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VOLUME 9

Renewers of the Age

Holy Men and Social Discourse in
Colonial Benaadir

By

Scott Reese



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2008

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Reese, Scott Steven.

Renewers of the age : holy men and social discourse in colonial Benaadir / By
Scott Reese.

p. cm. — (Islam in Africa ; v. 9)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-16729-2 (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Islam—Somalia—Benaadir.
2. Islam and social problems—Somalia—Benaadir. 3. Sufism—Somalia—
Benaadir. 4. Benaadir (Somalia)—Social life and customs. I. Title.

BP64.S6R44 2008

297.096773—dc22

2008008972

ISSN 1570-3754

ISBN 978 90 04 16729 2

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
Note on Transliteration, Personal and Place Names	ix
MAP	xi
 Chapter One Introduction: The ‘Ulamā’ as “local intellectuals”	 1
Chapter Two Religious History as Social History	33
Chapter Three Saints, Scholars and the Acquisition of Discursive Authority	63
Chapter Four Urban Woes and Pious Remedies: Sufis, Urbanites, and Managing Social Crises in the Nineteenth Century	101
Chapter Five When is Kafā’a Kifayah?—Sufi Leadership, Religious Authority and Questions of Social Inequality	139
Chapter Six The Best of Guides: Sufi Poetry, theological writing and Comprehending Qādiriyya popularity in the Early Twentieth Century	171
 Epilogue: End of the Sufi Era	217
Appendix One	223
Appendix Two	229
Bibliography	233
 Index	241

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When undertaking any research project the debts of gratitude one accrues are enormous. This work began life as a Ph.D. dissertation completed at the University of Pennsylvania in 1996. It has changed greatly since then and truly stands as a separate work. Having said that, I am deeply indebted to those who assisted me in completing that first work. In Mombasa, this includes a large number of Benaadiri refugees, but most importantly the late Abukar Sokorow and his sons Abdi and Muhy al-Din. In addition, the long suffering members of my doctoral committee, Margaret Mills, Everett Rowson and my advisor Lee V. Cassanelli have continued to provide support, guidance and friendship over the years.

The continued research, writing and (almost) unending revisions of this book were made possible by generous grants (in both time and funding) from my home institution, Northern Arizona University and the College of Arts and Letters. A Fulbright Fellowship in 2002 enabled me to spend a productive semester at the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies at the University of Bergen where I first began work on this revised manuscript.

In addition to institutional support, I have been fortunate to have the assistance and friendship of many individuals during the preparation of this work. Special thanks to Carl Ernst, Valerie Hoffman and Roman Loimeier for reading all or parts of the volume as it progressed through its various lives and for providing guidance and advice that have certainly made this a better book. Among the legion of friends who must be singled out for thanks for advice and support over the years are Kai Kresse, Anne Bang, Ed Simpson, Kjersti Berg, Loren Lybarger, Martin Orwin and Elke Stockreiter. In Flagstaff, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the same fellowship that I have received from dear friends and colleagues at NAU including Susan Deeds, Sanjay Joshi, Sanjam Ahluwalia, George Lubick, Cynthia Kosso, Leilah Danielson, Eric Meeks, Jude Costello, Paul and Ruth Donnelly, Zsuzsa Gulasci and Jason Beduhn. There are certainly many others, too numerous to mention.

It is also crucial to thank the series editors of the Islam in Africa Series, Knut Vikor and Ruediger Sessemann as well as Sasha Goldstein

and Trudy Kamperveen at Brill. In addition, Sean O’Fahey who arranged for my stay at Bergen and my doctoral adviser Lee Cassanelli, both of whom have shown an unwavering faith in my work over the years, deserve special thanks and recognition.

My wife Marilya and kids Kai and Svea (not to mention our “junior” family members Henry and Howard) whose love, understanding and—in the case of the latter—penchant for long walks in the forest have offered me perspective and sanity during the long and difficult writing process. Finally, my parents whose love, support and understanding over the years have been instrumental in making me the person I am. It is to them I dedicate this book.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, PERSONAL AND PLACE NAMES

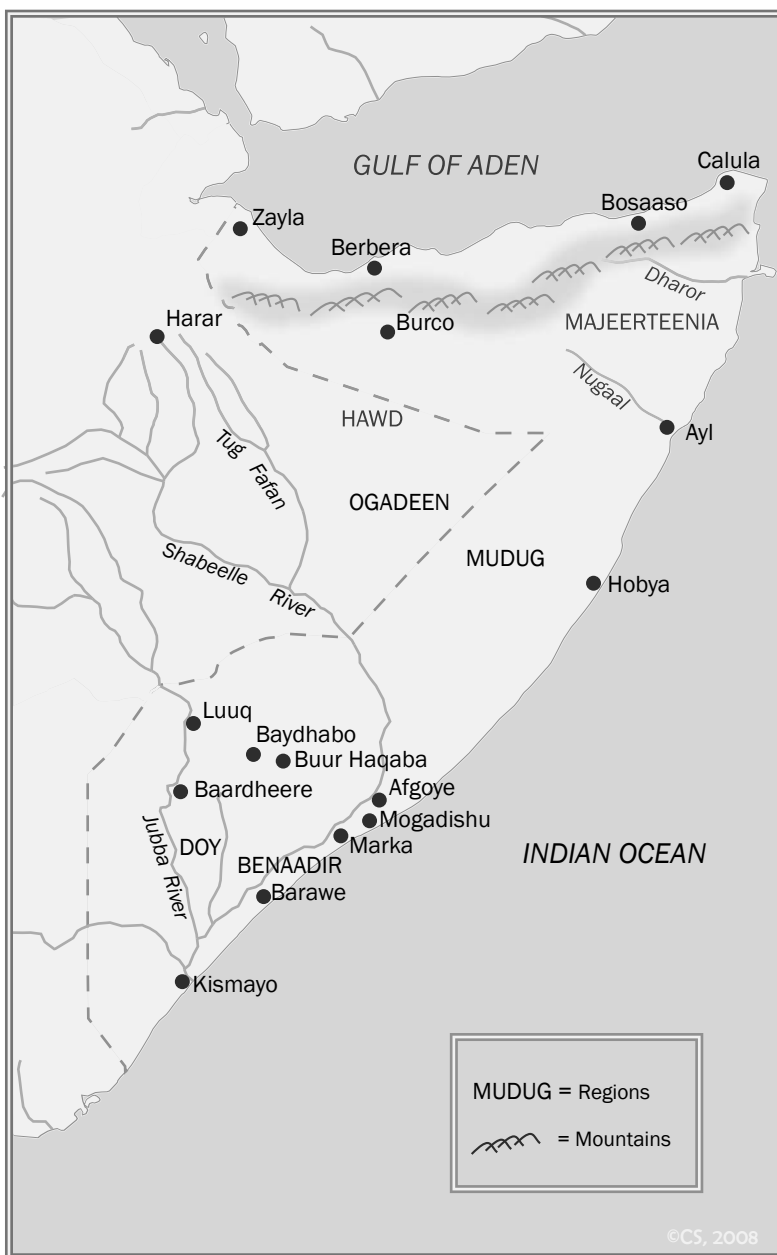
The transliteration and spelling of Arabic and Somali personal names, places and terms represents a particular challenge in this book. All of the locally compiled primary sources are written in Arabic however their authors were native Somali rather than Arabic speakers. Similarly, an official Latin based orthography for the Somali language was adopted in the 1970s which, theoretically at least, standardized the spelling across the language and adopted a number of unique conventions designed to represent certain Somali vocalizations. The letter “C”, for example, served to represent the pharyngeal fricative corresponding to the letter “ayn” in Arabic, while “X” represented the Arabic “ha” or ح. This raises the interesting question of how should one transliterate Somali personal and place names appearing in Arabic? For the sake of clarity, and the fact that more readers will be familiar with Arabic transliteration than Somali, this book follows the system of transliteration laid out in the International Journal of Middle East Studies with regard to most personal names. So, Aḥmad will be used rather than Axmad, Muḥammad rather than Maxamaad etc. The same holds for titles (e.g. *Shaykh*) and technical terms (e.g. *ilm*). In a few rare cases, Somali forms of names exist that are significantly different from their Arabic originals (e.g. Abiker or Abukar for Abū Bakr). In these instances—where changing the name would render it unrecognizable to a Somali speaker—the Somali form has been retained.

With regard to clan and place names I have in most cases opted to employ a simplified orthography that maintains the spirit of the Somali spelling. So, Bendawow rather than the Arabic Bandawū, for example. In cases where there already exists a commonly accepted English spelling of place names, Mogadishu for example, that will be used instead of either the Arabic transliteration (Muqdishū) or the Somali (Muqdisho). In some cases, however, the new Somali spelling of certain place names has become the standard so, Barawe rather than Brava or Marka rather than Merka or Merca and most importantly Benaadir instead of Benadir.

The fact that none of the authors of these texts was a native speaker of Arabic also raises the issue of spelling. Systematic misspellings

of common and technical Arabic terms occurring within the texts have been politely corrected by the present author in the interests of clarity.

Finally, the above spelling conventions are applied only to historical texts and figures. A great deal of the data for this book was collected through oral interviews in and around Mombasa, Kenya in 1994. The majority of my interviewees preferred anglicized spellings of their names, for instance, Abdi rather than Cabdi, Muhammad rather than Maxamaad. In order to respect their personal preference I have opted to use these forms rather than either Arabic transliteration or Somali orthography.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE ‘ULAMĀ’ AS “LOCAL INTELLECTUALS”

One night in 1917 the Somali *shaykh*, Qassim b. Muhy al-Dīn al-Barawī, in the place between “sleeping and waking,” had a vision in which he received a visit from his deceased mentor, *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad. The departed saint asked for news of his followers. Excitedly, *Shaykh* Qassim informed him that since his departure from the earthly realm the “renewer of the age” had appeared to revive the—until then—flagging reputation of the Friends of God and return the people to the true path of salvation.¹ The “renewer” referred to by *Shaykh* Qassim was a Palestinian jurist named Yūsuf Isma‘īl Nabhānī, an Ottoman functionary living in far off Beirut. The work in which *Shaykh* Qassim recorded his ethereal encounter with Uways was the introduction to a collection of devotional poetry, *al-Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id*. The collection with its laudatory references to Nabhānī represents more than an example of religious hyperbole in the early twentieth century. It also provides a window which allows us to observe a number of important facets of Muslim religious life on the local level at the beginning of the last century.

The early decades of the twentieth century in East Africa, as in most of the Muslim world, were characterized by economic depression, epidemics and colonial occupation. As in the current Islamic world these conditions set many East African Muslims searching for spiritual remedies to their secular woes. It was against this backdrop that al-Barawī compiled his *Majmū‘a*. The Somali *shaykh*’s encounter with his own deceased spiritual guide served as the opening of a collection of religious poems aimed at providing the faithful with guidance towards personal salvation in a time of troubles. Its didactic poems, each prefaced by a brief *karāma* or miracle story, provided detailed practical

¹ Qassim al-Barawī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id fī madīh sayyid al-anbiyā’ wa al-tawassūl bi-tāj al-awliyā’ sayyidī ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī* 3rd edition (Cairo: Sharika Maktabat wa Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafa al-Babī wa awladahu, 1955) p. 1.

advice to Somali Muslims regarding what spiritual steps they needed to take in order to cure the ills of their time.

The invocation of *Shaykh* Nabhānī—and quotations from his work cited later in the same piece—however, transformed Qassim’s writings from the sermonizing of a parochial local *shaykh* to that of a learned *‘alim* well read in the works of his contemporaries who sought to transmit the teachings of the wider Muslim world to his own flock. Nabhānī’s works figure prominently in the writings of a number of early twentieth century Somali *‘ulamā’*. His hagiographic collection, *al-Jāma’ al-Karāmāt*, served as the inspiration for *Shaykh* Qassim’s own sacred biography of Uways compiled in 1917. Similarly, *Shaykh* Nabhānī’s polemical anti-Wahhābī work *Shawāhid al-Haqq* constitutes an important element in the anti-Šālīhiyya writings of al-Barawī’s contemporary *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī collected under the title *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*.² The influence of a Palestinian jurist on the intellectual production of two Somali *‘alims* is an interesting demonstration of the interconnectedness of the *umma* in the early twentieth century. Of greater importance is the role played by such texts in demonstrating the manner in which complex theological ideas were disseminated to a wide, largely non-literate, audience.

The central place of religious learning and by extension “the learned” in the construction of Muslim societies is one readily recognized by modern scholarship. Countless books and articles have been published exploring all facets of Islamic learning. Studies of the evolution of the various disciplines (e.g. Hadith, jurisprudence, Sufism), educational institutions and the social functions of religious scholars are legion.³ However, two unfortunate trends are readily apparent when reviewing the existing literature. First, the vast majority of scholarship concerns itself primarily with the period before 1500 with an overwhelming

² Amal Ghazal, “Beyond Modernity: Islamic Conservatism in the Late Ottoman Period,” MA Thesis University of Alberta, 1999. ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī, *Majmū‘a al-mubāraka al-mushtamila ‘ala kutub khamisa* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, c. 1919).

³ See for instance George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1981); Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: a social history of Islamic education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Such studies, it should be noted are increasingly geographically diverse, limited not just to the “Islamic heartland” of the Middle East and Persia but including South and Central Asia, Africa and Europe.

emphasis on the 11th–13th centuries.⁴ Muslim intellectual history for later periods, especially the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, has received far less attention. It is a period regarded by many until recently as an intellectual wasteland whose theologians were largely devoid of originality.⁵ Second, most scholarly studies have taken an inward looking approach to the study of the learned classes. As a result, they are concerned largely with either the development of individual personalities, particular schools of thought or institutions or, more rarely, the relationship of the learned classes to the governing structures of society.⁶ What has been little studied in any era is the impact of the 'ulamā' and their thought on wider common society. To date little has been written on the 'ulamā' as a reflection of the societies to which they belonged.

This book seeks to address both of these issues by examining the role of various learned holy men, such as *Shaykh* Qassim, in helping urban Somali society cope with the turbulent colonial era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This study should not be seen as a corrective to earlier scholarship but part of an effort to push Islamic intellectual history in a new direction. In essence, the goal of this book is to examine the role of Muslim religious leaders as intellectuals in the broadest sense of the term and their role as molders of social discourse during an era of upheaval and change.

Discourses of Reform and the Colonial Milieu

Social reform has been a central characteristic of the faith since its very inception in the early seventh century. Indeed, many link the success of the Prophet's message to economic, social and political inequalities

⁴ R.S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered," *Der Islam* v. 70 no. 1 (1993) pp. 52–87.

⁵ It should be noted that even this is beginning to slowly change and an increasing number of scholars are starting to closely examine this later period. Important recent works covering the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries include Valerie Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice", *IJMES* 31 (1999) pp. 351–369; Sean O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint, Ahmad ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition* (London: C. Hurst & Co. 1990) and; Barbara von Schlegel, *Sufism in the Ottoman Arab World: Shaykh Abd al-Ghani Al-Nabulusi*, University of California, Berkeley Ph.D. diss. 1997 are a few recent examples of research devoted to this neglected era.

⁶ The works of Cornell, Metcalf as well as Adeeb Khalid's book *The politics of Muslim cultural reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and; Muhammad Qassim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) fall into this category.

within Meccan society that resulted in the emergence of a grassroots movement among the ranks of the disadvantaged aimed at overthrowing the Qurayshī oligarchy and replacing it with a more equitable social system based on the will of God.⁷ Following the example of the Prophet, a large proportion of the social reform movements in Islamic history have been led or at least inspired by individuals drawn from the ranks of religious practitioners. So, it should come as little surprise that members of the learned classes continued to provide active leadership as well as guidance during times of trouble in the modern era.

Religious reform aimed at correcting social and political ills were a central theme of Muslim discourse throughout the nineteenth century. The populist war against the Hausa Sultan Nafata of Gobir in 1804 that resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, for instance, was led by *Shaykh* ʿUthman dan Fodī who—before becoming a jihadist leader—spent a long career as a “quietest scholar” concerned with guiding the faithful in the proper worship of God rather than politics.⁸ Similarly, the rise of the Mahdi in the Sudan in the latter part of the same century can be seen—at least in part—as an effort to throw off Egyptian colonial occupation.⁹ From the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the single greatest threat faced by virtually all Muslim communities throughout the world was growing European dominance. From French-occupied Morocco in the west to Dutch Indonesia and the Malay States in the east, by the beginning of the twentieth century virtually every Muslim society, with the exception of those falling under Ottoman rule, was living under some kind of European colonial domination. In addition, stagnating economic conditions, as well as human and livestock epidemics left many in a state of despair searching for ways to end the social, political and economic decay. Not surprisingly it was the *ʿulamāʾ* who were at the forefront of the search.

Western and Western trained scholars have devoted ample space to the reformist voices of the colonial era. Their attention, however,

⁷ For a full discussion of the economic roots of the Prophet’s movement see Ira Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 3–30 and; Mahmood Ibrahim, *Merchant Capital and Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

⁸ Louis Brenner, “Muslim Thought in Eighteenth-Century West Africa: The Case of *Shaykh* ʿUthman b. Fudī” in *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*, Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll eds. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

⁹ P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

has focused largely on those forming the highest levels of intellectual discourse, located in the so-called "center" of the Islamic world. As a result, important intellectuals such as al-Tahtawī, al-Afghanī, and Muḥammad Abduh who represented what has come to be regarded as an "accommodationist" stance towards the West and Rashīd Riḍa and Sayyid Quṭb, viewed as the spokespersons of the "rejectionist" school of thought, have received the most attention.¹⁰ Numerous "smaller" or more "local" voices of reformist discourse located largely on the so-called Islamic "periphery" of sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia west of Persia, however, have attracted far less consideration. Reformist thought, it has been assumed, was a dynamic process only in the supposed centers of intellectual discourse (i.e. Egypt, the Levant and—to a far lesser extent—the Hijaz) whose ideas then trickled down to Muslim intellectuals in distant outposts on the fringes. Lying far beyond what were perceived as the most important scholarly centers of the Muslim world, the 'ulamā' of these regions—whom scholars have regarded as less intellectually capable than their more central counterparts—were presumed to fall neatly into one of the two major reformist camps as either backward looking "rejectors" or secular minded "accommodators".¹¹ To be sure, the thought of Muslim intellectuals in the Arab heartland had a significant impact on scholars of the wider *umma*. Discursive interconnectedness, however, should not be confused with intellectual uniformity.

One of the most ironic side effects of the colonial era of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to bring intellectuals from across the Muslim world into closer contact with one another than at any other time in Islamic history. What drew them together, however, was not necessarily the shared experience of colonial rule which could vary enormously from place to place. Instead, what bound them to one another was what Juan Cole has referred to as "a web of technology and intelligence" that was not so much new as made "enormously lush and rapid" with the advent of European dominance.¹² Cole observes that the creation of a "global information ecumene" as a result of

¹⁰ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

¹¹ O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, p. 5.

¹² Juan I. Cole, "Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World, 1890–1920," in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) p. 344.

the establishment of regular steamship routes, telegraphy and cheap printing, meant to serve the practicalities of empire, in fact worked to draw colonized Muslims together in terms of intellectual discourse. A number of studies of the evolution of print culture in various parts of the Islamic world bear out Cole's assertions while evidence from East Africa lends similar support.¹³

The introduction of regular steamship routes between British East Africa and Egypt, for instance, appears to have greatly expanded patterns of Muslim intellectual migration. Prior to the end of the nineteenth century, Somali religious practitioners looked almost exclusively to Arabia as the primary source of religious learning. While traditions contend that the scholarly classes were educated largely at home in the towns of the Benaadir, Arabia, especially the Hadramaut in the south, served as their intellectual touchstone. "Learning" itself was, by tradition, carried from the Hadramaut to the Benaadir by the semi-mythical Barawan 'alim Nūr Chande who introduced the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Bukharī* to the coast.¹⁴ Similarly, according to clan genealogies, the Āl-Naḍīr, an Ashrāf lineage which produced some of the most influential religious practitioners of the coastal towns, migrated to the Benaadir from the southern Arabian port of Shiḥr in the seventeenth century.¹⁵

The careers of numerous holy men were similarly tied to the mountains and deserts of southern Arabia. Although largely educated in Barawe and Mogadishu, the famed *Shaykh* Uways spent several months "visiting the *Shaykhs* of Yemen" after completing the Hajj in the early 1880s.¹⁶ Similarly, when discussing weighty cosmological matters such as the nature of the Prophet or the shape of the universe, another important Qādiriyya *shaykh*, 'Abd al-Raḥman Zayla'ī frequently quoted "the greats" including Ibn Ḥajjar, Ibn al-'Arabī or Sahl al-Tustarī.¹⁷ However, when addressing more practical concerns of worship—such

¹³ Francis Robinson "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies*, v. 27, n. 1 (1993) pp. 229–251; Adeeb Khalid, "Printing, Publishing and Reform in Tsarist Central Asia" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, v. 26, n. 2 (1994) pp. 187–200. Scott S. Reese, "The Adventures of Abu Harith," in Scott S. Reese ed., *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004).

¹⁴ Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir: Islamic Learning, Commerce and Somali Urban Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, Ph.D. Diss. University of Pennsylvania (1996) p. 264.

¹⁵ *Sharīf* 'Aydārūs b. 'Alī, *Bughyat al-Āmāl fī Tārīkh al-Ṣūmāl* (Mogadishu: Italian Trusteeship Administration, 1950).

¹⁶ 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, p. 10.

¹⁷ See 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Zayla'ī, *al-Majmū'a al-Mushtamila* (Djibouti: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 1972).

as the performance of supererogatory prayers—he preferred to cite the example of the more contemporary Ḥadramī saint *Sayyid* ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥaddād and “what he read each night following the ‘*ishā*’ prayer.”¹⁸

With the start of the twentieth century, however, a noticeable change occurred as Somalis—as well as other East Africa Muslims—began to shift their intellectual attention northward towards the Mediterranean. Most historians of modern East Africa are well aware of the Zanzibari *‘alim*, *Shaykh* Aḥmad b. Sumayt’s tour of the Mediterranean and audience with the Ottoman Sultan in 1886.¹⁹ However, Ibn Sumayt’s tenure at the Ottoman court was hardly an isolated episode and represents the start of increasingly regular contact between East African Muslims and their Mediterranean brethren for both intellectual and economic purposes. In 1905, for instance, the presence of a small group of Somali students was reported at al-Azhar in Cairo for the first time.²⁰ While during World War I, ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī wrote most of his *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka* there during a self-imposed exile.²¹ In the spring of 1914 the Zanzibari scholar, Muḥammad al-Barwānī—himself on a grand tour of the holy places of the Levant—noted unexpectedly running into his cousin, a merchant in Lebanon on business, at their Beirut hotel.²² And in 1920 British consular officials noted on several occasions, with increasing alarm, the growing presence of Somali seamen in the Egyptian ports of Suez and Port Said. Though not of the scholarly class, their presence certainly demonstrated the growing frequency with which East Africans were beginning to interact with the Levantine-Egyptian world.²³ While certainly anecdotal, such incidents suggest a continuous growth of economic and intellectual linkages between East Africa and the Muslim world of the eastern Mediterranean from the end of the nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth. From scholars seeking knowledge and enlightenment to businessmen and laborers looking for economic opportunity, imperial infrastructure

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 23–24.

¹⁹ *Shaykh* Abdallah Farsy, *The Shafī‘ī Ulama of East Africa, ca. 1830–1970*, p. 156.

²⁰ CO 535/3 Correspondence 1905 Somaliland. The presence of these students came to the attention of British authorities through a rather circuitous route via the British Consul in Rome who noticed their mention in an editorial in the Italian newspaper *Il Messagero* regarding Italy’s attitude towards its Muslim subjects.

²¹ India Office record [IO] R/20/A/3031.

²² Muḥammad al-Barwānī, *Rihlat Abī al-Ḥarith* (Zanzibar, 1915).

²³ CO 535/60 Somaliland Dispatches June–September 1920. British consular reports note the presence of several hundred Somali seamen looking for work mostly as firemen or able seamen on European cargo vessels.

seems to have laid the groundwork for expanding the horizons of East African Muslims.

While imperial infrastructures had an impact on the circles in which scholars moved, they likewise effected what they read. The availability of Muḥammad Abduh's reformist newspaper, *al-Minār*, throughout the Indian Ocean, for instance, is well documented. But as the following pages suggest, this was only the tip of the lithographic iceberg. Scholars such as al-Barawī and al-Quṭbī were, of course, schooled in the classics of *ʿilm* and the works of regional luminaries such as Ibn Daḥlān and al-Ḥaddād. However, they were equally well versed in the writings of Abduh, Nabḥānī and others that clearly placed them in the midst of the intellectual currents of the time. What needs to be noted, though, is that scholars from this so-called periphery cannot be easily pigeonholed as either “rejectors” or “accommodators”. Rather than slavishly subscribing to the ideas propagated at the center, Somali reformers carefully sifted and selected ideas that fit their own social contexts.

The Rise of the Ṭuruq

The colonial experience of Muslims in East Africa, in general, and Somalia in particular, was far different from that of their co-religionists in Egypt or India. So, what Cole seems to regard as a largely one-way transmission of reformist, especially Salafī, ideology was a far more dynamic and varied process. While certainly influenced by wider currents of reformist discourse, local voices generally tailored both the form and content of their messages to match local contexts and tastes. Although a few young scholars may have begun to venture towards Cairo for their studies the biographies, hagiographies, and travel accounts of the time still regarded the Ḥaramayn and the Hadramaut as the—albeit somewhat imaginary—apex of scholarly learning. Similarly, while East African scholars were beginning to develop regular links with their colleagues in Egypt and the Levant, the writings of the Meccan scholar Zaynī Daḥlān, for example, continued as an important source of spiritual inspiration. While “modernist” periodicals such as Muḥammad Abduh's *al-Minar* were certainly read by the intellectual elite, the *ʿulamāʾ* of the coast also frequently cited the work of individuals such as Nabḥānī, a sworn opponent of such modernist thinkers. The shape of reformist messages on the ground in Somalia during this period—while conversant with the wider discourse—appear largely independent and focused more on local social concerns than wider ideological battles.

Like most of coastal East Africa, the towns of the Benaadir region of Somalia (Mogadishu, Marka, Barawe and Kismayu) were effectively under European colonial rule from about 1890.²⁴ The majority of this region fell under Italian control, while the area around Kismayu and south of the Jubba River, known as Jubaland came under British administration.²⁵ For the first fifteen years of European rule the Benaadir colony, as it came to be known, was administered by two different charter companies. Direct colonial rule by the Italian government came into effect only in 1905 after scandal²⁶ and bankruptcy brought about the collapse of the second of these private ventures. Direct Italian rule of southern Somalia would last until the ouster of the Italians by a British expeditionary force in 1941.²⁷

The most visible Somali response to the trials of the colonial era (which included not only European political and economic domination, but coincided with bouts of famine, drought and pestilence as well) was the emergence of a number of highly organized and widely popular mystical religious orders or Sufi *turuq* (sing. *ṭarīqa*) which would come to dominate the religious landscape during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The presence of broad based and highly organized Sufi orders in Muslim East Africa was a fairly recent phenomenon. Sufism was certainly known in the region before that time, but appears to have been the preserve of a few individual ascetics. Its development as a dynamic social movement only occurred with the appearance of a number of charismatic preachers after 1880. The epicenter of *ṭarīqa* activity was the Benaadir itself. However, the influence of the various orders could be found along the length and breadth of the African coast as well as far into the interior. The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of three important Sufi orders in the Horn of Africa: the

²⁴ Prior to this the Benaadir was under the nominal control of the Sultan of Zanzibar from about 1880, although the power of the sultan was generally more imagined than real.

²⁵ That is until the end of WWI when this region also passed from British to Italian hands in 1922.

²⁶ Among other things, a government commission concluded that not only had the company actively aided and abetted the continuation of the slave trade in the region, but that Company officials commonly purchased female slaves for use as concubines or coerced local women into becoming their mistresses. In addition, the commission concluded, Company officials regularly held orgies with these local women in which the use of drugs and alcohol was rife. See Robert Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

²⁷ Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, chapters 1–4.

Aḥmadiyya; the Ṣālihiyya and; the Qādiriyya.²⁸ All appeared at about the same time, and each found adherents among diverse elements of the Somali population. Most importantly, all of them were concerned with issues of social and religious reform.

The Aḥmadiyya and Ṣālihiyya traced their origins to the Moroccan scholar and mystic *Sayyid* Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Fāsī (1760–1837). The Aḥmadiyya regarded themselves as the *Shaykh*'s most direct spiritual descendants and dated their arrival in Somalia to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Accounts differ as to how the order actually arrived in the Benaadir²⁹ and in comparison to the Qādiriyya and Ṣālihiyya their numbers were always relatively small. Despite their small numbers, however, the Aḥmadiyya was enormously influential counting among its adherents wealthy merchants from the towns of the coast and rural agriculturalists and ex-slaves living in villages along the Jubba River. More importantly, the order produced a number of leaders who are remembered as religious and social reformers. *Shaykh* Nurayn Aḥmad Ṣābr, a popularizer of the order in Barawe and the town's *qāḍī* under first the Zanzibaris in the 1880s and then the early Italian administration, is remembered as an advocate of a more rigorous observance of *sharī'a* and elimination of aberrant traditions in the everyday lives of believers.³⁰ *Shaykh* Murjān is revered for his missionary work that brought the faith to the upper reaches of the Jubba River, but more importantly for mediating peace between low-status villagers who were recent converts and local pastoralists who had historically dominated and oppressed them.³¹

²⁸ Smaller orders such as the 'Alawiyya and Rifa'iyya also existed in the region. However, these maintained more narrow "ethnic" constituencies among members of the Ashrāf (individuals belonging to lineages able to trace their descent from the Prophet Muḥammad) and immigrants from the Hadramaut. Little work has been done on either of these orders in East Africa. For a comprehensive overview of the Alawiyya *ṭarīqa* is Anne Bang's *Saints and Sufis of the Sea* (London: Curzon Press, 2003).

²⁹ In his brief autobiography, the Marka 'alim *Shaykh* 'Alī Mai claimed to have introduced the *ṭarīqa* to the coast in 1870, while oral traditions hold that it was propagated by a disciple of the late Aḥmad b. Idrīs, Maulan 'Abd al-Raḥman, at about the same time. Alessandro Gori, *Studi sulla letteratura agiografica Islamica Somala in lingua Araba*, Quaterni di Semitistica, no. 24 (Florence: Department of Linguistics, 2004) pp. 193–264. Interview Ahmad Nurayn, June 21, 1994. For a detailed account of Aḥmadiyya origins see Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*, pp. 321–24.

³⁰ Alessandra Vianello and Mohamed M. Kassim, *Servants of the Sharia: The Civil Registrar of the Qadis' Court of Brava 1893–1900* vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006) pp. 54–55.

³¹ See Chapter 5.

The Ṣālihiyya constituted an off-shoot of Aḥmad b. Idrīs' teachings propagated by Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ (d. 1919) the nephew of one of the *Shaykh's* early disciples. The *ṭarīqa* was introduced to the Horn in the late nineteenth century first by *Shaykh* Muḥammad Guled (d. 1918) whose mission work focused on the middle Shabeelle River and *Shaykh* 'Alī Nairobi (d. 1919) whose center of activity was along the Jubba. The most famous proponent of the Ṣālihiyya was, of course, *Shaykh* Muḥammad 'Abdullāh Ḥasan (d. 1920) who not only spread the Ṣāliḥī word throughout the northern Somali interior, but also led a twenty-two year insurgency against foreign intervention that ended only with his death shortly after World War I. While certainly more rigid in their theological interpretations than the other orders, the Ṣālihiyya are frequently—and wrongly—accused of being promoters of Wahhābism. While such charges are largely groundless, the followers of Muḥammad 'Abdullāh Ḥasan did call for the necessity of purifying the faith in the face of rampant *bid'ā* or unlawful innovation. This included, among other things, prohibitions against consuming tobacco, drinking and dancing but most importantly a ban on saint veneration. It was the latter that would ultimately place them in conflict with their largest and most important rival, the Qādiriyya. Unlike the Aḥmadiyya and the Qādiriyya, who attracted followers from both urban and rural populations, the Ṣālihiyya were a largely rural phenomenon. Muḥammad Guled and 'Alī Nairobi drew their followers primarily from the agriculturalists and pastoralists of the Shabeelle and Jubba River valleys respectively while Muḥammad 'Abdullāh Ḥasan's locus of authority was largely clan based with the overwhelming majority of his adherents drawn from the pastoral Ogaden and Dulbahante clans.³²

In terms of numbers of followers, literary production and social influence the most prominent order of the period was certainly the Qādiriyya. As such, it is the Qādiriyya who constitute the main focus of this book. Named for its eponymous founder *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī (d. 1166), by the early 20th century Qādiriyya influence was felt as far south along the coast as Mozambique and as far inland as the present day Democratic Republic of Congo.³³ The written and oral traditions of the order credit its emergence in East Africa to the efforts

³² See Chapter 6 and Said S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Maḥammad 'Abdille Ḥasan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) pp. 107ff.

³³ B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth Century Africa*, pp. 152ff.

of two Somali *Shaykhs*, ‘Abd al-Raḥman Zayla’ī (c. 1820–1882) and Uways b. Muḥammad (1847–1909). As the earlier of the two, Zayla’ī is viewed as the principal reviver of the order in Somalia while Uways is remembered as its greatest propagandist, spreading the *ṭarīqa* not only to the towns and countryside of Somalia but as far south as Zanzibar. The latter’s preaching and personal *karāma* were reputed to be so persuasive that he even counted the Ibadhi Sultan of Zanzibar, *Sayyid* Barghash b. Ṣultān, among his followers and patrons.³⁴ Theoretically, the followers of the order were divided between two branches: the Zayla’iyya and the Uwaysiyya each named for its founding *Shaykh*. In practice, however, these divisions seem to have meant little to individual followers who simply attached the *nisba* “al-Qādirī” to their names regardless of which *shaykh* they considered their spiritual guide.

Perhaps the most important thing to point out about the emergent orders is their broad based popularity that, by the early twentieth century, they were able to parley into significant social, and sometimes political, influence. Rather than a closed circle of ascetics keeping quietly to themselves, the great *shaykhs* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were omnipresent in both rural and urban public spheres. In the countryside, peripatetic *shaykhs*, like Uways and Murjān, and their students devoted years of their lives to missionary work among farmers and pastoralists alike. They taught the fundamentals of the Qur’ān to the young, served as mediators in local disputes and founded *jamā’as*, or religious communities that provided refuge for ex-slaves, client cultivators and other disadvantaged elements of society. In the towns of the coast, they taught classes in mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) from their homes, held nightly *dhikr* ceremonies in the mosques and preached in various public spaces. They enjoyed the protection of clan elders in the interior and the patronage of the wealthy in the towns.³⁵ As a result, it should come as little surprise that membership in the *ṭuruq* ranged across the social spectrum. J.S. Trimingham asserted that by the time of the Second World War virtually all Somali men identified, at least nominally, with one of the local schools of Sufism.³⁶ While this is certainly something of an overstatement, the orders were clearly popular institutions with an appeal across the social spectrum.

³⁴ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*. Also, see Appendix 1 *Khulafā’ of Shaykh Uways b. Muḥammad al-Barawī*.

³⁵ For details of these relationships see Chapter 4.

³⁶ Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, pp. 233–247.

As one hagiographer of *Shaykh* Uways noted, wherever the *Shaykh* traveled, in town or country, he attracted large followings, "both men and women, free and slave."³⁷ Indeed, Sufi literature, colonial records and oral testimonies all provide ample evidence of a broad membership ranging from wealthy merchants and prominent religious figures to nomads, poor laborers, slaves, freedmen and, occasionally, women.³⁸ One obvious question that must be asked is what explains this popularity? However, a question of equal importance is what exactly did Sufi leaders hope to impart to this broad audience?

Commanding the Right and Forbidding the Wrong: Sufi 'Ulamā' as "Popular" Intellectuals

Within the confines of early colonial Somalia, the Sufi orders were arguably one of the most influential social constructs of the period. But why were they so popular and, more importantly, what exactly did they seek to impart to their followers? Similarly, how were these messages spread to the wider community of believers? These are the questions with which this book is largely concerned. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the 'ulamā' of the orders spread their teachings through a variety of written and oral genres ranging from didactic poetry and hagiographies to rigorous theological texts. Some scholars of East African Islam have argued that as such works are largely religious in nature they are of limited value for the social/cultural historian.³⁹ Even a cursory examination of such texts, however, quickly calls such assertions into question.

Contemporary hagiographies of the Somali saint Uways al-Barawī, for example, contain clear commentary on a variety of social matters including proper ethical conduct, ethnicity and social standing. The *Rihlat Abī Harīth* written by the Zanzibari scholar Muḥammad al-Barwānī, on the surface an account of the author's 1914 tour of the holy sites of Egypt and the Levant, is more importantly a running discourse on how the good Muslim should engage Western modernity.⁴⁰ In a similar fashion, Qassim al-Barawī's collection of mystical poetry

³⁷ 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, p. 12.

³⁸ See Chapter 4.

³⁹ See Randall Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent*, Introduction. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁴⁰ See Reese, "The Adventures of Abū Harīth."

Majmūʿa al-Qasāʾid contains works praising the Prophet Muḥammad and various Sufi saints, but is also a dialogue on the proper path of religious reform and personal salvation that is also virulently anti-Ṣāliḥī in tone, a position that carried with it important political ramifications.⁴¹ Finally, ʿAbdullāhī al-Quṭbī's *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*, has historically been viewed as a heresiography denouncing the rival Ṣāliḥiyya Sufi order of *Sayyid* Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh Ḥasan as a group of pro-Wahhābī heretics. However, as we shall see, much of his text is devoted not to disparaging the Ṣāliḥiyya, but to providing counsel to the faithful on right and proper practice.⁴²

As contemporary comment on the times, works such as these—along with more specialized and erudite writings—constitute a blueprint for a kind of communal *moral history* through which East African Muslims tried to make sense of the global political, economic and social changes enveloping them in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, through the lens of their own cosmological worldview. The larger importance of such works is that they reveal the efforts of local Muslim scholars to convey their thought to a wider, popular audience.

A number of recent studies have begun to uncover the ways in which Muslim learned elites have historically conveyed textual Islamic ideologies to a wider popular audience. The most fruitful veins of inquiry have been those exploring the role of mystical practitioners, Sufis, as an important bridge between the loftier circles of the Islamic intellectual elite and the world of the Muslim masses. Principal among these is Vincent Cornell who in recent writings about Sufi saints in early modern Morocco has mounted a successful challenge to the notion of local holy men as clever confidence men bent on the spiritual manipulation of illiterate common folk for the acquisition of personal power.⁴³ Rather than constituting an alternative to scriptural, legalist Islam as earlier generations of Western scholars had proposed,⁴⁴ Cornell has

⁴¹ For Uways al-Barawī see, ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUmar, *Jalaʾ al-ʿAynayn fī Manāqib a-Shaykhayn al-Shaykh al-Walī Ḥajj Uways al-Qādirī waʾl-Shaykh al-Kamil al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Ẓaylaʿī* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī ca. 1954) and; *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs fī Khuwas al-Shaykh Uways* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, 1964). Muḥammad al-Barwānī, *Rihlat Abī Harīth* (Zanzībar, 1915) and; Qassim Muhy al-Dīn al-Barawī, *Majmūʿa al-Qasāʾid* (no publisher information, 1917).

⁴² Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*.

⁴³ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, and Vincent Cornell, “The Logic of Analogy and the Role of the Sufi *Shaykh* in Post-Marinid Morocco,” *IJMES* v. 15, (1983) pp. 67–93.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Ernst Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

successfully demonstrated that Sufi saints were its foremost promoters among the common, especially rural, classes. In his book *Realm of the Saint* he notes, "apart from holy warriors and tribal eponyms, the most important saints of early Moroccan Sufism were legal specialists"⁴⁵ who promoted the notion of *salah* or "socially conscious virtue" as a rule of thumb for all ordinary believers. The socially conscious believer, or *salih*, according to Cornell was bound to abide by the strict code of ethics represented by the Sunna (example) of the Prophet Muḥammad and the *sharʿa* in order to be a "morally upstanding and socially constructive individual."⁴⁶ As proponents of scriptural jurisprudence, the Sufi leader, in Cornell's view, becomes "a symbolic nexus" for the mediation of textual Islamic ideologies that served to indoctrinate the common follower into orthoprax observances and thought. Far from being the embodiment of simple local beliefs and discourse, Cornell argues, Sufi leadership represented an important link to the wider Muslim intellectual world.⁴⁷

A similar view is taken by the historian Albrecht Hofheinz in describing what he refers to as the "inner mission" of Sufi practitioners in nineteenth-century Sudan. Sudanese Sufi leaders acted, like Cornell's Moroccan saints, to instill more "orthodox" norms in the every day practice of their followers. At the same time, they were also instrumental in introducing common Muslims to the most active Islamic intellectual currents of the age. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw what Hofheinz refers to as "an unprecedented explosion of writing activity," resulting in what he and others have labeled a "literary revolution."⁴⁸ The period was one of incredible intellectual ferment in which scholars of various intellectual stripes sought to reevaluate centuries of received scholarly tradition and "more direct access to...the sources of true knowledge." In the Sudan, Hofheinz writes, "Scholar-jurists (*ulamā'*) as well as Sufis were involved in this enterprise which aimed mainly at reassessing the relationship between Divine Revelation, Prophetic Tradition and human reasoning."⁴⁹ While the influence of many scholars was limited to the more erudite environment of the urban sphere, he writes, leaders of "socio-religious reform movements derived from the

⁴⁵ Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

⁴⁸ Albrecht Hofheinz *Internalizing Islam*, p. 1.

⁴⁹ *Idem.*

mystical tradition,” carried these new ideas and concepts into the countryside “beyond the traditional confines of the urban scholar-jurists.”⁵⁰ Sufi *shaykhs* in the Sudan—who were every bit as learned as Cornell’s sixteenth-century Moroccan saints—fulfilled the role of what Hofheinz terms “culture brokers” who “acted as mediators between an urban literary tradition and more peripheral areas of the Muslim world or more peripheral sectors of society...”⁵¹

Both Cornell and Hofheinz demonstrate the importance of the learned classes, especially Sufi leaders, as transmitters of Islamic doctrine within a broad public sphere and making “textual Islamic ideologies” accessible to the average, non-elite believer. But one question neither author takes up, at least not directly, is how *did* Sufi leaders shape discourse during particular historical moments acting as, to paraphrase Steven Feierman, “popular” intellectuals? Feierman coined the term “peasant intellectual” to describe “those individuals within peasant society who are best able to shape discourse...” by, in his words, “engag[ing] in socially recognized organizational, directive, educative or expressive activities,” and at some point “elaborate new forms of social discourse.”⁵² That holy men and religious scholars would hold such a place in local Muslim society should come as a surprise to no one. In its essence, Islam is conceived of as an all-encompassing social system epitomized by the ideal of the *umma* that preaches not only the basic spiritual equality of believers, but that all aspects of their lives should be governed by a strict adherence to the faith. As such, it is logical that those who have played the greatest role in shaping public social discourse have frequently been those responsible for “commanding the right, and forbidding the wrong,” the ranks of the religious practitioners.

Feierman’s notion of the “peasant intellectual,” is derived largely from the work of Antonio Gramsci who, writing in the 1920s and 30s, was concerned largely with the development of intellectuals among the working class and whether or not they were able to consciously subvert the hegemonic discourse of the elite with one of their own.⁵³ The concerns of Feierman, as well as my own, are somewhat different. As Feierman

⁵⁰ Idem.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 2–3.

⁵² In his 1991 book *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), pp. 4, 18.

⁵³ Feierman, p. 18; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971) pp. 3–23.

notes, his primary concern is exploring not whether or not discourse is hegemonic but rather “*who* authorizes discourse and practice?”⁵⁴ As a way of unpacking this question, Feierman posits a number of questions: “What is the nature of an inherited stream of discourse? What is the history of the intellectuals who use that discourse? What is their social position and what are their interests? Finally, what is the relationship of the intellectuals and their discourse to holders of power at a wider level?”⁵⁵ The advantage of such questions is that they enable us to construct the evolution of a given discourse and thus better comprehend its impact on a particular society. With little modification,⁵⁶ these same questions may also be helpful in exploring the place of the ‘*ulamā*’ and holy men as authoritative voices of Muslim social discourse.

Examinations of the evolution of Islamic social discourses have frequently taken place at what could be called the macro-ideological level concerned more with elite sectarian and theological debates than with what those debates meant to individual communities of believers.⁵⁷ While much space has been given over to an examination of various religious institutions as well as the development of numerous socio-theological debates, little has been done to examine how the individual leaders and members of these organizations have influenced (or at least *sought* to influence) wider society.

One reason for this oversight, of course, is the nature of the source material. For many periods of Islamic history the surviving sources tend to be of an elite nature, written by the ‘*ulamā*’ for the ‘*ulamā*’. With the greater diffusion of print from the middle of the nineteenth century, and especially after the beginning of the twentieth, a significant body of texts aimed at more popular audiences began to emerge. While much of this activity was centered in places such as Cairo, Beirut and Istanbul, a thriving print culture also emerged in areas traditionally considered more “peripheral” to the Islamic world such as East Africa. From the

⁵⁴ Feierman, p. 33.

⁵⁵ Idem.

⁵⁶ Given the religious nature of the discourse it is also necessary to ask how is local discourse influenced and connected to the same or similar debates in the broader Muslim context. This will be more fully discussed below.

⁵⁷ A number of recent works that add to our understanding of Islamic intellectual movements and processes include Wilfred Madelung *The Succession to Muhammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Denise Spellberg *Politics, Gender and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of 'Aisha bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) and Alexander Knysh, *Ibn Arabi and the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Buffalo: SUNY Press, 1998).

1880s onward members of the East African *‘ulamā’*, some located in important urban centers like Zanzibar but others living in more remote locations such as the interior of Somalia, began to produce an increasing number of texts aimed at a broad audience. The hagiographies, local pilgrimage accounts,⁵⁸ and compilations of mystical poetry and Sufi manuals mentioned above are emblematic of this production. Generally written in simple Arabic and printed in inexpensive editions, such works were designed to inspire the faithful but also to provide them with a sense of both moral and social direction. Using these and other works, this study examines the ways in which Somali *‘ulamā’* sought to reshape Somali society in a manner more pleasing to God. At the same time, it will explore the socio-religious constructs that placed them in a position to fulfill this function in the first place.

Anything new under the sun? Somali Sufi Orders and the “Neo-Sufism” Debate

While an examination of Somali Qādiriyya practice and belief will deepen our understanding of the place of Sufis in the African social context, this study also has significance for recent debates on the nature and social importance of Islamic mysticism as a whole. The notion that most Sufis of the nineteenth century were concerned largely with the welfare of wider society is, of course, hardly a new one. Until recently, the Qādiriyya and, indeed, all of the nineteenth-century Sufi orders of Eastern Africa would have been placed under the rubric of what is often referred to as “Neo-Sufism”. First coined by Fazlur Rahman in 1948, the term “Neo-Sufism,” described a supposed paradigmatic shift in the focus of Sufi orders during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from a quietest tradition concerned primarily with divine union to a position that was more outward looking and concerned with social reform.⁵⁹ Rahman, along with H.A.R. Gibb, postulated that during this period Sufi practitioners drifted away from the traditional metaphysical pursuit of union with the divine and turned towards

⁵⁸ Here we are speaking of accounts of *ziyarat* or visitations to the tombs of local saints rather than Hajj accounts of journeys for the pilgrimage to Mecca.

⁵⁹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) pp. 206, and 239 quoted in R.S. O’Fahey and Bernd Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered,” p. 55. The following critique is based largely on this seminal article by O’Fahey and Radtke whose hypotheses have been borne out by virtually all subsequent research into this issue.

propagating the 'norms' of "orthodoxy."⁶⁰ Subsequent writers climbed on to the bandwagon and over the course of a generation a kind of "Neo-Sufi" ethic emerged, which scholars claimed represented a new kind of mystical organization. In a groundbreaking article critiquing these assertions R.S. O'Fahey and Berndt Radtke provide a detailed list of what are argued to be the "main characteristics" of the typical Neo-Sufi including:

- a) Rejection of 'popular ecstatic' [sic] Sufi practices, e.g. dancing, the 'noisy' *dhikr*, saint worship and the visiting of saints' tombs.
- b) Rejection of Ibn al-'Arabi's teachings, especially his doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.
- c) Rejection of the *murshid/murīd* relationship and the hierarchical mystical Way leading to faith or 'illumination'; emphasis on moral and social teaching.
- d) 'Union' with the spirit of the Prophet, with a general emphasis on 'The Muḥammadan Way', *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* [as opposed to union with God].
- e) Legitimation of the position of the order's founder through his having received prayers, litanies and his authority generally directly from the Prophet.
- f) Creation of mass organizations hierarchically-structured under the authority of the founder and his family; "Whereas earlier teachings of *taṣawwuf* meant passing on a devotional tradition, in the eighteenth century in the new-style order it implied initiation into a social organization."⁶¹
- g) Renewed emphasis on Hadith studies, especially, "The importance of studying the earliest possible texts of Hadith rather than the later standard collections."⁶²
- h) Rejection of *taqlīd* [imitation] and the assertion of the right to exercise *ijtihād* [independent reasoning].
- i) The will to take political and military measures in defense of Islam.⁶³

⁶⁰ Rahman, *Islam* ibid. H.A.R. Gibb *Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948) p. 170.

⁶¹ Quoted from Levtzion and Voll, *Renewal and Reform*, p. 10.

⁶² Quoted from Lapidus, p. 258.

⁶³ Significantly, none of the proponents of Neo-Sufism ever provides a comprehensive discussion of the notion. The table compiled by O'Fahey and Radtke is one put together from a variety of sources considered the idea's loudest proponents. In

The thrust of O’Fahey and Radtke’s article is that virtually every one of these characteristics can be demonstrated to be inaccurate, if not outright wrong, given a careful reading of Sufi writings composed during this period.⁶⁴ Certainly, even a cursory examination of the writings from East Africa places many of these claims in serious doubt. Tomb visitations or *ziyārat*, for example, form a central part of not only virtually every hagiographical text, but are also commonly found in local travel accounts and poetry collections. As one popular poem notes, it is the tomb of the Prophet where supplications to God will have the greatest effect.⁶⁵ While the *Nūr Muḥammadiyya*⁶⁶ is certainly an important element of Sufi ideology, the teachings of Ibn al-‘Arabī and other classical Sufis including the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the oneness of being) are endorsed explicitly in theological treatises such as the *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka* of ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī and more implicitly in popular works such as the *Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id* of *Shaykh* Qassim al-Barawī. Although Ibn al-‘Arabī may be less explicitly invoked than in times past, his views are hardly rejected and God—not the Prophet—is always the object of one’s journey.⁶⁷ Esoteric practices such as *dhikr* (lit. remembrance) and *ziyāra* (lit. visitation) were deemed essential to achieving spiritual health. More importantly, for the Qādirīs of the Benaadir, it was only through such practices and attention to the ills of the soul that one could hope to remedy the maladies of everyday life.

addition to Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (p. 209), these include: J.S. Trimingham *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 106–107; B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in 19th-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) pp. 71–72, 108; John Voll *Islam. Continuity and Change* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1982) pp. 55–9, 65–7, 76–9 and 134–6; Nehemia Levtzion and John Voll eds. *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987) p. 10 and Ira Lapidus, *Islamic Societies* p. 258. This list is drawn from O’Fahey and Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered” p. 57.

⁶⁴ In fact, one of their most pointed criticisms of Neo-Sufi proponents is that much of their work seems based not on the writings of their subjects but on colonial surveillance literature. O’Fahey and Radtke, “Neo-Sufism” p. 53.

⁶⁵ Qassim al-Barawī, *Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id*, p. 2; al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*.

⁶⁶ Literally the “Light of Muḥammad,” the doctrine that declares the light of the Prophet which emanates from God, to be the light of all creation.

⁶⁷ Engseng Ho addresses this same point noting that although by the nineteenth century the reading and citing of Ibn al-‘Arabī was generally discouraged, many of his important ideas were clearly still present in Ḥadramī mystical belief and practice. See, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) p. 127.

As O'Fahey and Radtke rightly contend, many of the claims of Neo-Sufism's proponents do not bear the weight of close examination. The one element of the Neo-Sufi argument that has not been undermined by subsequent investigation is the notion of reform and social concern. Although the shape of this concern and ideas of reform could vary widely they are themes that run throughout Sufi writings in East Africa. The hagiographies of the Qādiriyya saint *Shaykh* Uways engage issues as diverse as moral sobriety and social equality. Those of the Aḥmadiyya saint *Shaykh* Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr and the Qādirī leader 'Abd al-Raḥman "Ṣūfī" cite adherence to the *sharī'a* as an indispensable element of spiritual development while the poetic collections of Qassim al-Barawī include admonitions against the "evils" of Wahhābism and advice for remedying societies ills.⁶⁸ Ironically, the role of religious practitioners as public intellectuals participating in wider social discourse is the area that has received the least amount of attention by scholars. Whether or not this social concern constituted a new trend within Sufism still remains to be demonstrated. Thus the characterization of Sufis in the nineteenth century as "neo" representing a sharp break with the past remains unproven. What is clear is that many of the Muslim intellectuals writing during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did display a concern for the wider social well-being and appear to have actively sought to influence social discourse. What is equally clear, however, is that social well-being could not be divorced from spiritual well-being.

The following chapters will "unpack" this discourse focusing on various aspects of the role of holy men as local "intellectuals". Chapter Two starts by providing an overview of Benaadiri history to the end of the nineteenth century, with an emphasis on how local sources have remembered that past. As we shall see, for Benaadiris there exists a nexus between the basic narrative of town history and religious history

⁶⁸ There are also numerous examples of individual scholars who are not remembered primarily as Sufis but with Sufi affiliations who were similarly concerned with social issues. These included *Sayyid* Aḥmad b. Sumayt and 'Abdullāh BāKathīr both affiliated with the 'Alawiyya *ṭarīqa* who were concerned with social and educational reform in Zanzibar. Muḥammad al-Barwānī, another Zanzibari 'alim, who wrote about the potential pitfalls of modernity in his travel account *Rihlat Abi Harith* (Zanzibar, 1915). For a discussion of Sumayt and BāKathīr see Anne Bang *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea, The Sufi and Family Networks of Ahmad ibn Sumayt and the Ṭarīqa' Alawiyya in East Africa c. 1860–1925*. (Dr. Art. Thesis, University of Bergen, 2000) pp. 211–223. For Muḥammad al-Barwānī see my own "The Adventures of Abu Harith: Muslim Travel Writing and Navigating the Modern in Colonial East Africa," in Scott S. Reese ed, *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 2004) pp. 244–256.

in both written and oral sources that cannot be broken. Religion and religious practitioners play a pivotal role in the destiny of the towns from their founding at the start of the tenth century to the political struggles and social dilemmas of the nineteenth. More importantly, it is faith that always guides town fortunes. Chapter Three examines the notion of religious authority more closely by identifying the elements necessary to convey legitimacy on a given scholar. In other words, it explores the “authorization” of holy men as discursive entities in the public sphere. As we shall see, scholarly influence was based on a complex mixture of spiritual transcendence and religious scriptural knowledge that combined to create a powerful discursive voice. While a reputation for learnedness was an essential element of religious authority on social matters, more esoteric attributes were equally important. In Chapter Four we begin to explore learned social discourse itself, looking at the close connections between religious figures and the urban merchant classes in the construction of social norms and regulating the boundaries of the community. In particular, it considers how religious discourses were used to scrutinize various social problems and pose concrete solutions to at least some of those dilemmas. While the solutions suggested in Chapter Four came from the relatively united voice of the *‘ulamā’*, Chapter Five examines the emergence of discursive discord among these same intellectuals over the notion of social equality among all believers. A common theme running through each of the first three chapters is that they engage problems multiple sectors of society agree were difficulties which needed to be confronted and solved. Chapter Five, however, focuses on issues that many in society would rather not face but were brought to the fore by members of the learned class; specifically, social tensions resulting from disparities in birth. As a result of the advent of colonial rule and the ending of slavery the “proper” order of society was a question that *‘alims* of all social backgrounds were forced to confront during the early twentieth century. As we shall see, some sought to remedy such disparities through new scriptural interpretations, others sought more radical and socially disruptive solutions while still others hoped to maintain the status quo. Finally, Chapter Six explores the various ways local scholars sought to engage the notion of religious and social reform in the early twentieth century both in relation to local forces as well as wider intellectual trends in the Muslim world. In part it looks at how local holy men charted their own course within the wider world of reformist discourse, endorsing some and countering others they consider ill advised. At the

same time, it examines how these ideas were disseminated to a large, popular and largely rural illiterate audience.

The Sufi revival of the early twentieth century in East Africa is a topic that has long drawn scholarly attention. Most often, however, it has been explored only in its relation to the advent of colonial rule. Furthermore, beyond its broad outlines the social and religious significance of its leadership has long been relegated to the margins of both African and Islamic history. This work seeks to address this by bringing local sources to the center. The reader will notice in the following pages that European colonialism and colonial actors (i.e. European administrators) remain largely in the background. Certainly, Somali 'ulamā' lived within the colonial context, but throughout their writings colonialism virtually never takes center stage. Rather than seeing colonial occupation as the cause of society's ills, Benaadiri intellectuals perceived it as a symptom of a more dangerous spiritual malaise.

From the glimpses we see in Somali texts and the colonial record, 'ulamā' and European administrators seem to have maintained an amicable relationship with one another. These are for the most part, however, only glimpses and the relations between religious leaders and officials are generally characterized more by silence than voice. While such silences are intriguing (why, for instance, do the 'ulamā' never appear to openly opposed or criticize the colonial regime?) I have chosen to focus on what religious scholars say in their texts rather than what they do not. In short, I seek here to uncover the social and spiritual concerns of religious scholars rather than superimpose agendas of the twenty-first century academy. By looking at their work in detail, we can begin to see how elements of the Somali 'ulamā' sought to help their brethren meet and deal with the social problems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the lens of the faith. In this sense, as intellectuals whose first concern was the spiritual well-being of their fellow Muslims, they were truly "Renewers" of their Age.

Source Material, Fieldwork and the Benaadir Past

In early November, 1994 just as I was about to start my dissertation fieldwork, I met with my adviser at the annual meeting of the African Studies Association to finalize my plans and touch base one last time. When we met in the hotel lobby he was carrying a packet of photocopied material and seemed almost giddy with excitement. He had just

returned from a short visit to Mombasa, Kenya where he was hosted by members of the Benaadir refugee community. Benaadiris are Somalis who belong to a number of largely urban lineages from the towns of the southern Somali coast (Mogadishu, Marka and Barawe) known collectively as the Benaadir. Prior to the start of the Somali civil war in late 1989 very little research (historical or anthropological) had been conducted among these communities, not because they were deemed of little interest but because they maintained a reputation for insularity. As a corporate group, although gracious and hospitable, Benaadiris maintained strict boundaries between themselves and outsiders. The inner workings of their community, their conceptions about their relationship to other Somalis as well as their past remained largely inaccessible to those outside the various coastal lineages. Ironically, Benaadiris have produced a significant, if not necessarily vast, body of oral and written material that engages their sense of self as well as their relationship with the outside world. Unfortunately, for reasons known only to them, these texts and traditions were rarely shared with outsiders.⁶⁹ While ethnographers and historians recognized the importance of urban lineages they were unable to write about them except in the most general terms. This all changed with the war.

The packet my adviser was carrying contained a thick stack of photocopied manuscript pages written in Arabic. Not able to read Arabic, he pulled several from the envelope, pushed them across the table and asked, “Do these look important to you?” The random pages he’d given me included several genealogies, a brief clan history and a hagiographic episode for a Somali Sufi *shaykh* (Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr) who—until then—I hadn’t known existed. Important? It was a treasure trove!

Like thousands of other Somalis, after four years of war many Benaadiris were living as refugees in Kenya. Unlike other Somali refugees, however, they found themselves in a unique, if awkward, position. As a community of merchants, many displaced Benaadiris had local connections that could be used to ease their involuntary relocation. Refugees from Barawe, for example, received assistance from members of the long established Barawan community in Mombasa; descendants

⁶⁹ One of the few foreigners permitted access to Benaadiri oral and written traditions, especially genealogies, prior to the civil war of the 1990s was the Italian ethnologist Enrico Cerulli who acquired a number of important locally produced texts at the end of the First World War that were published in the late 1950s. Significantly, his access to these—as I argue in a subsequent chapter—was precipitated by the various social upheavals of the early twentieth century.

of merchants who had migrated to the Kenya coast over the last two hundred years.⁷⁰ Exiles from Mogadishu and Marka, while having few clan connections to the Kenya coast, frequently turned to long time business associates for help finding housing, employment and other forms of social assistance.

Ironically, this ability to integrate into their new surroundings caused many international relief agencies to question their status as Somalis and as refugees. Kenyan government and U.N. officials, foreign aid workers and Western diplomats involved in refugee affairs frequently suspected that Benaadiris were not "true" Somalis and as such were not entitled to the same relief benefits and resettlement opportunities as "real" refugees.⁷¹ To make matters worse, the various militias who occupied the Benaadir towns began to assert claims to these places in the name of the clans they represented. Benaadiris, they charged, were foreign interlopers who had no real right to call themselves Somalis.

The sudden willingness of Benaadiris in Mombasa to allow outsiders access to writings and oral traditions about their past was directly linked to the increasingly public debate over their identity as well as the anti-Benaadiri propaganda being spread by militia leaders occupying their old homes. The key to ensuring their piece of the international aid pie, Benaadiri elders reasoned, was to demonstrate that they were as Somali as their pastoral counterparts. One way of achieving this was a more public discourse regarding the nature of Benaadir identity. As a Western researcher I was considered by many a perfect conduit for disseminating their view of the Benaadir past. The emergence of such a discourse offered me not only the chance to examine rare manuscripts but more importantly, afforded a glimpse into how the oral and the written are blended to create Benaadiri history.

Hagiography as a source of social history

This work is as much a study of how Benaadiris have conceived of their past as it is about the past itself. As such, I have drawn on locally produced material whenever possible. This includes extensive use of

⁷⁰ Such connections even extended in to government circles; the local Member of Parliament for Mombasa, for instance, was a native Barawan who could always be counted on to look out for the interests of his compatriots.

⁷¹ Thankfully, both the Government of Kenya and the international community ultimately reversed their position and, in the end, Benaadiris began to receive the same consideration as other Somali refugees.

oral traditions and locally compiled written texts most of which are religious in nature.

Much of the data for this work are drawn from locally compiled Arabic language religious texts that date from the early twentieth century to the mid-1960s. These include anthologies of didactic Sufi poetry, genealogies, a collection of theological pamphlets, one local history and, most importantly, a number of hagiographies dedicated to local saints. A very few of these written texts can be found in published form. Most notable, are the genealogies and clan stories collected by Enrico Cerulli in the early 1920s and published as part of a three volume set of his collected writings on Somalia, *Somalia Scritti Vari Editi ed Inediti*.⁷² The majority of the texts used in this study, however, were collected by the author during fieldwork in 1994 or during subsequent research. A few, such as *Shaykh* Uways' hagiography *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, remain in print in cheap Indian editions that were purchased from local booksellers. Most were acquired through acquaintances who graciously allowed me to photocopy manuscripts and out of print books that were valued personal possessions.

The historical utility of most of these sources is self-evident. The present study, however, relies heavily on locally produced hagiographies (Ar. *manāqib*) a genre that has been only lightly used in studies of the recent Islamic past. Until comparatively recently, historians tended to raise an eyebrow at the mention of such texts which were regarded as miraculous flights of fancy rather than a part of the more "tangible" historical record. Such is the case with the Somali collections. A number of historians have mined these sources for the biographical information they contain about particular holy men but little else.⁷³ In fact, they are more than just laudatory collections of miracles. The literature produced by the *ṭuruq* was a genre that presented the sacred as a remedy for very real, contemporary secular ills and as such constitutes a valuable source of social history.

As a genre of literature, hagiography has come to be regarded as an important source of social commentary especially in relation to societies

⁷² This collection of Cerulli's writings appeared between 1957 and 1962. The articles and texts, however, were all originally published in various journal articles during the 1920s soon after their original collection.

⁷³ B.G. Martin, "Shaykh Zayla'i and the Nineteenth-Century Somali Qadiriya", in *The Shadow of Conquest*, Said S. Samatar, ed. (New Jersey: Red Sea Press, 1992) pp. 11–32; Said S. Samatar, "Sheikh Uways Muhammad of Baarawe, 1847–1909: Mystic and Reformer in East Africa, in *In the Shadow of Conquest*, pp. 48–74.

that viewed the world through a largely religious lens. In his book, *Sacred Biography*, Thomas Heffernan argues that hagiographies are texts that, almost by definition, have broad social relevance within the communities that create them and are, in fact, reflections of what its members regard as important. Within the Western Christian context, he notes, "the lives of the saints were sacred stories designed to teach the faithful to imitate actions which the community had decided were paradigmatic."⁷⁴ Such texts, "iterate a system of values with wide community acceptance," and "are designed to promote social cohesion."⁷⁵

Scholars have begun to make similar arguments with regard to Islamic miracle narratives. Michael Gilsenan and David Edwards have shown—in Egypt and Afghanistan respectively—that such narratives can tell us a great deal about the communities that produce them. As literature, they argue, miracles may be best approached as stories which "provide an avenue for understanding the cultural significance of Islam..." in a given society. In particular, miracle stories act as a popular "discursive vehicle" through which "a certain kind of ethos and worldview are made real and apparent."⁷⁶ In short, hagiographies, in addition to glorifying the life of a given saint, provide the outline for a community's moral universe.

The use of *manāqib* as panegyric literature within Islam dates to the tenth and eleventh century Maghreb, where the first biographies dedicated to ascetics and martyrs appeared. From this point onward in Islamic history the genre became a favorite vehicle of religious orders, especially Sufi *ṭuruq*, whose adepts wished to venerate their founders or more distinguished adherents using the written word. The founders of both the Qādiriyya and Aḥmadiyya orders, *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (d. 1166) and Aḥmad b. Idrīs (d. 1837) respectively, were memorialized by such compilations. This genre continued to remain a hallmark of Sufis through the nineteenth century. Thus it should come as no surprise that with the appearance of well-organized Sufi congregations in the Benaadir we also see the production of the first locally composed *manāqib*.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 5 emphasis mine.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁶ David Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) pp. 130, 132; Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt: An Essay in the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

⁷⁷ "Manakib" EI 2.

As Alessandro Gori notes, from the late nineteenth century there existed essentially two types of hagiography within the Somali tradition. The first was what he refers to as “genealogical hagiography,” that deals exclusively with the deeds of Somali clan ancestors. These narratives extol the miracles, piety and learning of largely legendary *shaykhs*, but at the same time link various clan genealogies to prestigious Arab ancestries. Thus, the hagiography of *Shaykh* Ishaaq, eponymous founder of the Ishaaq clan family, links the lineage to the Prophet’s cousin ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.⁷⁸ While that of *Shaykh* Darood links the clan family to a similarly prestigious southern Arabian line.⁷⁹ Nineteenth-century European travelers cited numerous examples of these kinds of hagiographic accounts, albeit generally in an oral rather than written form.⁸⁰ Written versions of such narratives only seem to appear following the emergence of the second type of collection identified by Gori, which he refers to as “brotherhood” hagiographies.⁸¹

The “brotherhood” *manāqib* represent the emergence of hagiography in Somalia as a written genre of literature and are directly linked to the local renaissance of the Qādiriyya and Aḥmadiyya Sufi orders during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While “genealogical” hagiographies were dedicated to demonstrating a connection between Somali clan ancestors and prestigious Arab-Islamic lineages, these collections were largely didactic in nature. The earliest known collections were dedicated to the first generation of scholar/saints who are credited with the Sufi revival. These served to preserve the memory of the saint while at the same time indoctrinating new initiates into the ways of the *ṭarīqa*. As such they were generally recited during *dhikr* sessions and annual ceremonies (known locally as *zīyāra*)⁸² held to mark the anniversary of the death of a particular saint.⁸³ Recitals also occurred on a much more

⁷⁸ Alessandro Gori, *Studi sulla letteratura agiografica Islamica Somala in lingua Araba*, (Firenze: Quardeni di Semitistica, Departmen of Linguistics, 2004) pp. xi, 26–28.

⁷⁹ Virginia Luling, “The Man in the Tree,” p. 333; Swayne, *Seventeen Trips in Somali-land*, pp. 20–22.

⁸⁰ Robecchi-Brichetti, 1899; Pantano, 1910; Cerulli, 1923.

⁸¹ Gori, *Studi Agiografica*, p. 28ff.

⁸² The term *zīyāra* literally means “visitation” and is used to refer to the pilgrimages to a saint’s place of burial. However, as many informants pointed out, the death anniversary of a prominent saint was commonly marked by ceeremonies in all major urban centers where a holy man had adherents. Thus *zīyāras* for popular saints such as *Shaykh* Uways or ‘Abd al-Raḥman Ṣūfī were commonly held in more than one location.

⁸³ Interviews Abukar Hamud Sokorow, May 20, 1994; Ahmad Nurein Bana Funzi, June 21, 1994; Said Hajj Umar, May 14, 1994.

informal basis, however, taking place during what B.W. Andrzejewski described as "ad hoc situations, round the evening camp fires in the interior," or "at parties in private houses in towns."⁸⁴ These collections were written exclusively in Arabic, which Somali urbanites considered the only proper language of public oratory; running translations into Somali were generally provided at all such events for the benefit of less educated adepts and casual observers.⁸⁵

Gori has rightly noted that one of the major functions of the *manāqib* was theological instruction. Thus, these works all cover certain common issues such as the absolute oneness of God (*Tawhīd*), the importance of following the *ẓāhir* (exoteric) rituals of the faith before attempting to master the *bāṭin* (the esoteric), and the necessity of Prophetic mediation in the search for *fanā'* or annihilation of the self within the divine. Andrzejewski, however, suggests that such oral performances provided the *manāqib* with a public audience that went far beyond the boundaries of an individual *ṭarīqa* and as a result stray from theological concerns into more pragmatic communal anxieties. He notes that while hagiographic stories were often heard during religious events they could often find their way "into ordinary conversation, especially when people discuss some difficult or unusual situation or reminisce about similar things in the past".⁸⁶ Andrzejewski's comments highlight two important aspects of the genre. First, it existed as a distinct form of oral literature, which was widely known and used in both rural and urban society. Second, and more importantly, he notes that individual stories could be used to illuminate particular social problems.

The social utility of various oral genres among the Somali has been amply demonstrated by numerous researchers. Andrzejewski and Said Samatar have demonstrated the various political and social uses of Somali oral poetry, while Lee Cassanelli has illustrated the place of historical tradition and the histories of individual clans in the definition of social relationships and identities among pastoral groups.⁸⁷ If, as Andrzejewski maintains, *manāqib* are simply another category of

⁸⁴ Andrzejewski, "The Veneration of Sufi Saints" p. 18.

⁸⁵ For the use of Arabic as a form of public oration during the late nineteenth century see Carletti, *I Problemi*, (Viterbo: Agnecosti, 1912) pp. 63–64.

⁸⁶ Andrzejewski op. cit.

⁸⁷ Andrzejewski and I.M. Lewis, *Somali Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Samatar, *Poetry and Somali Nationalism* and; Lee V. Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1600–1900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

oral literature within the Somali repertoire, then it can be argued that they, like other genres, also hold social meaning. Many of the issues confronted and remedied by the saints of the *manāqib* were physical threats to both urban and rural society: famine, physical insecurity and endemic illnesses, such as smallpox, which threatened entire villages. In other instances, the issues were more moral in character, addressing deep social concerns such as public morality and local tradition versus Islamic “orthodoxy”. As such, while not losing sight of the religious significance of these writings, the present work also approaches hagiography as a valuable social text.

The various *manāqib* collections used for this study vary greatly in terms of when they were written. Some were clearly composed during the time period under consideration (i.e. the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Qassim al-Barawī’s hagiography of *Shaykh* Uways, *Majmū‘a Karāmāt*, for instance, was compiled around 1917 while Moallim Nūr’s *Manāqib Shaykh Nūrayn Ahmad Sābr* dates to around 1925. Others, such as ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar’s works *Ǧala’ al-Aynayn* (1954) and *al-Ǧawhar al-Nafīs* (1964) and Abū Bakr b. Nūr Shay al-Bakrī’s *Manāqib Shams al-Dīn* (a manuscript copy of which dates to only 1991) are of much later vintage. Given that the subject of this book ends with the mid-1920s, the utility of these later works as a barometer of social concerns might, at first, seem problematic. In fact, for this very reason, I have used the latest of these, *Manāqib Shams al-Dīn* (a collection concerned with miracles associated with Qassim al-Barawī), sparingly. The collections compiled by Ibn ‘Umar, however, appear less problematic in this regard.

His earlier work, *Ǧala’ al-Aynayn* is, in fact, two separate compilations. The first half appears to be an edited version of Qassim al-Barawī’s original hagiography of *Shaykh* Uways under a new title, *Ins al-Anīs*, while the second half (*Rāḥat al-Qalb*) is an original collection of saintly stories about the life of *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Zayla’ī gathered by Ibn ‘Umar at the behest of his own teacher.⁸⁸ A close examination of all of his works reveal that many of the episodes recorded by him were either reported in earlier collections (i.e. al-Barawī’s *Majmū‘a*

⁸⁸ Al-Barawī’s, *Ins al-Anīs fī manāqib Shaykh Uways* as well as *Rāḥat al-Qalb al-mutwala’ fī manāqib al-shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Zayla’ī* can both be found in ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *Ǧala’ al-‘aynayn fī manāqib a-Shaykhayn al-Shaykh al-Walī Ḥājj Uways al-Qādirī wa’l-Shaykh al-Kāmal al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Zayla’ī*. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, 1954.)

Karāmāt), related to him by individuals who claimed to have witnessed such events,⁸⁹ or follow themes that are common to earlier texts. As such, while it is important to treat Ibn 'Umar's collections with care, their later compilation does not eliminate them as a potential source for understanding an earlier era. One could argue that Ibn 'Umar's collections are a reflection of the fact that many of the issued confronted by Benaadiris in the early part of the twentieth century continued to concern their descendants in later decades. In any case the apparent asymmetrical nature of the sources is not as problematic as it might first appear.

Oral sources

Oral traditions and histories also form an important part of the present study. Traditions were collected for this study during a year of fieldwork in Mombasa, Kenya in 1994. Interviews were conducted with a wide array of Benaadiris, young and old, men and women, from a wide variety of backgrounds including merchants, religious practitioners, former civil servants, and teachers. The one commonality shared by all was an interest in collecting and preserving the past. Like other Somali groups, Benaadiris preserve images of their past through an assortment of oral genres. These include origin traditions, family histories, stories of holy men and women, poetry and genealogies. Each of these plays a role in the construction of a collective memory that in turn helps define the community.⁹⁰

Space does not permit an in depth discussion of the pros and cons of oral sources. Oral and orally based documents are open to a variety of scholarly interpretations and questions regarding their validity have precipitated no end of debate over the last fifty years. Some, such as the noted historian Jan Vansina, argue that beneath the layers of metaphor there lies a 'kernel' of fact regarding the past. Others contend that given the evolutionary nature of traditions (and even personal history) they tell us much more about the present world view of people than they

⁸⁹ 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Umar carefully provides chains of transmission for every episode he relates. These frequently include only one or two persons.

⁹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the use of oral traditions in pastoral Somali society see Lee Cassanelli's *The Shaping of Somali Society*, "Appendix A: Comments on the Collection and Use of Somali Oral Sources," pp. 263–282.

do about their past.⁹¹ As Cassanelli argues, however, these two positions need not be mutually exclusive. “The very fact that traditions are reconstructions of the past,” he notes, “suggests, if anything, a concern to make the past real and meaningful.” That some traditions persist, granted in varied forms, while others fall by the wayside is largely a reflection of the continued importance of certain issues and the relative de-emphasizing or resolution of others.⁹²

In terms of the present work, I have tried to avoid using oral accounts as my sole evidence. Oral traditions and family histories have been used largely to provide texture and support to the larger narrative. I have tried to use oral accounts only where they substantiate data from the written texts or where they help provide a better understanding of the social contexts prevalent during the period under study.

⁹¹ John Johnson, *The Epic of Son-jara: A West African Tradition* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986) pp. 3–7.

⁹² Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 278ff.

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AS SOCIAL HISTORY

Why study Muslim religious discourse as a central theme of Somali and indeed East African social and cultural history? This is one question that may immediately present itself to the reader. For the townspeople of the Benaadir, the answer is quite simple: religious history *is* social history. By at least the late nineteenth century, the Benaadiri Somali concept of virtually every aspect of their society's past was synonymous with Islam. Town and clan origins, social and political structure were all viewed through a Muslim lens and deemed thoroughly Islamic in their roots. As such, in order to better appreciate the importance of religious practitioners as brokers of social discourse we need to first examine how Benaadiri townsmen of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries viewed their past through what was largely a religious prism.

Sources discussing the pre-colonial Benaadir are notoriously sparse and anecdotal at best. There are no known surviving written texts that date from before the late nineteenth century while Somali oral traditions tend to be episodic with no epic narratives that might provide lengthier accounts for analysis. That said, there exist a number of sources (written and oral) that provide insight into how nineteenth and twentieth century Benaadiris conceptualized their past.

Locally produced Arabic language texts that deal specifically with the Benaadir past come to us from two main sources. First is a set of brief genealogies and historical traditions collected by the Italian ethnologist Enrico Cerulli in the early 1920s.¹ Second is *Sharīf* 'Aydarūs b. 'Alī al-Naḍīr's *Bughyat al-Āmāl fī Tarīkh al-Ṣūmāl* published under the auspices of the Italian Trusteeship Authority in 1950. On the surface both sources appear very different. Cerulli's texts are little more than fragments never

¹ Gathered between the end of World War I and 1922, these texts were originally published in two separate articles. "Iscrizioni e Documenti Arabi per la Storia della Somalia," in *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, vol. XI, 1929, pp. 1–24 and; "Nouvi Documenti Arabi per la Storia della Somalia," in *Rendiconti R. Accademia dei Lincei, scienze morali*, (1927), pp. 392–410. Both were republished in volume I of Cerulli's three volume set of collected works on Somalia, *Somalia, Scritte vari editi ed inediti* (Rome: Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia, 1957), pp. 1–40.

running to more than a few paragraphs. ‘Aydarūs’ work, on the other hand, is a lengthy treatise that attempts to cover the Benaadir past in all of its complexity. However, both sources were produced at times when urban society felt its power and influence threatened;² and both sought to place the Benaadiri community within a historical framework that was self-consciously religious.

Acquired primarily from the leading families of Mogadishu (especially the Banū Qaḥṭān), Cerulli’s collection consists largely of genealogies found either in the backs of family Qur’āns and other religious texts or, occasionally, copied especially for his perusal. Other documents in the set are vignettes of critical moments in town history. The provision of these texts, as Cerulli noted in 1922, came at a time when groups such as the Banū Qaḥṭān found many of their traditional privileges under attack from both the colonial government and the leadership of the newly emergent Sufi orders. Their appearance seemed aimed above all at substantiating the claims to authority of certain families within the urban sphere.³ Appearing more than thirty years later, the *Bughyat al-Āmāl* shared a similar political provenance. Published in the period just before independence, ‘Aydarūs’ book was a response to nationalist rhetoric that sought to equate Somali ethnicity, and thus full membership in the nation, with nomadic-pastoral heritage. Utilizing written and, to a lesser extent, oral sources to compile what he called the first history of the Somali people, the *Sharīf* argued for the essential “Somaliness” of Benaadiris.⁴

Both these sources appear intended to serve rather crass political and social ends. Political agendas aside, they share an implicit understanding of Islam as the common core of Benaadiri history with religious values such as faith, piety and good works serving as the catalysts which shape their destiny. As texts produced by religious practitioners, it might be argued that such an underlying message is hardly surprising. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, this is not the only place where we can identify the perception of religion as a guiding and defining force of history. Oral traditions dating from the 1970s onward also

² First by colonial rule and later by incipient nationalism.

³ This topic will be explored in Chapter 3. See Cerulli, *Somalia, Vari Scritti* v. I pp. 19–20.

⁴ See Scott Reese, “Tales Which Persist on the Tongue: Arabic Literacy and the Definition of Communal Boundaries in *Sharīf* ‘Aydarūs’s *Bughyat al-āmāl*,” in *Sudanic Africa*, v. 9 (1998), pp. 1–17.

frequently cite faith in Islam as a deciding factor in the community's history. Traditions collected from both religious practitioners and non-practitioners relating to events such as the Baardheere "Jihad" and the Geledi wars of the nineteenth century commonly point to faith as determining society's fate.

The ultimate aim of this chapter is not to provide an exact chronology of Benaadiri history from the Middle Ages through the late nineteenth century. Nor does it seek to argue that Islam has defined the Benaadir past from then down to the present, although that may in fact be true. Rather, it demonstrates that, from the perspective of nineteenth and twentieth century Benaadiris, faith was perceived as a very real and all pervasive force that shaped the past and guided the community through times of peril. As such, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, it will come as little surprise that Benaadiris saw religion and faith as not only important historical forces that shaped the past but as ones that could mold their present as well.

The Ancient Somali Coast

The towns of the Benaadir (including Mogadishu, Marka and Barawe) constitute the northernmost extension of the East African trading coast bearing the distinction of being the only suitable anchorages for large ocean-going dhows north of the Lamu archipelago. As a result, they emerged as the largest and most important centers of trade north of Mombasa from the Middle Ages. The region's history as an entrepot of international trade, however, long predates its Islamic heyday which is traceable at least to the early Common Era. One of the earliest mentions of the coast occurs in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, an anonymously composed merchant's guide from the middle of the first century C.E. that refers to the entire region as the "Land of Punt," a country renowned for the production of frankincense, myrrh and other valuable commodities.⁵ The region appears again in Ptolemy's *Geography* composed around 150 C.E. Unfortunately, these ancient sources tell us almost nothing about the inhabitants of the region, concentrating

⁵ Anon. *Periplus Maris Erythraei: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by Lionel Casson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 16.

instead on describing the available trade goods as well as vague references to local political conditions.⁶

After Ptolemy, direct references to the Benaadir coast before the end of the first millennium C.E. are virtually non-existent. Specific mentions of Somalia or the Benaadir, in fact, do not reemerge until well into the second millennium in the works of early Arab geographers. The earliest of these was the eleventh century scholar Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Idrīsī who in his *Kitāb Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhtirāq al-Āfāq* referred to the land of the Somal, including its towns, as “a country of pagans who do not believe in anything.”⁷ Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī’s geographical dictionary, *Kitāb Muṣjam al-Buldān*, written around 1228, includes what is probably the earliest reference to the port of Mogadishu which he regards as the most important town on the East African coast, whose inhabitants were distinguished from the “Berber” nomads⁸ of the interior by their adherence to Islam and physical features that placed them “between Ethiopians and the Zanj.”⁹ Following Yāqūt, an increasing number of Arab geographers began to reference the importance of Mogadishu and other ports including Marka, Barawe and Zayla (located in the north) as important centers of trade. Al-Dimashqī, in the latter half of the thirteenth century for instance, referred to Mogadishu as one of the great mercantile city’s of Zanj (East Africa). He also made what may be the earliest reference to the northern commercial port of Zayla located near the mouth of the Red Sea. Similarly, the thirteenth century writer Ibn Sa‘īd remarked on the importance of Mogadishu, although he appears unfamiliar with its actual location, placing it south rather than north of Marka.¹⁰

While these references demonstrate the importance of the Benaadir towns in the world of Indian Ocean commerce, they tell us little about the people who inhabited them. The first detailed account of the region

⁶ Ali Hirsi, *The Arab Factor in Somali History: The Origins and The Development of Arab Enterprise and Cultural Influences in the Somali Peninsula*, Ph.D. dissertation UCLA, 1977, p. 73.

⁷ Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abdullāh al-Idrīsī, *Kitāb Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhtirāq al-Āfāq* cited in Hirsi, *The Arab Factor*, p. 118.

⁸ These, he notes, should not be confused with the Berbers of the Maghrib. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdullāh Yāqūt b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī al-Baghādī, *Muṣjam al-Buldān* (Beirut: Dar al-Ṣadr, 1957) v. 5, p. 173.

⁹ Idem.

¹⁰ Enrico Cerulli, “Noterelle Somale ad al-Dimashqi ed Ibn Arabi,” *Somalia Scritti Vari*, pp. 41–49; Neville Chittick, “Medieval Mogadishu” *Paideuma* v. 28, 1982, pp. 45–62.

comes to us only in the second quarter of the fourteenth century from the pen of the venerated Moroccan scholar and traveler, Ibn Battuta, who paid visits to Zayla and Mogadishu around 1331. His account, although brief, paints the most complete picture we have of elite life along the Benaadir coast during the Middle Ages.

His sojourn on the Somali coast began in the northern port of Zayla. He stayed only one night, however, telling his readership, that although it was a large town with a “great market,” Zayla was also distinguished by being “the most desolate and foulest smelling place in the known world.” This was due to the large quantity of fish in the market and the blood of numerous camels slaughtered daily on the local beach.¹¹ He found Mogadishu far more genial, urbane and bearable. The town he describes was one whose lifeblood was commerce but whose soul was Islam, and his account is one in which both trade and religion held center stage. He begins with a description of local commercial practice known as *abbanship*, a kind of local agency for foreign merchants:

...when a ship arrives at the anchorage, small local craft come out to meet it. In every one is a group of young men of the town each one carrying a covered dish of food. He offers it to one of the merchants on board and says ‘this is my guest...’ When the merchant disembarks he goes nowhere but to the home of his host...Although, a man who has frequented the place a good deal and has knowledge of its people may lodge where he wishes. When he lodges with his host, he [the host] sells his goods for him and buys on his behalf. He who buys from him at too low a price or sells to him without the presence of his host—that transaction is considered invalid.¹²

The city, Ibn Battuta points out, was not all business. When these agents approached him and were informed of his status as a *faqīh* or jurist rather than a trader, he notes, he was immediately declared the guest of the town’s *qāḍī*. The *qāḍī* was sent for and soon arrived followed by his students. Although, he does not dwell on the state of religious learning in the town, Ibn Battuta indicates that it hosted enough students to support its own students’ hostel, a sign that advanced religious education constituted more than a marginal aspect of local society.¹³

¹¹ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Rihlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* (Dār al-Turāth: Beirut, 1967), p. 245.

¹² Idem. The institution of *abban* continued through the nineteenth century, although according to local sources, by the twentieth it had declined dramatically in importance. Interview, Abukar Hamud Sokorow, May 20, 1994. For a discussion of the *abban* system in a pastoral setting see Lee V. Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, pp. 156–59.

¹³ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Rihla*, p. 245.

He then provides a detailed account of court ceremony and a short description of the town's ruler, a certain Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar who bore the title of "*Shaykh*." In addition to noting Abū Bakr's local origins and his position as absolute ruler, Ibn Battuta takes great care in describing the ceremony surrounding the communal Friday prayers in which the *Shaykh* played a central role and the place of the *qāḍī* as an important court advisor.¹⁴

The image pieced together from these fragmentary early sources is one in which Islamic society emerged as part of an evolutionary process. The region's commercial importance pre-dated the arrival of Islam by almost a thousand years. As late as the eleventh century C.E. the coastal inhabitants are described as *kuffār* or unbelievers and even in the thirteenth century it appears that Islam had only penetrated the elite ranks of urban society. It is not until Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's account in the fourteenth century that we see a wholly Muslim urban milieu appear in the foreign record. The picture drawn by Benaadiri written and oral sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, creates a far different impression. In the case of Mogadishu, the city's very roots are viewed as Muslim ones. While in the case of Barawe, although local traditions admit a pre-Islamic origin, the city's growth and economic success is attributed solely to the arrival of Islam. For Benaadiris, the creation of urban Somali culture was one cut entirely from Islamic cloth.

Foundations: Mogadishu and Barawe

Mogadishu is the city most often mentioned in early Arab accounts of the Benaadir. These reports imply an on-going process of Islamization from about the eleventh century. Local custom starting in the nineteenth century, however, sees this past very differently. These traditions, both oral and written, can hardly imagine the town's existence outside the realm of Islam. Indeed, the founding of the city itself is viewed as an undertaking by pious Muslims. A particularly vivid example of this belief is a passage from *Sharīf* ʿAydarūs' twentieth century history *Bughyat al-Āmāl* that details the founding of Hamarwayn, believed to be the town's oldest quarter.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 246–249.

It is said that there came in the ancient time a lame man riding a red she-camel. He arrived from the east, his wife leading the camel. When they reached a spot called al-Milmila—upon which there is now built the main reception garden opposite the Arba' Rukn mosque in the rear of the city—he stopped, got down from the back of the camel, and went to perform the duty of prayer since it was near the time of *maghrib* [sunset]. Before they have completed their ablutions there came upon them four persons from among the *ahl al-khayr* [an apparent reference to Sufis] and they greeted one another. They spoke for a short time until *maghrib* approached when they prayed together. The strangers then said to the owner of the she-camel and his wife, 'we are foreigners in this place and this night we would like to be your guests and shelter with you.'

With this, the man obliged them saying, 'We welcome you, although we ourselves are strangers like you in this place. But we preceded you to this stopping place and so it is incumbent upon me that I play the master of it for this night, so that you are my guest and you will shelter with me.' They replied that this was indeed what they had meant.

They then asked that he slaughter a sheep for them as a sign of his hospitality, but his wife replied, 'we have nothing other than this she-camel, and she is our transport.' But the guests replied, 'We are your guests and if what you have is only the she-camel, then slaughter her for our entertainment.' So, the crippled man obliged saying to his wife, 'without a doubt we should slaughter her generously for their enjoyment..' So they slaughtered her.

The guests gathered with the host and his wife and they ate until they were satisfied. Following the night prayer the guests asked him to spread out the she-camel's hide so that they might sleep upon it. So the man stood and spread out the hide in an isolated place [apart from his wife] for them to sleep. The guests retired, happy with what they had received from their host by way of generosity.

The host and his wife then slept in another place. He and his guests arose before dawn, made their ablutions and prayed the dawn prayer each in their own place. When the prayer was finished the man sent his wife saying to her, 'go look for the guests as I haven't heard their voices, and I believe they may have departed. Go see what they have done with the hide.' The woman went, but when she approached she did not see them, but the hide remained. As she drew near, she saw it spread out and filled with small red objects. She took part of it and carried it to her husband. She told him that the guest had left, but the hide was still there and full of these things.

When the husband saw what she had brought, he exclaimed 'This is red gold!' He stood and went to see the hide which was full of gold. He took it and it was this gold he used to establish the town...¹⁵

¹⁵ 'Aydarūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, pp. 32ff.

As the story indicates, not only were the founders Muslim, but it was their piety that made the founding of the town possible. The existence of Muslim progenitors is usually implied within the origin traditions of most Somali lineages. Only in urban myths do Islamic identity, ritual and piety take center stage. The origin traditions of the Darood, a nomadic clan family, for example, contend that their progenitor—*Shaykh* Darood—came from Arabia and was presumably Muslim. The imagery presented throughout that tale, however, is distinctly pre-Islamic. Rituals such as prayer, gender segregation and alms giving or hospitality are noticeably absent from the narrative. Instead, the eponymous *Shaykh* Darood mysteriously enters the story nested in the branches of a tree, refusing to come down until a local elder allows him to descend onto his own shoulders and promises to give his daughter in marriage to the tree-dwelling stranger. As the anthropologist Virginia Luling has noted, all of these symbols (the tree, descent onto the shoulders of an individual, and the introduction of an alien through marriage) mimic elements of pre-Islamic origin myths from throughout the region; although the story is reworked somewhat in order to accommodate modern Muslim sensibilities, no hint of Islamic ritual is present.¹⁶

Tales of urban origin, such as *Sharīf* ‘Aydarūs’, are decidedly different. In the case of Mogadishu, not only is Islam associated with the town from its beginning, it is the vehicle that actually brings it into existence. The town’s eventual founder is portrayed as a pious Muslim who meticulously observes the times for prayer, segregates his wife from the prying eyes of unrelated men, and when called upon, selflessly provides charity in the form of hospitality even at great personal cost to himself. He is rewarded for his piety by the mysterious travelers who act as instruments of God’s beneficence.

A commonly circulated story surrounding the foundation of Barawe, also contained in ‘Aydarūs’ *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, is far less prosaic, but still provides Islam with a prominent role.¹⁷ According to ‘Aydarūs’ narrative, Barawe was founded around the year 900 C.E. by an individual from the pastoral Garreh clan known as *Aw* ‘Alī.¹⁸ When he and his family arrived, the region was an untamed wilderness where the forest extended to the sea’s edge and herds of elephants wandered on the shore. Other

¹⁶ For a complete discussion of this phenomenon see, Virginia Luling, “Man in the Tree” *Proceedings of the Third Annual Somali Studies Congress*, 1989, pp. 330–334.

¹⁷ The following is from ‘Aydarūs’ *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, pp. 60ff.

¹⁸ *Aw* is a Somali honorific title roughly translatable as “the venerable”.

groups of pastoralists are said to have inhabited the area, but *Aw 'Alī* was the first to take up a sedentary lifestyle, bringing his family from further south to establish the town. Following their settlement others began to arrive, most notably the Tunni and Warday clans the latter belonging to a non-Somali ethnic group, the Oromo. The Warday, he notes significantly, were eventually expelled to present day Ethiopia because of their refusal to adopt the true faith, Islam.

True prosperity, 'Aydarūs writes, only arrived around the end of the fourteenth century with the arrival of immigrants from the Islamic "heartland". In that year, we are told, the first of the city's two leading lineages arrived from Arabia. These were the Bida who were followed a number of years later by another group who came to be known as the Hatimi. The former were a confederation of several lineages who trace their origins to southern Arabia while that latter were said to be refugees from Moorish Spain fleeing the *reconquista*.¹⁹ These two clans brought the two things for which Barawe was to become known: commercial savvy and religious learning.

The Bida, he notes, were the first people to claim ownership of the land bordering the sea. They did so, he writes through "the hide of a cow." When the Bida arrived, according to tradition, they asked the local Tunni leadership for permission to "purchase only as much land as may be covered by the hide of a single cow." When the Tunni agreed to this arrangement, the Bida proceeded to cut the hide into long strips using it to outline a large area to which they then laid claim as it was "covered" by a single hide.²⁰ While even the Bida admit that the actions of their ancestors might have been ethically suspect, they argue that the ends justified the means; for it was the Bida, as well as the Hatimi, who brought Islamic orthodoxy to the Barawan coast.

It was they, 'Aydarūs explains, who were responsible for most of the town's twenty mosques. More importantly, it was the Bida who brought "true" learning to the town. According to their traditions, proper *'ilm al-dīn* (lit. religious sciences) only came to Barawe in the seventeenth century under the auspices of their own great *shaykh*, Nūr Chande. The traditions hold, that Nūr Chande was initially educated in Barawe, but because the *'ulamā'* of his time were lacking in true learning he

¹⁹ A similar narrative of clan origins can be found in Vianello and Kassim, *Servants of the Sharia*, pp. 27–28.

²⁰ 'Aydarūs provides only a very cursory account of this tradition, the details given here were obtained from Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, interview, September 15, 1994.

set out in search of greater knowledge. He traveled to the Hadramaut region of southern Arabia, where he studied under the noted *ʿālim*, *Sayyid* ʿAbdullāh Ḥaddād. After a period of several years he returned to Barawe bringing with him the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* one of the six canonical collections of Hadith. As such, he became the spiritual father of all successive generations of Barawan *ʿulamāʾ* and the founder of “proper” learning in the city. Thus, in Barawan traditions, the initial subterfuge of the Bida was justified in that it eventually made the inhabitants better Muslims and more complete members of the *umma*.

Political Destiny, Tyranny and Protection of the Common Good

Faith is an ever present subtext within late nineteenth and twentieth century urban traditions and it is the actions of the pious that determine the cities’ political futures, defend them from internal tyranny and protect them from external aggression. One of the most illustrative of these concerns the rise of the Muzzafar *Shaykhs* or Sultans of Mogadishu featured in an anonymous manuscript fragment given to Cerulli by the Banū Qaḥṭān.²¹ Prior to the thirteenth century, according to this piece, Mogadishu was ruled by a council of elders drawn from the thirty-nine founding lineages of the town and headed by four of the city’s most respected notables known as the *ārbaʿa rukn*—literally the four pillars or sages. According to the text, this council was supplanted by the hereditary Muzaffar dynasty founded by a foreign merchant, Abū Bakr Fakhr al-Dīn, sometime during the thirteenth century with the assistance of the Banū Qaḥṭān, an important lineage of hereditary *ʿulamāʾ*. Abū Bakr, the tradition holds, was a stranger who “had no wealth of his own.”

He did, however, have a wealthy wife who was the daughter of *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Jabbār [a local notable]. One day, a poor man came to the Friday mosque reciting verses from the Qurʾān and asking for alms. But no one gave him anything. Then [two prominent members of the *ʿulamāʾ*] *Shaykh al-Hājj* Ḥusayn and *Shaykh al-Hājj* Mūsā arrived [and asked for alms on the man’s behalf]. But still, no one offered them anything and they were saddened by such stinginess. Abū Bakr Fakhr al-Dīn [saw this

²¹ Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, pp. 14–15. Uncharacteristically, Cerulli provides no provenance for this document or details regarding how it came into his possession.

and] promised the *Shaykhs* a hundred dirhams even though he didn't have them; they were happy with this and blessed him...²²

Fakhr al-Dīn went home distraught, as he had no way to give the *shaykhs* what he promised except by borrowing it from his wife, which would mean his utter humiliation. That night, however, divine providence lent a hand. While washing his master's clothes along the shoreline, one of Fakhr al-Dīn's slaves discovered a massive block of ambergris that his master was able to sell at an enormous profit. Literally overnight this boon, interpreted as a sign of God's pleasure with his act of generosity in the mosque, made Fakhr al-Dīn one of the wealthiest and most powerful individuals in town.

Eventually, according to the story, the elders of the town met and agreed to appoint Fakhr al-Dīn sultan based on his pious reputation as well as his wealth. Others among the local lineages objected, each arguing that they were "more deserving of [leadership] than this stranger. How is he to be sultan over we who have not had a sultan in three hundred years?" They then declared, "If we are to invest one [as sultan] it should be the Banū Qaḥṭān, who are more worthy of it as they are our *qāḍīs* and *khaṭībs*."²³ Other elements of the learned class agreed admonishing the elders that Fakhr al-Dīn was "a stranger," whom they should "abandon so that he does not bring pride upon us." The impasse was only broken when the Banū Qaḥṭān demurred from assuming open political power and threw their support behind Fakhr al-Dīn instead. In return they received a monopoly over the positions of *qāḍī* and *khaṭīb* (preacher in the Friday mosque) in perpetuity.²⁴

In terms of how Benaadiris viewed their history, the significance of this tradition is its demonstration of piety and faith as important elements in shaping the destiny of the urban sphere. While elements of the *ʿulamāʾ* certainly acted as important mediators in the affairs of the town, the piety of a single individual—Fakhr al-Dīn's selflessness—carried an equal amount of weight in shaping the town's political destiny.²⁵

²² Idem. All translations from Cerulli are based on the Arabic language texts provided by him.

²³ Idem.

²⁴ Idem.

²⁵ The importance of this and other traditions in legitimizing the Banū Qaḥṭān's own social authority are discussed in the following chapter.

Muslim Roots versus Arab Roots

Scholars since Cerulli—relying on traditions such as those recounted above, as well as other genealogical data—have maintained that the urban clans of the coast looked to Arab or Persian ancestors as the roots of their identity. Cerulli went so far as to claim:

Mogadishu in a period, fixed somewhere between 900 to 1250 Common Era, or for about 350 years, was an Arab commercial colony; the various Arab tribes having their own elected heads, however recognizing in religious and legal matters the hegemony of the tribe of Qaḥṭān b. Wā'il. A council of heads...called "the four sages" [*al-arba'a al-rukn*] probably presided over the confederation.

The ancient Arab tribes of this Mogadishu confederation, [formed] undoubtedly against Somali incursions, are preserved until now although having in the progress of time adopted Somali names.²⁶

Writing in the early 1920s, Cerulli provides an important snapshot of how many Benaadir clans conceptualized their origins, but only up to a point. Certain clans in both Mogadishu and Barawe laid claim to foreign origins. The Bida and Hatimi of Barawe both considered themselves of Arab stock while the Banū Qaḥṭān, Gudmane and Shanshiyya clans of Mogadishu laid claim to Arab as well as Persian (in the case of the Shanshiyya) beginnings. Many other urban clans, especially those known collectively as the Reer Hamar or Mogadishu clans, feature Somali ancestry as the touchstone of their identities. The Murshow, widely regarded as Mogadishu's oldest clan, regard themselves as an offshoot of the Ajuran, a pastoral group popularly believed to have ruled the southern interior during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁷ The Dubbarwayn claim descent from the Hawadle and Murusade clans while the commercially influential Bandawow are descended largely from various pastoral groups.²⁸

As with the story of Fakhr al-Dīn related above, piety and moral rectitude appear as more important than birth as a qualification for membership in the urban community. The role of piety in gaining

²⁶ Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, p. 39.

²⁷ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, pp. 100–101.

²⁸ Interview, Muhammad Hajji Dheere, July 2, 1994; 'Aydarūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, pp. 74–75. Current oral traditions contend that of the eight Bandawow sub-lineages five have pastoral origins. The Amīn Khalifow are descended from the Hawiye; Aḥmad Nūr from the Ishaq; Sheybow from the Ajuran; the Khurywe from the Bade Ade and the Antrow are descendants of the Ogaden.

acceptance in the urban sphere is amply demonstrated through the story of Baḥr Šūfī. Unlike most settlers along the coast, we are told, Baḥr Šūfī arrived in Mogadishu by accident rather than design after being shipwrecked at a rocky cliff near the town, called Abū Ḥusayn. Arriving destitute, both the Morshow and Dubbarwayn lineages refused to assist him on the grounds that although he claimed to be from Yemen they could not determine his true origins and thus his moral character was uncertain. Amīn Khalifow, founder of the Bandawow however, decided he liked the look of him and adopted him into his family. Proving himself an “upright” individual, Amīn Khalifow ultimately allowed him to solidify his place as a full member of the Bandawow lineage by marrying into his household.²⁹

The preeminence of faith and piety over ethnic origins in the establishment of town lineages and a place in urban society is yet again brought to the fore in the origin tales of the Reer *Shaykh* Mumin whose foundation stemmed from the social conscience of their founder rather than biological descent.³⁰ According to the lineage’s oral traditions, “in the ancient time the clans living in Mogadishu were few, but even these continually fought amongst themselves.” The smallest lineages suffered the most as a result of the constant strife and were on the verge of extinction. At the height of the crisis *Shaykh* Mumin ‘Abdullāhī, a wandering holy man, suddenly appeared in the town from somewhere in the interior and began preaching against the internecine conflicts.

As a symbol of his disapproval of clan based rivalries the *shaykh* consistently refused to reveal his own origins saying, “Whoever wishes to know my origins, should ask God.” In a more pragmatic vein he set about uniting six of the town’s smallest lineages (Reers Manyow, Hatimi, ‘Aydarūs, Drukhbow, Shams al-Dīn and the *Shaykh* Mumin) in an effort to protect them from the excesses of clan violence. These six became known as the Skashatow (literally “the cooperative”) and began to act as a social unit. The lineages celebrated weddings, births and funerals as one and presented a united political front against the depredations of larger lineages such as the Murshow and Bandawow. His mission complete the *shaykh* disappeared as mysteriously as he had

²⁹ Though it should be added, he was only permitted to marry an Ethiopian slave girl for, as the traditions point out, his origins were still unclear. Interview, Maryam Abd al-Rahman, August 18, 20, 1994.

³⁰ The following story was related by Dheere Hajji Mahad, October 4, 1994.

arrived. Some said in order to bring the same peace to the interior that he brought to the town.

Rags to Riches to Rags, again—Local history 1500–1880

As the above traditions show, by the nineteenth century Benaadiri observers believed that Islam and the faith played crucial roles in the formation and ascendancy of towns such as Mogadishu and Barawe as well as the foundation of their social structure. Equally important to local historiography, however, was the role of religion in seeing the faithful through times of trouble. At the time of Ibn Battuta's visit in 1331, the towns of the Benaadir appear to have been at their zenith. By 1800, the coastal settlements retained but a shadow of their former glory. Much of Mogadishu lay in ruins, while it and the other ports of the coast—once hubs of East African commerce—were reduced to minor backwaters of the Indian Ocean trade. This decline in local fortunes was precipitated by a combination of European intrusion into the Indian Ocean and pastoral expansion from the Somali interior into the urban sphere. From the perspective of nineteenth and twentieth century Benaadiris, however, town society was able to weather these threats through faith and perseverance.

The coast's initial decline coincided with the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century. Although they made no attempt to subject the Benaadir to their authority as they did further south, Portuguese adventurers did seek to remove the Somali ports as a source of serious commercial competition. In 1499, on his return voyage from India, Vasco da Gama shelled Mogadishu; then in 1507 a force led by Tristan da Cunha sacked and burned Barawe.³¹ Such raids, in and of themselves, probably did not lead to the direct decline of Benaadiri economic influence. However, Portuguese disruption of

³¹ A few secondary sources erroneously record da Cunha's raid as occurring in 1506, most notably R.B. Serjeant's *Portuguese Off the Southern Arabian Coast*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 14. A careful reading of da Cunha's itinerary reveals that while he departed Portugal in April, 1506 he did not enter the Indian Ocean until December of that year and did not begin his depredations of the coast north of Malindi until early the following year (1507). For a detailed summary of his expedition see R.S. Whiteway, *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India, 1497–1550* (New York, Augustus Kelley, 1969, first edition 1899), pp. 112–114 and; Justus Strandes, *The Portuguese in East Africa, Translated from the German by Jean F. Wallwork* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1961), pp. 74–79.

Indian Ocean sea-lanes and the shifting of commercial traffic further south to Malindi and Mombasa robbed the Somali coast of much of its economic importance.³² In the case of Mogadishu, economic decline was exacerbated by disruptions in its commercial hinterland. During the seventeenth century pastoralists of the Hawiye Abgal clan from the interior made inroads into both the commercial export economy and town life. By 1700, the Yaqub lineage of the Abgal had seized control of Shangani, the northernmost section of the city and established themselves as effective rulers over the entire town. The townspeople abandoned several outlying districts and those who remained found themselves clustered in the other principle quarter, Hamarwayn, and living under pastoral domination.³³

In the annals of the Benaadir, the three hundred years from 1500–1800 is viewed as a dark time of troubles. From the Benaadiri perspective it was also a time that was survived only through the piety of a few individuals whose spiritual strength preserved the social fabric in the face of tyranny and aggression. This is especially true in the traditions of Mogadishu where such evils were held in check only through the efforts of righteous individuals.

By the late nineteenth century, as we shall see, the Abgal of Shangani had become productive urban citizens. Oral traditions contend, however, that this was not always the case. During the first years of pastoral occupation, Abgal rule was characterized by innumerable injustices. The most vile of these, according to oral tradition, was the Abgal Imam's practice of forcing all new brides in the town to spend the first seven days of marriage in his bed. The good Muslims of Mogadishu were outraged by such evil but were too oppressed to resist. One pious man named Abū Aḥmad Alā' al-Dīn decided to take action. The father of seven daughters, he swore an oath not to allow any of them to submit to such immoral humiliation. Instead, when he married off the first of his offspring, he and his daughter plotted to foil the lecherous Imam. Abū Aḥmad and his daughter let it be known publicly that she had been wed. When news of the union reached the Abgal Imam he sent a slave to the house demanding the ruler's rights. Instead, Abū Aḥmad

³² William Puzo, Mogadishu, *Somalia: Geographic Aspects of Its Evolution, Population, Functions and Morphology*. Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1972, pp. 32–35; Cerulli, *Somalia, Vari Scritti* v. I, pp. 115–120; Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, p. 6.

³³ Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*; Edward Alpers, "Muqdisho in the Nineteenth Century: A Regional Perspective," *Journal of African History* v. 24 n. 4 (1983), 441–59.

beat the slave and sent him back to his master. Incensed, the Imam decided to go to the recalcitrant father's house personally to punish him and take the bride to his bed. When he entered the house, however, Abū Aḥmad and his kinsmen ambushed the ruler and killed him. This sparked a spontaneous uprising and the Abgal were expelled from the city. Abū Aḥmad then gathered the elders of the town and instructed them to build a wall so that the pastoralists might never again settle in the town unimpeded. While the Abgal were eventually allowed to return and even regained much of their political power, so the story continues, they never again attempted to terrorize the townspeople or act in ways contrary to the laws of God.³⁴

Religious faith similarly saved the town from foreign aggression. In a second incident a Banū Qaḥṭān elder, *Faqīh Shaykh Aḥmad b. Faqīh Abū Bakr b. Faqīh Abḥāj* miraculously saved the town from a fleet of British warships when all others had fled. An account of this, along with an enumeration of the privileges awarded to the clan as a result, was preserved in the back of a nineteenth century family Qurʾān:

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful... This is the history of the English who came upon the port of Mogadishu with seven ships on Sunday the 23rd of the month *Ḥumāda al-Ākhar*. [Upon their arrival] they killed seven men from among the people of the two towns³⁵ and remained for eleven days around the port. On the eleventh day—Wednesday, the fourth of *Rajab*—some of the ships sank and the others fled, by the strength of the one all powerful God, the blessedness of the prophets, the saints and the pious and the prayers of *Faqīh Shaykh Aḥmad b. Faqīh b. Abū Bakr b. Faqīh Abḥāj*.

When the unbelievers arrived in Mogadishu none had the strength to remain in the two towns [Hamarwayn and Shangani] and the *Sayyids*, the *Ashrāf* and the notables—Black, Red and White—all fled, and there remained only the people of *Faqīh Abḥāj* [*Āl Faqīh Abḥāj*—a term used to denote his entire lineage]. When the hand of the idolaters threatened, the people of the two towns came to *Faqīh Aḥmad* and said, “Oh, *Faqīh* we need worldly³⁶ help from you today.” *Inshallāh*, he replied, “God willing.” With that, the people said to *Faqīh Aḥmad*, “we will give you one

³⁴ Interview, Amina *Shaykh* Ali Nuur, October 6, 1994. As Cassanelli has pointed out, this is a common trope in the oral lore of the Benaadir. The fall of the Ajuran 200 years earlier is attributed to a similar display of royal hubris. Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, pp. 109–112.

³⁵ This refers to the two principal quarters of the town proper, Hamarwayn and Shangani.

³⁶ As a holy man it is presumed that he was normally only preoccupied with “other” worldly concerns.

thousand *tōbs* [pieces of cloth].” “This is ungrateful!” he said to them, [in addition] “my sons will enter into [perpetual] security. You will not place them, in our words, in *marta sooran*³⁷ and you will not ask any wealth from them other than supplications to [our ancestors].” The people of the two towns accepted this. The *Shaykh*... then requested that a raven be found and then he cast an auger. The raven was found and he attached a paper to its neck and sent it off. The bird landed on the mast of one of the ships and it sank... The people declared, “the ships were sunk by the strength of God and the prayers of *Shaykh Faqīh Aḥmad*!” This was in the Sunday year after 1112 A.H. [1700 C.E.].³⁸

The Dynamic Nineteenth Century—Economic Revival, Political Turbulence and Religion

Sources for the urban social history of the Benaadir coast before 1800 are fragmentary at best. The available written and oral traditions, however, indicate that—at least from the point of view of townsmen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—the era from 1500 to 1800 was one characterized by darkness and chaos. Much of the nineteenth century, on the other hand, is viewed as a time of great prosperity although not without its own periods of upheaval. This reversal in Benaadiri fortunes was brought about by certain economic circumstances which, as we shall see, contributed not only to the growth of the region but to its troubles as well.

The urban inhabitants of the Benaadir were traditionally regional middlemen. Urban merchants specialized in obtaining agricultural and pastoral goods (e.g. ghee, hides and livestock) from pastoral communities in the interior and exchanging these with Arab and Indian traders in the coastal ports for imported products (e.g. cloth, tobacco, and beads). Many also participated in a modest regional export trade dealing in cattle, ivory and ambergris among the harbors of the coast as far south as Zanzibar.³⁹ By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the flagging commercial fortunes of the coast began to revive due to two related factors: the rise of commercial agriculture in the

³⁷ Literally “feeding the guests” traditionally incumbent upon all lineage heads. While considered an honor in a busy port such as Mogadishu it was also considered economically burdensome.

³⁸ Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, p. 21.

³⁹ See Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir* and; Alpers “Muqdishu”, for a detailed discussion of these trading networks and their development through the nineteenth century.

Jubba-Shabeelle River valley and the gradual expansion of coastal commercial networks deeper into the Somali interior.

The emergence of commercial agriculture in southern Somalia was primarily the result of fortunate geography. The Benaadir was the only part of the East Africa coast with a fertile riverine plain in its immediate hinterland. As Lee Cassanelli points out, the coastal plain created by the Shabeelle River is only a few miles wide at any given point. However, it runs parallel to the coast for two hundred miles. Furthermore, at points, the river banks are higher than the surrounding plain, providing optimal conditions for irrigated agriculture.⁴⁰ This fertile near-hinterland probably provided the towns with a ready source of food since their inception. The transformation of this region into a commercial enterprise was the result of settlement of several pastoral groups in the early years of the nineteenth century. Each of these—the Tunni near Barawe, the Bimal in Marka and the Geledi in Afgoye just outside Mogadishu—established ownership rights to the fertile land, and within a short time made local cultivator groups their clients. By the mid-nineteenth century, pastoral entrepreneurs, using these client cultivators and imported slave labor from southern Ethiopia and elsewhere in East Africa, were producing large amounts of grain, sesame and later, cotton for commercial markets.⁴¹

Although the urban residents of the coastal towns did not at first own agricultural land in the interior, they benefited from agricultural growth through their domination of the ports. While pastoral entrepreneurs controlled the means of production in the interior, they lacked both the facilities and commercial contacts to export their goods to a wider market. They needed to maintain amicable relations with urban merchants who could provide access to shipping and commercial links as well as guarantee a favorable overseas market for their produce. This included not only agricultural goods such as grain and sesame but also more traditional pastoral products such as livestock, ghee and hides, which they began to export in increasing amounts throughout the western Indian Ocean.⁴²

Benaadiri merchants also broadened their economic horizons by extending their commercial interests deeper inland in search of luxury

⁴⁰ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 161.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁴² *Idem.*, Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*, pp. 110–154.

goods especially ivory and slaves. At the start of the nineteenth century the so-called “ivory-frontier” of Somalia extended only as far as the near-hinterland of the towns. Some traditions suggest that up until this time, elephants and other beasts roamed freely about the country “to the edge of the sea.”⁴³ Population movements, sedentarization and continued hunting, however, gradually forced merchants and hunters further inland in search of ivory, rhino horn and other valuable low bulk goods for Indian Ocean markets. During the second half of the century coastal traders penetrated deep into the interior. By 1890, Benaadiri merchant colonies could be found in every important town in the interior including Luuq, Baardheere and Buur Haqaba. These locations served not only as nodes for coastal business interests, but also as bases for even deeper commercial forays into the lands of the Boran and Arussi peoples in present day Ethiopia.⁴⁴ Coastal merchants prospered by controlling the flow of slaves and ivory toward the Benaadir towns, but also by speculating in the local grain and livestock markets of the interior.⁴⁵

The Baardheere Jihād and the Geledi Wars

The economic prosperity of the first half of the nineteenth century also precipitated a number of conflicts. The most notable of these were the Baardheere Jihād of the 1830s and '40s and the subsequent Geledi wars of expansion (c. 1846–1878), both of which were connected to the economic revival of the region. While each of these episodes occasioned violent conflict and social upheaval, from the Benaadiri point of view neither was solved by way of mere brute force. Instead, each was resolved in part through military confrontation but with the help of spiritual and religious power.

The conflict that has come to be known as the “Baardheere Jihād”⁴⁶ had its roots in the *jamā'a* or religious community founded in the village of the same name around 1819. Throughout the nineteenth century

⁴³ 'Aydarūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, pp. 58–59.

⁴⁴ Ugo Ferrandi, *Lugh: Emporio commerciale sul Giuba* (Roma: Soccita Geographica Italiana, 1903), p. 314.

⁴⁵ Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*, pp. 114–116, 126–139.

⁴⁶ This is a term coined by Lee Cassanelli in his book, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, and not one commonly used in the traditions of the Benaadir. Instead, such traditions more usually speak simply of a conflict between the community at Baardheere and the surrounding clans.

countless such communities emerged in rural Somalia. The *jamā'āt*, or “communities” as they came to be known generically, were religious settlements regarded as places of refuge for those seeking a life of quiet prayer and contemplation as well as individuals seeking social protection. Such communities were generally under the leadership of a *shaykh* or other religious practitioner and might or might not be affiliated with a particular Sufi order.⁴⁷ The community at Baardheere appears as one of the earliest of these. Its beginnings were modest, starting with only about a hundred followers. At the peak of its influence, around 1840, it may have had as many as 20,000 supporters drawn not only from individuals living as formal members of the *jamā'a* but including thousands of clansmen whose elders had pledged loyalty to the community's leadership.

The history of the Baardheere's origins and doctrinal affiliations remains murky. Most agree that it was founded during the second decade of the nineteenth century and that, over time, its leadership came to espouse a particularly puritanical brand of Islam. From this point, however, scholarly opinions, local traditions and contemporary European accounts quickly diverge. Oral traditions collected by Cassanelli in the 1970s held that the community was founded by *Shaykh* Ibrahīm Ḥasan Jeberow, an adherent of the Aḥmadiyya Sufi order. Citing locally compiled written sources, however, Ali Hersi and J.S. Trimingham contend that while *Shaykh* Ibrahīm founded the *jamā'a* it was in fact a Qādiriyya settlement.⁴⁸ Other traditions collected more recently contend that the founder was a *sharīf* or descendant of the Prophet named Ismaan⁴⁹ b. *Sharīf* Aḥmad who had no formal *ṭarīqa* affiliation.⁵⁰ Still other sources, mainly early European travelers, held that the *jamā'a* members were ideological adherents of the militant Wahhābī movement then ascendant in Arabia, who were by definition opponents of any and all mystical orders.⁵¹

⁴⁷ A more general discussion of *jamā'āt* can be found in Chapter 4.

⁴⁸ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 136; Hirsī, *The Arab Factor*, pp. 249–250; J.S. Trimingham *Islam in Ethiopia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). The work cited by both Hirsī and Trimingham is *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Rahman al-Najar's *al-Islām fī al-Ṣumāl* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Alā' li-shu'ūn al-Islamiyya, 1973, p. 69).

⁴⁹ The Somali form of 'Uthmān.

⁵⁰ Interview *Sharīf* Hashem Abd al-Naṣr, July 4, 1994.

⁵¹ William Christopher, “Extract from a Journal by Lieut. W. Christopher, commanding the H.C. Brig of War Tigris, on the E. Coast of Africa. Dated 8th May, 1843.” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 14 (1844), 76–103.

The uncertainty surrounding the community's affiliation may arise, in part, from the situation prevailing in the *jamā'a* at the end of the nineteenth century. According to at least one tradition from Baardheere itself, at the end of the 1800s the community was not affiliated with any one *ṭarīqa*. Instead, both the Aḥmadiyya and the Qādiriyya had adepts living as part of the community.⁵² So, for partisan reasons local sources might wish to privilege one party over the other in order to make a case for their own preeminence. In light of this lack of agreement among the sources, an attractive explanation is that offered by Cassanelli, who posits the notion that from its very beginning Baardheere was "an independent religious congregation with no specific *tariqa* [sic] ... affiliation."⁵³

While the *jamā'a* was undoubtedly militant during this period, their religious vilification appears to stem from the threat they posed to regional commerce rather than any actual demonstrated connection to Wahhābism. Early members of the *jamā'a* did reportedly advocate a number of puritanical beliefs current among many Muslim reformers during the early nineteenth century that mirrored certain tenets of Wahhābism. These included prohibitions against the consumption of tobacco, public dancing, intermingling of the sexes and saint veneration. Of even greater import was their alleged condemnation of the trade in elephant ivory on the grounds that it was an unclean animal. The British naval officer William Christopher cited these social restrictions as evidence of the community's affiliation with the Wahhābiyya. This line of argument would seem to receive a boost from a local tradition which holds that the founder of the *jamā'a*, *Sharīf* Ismaan, studied for nine years in Mecca before returning to Somalia to found the community in 1819, a chronology that would be consistent with Wahhābī domination of the holy city.⁵⁴ Numerous reformers of the nineteenth century, however, advocated reforms similar to those of the Baardheere *jamā'a* who were demonstrably *not* Wahhābiyya.⁵⁵ So, while *Sharīf* Ismaan and his followers may have been influenced by the teachings of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, there is no evidence to support the notion they were formal adherents of his theology.

Nevertheless, these and other criticisms of local Muslim practice eventually brought the *jamā'a* into conflict with its neighbors. By the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 137.

⁵⁴ O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, pp. 64 ff.

⁵⁵ Shehu Uthman dan Fodio, founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, for example.

mid-1830s the movement embarked on an attempt to expand its influence by force. Under the successive leadership of *Shaykh* ‘Alī Duure (d. 1836) and *Shaykh* Abiker Adan Dhuro (d. 1838 or 1839), the *jamā’a*—with the help of allied clansmen—sought to impose their order over all of southern Somalia. Successful expeditions were led as far east as Baydhabo and as far north as the trading center of Luuq. In addition, at least one raid was led by *Shaykh* Abiker against the non-Muslim Warday west of the Jubba River. The movement’s greatest triumph came in 1840 when a column attacked Barawe and forced its population to submit to their authority.⁵⁶ This, however, was to be their final victory.

The sack of Barawe galvanized resistance against *jamā’a* forces. The hub of this opposition were the Geledi, an agro-pastoral clan from Afgoye near Mogadishu. While the towns themselves provided funds and supplies to support the army, it was the Gobroon Sultan of the Geledi, Yūsuf Muḥammad, who organized and led an army composed of clans from across the inter-riverine plain to fight the Baardheere threat. In 1843, Sultan Yūsuf set off with a force said to eventually number as many as 40,000 men from virtually every clan living along the Shabeelle River. After regaining most of the territory won by the Jihadist army, the Sultan moved his force around Baardheere and laid siege. Within days the resistance of the defenders was broken and the town was burned. So many houses were destroyed, according to one tradition, that “the fires remained warm for a month.”⁵⁷

Local accounts of the Baardheere *jamā’a*’s defeat and its aftermath provide further examples of the importance of the faith as a fulcrum of history. In his book, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, Cassanelli provides an exhaustive account of the various political and economic motives behind armed resistance to the Baardheere expansion. Drawing on contemporary accounts, he argues the conquests of the *jamā’a* held the potential to severely damage the region’s growing commercial economy through the disruption of the lucrative trade in ivory and the occupation of valuable agricultural land where sesame and grain production were becoming an increasingly important part of the regional export economy. By the same token, the threat to the regional commercial

⁵⁶ Christopher, “Extract”, pp. 90–92; Charles Guillain, *Documents sur l’histoire la géographie elle commerce de l’Afrique orientale* v. 3, (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1856), pp. 36–37.

⁵⁷ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 138.

economy would have naturally been also viewed as a danger to the political and social security of not only the Geledi Sultan but to the towns as well. As a result, armed conflict was inevitable.⁵⁸ The economic foundations of the conflict, as laid out by Cassanelli, cannot be doubted. The way the war is remembered in local sources however, places the roots of the struggle on a rather different footing.

In the Geledi traditions recorded by Cassanelli neither of the above concerns comes to the fore. Instead, the entire conflict is remembered in terms of the faith. For the Geledi and their allies, the leaders of Baardheere are remembered as evil sorcerers responsible for oppressing the inhabitants of the Shabeelle region through black magic. The Geledi sultan, Yūsuf Muḥammad, on the other hand is portrayed as a righteous leader who through the use of both his martial and spiritual powers was able to free the people from repression. The Gobroon lineage from which Sultan Yūsuf descended were the traditional rulers of the Geledi whose power was based primarily on their reputation as religious practitioners who possessed mystical powers, especially *ta'dar* or "sacred magic".⁵⁹ Cassanelli's assertion that the rhetoric surrounding the conflict represented different "modes of spiritual outlook,"⁶⁰ is most likely correct.⁶¹ The presence of multiple discourses regarding the proper expression of Muslim faith, however, may not be the most revealing aspect of this rhetoric. Equally, if not more significant, is the tendency for the traditions to once again place weighty social matters within a religious context. It seems unlikely that the political and economic stakes over control of the Jubba-Shabeelle riverine region could have been lost on the participants. In addition, a large proportion of the *jamā'a's* allies were recent nomadic migrants from the Darood clan, also referred to in the sources as the Qablallah. As such, it would not be unreasonable to expect at least some traditions to speak of the conflict in terms of defending the clan's traditional territory and interests from interlopers. However, it was the religious nature of the struggle and the spiritual

⁵⁸ Ibid., 140–141.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 108.

⁶⁰ A phrase he borrows from J.S. Trimingham's work *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, p. 11, quoted in Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 145.

⁶¹ Idem. However, his conclusion that the perspective of Baardheere represented a view of Islam that was "more scholarly, pragmatic and international," while that of the Geledi was "more popular, mystically oriented and parochial," is questionable. Certainly, the leaders of the *jamā'a* were learned but so were many of the *'ulamā'* resident in the towns who were not necessarily sympathetic to the jihadists or their aims.

credentials of the competing sides that chroniclers of traditions chose to emphasize. Naturally, supporters of Baardheere present the war as a struggle against the enemies of religion as represented by the Geledi. As one letter from a Jihadist cleric to the people of Barawe declared, “Verily, our dead will go to Paradise while theirs will go to hell...”⁶² However, a tradition told by the Eelay—allies of the Geledi—places the conflict on a similarly spiritual footing saying:

The people of Buur Hakaba [sic] and Baydhabo feared the constant magic of the Baardheere diviner, who always foretold when an army was coming to attack the *Iberay* [“the robed ones” as the reformers are known by the upcountry people]. The people went to Afgooye [sic] to find one of the Gobroon practitioners. This man they brought to the Buur, and he told them to place some red earth on their camels’ backs and to sit backward on their camels.

When the diviner of Baardheere saw the camels, he said “those men are still in the region of red earth [near the Buur] and are riding in the other direction.” In this way the Iberay were deceived and defeated.⁶³

The point to be made is that although much of this conflict was fought over territory and clan boundaries, it was still often spoken of in essentially religious terms.

While the Geledi victors of the Baardheere war are praised as the defenders of the people and—by extension—the faith, it is instructive to examine how they were portrayed by their Benaadiri allies only one or two generations after the conflict. Following the defeat of the Baardheere *jamā’a*, the political fortunes of the Gobroon sultan, Yūsuf Muḥammad appeared ascendant. Military strength and perceived religio-magical abilities made the Gobroon the region’s single strongest power brokers by the mid-1840s. Flush with success after their victory over the *jamā’a*, the Geledi sultans sought to extend their influence over much of the middle Shabeelle River valley as well as the coast proper. Not surprisingly, this led to tensions with the agricultural and commercial people of the region and a very different reputation for the heroes of the Baardheere war.

The Gobroon lineage of the Geledi first appeared in southern Somalia sometime in the seventeenth century. According to traditions collected by Cassanelli and Luling, the line rose to political power

⁶² Guillain, Documents, v. 3, pp. 143–145, quoted from Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 145.

⁶³ Mustafa *Shaykh* Hasan, quoted from Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 144.

because of their ability to unite the continuously squabbling sub-clans of the Geledi through their role as mediators. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Gobroon had turned their religious prestige into political power and were recognized as the rulers of an increasingly centralized and wealthy state.⁶⁴ As already mentioned, much of their wealth was based on control of fertile riverine lands. Using slave labor obtained through the coastal ports the Geledi gradually shifted their economic base away from its traditional dependency on pastoralism and subsistence agriculture to one built largely on plantation agriculture and the production of cash crops such as grain, cotton and sesame.⁶⁵

This process encompassed most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By the time of the Baardheere troubles, the Geledi in Afgoye were enjoying unprecedented prosperity and influence. The power of the sultans continued to expand via local conquests and alliances. In addition, they had also begun to dominate local trade networks, enabling them to force all caravans bound for the interior to pass through their own markets where they could be taxed.⁶⁶ With their victory over Baardheere, the Geledi seemed poised to dominate all of southern Somalia. Geledi expansion was blocked, however, by both local rivals and their own lack of direct access to the sea. From the mid-1840s through the 1870s Sultan Yūsuf Muḥammad and his successors sought to use the political and military capital accrued as a result of the conflict with Baardheere to secure their expansionist agenda. The result instead was tension, political intrigue and—eventually—armed conflict.

Immediately following the Baardheere war, Yūsuf Muḥammad hoped to establish a Geledi controlled port at the point where the Shabeelle was closest to the coast known as Mungiya south of Marka. The Geledi already controlled most of the riverine agricultural settlements that far

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 133; Virginia Luling, *The Social Structure of Southern Somali Tribes* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1971), p. 108. See also her *Somali Sultanate* (London: Haan Publishing, 2003).

⁶⁵ Revoil, *Voyages au Cap des Aromates* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1880), p. 35; Christopher, "Extract" p. 91; Luigi Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somali e Benadir* (Milan: Carlo Aliprandi, 1899), p. 604, n. 2; J.L. Krapf, *Travels, researches and missionary labours during eighteen years' residence in eastern Africa* (London, 1860), p. 113. For a complete discussion of cash crop production in southern Somalia during the nineteenth century see, Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, especially chapter 5 and Edward Alpers, "Futa Benaadir: continuity and change in the traditional cotton textile industry of Southern Somalia, c. 1840–1890," in *Actes Colloque Entreprises et Entrepreneurs en Afrique IX et XX siècle*, Tome I (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1983), pp. 77–98.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 114–116.

south and the establishment of a port would enable them to export grain directly to overseas buyers without the expense of going through urban middlemen in Mogadishu or Marka.⁶⁷

Not surprisingly, this move evoked almost immediate resistance from agro-pastoral competitors as well as coastal merchants, both of whom saw their interests threatened by Geledi ambition. The result was a long war of attrition between the Geledi and their principal rivals the Bimal, a clan of pastoral entrepreneurs from the region surrounding Marka. The latter were supported by urban merchant communities from the length and breadth of the coast. Throughout the 1840s, the two sides fought a number of indecisive engagements ultimately ending in stalemate by the latter years of the decade.

By 1847, the upper hand seemed to lay with the Geledi. Hoping to consolidate his gains Sultan Yūsuf decided to eliminate the Bimal threat once and for all by forcing what he hoped would be a final decisive battle. In May 1848 he forced the Bimal into a major engagement at the village of Golwayn.⁶⁸ The details of the battle are sketchy, however; what is known is that shortly after the fighting began, both Sultan Yūsuf and his brother Mūsa lay dead and their forces were routed. With one blow, Geledi expansion towards the coast was ended.

While Sultan Yūsuf's death ended Geledi ambitions to dominate the coast, it did not end their control over territories in the interior. Yūsuf was succeeded by two of his sons, Aḥmad and Abiker.⁶⁹ Aḥmad made his seat at Afgoye the traditional center of power for the Gobroon. Abiker became Sultan of Buulo Merer, a village downstream from Afgoye and opposite Bimal territory at the extreme limit of what had become the Geledi sphere of influence. This move was apparently aimed at enabling the Gobroon to maintain tight control over the furthest reaches of their territory in the face of continued Bimal belligerence.⁷⁰

In addition to sustaining their territorial integrity, the Gobroon were also able to maintain much of their political influence in the urban centers of the coast, especially Mogadishu, although this seems to have been due more to their economic power than military strength.

⁶⁷ Christopher, "Extract," p. 90; Luling, *Social Structure*, pp. 177–78.

⁶⁸ This was, in fact, the second battle of Golwayn, as Geledi forces had defeated a well-armed force led by a Kisimaayo merchant, 'Alī Majerteen at the same site a year earlier.

⁶⁹ The Somali form of Abū Bakr.

⁷⁰ Luling, *Social Structure*, pp. 186–87.

The most celebrated example of their continued influence centers on the construction of a Zanzibari fortress or *garesa* in the Shangani district of the town. The Omani sultans of Zanzibar had laid nominal claim to the Benaadir coast since the early 1800s. Around 1870, the Zanzibari sultan, *Sayyid* Barghash, decided to make this claim a reality by establishing garrisons in each of the major towns for the purpose of assessing customs duty. The elders of Shangani, however, resisted the idea and the Sultan lacking either the military or economic means to force compliance looked to the Geledi Sultan, Aḥmad, for help. Eager to demonstrate his power over the townsmen, Sultan Aḥmad readily agreed, and threatened to order his allies along the river to boycott the Shangani market if the elders continued to obstruct Zanzibari plans. Faced with the complete disruption of the local grain trade, the elders realized the futility of their position and ended their resistance. The *garesa* was built.⁷¹

As it turned out, this was to be the apex of Geledi influence. In the decades following Golwayn, a pattern of indecisive raids and counter-raids characterized relations between the Geledi and their Bimal rivals. In 1878 this pattern culminated in what would turn out to be the last major encounter between the two clans. In that year, Sultan Aḥmad, like his father, decided to end the Bimal threat through a single decisive battle. He and his brother Abiker, mustered their forces and moved to meet the enemy near Marka at a village known as Agareen. Like their father's last battle thirty years before, the engagement turned into a rout, with the Bimal once again victorious at the end of the day. In a final ironic twist of fate, both Aḥmad and Abiker were killed in an uncanny replay of the deaths of their own father and uncle.⁷² With the battle of Agareen, Gobroon dominance was at an end.

The struggles with the Geledi in the mid-nineteenth century were clearly based on issues of military, economic and political supremacy and the desire of the sultans to be the dominant force in the region. These are not necessarily the terms in which urban traditions remember the struggle. While the political and military prowess of the Geledi are recalled, the real struggle according the Benaadiri traditions was more importantly one over the true faith.

⁷¹ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 175.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 188; Luling, *Social Structure*, p. 188.

As already seen, coastal traditions regarding the Baardheere Jihad recall that while the military skills of the Geledi were important in the defeat of the *jamā'a*, it was the *baraka* and sacred magic (*ta'dar*) of Sultan Yūsuf Muḥammad that were decisive in defeating the heretics. In this struggle, the Gobroon and their powers are portrayed as defenders of true Islam. As Gobroon ambitions began to threaten and intrude on the urban sphere after Baardheere's defeat, however, the sultans were themselves transformed into heretics who must be stopped at any cost.

In a hagiographic tradition concerning *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad for instance, the Gobroon are presented as evil magicians bent on harming the faithful rather than as defenders of the faith, even those who are guests in their own homes:

Shaykh Uways was in a village known as Aylguudh while some of his students were in a place called Seghaal. Both of these were in the territory of the Gobroon sultans. The one who witnessed this relates, "the Gobroon placed a spell on the *bunn*⁷³ offered to the students. But this was revealed to Uways in Aylguudh, ... even though there was a considerable distance between the two. He stood up and planted his staff in the ground, placing his turban upon it. He then traveled [miraculously] to Seghaal arriving just before the students were about to eat the *bunn*. Uways spit into the *bunn* and read something over it. As he did so, something flew from the midst of evil into the air and ran off ... and the *shaykh* said, 'eat of this, as now no danger may come to you.' He then returned to Aylguudh."⁷⁴

In this story, first recorded around 1917, the Gobroon are no longer perceived as the defenders of the faith or even as good Muslims. Instead, they appear as malevolent magicians bent on doing harm to the faithful.

In Mogadishu traditions, the final defeat of the Gobroon is presented in similarly religious terms. Before moving against the Bimal at Agareen, Sultan Aḥmad reputedly demanded the submission of Mogadishu. The town elders rejected his demand, telling him instead to "go see the Ashrāf of Marka." Stung by this rebuff, Sultan Aḥmad turned his attention to Marka, vowing to deal with the obstinate people of Mogadishu at a later date.

When his army approached Marka, a *sharīf* of the town said to the Bimal, 'Go to war against these people.' He then planted a watermelon seed at the site of the impending battle that bore fruit after only three hours.

⁷³ Roasted coffee beans offered to guests.

⁷⁴ Al-Barawī, *Ins al-Anīs*, pp. 14–15.

The two armies joined battle in earnest. But when the soldiers of the Geledi came upon the fruit they stopped to eat and in doing so fell into a state of enchantment. While they were immobilized, the Bimal soldiers approached and killed them where they sat. This is proof that while the Gobroon practiced magic, the power of Islam was stronger.⁷⁵

The thrust of these stories is clear. The downfall of the Gobroon was due to heresy and their devotion to what came to be defined as “magic” rather than to God. The real importance of such narratives, however, is the view from the urban sphere which automatically placed the conflict and its resolution within a religious framework. This might be expected from the first story which appears in one of the two canonical hagiographies of *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad al-Barawī, *Ins al-Anīs*. The second account, however, is a tradition commonly told by Benaadiris in non-religious settings.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been twofold. First, to draw an outline of Benaadiri history to just before the rise of the *turuq* in the late nineteenth century and the social crises that precipitated them. More importantly, however, it has sought to demonstrate the importance of religion in shaping both the Benaadiri sense of their past as well as their approach to social crises. Virtually all locally produced accounts of Benaadiri history discuss that past in terms of their faith. All issues, whether social, political or, economic were ultimately resolved through that devotion. From the founding of the towns to the defense of their autonomy and prosperity it was their belief in Islam that ultimately provided solutions to their various crises. It should therefore come as little surprise that in the midst of social crises arising in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Benaadiris should look for spiritual remedies to their very secular problems.

The collapse of the Geledi in 1878 was hardly the end of Benaadiri problems. In fact, it was only the beginning. From 1880 through the middle of the twentieth century, the urban Benaadiri elite came face to face with ever increasing social crises. Zanzibari and then European imperialism stripped the towns of their autonomy by the first decade of the twentieth century. Drought and rinderpest epidemics severely

⁷⁵ Interview, Muhammad Hajji Dheere, August 27, 1994.

crippled the commercial base they had painstakingly revived over the course of the 1800s. And finally, a sudden influx of Arab merchants and Indian moneylenders threatened to eliminate the Benaadir merchants from their centuries old position as middlemen in the Indian Ocean trade driving many into ruin and bankruptcy.

Curiously, it was at this exact moment that the Sufi *turuq* emerged as an organized, widespread and popular movement. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the leadership of the orders provided direction for those searching for solutions to the crises of the times. They provided a means for individuals to make sense of the problems suddenly facing society and to propose solutions that fit their own cosmological framework.

CHAPTER THREE

SAINTS, SCHOLARS AND THE ACQUISITION OF DISCURSIVE AUTHORITY

“In [times past] the people of Mogadishu wrote genealogies that diverged from their true ones. As the Prophet, praise be upon him, said ‘He who recites a genealogy other than his own is cursed!’”¹ Such are the concluding thoughts of *Mu‘allim* Makram b. ‘Umar, copyist, and probably editor, of a late nineteenth-century manuscript detailing the contributions of his clan, the Banū Qaḥṭān, to Mogadishu society from the time of the city’s founding. The Ibn ‘Umar manuscripts, as we saw in the last chapter, provide evidence of a religious paradigmatic view of the past in which faith and the religious leadership played a role in resolving social crises.

These texts, along with several contemporary genealogies, also detail the clan’s status as a founding lineage of the town and their claims to local religious authority. In the first, they were rewarded with the position of *qāḍī* as a result of their role in brokering the smooth ascension to power of the Muzzafar sultans in the thirteenth century. In the second, their position was reaffirmed by an episode in the early eighteenth century when a scion of the lineage—*Faqīh* Abḥāj—saved the city from an English invasion fleet through his piety and miraculous powers. So, while the texts tell us something about how Benaadiris viewed their past, they also provide insight into how particular groups or individuals saw their own place in society and might make use of religion to solidify their own social position.

Mu‘allim Makram’s texts, which can be dated only to the 1880s, are the earliest known written accounts of his clan’s traditions. As such, they likely tell us far more about the role members of the ‘*ulamā*’ sought to carve out for themselves in nineteenth and early twentieth century society than any realities of the thirteenth or eighteenth. The appearance of these manuscripts coincided with the various crises faced by Muslim East African society during the late 1800s. The larger focus

¹ Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, p. 15.

of this work, of course, is the role of local religious leaders, such as the Banū Qaḥṭān, as what we could refer to as “brokers of social discourse” and their ability to mediate these communal crises.² However, one question that is frequently ignored in the literature is exactly *how* does an individual, or group, lay claim to such authority? What are the tools typically used by religious practitioners (or their followers) to publicly assert their right to provide social guidance? How does an individual successfully assert discursive authority?

The Banū Qaḥṭān represented a hereditary ‘*ulamā*’ who, in their view, had guided society through periods of crisis in the past. Their right to continue to do so, the manuscripts argue, was based on their status as a founding lineage of the town, claims to a noble ‘Arab’ ancestry and historical precedent. They were not, however, the only members of the learned classes seeking to legitimize their voices. Among the most prominent members of the ‘*ulamā*’ in East Africa during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were those associated with the newly emergent Sufi orders, whose appearance coincided with the onset of the social and economic disruptions of the late nineteenth century. We shall return to the events of this period in Chapter 4. Here we want to consider the question of discursive authority and the ways in which spiritual leaders sought to legitimize their influence during these times of crisis.

Not surprisingly, we see the leaders of these new organizations laying claim to authoritative social discourse and the right to provide moral guidance to their fellow Muslims. This included not only eponymous leaders such as Uways and Zayla’ī but countless poets, preachers, hagiographers and theologians such as ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī and Qassim al-Barawī, who inhabited a more or less second tier of leadership responsible for spreading the order’s teachings to a mass audience. In some instances, these leaders could assert prestigious family backgrounds similar to those of the Banū Qaḥṭān. In most cases, however, they could not.

No religious leader could afford to completely ignore the place of descent in establishing one’s discursive credibility. As a result, lineage—variously defined—played at least some role in the discursive authority of every individual’s claims to religious authority. The leading figures of the *ṭuruq*, and their supporters, however, relied largely on other tools

² This topic will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 4.

to bolster their claims to discursive authority. For many, reputations for “learnedness” in the formal Islamic sciences constituted the basis of their authority. Others looked to what could be termed “transcendence” or their ability to commune with the “other world” as the foundation of their influence. In most cases, religious figures or their followers used a combination of all three to establish their discursive *bona fides*. This chapter looks at the various bases for an individual’s discursive authority and the different formulae that could be employed to enhance one’s social weight.³

Genealogy, Historical precedent and Corporate Authority

By the end of the nineteenth century the coastal towns were inhabited by a variety of kin groups or clans whose structure closely mirrored the segmented lineage organization of the pastoralists in the interior.⁴ Most of those with the deepest roots laid claim to some form of foreign origins. Some maintained exclusively foreign—Persian or Arab—roots. The Hatimi of Barawe, for example, claimed to be the descendants of refugees from al-Andalus or Islamic Spain, while the Bida claimed similar Arab origins although from Yemen. Similarly, the Shanshiyya of Mogadishu held their ancestors migrated to Africa from southern Iran. In addition, the towns were home to a variety of lineages known collectively as the Ashrāf who claimed descent from the Prophet Muḥammad via one of his two grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, and who boasted of more or less pure Arab ancestry. Other urban clans claimed origins that were more mixed. The Morshow clan of Mogadishu, for instance, argued descent from Arab immigrants *and* elements of the Ajuran, a pastoral clan that ruled much of southern Somalia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Bendawow, on the other hand, held that their sole progenitor was a certain Amīn Khalifow a member of the pastoral Hawiye clan who settled in Mogadishu alongside the Morshow around the time of the town’s founding. However, certain Bendawow

³ Another element of personal discursive authority that is frequently discussed in Religious Studies circles is that of charisma. While certainly a part of authority in the Somali case, I have opted not to include it as part of the following analysis, given that in the available texts it is enormously difficult to quantify. For an excellent discussion of charisma and authority see Jonathan Brockopp’s article “Theorizing Charismatic Authority in Early Islamic Law,” *Comparative Islamic Studies*, vol. 1 no. 2 (2005), pp. 129–158.

⁴ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 17.

sub-clans, in particular the Baḥr Šūfī, were the descendants of Arab immigrants who had been adopted by the larger clan group.⁵

Finally, there lived in each of the major towns groups who were far closer to their pastoral roots. The Abgal clan of the Hawiye inhabited and ruled the Shangani quarter of Mogadishu along with a number of smaller or newly arrived clan groups from around 1700. Barawe was similarly home to elements of the Tunni clan while parts of the Bimal lived in Marka. In all of these cases the pastoralists were entrepreneurs who had grown wealthy through the emerging commercial agriculture sector along the Jubba and Shabeelle Rivers during the first half of the nineteenth century, obtaining residence in the towns via their business connections with settled townsmen.⁶ Within this complicated social milieu, a multitude of voices sought to influence social discourse. Clan elders, wealthy merchants and religious figures all sought a voice in directing society. A prestigious noble lineage with distinguished religious credentials was seen as one path to authority.

One such lineage, as we have seen, was the Banū Qaḥṭān, who based their claims to social authority on both their status as a founding lineage of Mogadishu and their long-standing reputation for religious learning. By the early twentieth century, the clan—by this time more generally known by the very Somali name Reer Faqīh—served as the Chief *Qādīs* of Mogadishu, an office they claimed in perpetuity. However, their privileged position was far from unchallenged. Writing in 1922, the Italian ethnographer Enrico Cerulli observed that the clan was constantly forced to “tenaciously defend” their position “of moral and political influence” within urban society.⁷

Not surprisingly, colonial European historians played an important role in reinforcing such claims. During the early decades of the twentieth century, Italian officialdom sought to record the history of the coastal peoples as part of an effort to establish some kind of native administration. The Banū Qaḥṭān seem to have taken full advantage of this situation by supplying the young ethnologist Cerulli with a number of documents that purported to relate the early history of the city as well

⁵ Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*, 1996, 167; Cassanelli *Shaping of Somali Society*, 100–101.

⁶ Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*, 1996.

⁷ Although he does not indicate who was challenging their authority. Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, pp. 19–20.

as the origins of the clan proper.⁸ These texts—from which the anecdotes in Chapter 2 were drawn—attested to their status as a learned founding “Arab” lineage of the town, the longevity of their residency, and the fact that, historically, successive regimes had recognized their privileged position. The genealogies and traditions recorded in the manuscripts dovetailed nicely with contemporary Orientalist thinking related to the origins of coastal Muslim society. Namely, African societies were believed far too primitive to have developed such sophisticated commercial communities and their origins lay in the arrival of various Persian and Arab merchant communities who were the true founders of the towns.⁹

Basing his analysis on the Banū Qaḥṭān manuscripts, Cerulli, like most of his European contemporaries, concluded that the towns of the Somali coast were commercial colonies settled by Arab and Persian merchants around the tenth century. “These foreign merchants,” he wrote, “were...obliged to unite themselves politically against the nomadic (Somali) tribes that surrounded Makdishu [sic] on every side, and eventually against other invaders from the sea. Therefore a federation was concluded in the same Xth century A.D. [sic] and composed of thirty-nine clans: 12 from the Muqrī tribe [which included the Banū Qaḥṭān]; 12 from the Djida’ū tribe; six from the Akabī, six from the Isma’īlī and three from the Afīfī tribe.” It was from these original “settlers” he, and the Banū Qaḥṭān traditions, argued from which the contemporary town lineages emerged.¹⁰ Such claims of Arab settlement and Muslim origins are reminiscent of the Shirazi myths common among the Swahili further to the south.¹¹ In addition to establishing a political and social hierarchy as in the Swahili case, however, the Banū Qaḥṭān used descent and a historically prominent place in the urban sphere as important tools in maintaining their claim to religious discursive authority.

The Banū Qaḥṭān traced their origins to the clans of the Muqrī tribe who were part of the original Arabo-Persian “federation” that founded the town. Supposed proof of this assertion lay in several written genealogies they provided to Cerulli, at least one of which was specifically

⁸ Idem.

⁹ Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, *The Swahili* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) p. 1.

¹⁰ Enrico Cerulli, “Makdishu” in *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, p. 135.

¹¹ Nurse and Spear, *The Swahili*, p. 1.

commissioned for presentation to him.¹² The leaders of the Banū Qaḥṭān also provided Cerulli with two manuscript traditions, attesting not only to the longevity of their residency on the coast but to their political and social importance as well. The first relates the rise of the clan to social and political prominence as a result of their facility as communal mediators. The second details their further service to the city in a situation when they alone maintained a cool head and their faith in God, when all others fled.¹³

On one level these traditions, as related in Chapter 2, served to demonstrate the importance of piety and faith in the city's destiny. However, they also support the claims of the Banū Qaḥṭān to hereditary religious authority. In the first account the Banū Qaḥṭān earned their place as hereditary *qāḍīs* through brokering the ascendancy of the Muzzafar dynasty and avoiding social conflict. In the second, reaffirmation of their position resulted from public service. Both accounts, along with an enumeration of their privileges, were preserved and conveniently shown to Cerulli written in the back of a family Qur'ān in 1922 at the height of what he considers their struggle to maintain their public authority.

For the leaders of the Banū Qaḥṭān these episodes clearly substantiated their right to religious authority. Not only did they list their hereditary privileges they also contained chains of transmission that directly linked contemporary clan elders to the subject of the manuscripts. The lineage sought to further protect their position by *de facto* short-circuiting any effort to challenge their claim. As the addendum at the end of the manuscript cited earlier states, "As the Prophet, praise be upon him, said, 'He who recites a genealogy other than his own is cursed.'"¹⁴ The implications here seem clear—while other clans may have manipulated their hereditary lines, the Banū Qaḥṭān did not. So while others in the past may have taken liberties in making their claims to authority, those of the contemporary Banū Qaḥṭān were unassailable. Those who sought to challenge this risked divine wrath.

The Banū Qaḥṭān was certainly not the only group in the Benaadir to use the past and their lineage as a means for protecting their status. The Ashrāf,¹⁵ for example, used their noble descent in a similar man-

¹² Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, pp. 28–29.

¹³ Cf. Chapter 2.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁵ *Ashrāf* is one of two accepted plural forms of the title *Sharīf* literally "noble"

ner to protect social privilege. Where I would now like to turn our attention is the use of genealogy and heritage by individuals to assert personal discursive authority.

Authority and the Genealogy of the Individual

One common feature of the texts produced in the Benaadir from the early to mid-twentieth century is that nearly all begin by asserting the bases for the authority of the author or, in the case of sacred biographies, the subject of the work. While a number of elements form the basis of discursive authority, the first to be mentioned is almost invariably lineage. Genealogy, both familial and intellectual, lies at the heart of the Islamic intellectual tradition.¹⁶ In theory, of course, all members of the community of believers were equal before the eyes of God. In practice, however, at least a part of an individual's religious authority was connected to whom he could claim descent from, both within the Benaadiri community and the Islamic past. As we have already seen, the Banū Qaḥṭān as a group placed a heavy emphasis on their historical importance within Mogadishu, and an unbroken genealogy linking them to that past, as the basis for their position of social authority. For individuals, genealogy could be put to similar use in a variety of ways, providing them with a certain amount of social capital.

First, and foremost, an individual's lineage served to establish the depth of one's roots in the Benaadir. An eighteenth-century manuscript copy of the *Tanbih al-Shirazī* that Cerulli dates to 1768 contains a genealogy by the copyist, *Shaykh* ʿUmar b. ʿAlim al-Gudmane, claiming twenty-seven generations of residency in Mogadishu. A lithographed copy of the *Tafsir* [Quranic commentary] of Baghdādī belonging to *Shaykh* Ḥusayn b. Ṭabar of the Shanshiyya dated 1306 A.H. (1888–1889 C.E.) contained a copy of his lineage—attached prominently to the front piece of the book—that boasted twenty-three generations since the migration of his ancestor Musa Jidaʿtī b. Maymūn from the Arab

but used as a title for anyone claiming descent from the Prophet Muḥammad via his grandsons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. It also serves as one of a number of terms used to refer to such lineages. Others include *Shurafaʾ*, *Sāda* and *Ahl al-Bayt* literally “people of the house”. In local texts the terms *Sāda*, *Ahl al-Bayt* and *Ashraf* are used interchangeably and are the most commonly encountered. The term *Shurafaʾ*, on the other hand, is almost never seen and will not be used to refer to lineages of Prophetic descent.

¹⁶ See Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophet in the Age of al-Maʾmūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Middle East to the Horn of Africa. The Chief *Qādī* of Mogadishu, ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad of the Banū Qaḥṭān ordered one of his nephews to compile a complete genealogy to be presented to Cerulli that contained thirty generations of ancestors since their arrival in Mogadishu.¹⁷ Similarly, the genealogy for the Qādiriyya leader *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman “Ṣūfī” attached to his hagiography *Mawlid Ṣūfī*, compiled sometime around his death in 1905, lists twenty-five generations between the clan’s arrival from the Middle East and the birth of the great *Shaykh*.¹⁸

Most coastal genealogies continued beyond the progenitor of the lineage, linking it to the time of the Prophet and even to pre-Islamic Arabia. The Banū Qaḥṭān, for instance, linked themselves via Qaḥṭān b. Wa’il to not only the first generation of Islam but to the pre-Islamic kingdoms of Himyar and Hadramaut among the earliest regions to be brought within the Community of Believers in the seventh century.¹⁹ While making claims that were not quite so grandiose, the lineage of *Shaykh* Ṣūfī traced itself easily to the first generation of Islam and beyond.²⁰ Although, as the text notes, once a period of fifteen generations before the time of the Prophet is reached, the descent from Adam becomes “unclear and open to dispute.”²¹

Genealogies also served as a general indicator of the overall erudition of one’s family by including titles with the names of ancestors denoting their scholarly achievements such as *shaykh*, *faqīh*, *qādī*, or *mu‘allim* (teacher). An extreme example of this phenomenon is the 1768 genealogy of *Shaykh* ‘Umar b. ‘Alim, cited by Cerulli. According to *Shaykh* ‘Umar, all but two of his twenty-seven forefathers since their arrival in Mogadishu had been religious scholars, including the founder of the lineage another ‘Umar—*Faqīh* ‘Umar al-Nawawī, whom he describes as “a *shaykh* of the beauty of religion and the station of splendor.”²² While claims of scholarly achievement are no less prominent, most other detailed genealogies of urban *‘ulamā’* are somewhat more modest in their claims. The leader of the Banū Qaḥṭān claimed that roughly half of

¹⁷ Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, pp. 14ff. a copy of each of these complete genealogies can be found in Appendix 2.

¹⁸ Qassim al-Barawī, *Mawlid Ṣūfī*, p. 1. See Appendix 2 no. VIII.

¹⁹ Wilfred Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, pp. 18, 305–306.

²⁰ For a full account of this genealogy please see Appendix 2 no. IV.

²¹ Al-Barawī, *Mawlid Ṣūfī*, p. 1. See Appendix 2 no. VIII.

²² Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, p. 31. See Appendix 2, no. V.

his thirty progenitors were members of the *‘ulamā’*.²³ The genealogies of *Shaykh* Šūfī and his fellow clansman, Ḥusayn b. Ṭabar counted only a modest twelve religious scholars each out of twenty-five and twenty-three generations, respectively, since their arrival in Mogadishu.²⁴ The accuracy of these lists regarding the occupational specialization of a particular individual’s ancestors, given the fragmentary nature of the pre-colonial record, is uncertain and most likely unknowable. This, however, is beside the point. What is important is that individuals viewed this kind of validation as important in establishing their own scholarly credentials, or those of their subject. Significantly, two of these detailed genealogies—that of *Shaykh* ‘Umar b. ‘Alim and *Shaykh* Ḥusayn b. Ṭabar—were found attached to scholarly books or manuscripts almost as testimonials to the erudition of the owners in the absence of formal *ijāzas* authorizing them to transmit the texts.²⁵

For urbanites, at least, a solid genealogy rooted in the history of the town and traceable to the early Muslim community appears as an important element in establishing discursive authority. However, a number of the most important Sufi leaders and intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did not have access to prestigious urban genealogies. In such cases different genealogical “devices” had to be employed to achieve a similar effect. In the most problematic of these—*Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad—lineage was a question that was simply ignored. *Shaykh* Uways, according to oral traditions, was born into a servile client lineage of the Tunni clan known as the Goigal. This less than noble birth was the source of no little tension throughout his career.²⁶ Because of its low status, not only was lineage not a tool

²³ While most of the genealogies collected here clearly state who among their ancestors first emigrated to Mogadishu, the Banū Qaḥṭān list is more vague on this point. Cerulli, through some rough figuring of his own, considers them to have been resident for about thirty generations. See Appendix 2 no IV.

²⁴ The discrepancy in the number of generations counted by *Shaykh* Ḥusayn and *Shaykh* Šūfī, who were members of the same Shanshiyya lineage and near contemporaries, cannot be immediately accounted for. *Shaykh* Šūfī’s genealogy, recorded by Qassim al-Barawī, includes several individuals—immediate descendants of Musa Jida’ī—who are not included in *Shaykh* Ḥusayn’s account of his own family tree. In addition, *Shaykh* Šūfī’s genealogy counts Musa Jida’ī as two people and not one, as is the case in Ḥusayn b. Ṭabar’s list. The reason for the differences are unclear and need to be examined more carefully. See Appendix 2, nos. VI and VIII.

²⁵ Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, pp. 31–34.

²⁶ Interview, Nuur Shaykh bin Shaykh, September 15, 1994; Said Samatar, “Sheikh Uways Muhammad of Baraawe, 1847–1909,” in Samatar, ed., *In the Shadow of Conquest: Islam in Colonial Northeast Africa*, p. 52; I.M. Lewis, “The Gadabuursi Somali Script” in

that Uways or his followers could use to establish his authority, it, if not handled delicately, could conceivably damage his reputation. As a result, the literature surrounding *Shaykh* Uways relies far more on his spiritual transcendence and relationship with the divine as the basis for his authority.²⁷ However, the notion of descent was not wholly ignored. But a different kind of relationship is emphasized: geography rather than blood.

In the two major sacred biographies of Uways, his familial genealogy is never enumerated beyond his father, Muḥammad. In the earlier of the two, the name of his mother and her lineage—a common feature in most other hagiographies—is not even mentioned. In this earlier work entitled *Ins al-Anīs*, Uways' hagiographer *Shaykh* Qassim al-Barawī, roots the *Shaykh* in the religious lineage of Barawe rather than a familial one. "Barawe", the birth place of Uways, declared *Shaykh* Qassim was "a fountainhead of saints, the Sāda, the pious and the 'ulamā'..." This illustrious past included among others, *Shaykh* Nūr Chande, the somewhat mythical 'alim believed to have brought 'ilm or "learning" to Barawe, and Uways' contemporary 'Abd al-Azīz b. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Amawī, a famous scholar who made his career in Zanzibar.²⁸ The numerous "monuments and tombs," located in the town attested to the scholarly and sacred history of Barawe; a past that, as far as al-Barawī was concerned, was part and parcel of Uways' patrimony.

Not all *ṭuruq* leaders who maintained influence in the Benaadir, however, could claim even a tenuous link to the urban sphere. Several important figures among the coastal 'ulamā' were individuals from pastoral backgrounds, lineages that carried little clout in the urbane atmosphere of the town. Among these were two prominent Qādiriyya *Shaykhs* 'Abd al-Raḥman Zayla'ī (d. 1881) and 'Abdullāhī b. Mu'allim Yūsuf al-Quṭbī (d. 1951). These individuals, or their followers, utilized other prestigious genealogical tools to help bolster their discursive authority in the urban realm.

Shaykh Zayla'ī is credited as the first reviver of the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa* in Somalia during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As his hagiography points out, however, even though he was an influential figure in Mogadishu he was born to a pastoral clan in the Qolonqool region

Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, v. 21 no. 1/3 (1958) p. 139. The social consequences of the *Shaykh's* birth will be discussed in Chapter 5.

²⁷ See below.

²⁸ Qassim al-Barawī, *Ins al-Anīs*, p. 3.

of northern Somalia. Writing in the middle of the twentieth century, the *Shaykh's* hagiographer, 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, provided only the most cursory genealogy, instead concentrating on his *nisba* Zayla'ī, a term attached to an individual's name, which in this case indicates the geographic origin of his family:

Al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥman b. Aḥmad al-Zayla'ī, this *nisba* refers to Zayla, a village in Yemen famous, like Luhaiya, and from where many saints come. Among them are *Shaykh* Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Zayla'ī and *Shaykh* Ibrāhīm Abū Sayfayn al-Zayla'ī, and his origin is from them.²⁹

On one level, Ibn 'Umar's comment on the *Shaykh's* *nisba* is purely for clarification in order to differentiate the Zayla of *Shaykh* Zayla'ī's ancestry from the northern Somali port of the same name. The hagiographer's comment, however, has the added affect of turning Zayla'ī's otherwise unremarkable lineage into a far more religiously impressive one. Rather than being simply a well-educated *alim* from a pastoral clan he becomes one with connections to Arabia and saintly associations.³⁰

Shaykh 'Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī and the "Do it yourself" genealogy

Among the most innovative users of genealogy to establish intellectual authority was the *alim* 'Abdullāhī b. Mu'allim Yūsuf al-Quṭbī (1881–1951). *Shaykh* 'Abdullāhī hailed from a prominent lineage of religious practitioners known as the Shaykhal in the northern region of Qolonqool. His family was among the earliest proponents of the Sufi revival of the later nineteenth century and enthusiastic followers of 'Abd al-Raḥman Zayla'ī. An elder brother, Abū Bakr, became head of the order upon Zayla'ī's death in the early 1880s. 'Abdullāhī's fame, however, came not as a *ṭarīqa* leader but through his role as a polemicist and Qādiriyya propagandist. From the second decade of the twentieth century, al-Quṭbī produced a series of tracts devoted largely to defending various Qādirī practices, promoting his version of orthoprax belief and launching scathing attacks against their opponents, in particular

²⁹ 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, p. 1.

³⁰ In an odd twist, the Italian philologist Alessandro Gori has argued that while Zayla'ī's hagiographers attribute Yemeni roots to the saint, according to Yemeni writings, the al-Zayla'ī were immigrants from the coast of Africa. See Alessandro Gori "Una Famiglia Santa tra Africa Orientale e Yemen Gli Zayla'ī nell 'tabaqat' di Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Latīf al-Sharjī," in *Revista degli Studi Orientali* v. 72, 1998, pp. 41–60.

the leader of the Ṣālihiyya Sufi order, *Sayyid* Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh Ḥasan. His most prominent work was a collection of five pamphlets published in 1920 as the *Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*, or the *Blessed Collection*.³¹ In pieces with such inflammatory titles as “The Grave Warning of the Butcher’s Knife for the Barking Dogs,” and “Victory of the Believers over the Rebellious Heretics with the Wisdom of Religion,” al-Quṭbī defended various Qādiriyya practices such as *ziyārat*, the notion of saintly and prophetic intercession (*tawassul*) and the permissibility of dancing during *dhikr*. At the same time he attacked the Ṣālihiyya as dangerous extremists who were no better than other heretics like the Kharijīs, the Mʿutazalīs and, worst of all, the Wahhābīs.³² The collection opens, however, with a pamphlet entitled, “The Sweetest Fruits,” a lengthy discussion of al-Quṭbī’s familial and intellectual genealogies.³³

Shaykh ʿAbdullāhī was a well-known figure throughout Somalia during the first half of the twentieth century. He seems to have divided his time between the family spiritual stronghold in Qolonqool and the coastal town of Barawe, where he benefited from the patronage of a number of prominent merchant families.³⁴ His credibility as a scholar in the urban Benaadir, however, was somewhat handicapped by his lineage.³⁵ Al-Quṭbī was a member of a Shaykhal clan. *Shaykhal* is a rather generic term given to a variety of largely unrelated lineages found throughout the Somali interior and believed to be the descendants of various itinerant Arab Muslim holy men who had come to spread the faith in the early centuries of Islam. Most of these lineages were integrated over time into larger pastoral clans while maintaining their character

³¹ Though published around 1920, the individual pamphlets were written at various times, beginning in 1907 with “The Victory of the Believers.”

³² The arguments put forward by al-Quṭbī and their importance will be discussed in Chapter 6. For a concise summary of this work see B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, pp. 199–201 and Cerulli “Note sul movimento Musulmano nella Somalia” in *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, pp. 197–98.

³³ *Aḥla al-thamar fī nish al-shaykh al-akbar wa al-jawhar al-āzghar ʿUmar bin ʿUmar al-maʿrūf bi aw Quṭb*, In ʿAbdullāhī b. Muʿallim Yūsuf al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*, pp. 7–26, pp. 27–35 also relate al-Quṭbī’s spiritual genealogy.

³⁴ Interview Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 15, 1994.

³⁵ His personal behavior may also have been something of a factor. According to oral traditions from Barawe, *Shaykh* ʿAbdullāhī was regarded as, at best, difficult. He was known for extreme fits of temper and, on more than one occasion, publicly abusing members of the Aḥmadiyya Sufi order who had links to the Ṣālihiyya, whom he blamed for the murder of *Shaykh* Uways al-Qādirī in 1909. Interview, Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 17, 1994.

as hereditary religious practitioners.³⁶ *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī’s particular lineage was descended from his eponymous ancestor *Shaykh* ‘Umar b. ‘Umar “*aw* Quṭb”,³⁷ yet another legendary lineage head about whom little is known. While being a descendant of *aw* Quṭb may have been prestigious in its own right in the distant interior around Qolonqool, it seems to have carried less weight in the more urbane settings of coastal society. As a result, a sizeable part of al-Quṭbī’s *Majmū’a* is dedicated to an examination of his *al-silsilat al-nasab* or genealogical tree.

In what he describes as “the small treatise” (*al-ṛisalat al-saghirat*) entitled *Aḥla al-thamar fi nisb al-shaykh al-akbar wa al-jawhar al-āghzar ‘Umar bin ‘Umar al-ma’rūf bi aw Quṭb*,³⁸ which is nearly twenty pages in length, al-Quṭbī lays out a detailed genealogical history of his family. The venerated ‘Umar b. ‘Umar *Aw* Quṭb, however, is not the center of attention. Instead, the primary focus of the *Aḥla al-Thamar* is the lineage’s connection to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, the companion of the Prophet and first *Khalīfa* or leader of the Muslim community following the latter’s death. The *Aḥla al-Thamar* is no simple list of names stretching from al-Quṭbī back to the companion of the Prophet. What makes al-Quṭbī’s genealogy particularly fascinating are not simply his claims but the meticulousness with which he marshals evidence and arguments to support them. Using other genealogical texts, didactic poetry as well as moral and legal reasoning, al-Quṭbī draws a complex argument in support of his descent that bears looking at in detail.

The *Shaykh* begins his discussion by establishing for his readers the sources used in putting together the genealogy of his ancestor, something no other published genealogy from the Benaadir does:

This is a short and bountiful treatise pertaining to my ancestor, *shaykh* of the ages [*al-shaykh al-‘ajal*] and most perfect pole [*quṭb al-aknāl*] ‘Umar b. ‘Umar famed as *Aw* Quṭb, God be pleased with him. It was collected from *Ṣirāj al-waqād ala silsila nisb al-shaykh ‘Umar Ṣiyād* who is also my ancestor [and son of *Aw* Quṭb], and compiled by *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Ḥājī ‘Alī, a well-known revealed saint. He organized this genealogy

³⁶ I.M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis, Popular Islam in a Clan-Based Society* (Lawrenceville New Jersey: Red Sea Press, 1998), pp. 17–18.

³⁷ Lit. “master of the pole”. A combination of a Somali title of respect “*aw*” meaning more or less “noble” with the Arabic “*quṭb*” meaning pole or axis, a Sufi term used to describe an individual who has attained perfection and the highest stage of enlightenment and as a result the head of the saintly hierarchy. See EI2 “al-Ḳuṭb”.

³⁸ “The sweetest fruits in the genealogy of the great *shaykh* and richest gem ‘Umar ibn ‘Umar known as *aw*-Quṭb.” In al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū’a al-Mubāraka*, pp. 7–26.

based on [the recollections of]...the revered *Shaykh*, noble sage and compiler between logic and tradition ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Alī al-Quṭbī al-Qādirī better known as *Hājj Jama‘a*...And I have verified it through the poem *Al al-ṣiddīq* written by *Shaykh* Ibrāhīm al-‘Ubaydi al-Mālikī, God’s grace be upon him...as well as from sources other than these two that were opened to me through God...³⁹

The work is then broken down into four sections. The first is concerned with the substantiation of genealogy as a religious duty; the second provides the chain of transmission to al-Quṭbī’s progenitor *Aw* Quṭb while; the third and fourth sections concern themselves entirely with substantiating his link to the lineage of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.

The practice of genealogy, *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī points out in the first segment, is an essential part of a well-run Muslim society due to its role in answering questions of paternity and inheritance. Therefore, it is a serious business and a religious duty equal to opposing heretics and avoiding forbidden practices such as consuming alcohol and fornication. Falsifying a genealogy, he later points out in excruciating detail, could have grave consequences for all concerned, thus his desire to set the record straight.

Lineage itself is something immutable and ultimately indisputable. “The Lawgiver,” [i.e. God] he notes, establishes the order of one’s lineage. Falsifying one’s genealogy, as he refers to it, is to commit a “lie of perception” [*yukadhdhib al-hiss*].⁴⁰ It is this offence that has been committed against his own lineage by individuals in the past. “...Some of our *shaykhs*, reliable in wisdom in our land...trace [our] lineage in our time [1916]...in fewer than thirty generations.” For a noble Muslim lineage, many of which seek to extend their heritage literally to Adam, this is an unconscionably short genealogy. Anyone who advocates this bastardized list, *Shaykh* al-Quṭbī declared was “a liar,” guilty of “a lie of perception!”⁴¹ He, on the other hand, had managed to establish his family’s true heritage. “I have established and transmitted this lineage—uninterrupted—from the tribes of the past until now and it will bring clarity to those who may trace their ancestry to it...” Furthermore, the genealogy established by *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī was “total knowledge that insures...agreement against [this] lie...”⁴²

³⁹ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*, pp. 7–8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴² Idem.

Using didactic poems drawn from “manuscripts” and “virtuous people,” *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī proceeds to make the case that not only did his lineage extend further than a mere thirty generations but that it descended from some of the noblest early Islamic and even pre-Islamic roots. Like the noble Benaadiri genealogies cited earlier, the *Shaykh*’s immediate claims to a noble scholarly lineage were substantiated by the titles of his most recent ancestors. Thus of the ten generations that al-Quṭbī counts between himself and *Aw* Quṭb nine are accorded the title of either “*mu‘allim*” (teacher) or “*shaykh*”, used in early twentieth-century Somali writings generally to denote a learned *‘alim*. The heart of his claim, however, rests not on simple genealogical titles but on a number of praise poems (Ar. *madḥi*) dedicated to ‘Umar al-Ziyād the son of *Aw* Quṭb and a revered saint in his own right. ‘Umar al-Ziyād appears as the first Somali born member of his line. His link to the first caliph of the Muslim community is based on a cryptic line from an apparently anonymous praise poem,

*son of [Dhu] ‘Umar increases the descendants of our Lord
And the second half of the pair was Abū Bakr.*⁴³

For al-Quṭbī, this is the crux of his argument, and he breaks the poem here in order to editorialize, stating that this line “mean[s], our father *Shaykh* ‘Umar Ziyād was among the progeny of Abū Bakr.”⁴⁴ A poem by another *‘alim*, *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Ḥājī ‘Alī is then used to fill out the remainder of the genealogy.

As with his father, door of all bliss
He was named as Quṭb al-Dīn ‘Umar b. al-‘Umar
His virtues in excellence were without number
And with him the assistance of wisdom [of those] living and in the earth [*al-ḥaḥr*]
And what differentiates the beloveds save their bodies?
Their souls are like the soul, a body without blemish
And the father of this al-‘Umar, he was Muḥammad⁴⁵
He followed from Yūnus b. al-Yūsuf al-Ṣaḥr
And who after him came his father Muḥammad
And after him Tayn b. al-Fakhr al-Bir⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ al-Qutbi’s prose genealogy refers to this individual as “Shams”.

⁴⁶ al-Qutbi’s prose genealogy includes an Aḥmad in between these two generations.

Muḥammad Ibrāhīm there is found with him knowledge
 And his father Ismaʿīl ʿIssa b. al-Bakr
 And after him came ʿUmar Yaḳūbiḥī
 And after him Yahyah b. al-ʿIssa al-Baḥr
 And their Marra and Zakariyya and from Taym
 His father Jamāl al-Dīn b. Our Muḥammad al-Baḍr
 And ʿAbd Allah then the highest Muḥammad
 Son of the beneficent worshipper [the] root Abū Bakr⁴⁷

Using this poem as a base, al-Quṭbī splices it together with his own line of descent from ʿUmar Ziyād and *Aw* Quṭb to create a complete genealogy that links him directly to Abū Bakr. By laying claim to “Bakrian” descent *Shaykh* ʿAbdullāhī was able to extend his known heritage from a paltry thirty generations to a weighty fifty-six. By using the accepted genealogical tree of Abū Bakr himself, the Quṭbī’s became the descendants of the luminaries of the early Muslim community as well as establishing an at least tenuous claim to descent from the pre-Islamic prophets including Noah, Idrīs, Ismaʿīl and ultimately Abraham.

Al-Quṭbī seemed well aware of the fact that elements of the Somali scholarly community might find his claims difficult to accept. Anticipating such criticism the *Shaykh* once again editorializes. Breaking his recitation of the poem, he notes that the composer, *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Qādir, found fault with anyone “who said that *Sayyidna* Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq was not an ancestor of,” ʿUmar Ziyād by incorporating the line:

*And whoever says Abū Bakr was without [male] offspring
 He oversteps the bounds of unbelief and is slain by it!*⁴⁸

Following the exposition of his proposed genealogy, al-Quṭbī devotes a lengthy passage to Prophetic injunctions against falsifying one’s lineage and the consequences for doing so. He tells his reader that “the conformity to this genealogy is protected from falsification and deception due to the frightening consequences [promised] in the Hadith [of the Prophet].” Drawing largely on the *Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukharī*, one of the major canonical collections of Hadith, al-Quṭbī quotes a number of sayings of the Prophet that clearly spell out what awaits those who are less than honest about their parentage.

⁴⁷ Although this appears to serve as the basis of *Shaykh* ʿAbdullāhī’s complete prose genealogy on p. 12 of the text, there are a number of discrepancies between the two. Most importantly the fact that al-Quṭbī’s genealogy contains more names between ʿUmar Ziyād and Abū Bakr than *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Qādir’s poem. Ibid., pp. 9–10.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

[The Prophet] said, 'who links himself to other than his fathers, he is cursed.' (And in Bukharī) 'any man who lays claim to other than his father, he learns from it nothing but unbelief.' (And he also relates), 'whoever claims other than his father, heaven is forbidden to him.' (and also) 'He brings upon himself the curse of God and all the angels...'⁴⁹

By forthrightly citing the consequences awaiting those who falsify their family trees, al-Quṭbī appears ideally situated to repel critics who might accuse him of forgery. As an educated *ʿalim* why would he, as well as other compilers, knowingly call divine wrath upon themselves in the hereafter?

But, why the lineage of Abū Bakr? Al-Quṭbī's motives for claiming Bakrian descent may have been aimed at the acquisition of a contemporary as well as a historical caché. The figure of Abū Bakr was certainly an important one in the early history of the faith. He was among the earliest and most vocal supporters of the Prophet Muḥammad. Upon the latter's death in 632 CE, Abū Bakr was elected by consultative counsel as the first leader of the Muslim community (Ar. *Khalīfa*). As the first of what are referred to as the four "rightly guided" *Khalīfas* (Ar. *al-Rashidūn*), he oversaw the initial development of the community of believers after the Prophet's death as well as the first great expansion of the faith outside Arabia in the form of the "Arab" conquests. Thus association with his descendants carried with it a certain amount of prestige and authority. Of equal importance, however, was the fact that those who descended from Abū Bakr could also claim a relatively close familial—albeit circuitous—connection with the Prophet through the maternal line. As al-Quṭbī rightly points out, Abū Bakr was related to the Prophet "from the side of his mother's ancestors," Salma "Um Khayr" bt. Sakhr.⁵⁰ Such a connection, in effect, allowed al-Quṭbī to claim a kind of Sharīfian descent. Although in coastal East Africa descent from the Prophet was traditionally defined only through the paternal line via his grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, claiming such status via the family of Abū Bakr was not unheard of in the Muslim world at large. In particular, the Bakriyya of Egypt were a particularly important, and for al-Quṭbī, contemporary example.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, following the restoration of Ottoman control over Egypt, the family of *Shaykh* Muḥammad Abū

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

al-Su'ud al-Bakrī—a poor and relatively unknown family of Bakrian origin—was given hereditary control over the office of *naqīb al-ashrāf* literally chief of the Ashrāf. The reason for the appointment was largely in order to punish the office's previous occupant, *Shaykh* Khalīl al-Bakrī who had collaborated with the forces of the French occupation (1798–1803). This political revenge gave *Shaykh* Muḥammad's family control over the distribution of the proceeds from *waqf* properties (religious endowments) established for the benefit of Ashrāf families as well as control over registrations in the *daftar al-ashrāf*, thus giving them literal control over who was and who was not recognized as a descendant of the Prophet in Egypt. In the highly centralized atmosphere of Khedival Egypt, the descendants of Muḥammad Abū al-Su'ud also managed to have themselves declared *shaykh mashayikh al-turuq al-ṣūfiyya* (loosely translated as Chief *Shaykh* of the Sufi orders) in 1892. Control over both the Ashrāf and the Sufi orders placed the Abū Su'ud al-Bakrī among the most powerful religious leaders in Egypt, certainly on par with the head of al-Azhar University in Cairo.⁵¹

Living in self-imposed exile in Egypt from c. 1912–1920 and resident for most of that time at al-Azhar, al-Qutbī was clearly aware of their existence and their success. Quoting the professional Egyptian genealogist and historian *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Salām al-Laḳānī, *Shaykh* 'Abdullāhī declares “every genealogy today has entered into error except the lineage of the Egyptian al-Bakrī and it is completely correct!”⁵² It is unlikely that al-Qutbī had any illusions of emulating the political success of the Egyptian al-Bakrīs. The Benaadir, even under the Italians, did not possess a centralized state of sufficient power to raise a single family to such a height from nothing. However, the al-Bakrīs of Egypt could certainly provide al-Qutbī of Somalia with something else: inspiration. While not his only source of legitimacy, descent from Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq provided al-Qutbī with an aura of prestige and influence far weightier than would have normally been warranted by a small up-country *shaykh*.

⁵¹ Fred De Jong, *Turuq and Turuq linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt: A Historical Study in Organizational Dimensions of Islamic Mysticism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978) p. 32; De Jong, “Al-Mahsāyikh al-Bakriyya and the transformation of their authority in 19th-Century Egypt,” in *Sufi Orders in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Egypt and the Middle East, Collected Studies* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000) pp. 81–98.

⁵² Al-Qutbi, *al-Majmū'a al-Mubarakā*, p. 18.

The Islamic Sciences, Learning and Discursive Authority

An individual's lineage could contribute greatly towards establishing his place as one authorized to play a role in urban discourse. However, it was neither the only nor most important pillar serving to uphold a person's discursive authority. Of equal, if not greater, importance was an *'alim's* reputation for formal mastery of the Islamic sciences. The Benaadiri *'ulamā'* claim a long history of higher Islamic learning that dates to at least the fourteenth century. Describing his visit to Mogadishu around 1331, the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta informed his readers that one of the most important local personalities was the *qāḍī*. According to Ibn Battuta the *qāḍī* was an influential adviser of the town's ruler, but in addition to his place at court, he also maintained a retinue of students. Many of these, we are told, lived in a *dar al-ṭalaba* (lit. student abode) indicating that by the fourteenth century the town sustained a tradition of Islamic education well beyond the basic Quranic level.⁵³ During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, education continued to occupy an important part of urban life and was a central element in a given religious leader's ability to claim authority.

Islamic education in the towns of the Benaadir consisted of two levels. The first was that of the Quranic school (Somali, *dugsi*) that made up the primary level of education. The principal goal of this level of education was to provide children with a working knowledge of the Qur'ān, generally achieved through rote memorization. Such schools also provided instruction in basic Arabic grammar, and elementary numeracy. Thus, if a child completed the entire course of instruction, he/she could be expected to have a working knowledge of classical Arabic as well as basic arithmetic.⁵⁴

The towns of the Benaadir also prided themselves on their reputation for advanced study of the Islamic sciences. In many parts of the Muslim world, from the early centuries of the faith to the present, students seeking advanced religious learning did so through the

⁵³ Ibn Battuta, *Rihlat Ibn Battuta*, p. 245.

⁵⁴ Instruction in Arabic grammar and arithmetic represents an important difference between *dugsis* in urban centers and those in rural areas where such instruction was absent and the focus was solely on the memorization of the Quran. Interviewees explained the difference as one of need. As merchant communities skills in Arabic, the *lingua franca* of western Indian Ocean trade, and basic accounting skills were vital to their economic well-being. Interviews, Abukar Hamud Sokorow, May 20, 25, 1994 and; Muhammad Shaykh Uways September 27, 1994.

institution of the *madrassa*, which has frequently been referred to as “the Muslim institution of learning *par excellence*.”⁵⁵ The *madrassa* appears to have evolved out of more informal *ḥalqa* or learning circles associated with various mosques in urban centers throughout Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran and much of Central Asia from about the eleventh century. These teaching mosques, as they became known, often combined with nearby hostels called *khans* that housed students from places other than the town in which they were studying. By the tenth century these two initially independent institutions amalgamated first into what is known as the *mosque-khan* complex and then into the more formalized *madrassa*.⁵⁶ *Madrasas* were concerned primarily with instructing students in the religious sciences, especially jurisprudence (*fiqh*), grammar (*nawha*), rhetoric and morphology (*sarf*) although certain elements of *adab* or the arts such as poetry and astronomy might also be taught. They ranged in size from small establishments with only a few teachers and students to vast complexes with hundreds of full and part-time students and dozens of professors.⁵⁷ The costs of establishing and maintaining a *madrassa*, including the salaries for staff and sometimes stipends for students, were covered through the creation of *awqāf* (sing. *waqf*), religious endowments, by wealthy individuals.⁵⁸

Although, in theory, all urban children were schooled in the formal atmosphere of the *dugsi*, the institutionalized *madrassa* was relatively unknown in pre-colonial and colonial Somalia. Higher education, sources are quick to point out, was hardly absent from Benaadiri urban centers. Rather than enrolling in formal schools, however, the more promising students might move on in the pursuit of ‘ilm (e.g. jurisprudence, rhetoric, Arabic grammar and theology) under the tutelage of individual scholars with reputations for expertise in particular subjects. Classes were held either in the home of the individual *shaykh* or local mosques rather than in purpose built schools.⁵⁹ The times of meetings,

⁵⁵ Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges*, p. 27.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 28–29.

⁵⁷ Idem.

⁵⁸ See also Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) pp. 3–94.

⁵⁹ This seems to have been a fairly common practice not only in southern Somalia but throughout the western Indian Ocean. References to this type of instruction occur throughout the Somali hagiographies and are set both in the Benaadir (Qassim al-Barawī in the house of *Shaykh Ṣūfī*) and Arabia (Uways and Zayla‘ī in Mecca); other examples of this same type can be found in accounts of the Hadramaut, see ‘Abdullāh BāKathīr’s *Rihlat al-ashwāq al-qawiyya ilā mawāṭin al-sāda al-‘Alawiyya* (N.P.: Maṭba‘at Dār ilhyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1985).

as well as the subjects to be studied, were arranged between each group of students and the *‘alim* conducting the lessons. Exceptional students or the sons of prominent *‘ulamā* also frequently benefitted from a kind of individual tuition with a student becoming the protégé of a prominent scholar.⁶⁰ As in most of the Islamic world, whom one studied with was as important as what one studied in terms of an individual’s discursive authority. The transmission of religious knowledge was founded on complex chains of transmission from teacher to student that ideally stretched back ultimately to the author of a given work or a noted scholarly figure. This type of intellectual genealogy was no less important for Benaadiri religious figures.

Works detailing the intellectual genealogies and credentials of Muslim scholars have been a common feature of Islamic literature since at least the ninth century. Historically, the most common form of Islamic intellectual biography is the *ṭabaqāt*, or biographical dictionary. Dedicated to the accomplishments of religious scholars, as well as other professionals such as poets, physicians and even bureaucrats, *ṭabaqāt* provided a durable if frequently spare—and usually posthumous—record of Muslim intellectual and political authority.⁶¹ Usually devoted to scholars of a given discipline (e.g. Hadith, jurisprudence, Sufism) from a particular geographic location (e.g. city, region or state), *ṭabaqāt* entries provided their audience with a concise survey of an individual’s parentage, intellectual lineage and areas of expertise. While providing only the barest outline of an individual’s life, such biographies enabled the reader to place the subject of a given entry within a particular tradition that established not only his (and more rarely her) intellectual authority but that of his students and followers.

In contrast, the biographical dictionary, for reasons unknown, was not a genre that achieved great currency in Muslim East Africa.⁶² However, this does not mean that Muslim religious intellectuals were

⁶⁰ Interviews Abukar Hamud Sokorow May 25, 1994 and Said Umar May 15, 1994; ‘Aydarūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl* introduction; These same methods of instruction in East Africa are documented extensively in Randall Pouwels, *Horn and Crescent* and *Shaykh Abdallah Salih Farsy, The Shaf’i ulama of East Africa, ca. 1830–1970: A hagiographic account*, Randall Pouwells ed. (Madison: African Studies Program University of Wisconsin Madison, 1989).

⁶¹ R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History, A Framework for inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) revised ed. pp. 187–191.

⁶² The single exception to this is *Shaykh Abdallah Salih Farsy’s* well-known biographical dictionary *The Shaf’i ulama of East Africa*, a relatively recent work composed in Swahili that details the intellectual lives of prominent nineteenth and twentieth-century Muslim scholars primarily from the Swahili coast.

any less interested in establishing their authority at least partly through their own claims to learnedness; they simply did so via genres other than *ṭabaqāt*. Intellectual achievements and accomplishments in the religious sciences form at least part of virtually every religious figure's spiritual resume. The hagiographies, biographies and autobiographies of Benaadiri religious leaders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries go to great lengths to detail the educational and intellectual accomplishments of their subjects. In some instances, intellectual biographies formed a specific part of a larger work while in others the academic achievements of the subject were woven throughout the narrative of an individual's life and were left to be pieced together by the reader. In either case, specific claims to "learning" formed a part of every religious figure's discursive authority.

A reputation for learning was based primarily on two elements, the disciplines and books one had mastered and the scholars under whom they had been studied. One of the most detailed accounts of an individual's learned credentials are those attributed to 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Abdullāh al-Shanshī "*Shaykh Ṣūfī*" (d. 1905), in his sacred biography titled simply *Mawlid Ṣūfī*. Born into a family of religious practitioners, *Shaykh Ṣūfī* was one of the most popular figures among the Mogadishu Qādiriyya. Posthumously, he became best remembered for his devotion to the recognized 'founder' of the Somali Qādiriyya, *Shaykh Uways* b. Muḥammad and as a composer of *madīḥ* or praise poetry.⁶³ His biographer and son-in-law *Shaykh Qassim al-Barawī*, writing shortly after Ṣūfī's death, chose instead to emphasize his father-in-law's erudition rather than his abilities as a poet.

Shaykh Ṣūfī's sacred biography begins with an account of his genealogy as well as signs of his nascent sainthood, which, like most saintly figures, pre-date his birth. Much of the text, however, focuses on his education and reputation for erudition. From a tender age he became devoted to the study of the religious sciences. "When he was seven years old he embarked on divine service with the tools of religious duty. He sat before his *Shaykh*, *Shaykh* Muḥammad Nūr Dinlow, who

⁶³ Almost all of the literature attributed to *Shaykh Ṣūfī* is in the form of poetry praising either the Prophet Muḥammad, 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī the founder of the Qādiriyya, or his own mentor *Shaykh Uways*. Examples of his work can be found in numerous Somali Sufi works published through out the twentieth century. The most significant is a slim volume dedicated to his poetry entitled *Dalīl al-'Ibād fī Sabīl al-Rashād* edited by his grandson Muḥammad Ṣūfī b. Qassim al-Barawī n.d.

was his refuge.”⁶⁴ The precocious Ṣūfī “took the knowledge of every *Shaykh* to his memory,” including that of the most famed scholar of the age *Shaykh* Abū Bakr al-Muḥdhār with whom he studied law and morphology.⁶⁵ So promising was the youth, his father made him promise to forswear other occupations and devote himself entirely to the pursuit of knowledge. As a result, “he turned to the sciences with the rising of its beautiful sun and the moon of his knowledge and star of his wisdom and reputation.”⁶⁶ Even when he turned his attention to the study of *taṣawwuf*—which seems to have occurred later in life—the reader is told that he remained “chaste” in his observance of the *ẓāhir* [external ritual practices] as well as the *bāṭin* [the internal or esoteric] which formed the center of mystical practice. Throughout his life, al-Barawī stresses, *Shaykh* Ṣūfī “took a lesson from the *sharīʿa* every day” and studied classical works from other disciplines such as the Arabic grammar *Kitāb Alfīyāt* of Ibn Malik to improve his “vocalization and praises between the plain, the prosodic and the artistic,” and the mystical works of al-Ghazālī and the *Burda* of Busirī. His erudition was, his biographer claimed, “like a learned man of Basra [in Iraq] or al-Sham [Syria].”⁶⁷

The importance of *Shaykh* Ṣūfī’s erudition, however, was not simply his possession of learning. Rather, what the text emphasizes is that far from a reclusive scholar and mystic, Ṣūfī used his knowledge for the greater good. The *Mawlid* declares that there was hardly an *ʿalim* in the Benaadir who did not “count his knowledge,” and that despite his vast esoteric knowledge it was “the study of the lawful sciences,” that he “implanted in the hearts” of his many followers making them “imbibe its drink.” Because of his understanding of law he was also frequently called upon by the merchants of the cloth market to mediate their internal disputes as his “judgments were [considered] unshakeable.”⁶⁸

Another religious figure for whom a reputation for erudition formed an integral part of his discursive authority was *Shaykh* Zaylaʿī. Unlike many of the other major Sufi figures of the early twentieth century for whom hagiographies were created soon after their deaths, Zaylaʿī’s

⁶⁴ Qassim al-Barawī, *Mawlid Ṣūfī* ms. pp. 5–6.

⁶⁵ The texts *Shaykh* Ṣūfī is said to have mastered included the *Minhāj* of Nawawī as well as the *Irshād* although this latter work is not more precisely identified. Idem.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 10–12.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 8, 9.

major sacred biography *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, was not written until the early 1950s.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, like earlier works, Zaylaʿī's reputation for learning was used as a major element of his sanctity similar in form to that of *Shaykh* Ṣūfī. According to his *manāqib*, it was his early talent for religious learning that signaled his holiness. As a young man he was educated in the Qurʾān and the sciences by the *ʿulamāʾ* and *mashayikh* in his home region of Kedalai. However, he quickly overtook their knowledge and it was revealed to him through prayer that he should go to Mogadishu to seek further education. Like *Shaykh* Ṣūfī, Zaylaʿī became learned first in the exoteric sciences such as law, Arabic grammar and morphology before turning his attention to the esoteric. This remained a hallmark of his saintly career.

As we shall see in the following section, Zaylaʿī's spiritual elevation was certainly viewed as an important part of his charisma. However, it was his "teaching and guidance" and his feats of learning that are regarded as central to his ability to spread the Qādiriyya order through out Northeast Africa. Indeed, learning and erudition constitute a central element in many of the *Shaykh's* *karāmāt*. One of the most illustrative of these is contained within the very first miracle story of the *Rāḥat al-Qalb*. Following a long and arduous spiritual apprenticeship, Zaylaʿī's spiritual mentor, *Shaykh* Ismaʿīl b. ʿUmar al-Maqdishī sent him on the Hajj to Mecca where he was to seek out "a noble saint named *Sayyid* Fadhl" a descendant of ʿAbd al-Qādir Jilānī. As expected, when Zaylaʿī arrived in Mecca, the saintly *Sayyid* Fadhl conveyed the *ijāza* and *silsila* of the *ṭarīqa* making him a fully invested *khalīfa* of the Qādiriyya order. However, this is not the crux of the story, as it continues:

After [meeting *Sayyid* Fadhl] and completing his Hajj, [Zaylaʿī] returned to Harar [which he had passed through on his way to Mecca]. When he arrived there... [the local students] requested that he make a commentary [*sharḥ*] for them of the *Kūtāb al-Shatbī* on the science of Qurʾānic recitation and to organize for them a book on *ʿilm al-ṣarf* [morphology] to make it easier for them to memorize because [the only text available to them] *Durar al-laʾālī* ["The Luminous Pearls"] overburdened them. So, he entered into seclusion and composed *al-Shatbiyya*, a wondrous commentary, and organized for them, in verse, a morphology text entitled *ḡaḥadīqat al-tasrīf* ["O'Garden of Inflection"] that is in print until now. When they saw his learning, it raised his prestige greatly and they hosted him with the utmost generosity. After this, news of him spread...and he

⁶⁹ ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUmar *Rāḥat al-Qalb* c. 1954.

organized many books and composed numerous *qasīdas* and led many circles of the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa* and invested numerous *khulāfaʾ*, all of them people of *karāmāt*, and he elevated them... with his blessedness. He was raised above his peers [*aqran*] in teaching and guidance and transcending the traditions. The *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya spread from him in the land of the *Ṣūmāl* and other than it and to parts of the Benaadir. God grants him his reward well and many, and God protect us with him and with his knowledge.⁷⁰

As this story clearly points out, it was his erudition, in addition to his spiritual gifts, that marked Zaylaʿī as a great *shaykh* and “raised him above his peers.” Indeed, many of the miracles associated with Zaylaʿī deal solely with his scholarly sophistication and respect for the exoteric sciences. It was this respect, we are told, that enabled the *Shaykh* to win over more skeptical elements of the *ʿulamāʾ*.

And from his *karāmāt* is what was related to me by *Shaykh* Abī Bakr b. *Shaykh* Aḥmad Ḥājī Mahad from *Shaykh* ʿAbdullāh b. *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Hosnī al-Qādirī that *Shaykh* Nūrow b. ʿUmar al-Ḥusaynī was spreading the learning and the necessity of the *sharʿa* of Muḥammad in the *ẓāhir*. If he spied individuals from a Sufi order he would flee from them as he loathed them. But when he saw *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Zaylaʿī he took the *ḥijāza* from him and entered the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa*. When people saw this they said, “yaʿshaykh Ḥājī Nūrow before you were the first to loathe the people of the *ṭarīqa* and now you take the *ḥijāza* from *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Raḥman Zaylaʿī, how is this?” He replied to them—“I took it from him on account of the verse that comes at the end of his *qasīda* Ḥādīyat al-ārūwah:

Give to Zaylaʿī the gifts that he seeks

He will grant with it generous testimony [before God]

Meaning, he requests the station of witness, and on account of *that* I took the *ḥijāza* from him and with that that he bade peace to us with what is from the knowledge of the *sharʿa* and supplied us with the internal knowledge of the *ṭarīqa*, God assist us with his knowledge *and* his secrets. Amen!⁷¹

Learning, Travel and Spiritual Authority

Demonstrations of an *ʿalim*’s erudition at home formed a prominent part of many individuals’ authority. Of equal importance, however, was an ability to display connections as well as prowess within the

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 2–4.

⁷¹ ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUmar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, pp. 19–20.

larger world of Muslim learning. To be learned was crucial to one's reputation, but it was equally important for a scholar, or his followers, to demonstrate his recognition as an authority within the wider community of Islamic intellectuals. In some instances, travel and instruction abroad represented a core element in a given individual's scholarly reputation. Such was the case of *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad. Like other Somali scholars, Uways received much of his education as a Qādirī adept at home in the Benaadir. However, as his spiritual abilities became more pronounced his master, *Shaykh* Muḥammad Jenay al-Baḥlūl, urged him to go to Baghdad where he might study under *Shaykh* Muṣṭafa b. Salmān the *Khalīfa* of the Qādiriyya order. Uways, according to traditions recorded in his hagiographies, traveled to Iraq where he underwent, "a long period of spiritual withdrawal and intensive instruction," under the direction of *Shaykh* Muṣṭafa. Once he had "attained the highest level of learning," the *Khalīfa* placed the mantle of 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī upon his shoulders and bade him return to the Benaadir to spread the teachings of the order.⁷² In most cases, however, travel and connections abroad were portrayed as the culmination of one's career rather than its foundation.

For scholars of the Benaadir, foreign learning was epitomized by two places: the holy cities of the Hijaz—Mecca and Medina—and the various Ashrāf dominated learning centers of the Wadi Hadramaut in southern Yemen. By the early twentieth century, neither the Hadramaut nor the Hijaz were on the cutting edge of Islamic intellectual activity, and the intellectual centers of the Mediterranean such as Cairo and Istanbul were beginning to play an increasing role in the world Muslim scholars in East Africa. The centers of western and southern Arabia, however, continued to hold a certain cachet deemed essential to the reputation of any first rate *'alim*. Two of the most famous East African scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Aḥmad b. Sumayt and 'Abdullāh BāKathīr both of Zanzibar, for example, traveled to Istanbul and Cairo during the course of their active careers. However, both highlighted periods of residence in the Hadramaut as crucial elements in their intellectual and spiritual development.⁷³

⁷² 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, pp. 9–10.

⁷³ Anne Bang, *Sufis of the Sea*, see also, 'Abdullāh BāKathīr, *Riḥlat al-Ashwāq*, Ulrike Frietag, "Hadramaut: A Religious Centre for the Indian Ocean in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries?" in *Studia Islamica* no. 89 (1999) p. 182.

As Ulrike Freitag points out, the reason for this continued attraction was primarily in order to secure one's own "spiritual genealogies."⁷⁴ Thus, even a scholar such as Uways b. Muḥammad, who received his advanced spiritual instruction in Baghdad, is said to have traveled extensively in the Hijaz and Yemen following his initiation during what is referred to as "the lost time."⁷⁵

Stories concerning the travels of Benaadiri *'ulamā'* abroad generally center on several overlapping themes. First, such accounts acted as demonstrations of an individual's high level of scholarly achievement attested to by the admiring testimonials of foreign, usually Arab, *'ulamā'*. Secondly, stories of intellectual prowess also served to link Benaadiri *'ulamā'* with some of the most famous and well regarded scholars of their day, which could only add to their prestige. Both these motifs are represented in the following hagiographical account of one of 'Abd al-Raḥman Zayla'ī's many trips to Mecca.

Among his *karāmāt* is what was told to me by *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Raḥman b. Aḥmad al-Quṭbī and from *Hājj* 'Abdullāh b. Mu'allim Yūsuf al-Quṭbī al-Qādirī that *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Raḥman Zayla'ī was on one of his trips to the Hajj when he arrived in the town of Jiddah. In the mosque of our ancestor Eve, al-Khidr came to him and said, "when you arrive in noble Mecca the *'ulamā'* of the Ḥaram will ask you one hundred and fifty questions about *al-Ahkām* [religious duties], one hundred questions about *al-farā'id* [inheritance law] and fifty questions about the remainder of jurisprudence." When he arrived in Mecca, accompanied by his student *Hājj* Muḥammad b. Nuḥ al-Quṭbī, they went to the mosque of the Ḥaram where a learned *shaykh* was teaching the sciences to many students. The subject he was teaching was that of diction. *Shaykh* Zayla'ī and his student sat in the lesson hall and the teacher asked his students about an utterance "*hūwa fihī*" and an utterance from another time. How are the two related in meaning, he wanted to know? He asked for a response from the students and not one of them could answer. *Shaykh* Zayla'ī then responded that the two were completely alike in pronunciation [lit. utterance] but not when written. The teacher then posed the question to his students a second time and none answered him and the *Shaykh* responded to him again like that, and he asked the question a third time to them with the same response and the students were silent and among them were many *'ulamā'*. The teacher called *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Raḥman Zayla'ī to come to him and said to him, "who are you and where did you come from?" The *Shaykh* told him and the teacher said to him, "I was reluctant

⁷⁴ Idem.

⁷⁵ Al-Barawī, *Ins al-Anās*, pp. 9–11.

about you when you answered me, and I said in my heart ‘is this a *jinn* or a person?’ Because in this hall there are numerous scholars learned in the sciences and drinking every day from the well of Zamzam and they did not answer me, but you answered me wondrously.” After that they asked him the previously mentioned questions, the one hundred and fifty, and among the questioners from the ‘*ulamā*’ of the Ḥaram was the *Shāfiʿī muftī*..., *Sayyid* Aḥmad b. Zaynī Daḥlān. He responded to fifty of their questions and then said to them “ask the remaining one hundred to this black student [of mine],” and this was *Hājj* Muḥammad b. Nuḥ al-Quṭbī. And they asked him and he answered the questions with the blessing of the *Shaykh*, God assist us with him. Amen.⁷⁶

This story of Zaylaʿī’s intellectual triumph in Mecca directly addressed his qualifications to speak as a religious authority. First, it demonstrated his scholarly abilities before ‘*ulamā*’ of the holiest shrine in Islam, the Ḥaram in Mecca. Of equal importance, it provided a link between him and one of the foremost intellectuals of Mecca in the nineteenth century, Aḥmad b. Zaynī Daḥlān (d. 1886). Daḥlān was the *Shāfiʿī Muftī* as well as *Shaykh al-ʿUlamā*, head of the all scholars and teachers in the Ḥaram, from 1871 until shortly before his death in 1886. He is best remembered, however, for his open stance as a virulent anti-Wahhābī. His brief tract, *al-Durar al-Saniyya fī al-Radd ʿala al-Wahhābiyya*, denounced the literalist followers of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb as a sect of unbelievers.⁷⁷ The writings of Daḥlān, *al-Durar* in particular, formed an important part of the reformist message of Benaadiri Sufi leaders. As we shall see in a later chapter, Daḥlān’s writings were frequently cited by those seeking to discredit the teachings of the Somali Ṣālihiyya leader, *Sayyid* Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh Ḥasan, whom they accused of being no better than a Wahhābī, largely because of his opposition to veneration of the Prophet and the saints.⁷⁸ By mentioning Daḥlān as one of Zaylaʿī’s examiners, the *Shaykh*’s followers theologically linked the two.

This overt connection may have more to do with the desire of one of Zaylaʿī’s hagiographers, the already discussed ʿAbdullāhī al-Quṭbī, to establish his own authority. Listed as one of the transmitters of this tradition, *Shaykh* al-Quṭbī frequently used both Daḥlān and Zaylaʿī’s teachings to oppose *Sayyid* Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh Ḥasan, despite the

⁷⁶ ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUmar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, pp. 14–15.

⁷⁷ See “Daḥlān, Sayyid Aḥmad b. Zaynī”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2nd edition.

⁷⁸ Al-Quṭbī’s teachings, contained primarily in his *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*, will be discussed in following chapters.

fact both died long before the latter appeared on the scene. Nevertheless, the story clearly suggests the importance of contemporary discourse of the wider Muslim intellectual world as a pillar of Benaadiri religious authority.

The continued importance placed on foreign intellectual connections, if not actual travel, is also highlighted in the writings of a somewhat later *‘alim* and historian *Sharīf* ‘Aydārūs b. *Sharīf* ‘Alī Āl Naḍīrī. Born in Mogadishu in 1893 to an Ashrāf merchant family, *Sharīf* ‘Aydārūs spent much of his life engaged in various commercial pursuits. While not a full time *‘alim*, his family was also one with claims to religious learning and the quest for religious knowledge was also a life-long vocation. ‘Aydārūs’ scholarly career culminated with the publication of a comprehensive history of the Benaadir entitled *Bughyat al-Āmāl fī Tarīkh al-Ṣūmāl* first published in 1950, although its exact date of composition is unclear.⁷⁹ Possibly because he was not regarded as one dedicated solely to the search for knowledge, ‘Aydārūs began the *Bughyat al-Āmāl* with an exhaustive intellectual autobiography. Part of this was devoted to an account of the works and disciplines he mastered as well as the scholars who instructed him. Most of his education took place under the direction of his father and grandfather either in Mogadishu or on the island of Faza near Lamu off the Kenya coast, where he spent his adolescence learning the family business.⁸⁰

An equally large portion of this autobiography, however, was dedicated to his lifelong study of Sufism and an exhaustive list of those who had conveyed their authority upon him via *ījāzāt* or licenses to transmit. The *Sharīf* provides a list of thirty-seven *‘ulamā’* who provided him with the “*ījāzas*, turbans, cloaks [*khirqāt*] and *kofīs* transmitted from their forefathers...”⁸¹ This includes progeny of the greatest scholars and Sufi saints of the Western Indian Ocean. ‘Aydārūs’ list contained noted leaders of three different *ṭuruq* including the Qādiriyya, Aḥmadiyya and ‘Alawiyya. This included such Somali luminaries as Qassim al-Barawī and ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī as well as the progeny of the most notable early Sufi leaders. Among these were *Shaykh* Sha‘īr b. Uways son of Uways

⁷⁹ ‘Aydārūs b. *Sharīf* ‘Alī *Bughyat al-Āmāl*. The work was published with the help of the UN sponsored Italian Mandate administration.

⁸⁰ ‘Aydārūs notes that in addition to his father and grandfather his first Qur’ānic teachers were two lesser known alims, *Mu‘allim* ‘Alī Rahanwaynī al-Ṣūmalī and Ḥājī Aḥmad Adūr both of whom instructed small children in a neighborhood Qur’ānic school in Shangani.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. “B”.

b. Muḥammad and *Shaykh* ‘Atta b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman a grandson of “the famous *Shaykh* Ṣūfī” both of the Qādiriyya and Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Mai son of *Shaykh* ‘Alī Mai a prominent founder of the Aḥmadiyya *ṭarīqa* in the town of Marka. The list also included a large number of influential scholars from outside the Benaadir mostly *sayyids* associated with the ‘Alawiyya order. Among these were individuals such as ‘Umar b. Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr b. Sumayt son of the famed Zanzibari scholar Aḥmad b. Sumayt who “bestowed,” upon ‘Aydarūs “the Crown of the Pole *Sayyid* Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-‘Attās and the Crown of *Sayyid* Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Muḥdhār and *Sayyid* Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr b. Sumayt...”⁸² Others were included in the list not as a result of their own individual fame but because of the reputation for learnedness their places of residence maintained. The *Sharīf* provides a list of seven scholars who conveyed their permission upon him “*bil-barīd*”, literally “by mail”. All of these were Sāda *Shaykhs* residing in various towns in the Hadramaut of southern Yemen including Tarīm, Sayyūn and Do’an.⁸³

‘Aydarūs’ work is of particular importance as it illustrates the importance of religious credentials in establishing discursive authority even in works that were largely secular. The *Bughyat al-Āmāl* was written as a history of Benaadir society covering topics ranging from the founding of the towns to explaining the nature of the clan system. The central purpose of this text was to argue for the place of urban peoples as “true” Somalis in the period just prior to independence.⁸⁴ Although a work with a clear social and political agenda, ‘Aydarūs chose to assert his authority by demonstrating a connection to the learned—particularly Sufi—elite of East Africa and the Hadramaut. Thus, even in a setting where the discourse was of an almost purely political nature, religious learning was viewed as a prerequisite to being heard.

Transcendent Authority

At the root of virtually every influential scholar or saint’s authority in the Benaadir through the middle of the twentieth century was some connection with what we can refer to as the “transcendent” or other-

⁸² Idem.

⁸³ Idem.

⁸⁴ See Reese “Tales that persist on the tongue”.

worldly. Such a connection is regarded by modern scholars as a given for those viewed as a *walī Allah*, literally a friend of God, frequently rendered in English simply as “saint.”⁸⁵ However, others of more humble spiritual status frequently also laid claim to certain sacred connections which leant authority to their works. In some instances, this connection might be extremely indirect. Such was the case of ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar who, was charged with compiling his hagiography of *Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman Zayla’ī Rāḥat al-Qalb* by his own teacher, *Sayyid Aḥmad b. Ḥājī Ḥabīb al-Dafaradī* after the latter was visited by Zayla’ī in a dream and instructed to collect stories of his miracles.⁸⁶ Similarly, the spiritual credentials of an individual might be largely ones of association as in the case of *Sharīf ‘Aydarūs* who, as we have seen above, noted in his intellectual autobiography that the “crowns” of several revered ‘ulamā’ including *Sayyids Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-‘Attās*, *Sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Muḥdhār* and *Aḥmad b. Sumayt* among others were bestowed upon him by Ibn Sumayt’s son, ‘Umar.⁸⁷

In most cases, however, the authority of a given ‘*alim*’ was shored up via an extremely direct relationship with the spiritually elevated, either a departed saint, the Prophet Muḥammad or other spiritual figure such as Khidr.⁸⁸ Encounters with the spiritual realm represent a common motif for the affirmation of an individual’s authority. Contact, however, took a variety of forms ranging from the performance of miraculous feats to visions and advice to overt declarations of one’s status as a saintly individual. In all cases such contacts were regarded as symbols of an individual’s *baraka* (lit. blessedness or spiritual power) made apparent through *karāmāt* or miracles.

The ultimate manifestation of a Muslim religious leader’s authority in the Benaadir was certainly the performance of *karāmāt* that in popular discourse marked one as a *walī* or saint. In Islamic discourse, the notion of what constitutes a *karāma* occupies a wide spectrum.

⁸⁵ See Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*; Valerie Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints in Modern Egypt* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995).

⁸⁶ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, p. 1.

⁸⁷ ‘Aydarūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, p. “B”

⁸⁸ An “unusual servant of God,” Khidr is viewed by many as a “deathless” prophet who frequently appears in mystical visions to variously give advice, provide warnings or teach valuable moral lessons. See, Carl W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Essential Introduction to the Philosophy and Practice of the Mystical Tradition of Islam* (Boston: Shambala, 1997) pp. 38–39.

In Benaadiri traditions, saints regularly commune with the Prophet, heal the sick, save villagers from drought, pestilence and depredation or appear in two places at once. *Karāma* stories, however, could also include more relatively mundane feats, such as producing theological texts in a short space of time, answering difficult religious questions or locating lost objects. The importance of such acts is not so much their fantastic nature as what they represent: spiritual authority manifest in the saint through closeness to God and His Prophet.

Since the early centuries of the faith, Muslim mystics have written of a special category of souls who enjoyed a “fundamental relationship of intimacy with God.”⁸⁹ Through their own devotion, piety and purity, such individuals commune with the divine achieving *fanā*’ or annihilation of the ego. Through their efforts, they achieve a position that is beneath only the Prophet Muḥammad among the ranks of the created. The saint, however, is also a spiritual bellwether who acts as a moral pole for the faithful. As Yahya b. Muadh (d. 872) wrote, “The saint is the perfume of God on earth. The sincere ones scent him, and his fragrance reaches their hearts, so that by it they are roused to long for their lord...”⁹⁰ This is certainly holds true for various leaders of the Somali *ṭuruq* regarded as “friends of God,” by their followers. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, miraculous stories of the saints are regularly held up as remedies for the moral ills of society. What concerns us here is not the notion of miraculous events themselves, but their use as a symbol of authority.

Karāmāt are a visible manifestation of an individual saint’s closeness to the divine. As the ninth-century mystic Tirmidhī (d. ca. 910) points out, *karāmāt* are gifts from God that demonstrate the *baraka* or spiritual power of the saint.⁹¹ Such acts, it is argued, are meant to confirm to the faithful the spiritual authority of the *walī*. As such, the ultimate source of the power is in fact God who vests the miracle *through* His saint as a symbol of the divine source of the *walī*’s spiritual authority. This is a fine point that has eluded most contemporary scholars of Sufism in East Africa.⁹² It is one that was not lost on Somali hagiographers.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 60.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Ernst, *Sufism*, p. 60.

⁹¹ Bernd Radtke and John O’Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*, (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996) pp. 155, 173.

⁹² See for instance, I.M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis*.

The divine origin of saintly authority is a theme reiterated continuously throughout Somali hagiographic discourse. Collections relating the miraculous works of various saints provide inspiration to the devout. However, the faithful are repeatedly reminded that the powers of the saint are not his, but rather emanate from God most often through the mediation of His messenger, the Prophet Muḥammad. Thus, in the Qassim al-Barawī's hagiography of *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad, *Ins al-Anīs*, each miracle story begins with, "It is mentioned among what he *received* from the *karāmāt*..." [emphasis mine]⁹³ emphasizing the fact that what the reader is about to encounter was not something initiated by the saint on his own, but only made possible through the generosity of the divine.

The cosmological universe of Islamic mysticism, however, is an extremely ordered and hierarchical one. Hence, it should come as little surprise that references to direct contact with the divine are rare and usually oblique at best. Instead, spiritual accreditation of individual holy men in the Somali tradition more often took place through the offices of other blessed individuals including not only the Prophet Muḥammad but others who have attained an elevated station. By tradition, such otherworldly acknowledgement of one's status as a *walī* might begin in the womb or even earlier. Such is how the sainthood of *Shaykh* Qassim al-Barawī was revealed:

It is remembered among the *karāmāt* revealed through him when he was but in his mother's womb. This was reported by *Shaykh* Badawī who heard it from the sister of Qassim al-Barawī who heard it from her mother. "There came into my house a man who greeted me and then left. After a few days this man returned a second time, greeted me and left. I informed my husband of this and he said, 'if he returns a third time ask him what he wants.' And when he came a third time I asked what he wanted. And he replied, 'I have come to visit the saint in your womb.' I then asked, 'who are you?' 'I am the Prophet of God,' he replied.⁹⁴

Following his birth, the infant *Shaykh* Qassim was then visited by a "great body" of saints including Khidr who came as a sign affirming his sainthood.⁹⁵

⁹³ Cf. al-Barawī, *Ins al-Anīs*.

⁹⁴ Abū Bakr b. Nūr Shay al-Bakrī, *Manāqib Shams al-Dīn wa ibn Muḥī al-Dīn al-walī al-kāmal wa al-quṭb al-fādal min shrab al-bahrayn al-ẓāhir wa al-bāṭin al-Shaykh Qassim bin Muḥī al-Dīn al-Barawī baladah al-Qādirī mashraban al-shāfiʿī mathhaban al-Ashaʿrī ʿaqīdat* p. 3 Ms. copied 1991.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

The *walāya* (office of sainthood)⁹⁶ of *Shaykh* Uways al-Qādirī, often regarded as the Benaadir's greatest saint, is—by tradition—foretold even before his conception. Several episodes recorded by *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar prophesy Uways' arrival, the most striking of which involves one of the greatest saints of the nineteenth century, *Sayyid* Aḥmad b. Idrīs (d. 1837), who foretells not only his arrival but regional dominance. Before the coming of *Shaykh* Uways, the story begins,

A group of people from the Benaadir went on the Hajj. When they arrived in Mecca they met the *walī Sayyid* Aḥmad b. Idrīs... who asked them, 'are any of you from Barawe?' 'Yes,' they said, and he continued, 'there will appear from Barawe a saint of the saints of God whose name is *Shaykh* Uways. And before his appearance all the lands of the Swahili will be in our hands, but following his coming he will take all of it into his.'⁹⁷

In a similar manner, the authority of Benaadiri holy men is frequently reaffirmed during the course of their lives. *Shaykh* Uways, for instance is visited by the Prophet, 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī and *Sayyid* Muṣṭafa b. Salmān at the age of six in order to inform him of his place as a saint.⁹⁸ Zayla'ī was visited by Khidr as well as the Prophet on numerous occasions in order to variously reaffirm his spiritual status, give him advice or demand greater praise from the faithful.⁹⁹ One of the most prosaic instances of spiritual authority being bestowed on a Benaadiri 'alim, is the following account of Qassim al-Barawī's encounter with the Messenger in Medina.

It is remembered from among his *karāmāt* revealed by him regarding when they entered the garden of the Prophet. Our *Shaykh Hājj* Muirow reported, "when I saw Shams al-Dīn [Qassim al-Barawī] he recited... [this *qaṣīda* praising the Prophet]

Peace be upon you, the Prophet
Peace be upon you, the Messenger
Peace be upon you, beloved
O'Imam of the two sanctuaries

⁹⁶ A great deal of discussion exists concerning the proper transliteration of this Arabic term and whether it should be *walāya* or *wilāya*. For an exhaustive overview as well as convincing argument for the former when speaking of a saint's spiritual authority see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. xvii–xxi, 272–274.

⁹⁷ 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, pp. 112–13.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 115.

⁹⁹ 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb* op. cit.

And when he visited the tomb of the Prophet, PBOH, and composed the *qaṣīda* he began with ‘salām’ and requested he be allowed to see his generous face and bless his heart. And during that night he saw the Prophet, PBOH, with his own eyes in the area between the grave and the *minbar*—like our *Shaykh*, Uways—and he [the Prophet] gave him the *ijāza* and the *khulafā’* and *silsila* as his son *Shaykh* Muhammad Ṣūfī said in his *qaṣīda* that recalls the *karāma* of his father saying

How many times did he see the Prophet and take the *ijāza*
From him with the revered *silsila*

And *Sharīf* Mubayd mentions this *karāma* in his *qaṣīda* saying:

The *ijāza* was given to him by the Best of Men, Aḥmad
O’walī, O’Qassim sit among us¹⁰⁰

The prominence of the Prophet Muḥammad in East African Sufi discourse is often held up as proof of a so-called “neo-Sufi” ethic, in which veneration of the Prophet had overshadowed the more “classical” mystical objective of annihilation of the self in God.¹⁰¹ Upon closer examination, however, we find that the Somali use of Prophetic imagery was deeply rooted in the classical tradition. Throughout the classical age, we find Muslim mystics employing encounters with the Prophet in dreams as one form of spiritual endorsement. One of the earliest of these is recorded in the autobiography of al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī in which he recounts his first ethereal meeting with the Prophet that is not unlike the one told by al-Barawī’s followers:

Then while I was in this state [*khalwa* or seclusion] I beheld in a dream that the Messenger of God entered the congregational mosque in our city, and I entered the mosque immediately afterwards, remaining close behind his neck. He continued walking until he was in the *maqsura*. I followed at his heels and was very close to him. It was as if I were almost clinging to his back, and I placed my footsteps in the same spot where he walked and so I entered the *maqsura*. Then he mounted the pulpit and I ascended immediately behind him. Whenever he ascended a step, I ascended immediately behind him. This went on until he reached the highest step and sat down on it, and then I sat down at his feet on the next step below where he was sitting. My right hand was towards his face, whereas my face looked in the direction of the doors that opened onto the market, and my left hand was towards the people. Then while in that situation, I woke from my dream.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Al-Bakrī, *Manāqib Shams al-Dīn*, pp. 25–27.

¹⁰¹ See R.S. O’Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*; J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*.

¹⁰² Radtke and O’Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood*, p. 18.

The striking similarities between Tirmidhī's account recorded in the ninth century and that of Qassim al-Barawī's from the twentieth clearly indicate that Somali Sufis were at least aware of the classical mystical tradition. Other evidence, however, indicates this was more than simply a passing acquaintance.

As mentioned above, for Muslim mystics the universe was a highly ordered and hierarchical place. At the top, of course, is God, the creator. Below Him, however, the created exist within a strict hierarchy of precedent with a specific order determined by the divine. Directly beneath God is His Messenger, Muḥammad, who is regarded as the first created being. Following this are the Lord's other prophets, the angels, saints and finally the remainder of all created beings both animate and inanimate.¹⁰³ The number of saints, like that of the prophets, is believed fixed as well as ordered into a strict hierarchy of their own. Among the numerous offices of sainthood, the most important include the *abdāl* (substitutes), the *nuqāba* (leaders) and *nujāba* (nobles) all of whom have particular duties and powers but are still subordinate to the *ghawth* (helper) or *quṭb* (pole of the world), the highest ranking of the *awliyā'*.¹⁰⁴

The universe is further ordered, according to classical Sufi teachings, through the mediation of the Prophet via the Nūr Muḥammadiyya or 'Muḥammadan light.' From the earliest centuries of Islam, the Prophet has been depicted as the "*sirajūn munir*," the shining lamp sent to humanity as a guide to the divine. As Annemarie Schimmel notes, Muslim theologians, as early as the eighth century, taught that "through him the Divine Light could shine in the world, and through him mankind was guided to the origin of this Light."¹⁰⁵ As early as the ninth century, however, mystics began to argue that the Prophet was not a mere guide to the divine but the primary instrument of God in the act of creation. Classical Sufis such as Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 895) and

¹⁰³ The exact ordering of created beings below the Prophet is a subject of some debate among medieval mystics (for example—are the other Prophets above or below the angels?) The most detailed and influential discussion is probably that of the thirteenth-century mystic Ibn al-ʿArabī, whose thought, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, certainly influenced the cosmological outlook of the Somali Sufis. For a detailed discussion see Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn Arabī*, translated by Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993).

¹⁰⁴ Ernst, *Guide to Sufism*, pp. 59–61; Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp. 103ff.

¹⁰⁵ Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, p. 124.

later Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240) argued that Muḥammad was the first being created from the Light of God appearing as “a light from His light.” As the first created entity, all else descended from him. God created even Adam, al-Tustarī held, “from the light of Muḥammad.”¹⁰⁶ The place of Muḥammad in the process of creation is made even more explicit by the ‘Abd al-Qādir Jilānī—the spiritual founder of Uways and al-Barawī’s order—who referred to the Prophet as “the pen of the Writer Who has written the growing of created things...the master who has smithed the seal of existence.”¹⁰⁷

Traditions recorded by Benaadiri hagiographers indicate that both these concepts were important in establishing the spiritual authority of Somali Sufi leaders. Qassim al-Barawī’s recognition by and access to the spiritual hierarchy is recorded in a *karāma* story that centers on his search for the *ghawth* or helper, the most spiritually enlightened individual living in the human realm.

Shams al-Dīn said to him, I have visited all the four poles. Then I visited the 300 *nuqāba*’ [leaders] and their place is the Maghrib. Then the 70 *Nujāba*’ [nobles] and their place is Egypt. Then the 40 *Budala*’ [substitutes] and their station is al-Sham (Syria). Then the seven *al-Akḥyār* [the best] on the surface [*al-sāḥūn*] of the earth. Then those inside [*al-‘amūd*] the earth. Then there is the *ghawth* of whom there is only one and his station is Mecca *al-Makrama*. I have visited all of them, the only one remaining is *al-Ghawth*...¹⁰⁸

Naturally, al-Barawī’s request is granted and upon meeting the *gawth* his spiritual authority is affirmed. The notion of the light of the Prophet is similarly present in Somali hagiography. Access to and the ability to mediate the Prophetic light of creation are likewise symbols of saintly authority. If one sat before Abd al-Raḥman Zaylaī, for instance it was said, one could witness the presence of “two lights. The light of the Prophet...and the light of [‘Abd al-Qādir] Jilānī...”¹⁰⁹ The same was said of *Shaykh* Uways al-Barawī. Following the recitation of one of his *qaṣīdas* entitled ‘Guidance of Humanity to the Tomb of the Prophet,’ in Mecca, the leader of the *Shafi’i* congregation declared “By God

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 135 quoting Jilānī, although her own citation is rather cryptic.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Bakrī, *Manāqib Shams al-Dīn, manqabah*, no. 22 (no page numbers).

¹⁰⁹ Al-Barawī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Qasā’id*, p. 8.

that's light! Because all that comes from the tongues of the saints, is light!"¹¹⁰

The larger importance of this imagery within Somali social and moral discourses will be discussed in Chapter Six. What is important to point out here is that, as the above examples demonstrate, the spiritual authority of many Somali holy men was not, as some have suggested, based solely on local pre-Islamic belief. Instead, by the early twentieth century it appears supported by a number of pillars. Heritage, learning and classical mystical beliefs well in keeping with Sufi attitudes throughout the *umma* were all integral to the establishment and maintenance of discursive authority. Perhaps most importantly, Somali mystics were well aware of the accepted shape of their cosmological universe and its immutable hierarchical order. As 'Abdullāhī al-Qutbī, who in his *al-Majmū'a al-Mubāraka* lays out this hierarchy in vivid detail, states, "any who do not accept," this order are *kuffār* and guilty of unbelief.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹¹ Al-Qutbi, *Majmū'a al-Mubāraka*, p. 6.

CHAPTER FOUR

URBAN WOES AND PIOUS REMEDIES: SUFIS, URBANITES, AND MANAGING SOCIAL CRISES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

As with most Africans, the profound disruptions of the nineteenth century provoked a period of great hardship and uncertainty within the urban communities of the Benaadir. Disease, commercial competition and encroaching colonialism spelled economic disaster for local merchants. For many Somali townsmen, the causes of these maladies lay not with external factors such as the vagaries of international economics or epidemiology—which they viewed as mere symptoms—but in their own moral failings. The *ṭuruq* emerged as a popular force at almost the exact moment of these calamities attracting a large following among the urban merchant classes. For Benaadiris, the answers to many of their problems were to be found within the Sufi orders which provided a venue for considering the sources of their troubles and to seek active solutions.

Both colonial officials and contemporary scholars have often portrayed Somali Sufism as a largely rural phenomenon with little impact on the towns of the region. As Tommaso Carletti, a colonial governor noted, “I did not see much [Sufi] organization, any brotherhoods or *zāwiya* [sic],”¹ located in the towns of the coast. “The term, *zāwiya*,” he noted, was “almost ignored and I have never thought to adopt the term ‘ikhwan’ [brotherhood] to designate the affiliates of a religious order [in the

¹ Tommaso Carletti, *I Problemi del Benadir*, pp. 68–69. In classical usage, a *zāwiya* is defined as a “small cupolaed mosque erected over the tomb of a Muslim saint, with teaching facilities and a hospice attached to it, usually established by a religious order.” The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Standard Arabic, J.M. Cowan ed. (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1994), p. 451. Carletti, as well as other Italian officials and travelers of the period, used the term not in its classical sense but rather to refer to usually rural communal compounds inhabited by a religious leader and his followers. Significantly, Somalis did not describe these compounds as *zāwiya*, a term the Italians seem to have brought from Libya, but rather as *jamā’a*, or communities. In urban areas, the term *zāwiya* was also little used and referred simply to a kind of dormitory for religious students from rural areas usually attached to a mosque. Interview Abukar Hamud Sokorow May 20, 1994.

Benaadir].”² Certainly, Carletti’s position was extreme, but while not denying their existence in urban areas, subsequent investigators such as the Italian official Massimo Collucci, the British anthropologist I.M. Lewis and historians Lee Cassanelli and Said Samatar have focused their discussions of Sufism only on its manifestations in rural areas.³

A careful examination of urban oral traditions and locally compiled religious texts reveal a great deal about the importance of Sufism in the urban milieu. A close reading of hagiographies and urban oral traditions reveal that from the late 1880s, the urban-based Benaadiri merchant community, like their rural cousins, maintained a complex and interdependent relationship with local Sufi networks.⁴ Local merchants were closely tied to the ‘*ulamā*’ and Sufi leadership through intricate bonds of family and patronage that provided prestige and spiritual capital. Many retained even more intimate relations with the local religious establishment as members of the all-important second tier of leadership within the various Sufi orders. As a social networking tool, membership in the orders could also provide very real remedies to the economic downturn of the early colonial period. However, Sufism in Benaadiri society served more than to solidify personal social and economic capital. It also provided a venue for exploring the failings of society and proposing solutions via a renewed moral framework.

As accounts of the times, the *manāqib* provide a blueprint for a kind of communal *moral history* through which Benaadiris tried to make sense of the global political and economic changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the realm of their own cosmological world.⁵ Saints, such as Uways al-Barawī and Nurayn Aḥmad Ṣābr,

² Ibid.

³ See, Massimo Colucci, *Principi di Diritto Consuetudinario dell Somalia Italiana Meridionale*, (Florence: Societa Editrice “La Voce” 1924); Lee V. Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*; I.M. Lewis, “Sufism in Somaliland: A Study of Tribal Islam,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 1955, 1956 17:581–602; 18:146–60 and; Said Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism*. Unfortunately, this is a position Lewis has continued to maintain as exemplified by his recent work *Saints and Somalis* (Red Sea Press, 1998) consisting primarily of reprints of articles published in the 1950s and 1960s which, although lightly edited by the author, continue to ignore the place of Sufism in the urban milieu.

⁴ The existence of such a relationship will certainly come as no surprise to scholars of West Africa, where connections between Sufism and mercantile elites has been recognized since the 1960s. In this vein see, for instance, Abner Cohen’s seminal work *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

⁵ Historians of Africa, in recent years, have begun to look towards the late pre-

were held up as moral icons whose pious natures were to be emulated in an effort to return society to a spiritually and materially prosperous path.

This chapter consists of three parts. In the first we pick up the narrative thread of Benaadir history from the last two decades of the nineteenth century. While much of the century was characterized by unbridled growth and urban prosperity, the period after 1880 was fraught with social and economic crises. This section will discuss these issues and sketch out the evidence for the links between the urban mercantile community and the Sufi *ṭuruq* in the late nineteenth century. For the sake of simplicity, we will focus primarily on the role of the Qādiriyya order amongst the merchants of Mogadishu, with additional examples from the traditions of the Aḥmadiyya order centered in Barawe. The second section focuses on the role of the orders in providing spiritual remedies for the troubles of the age. It examines the nature of the local crises as understood within the hagiographical works, focusing in particular upon the Qādirī work *al-Jawhar al-Nāfīs*⁶ and the Aḥmadī collection *Manāqib Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr*⁷ and their suggested paths of remedy. Finally, the third section briefly examines how *ṭarīqa* affiliation afforded more concrete remedies for merchants' economic woes by providing new connections to producers of the interior that may have helped counter increasing foreign competition.

Commercial Expansion, Commercial Woes: The Benaadir After 1880

As seen in Chapter 2, during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century Benaadiri merchants faced only occasional challenges to their renewed prosperity. The town of Barawe was attacked and briefly occupied during the late 1830s by religious reformers from the inland town of Baardheere. The merchants of Mogadishu experienced similar difficulties during the 1870s when the rulers of the Geledi clan in nearby Afgoye attempted to take over the city in an effort to gain direct access

colonial period as a prerequisite to exploring the history of the colonial era. Foremost among these efforts in East Africa are Steve Feierman's *Peasant Intellectuals* and Jonathan Glassman's *Feasts and Riot, Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1888*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995).

⁶ 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nāfīs*.

⁷ Moallim Nūr, ca. 1925.

to overseas markets for grain exports. In both instances, the urbanites, in conjunction with pastoral allies, were able to defeat these external threats and safeguard their economic prosperity. During the last two decades of the century, however, Benaadiri merchants experienced a number of crises to their economic well-being that could not be countered by the strategic use of violence. Some of these calamities were natural, most notably drought and a rinderpest epidemic which struck much of East Africa during the 1880s. Others were created through human agency, in the form of Indian financial leverage and Arab mercantile adventurers backed by encroaching Omani and European imperialism.

A promising start

With their principal political rivals defeated, the last quarter of the nineteenth century seemed to hold great promise for Benaadiri commercial society. The end of the Geledi wars in the 1870s initially provided enough security for Benaadir townsmen to expand their activities. A few of the wealthiest coastal patricians began to invest directly in agricultural production in the lower Jubba and Shabeelle River valleys. Acquiring land and slaves, they sought to diversify their interests by engaging in the actual production of commodities such as grain, sesame seed and cotton rather than acting as mere brokers.⁸ The heart of Benaadiri commercial fortunes remained the brokerage of pastoral and agricultural goods and an ever growing caravan trade with the far interior.

The practice of commercial exchange among the inhabitants of the coast was as old as the towns themselves. Journeying to the distant interior in search of these goods, however, was a relatively recent development. According to their oral traditions, Mogadishu merchants only began to travel and trade in the interior in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.⁹ Merchants from Barawe were even later entrants venturing into the far hinterland only after the middle of the 1800s.¹⁰ The conflicts of the middle of the century put a halt to this early expansion but peace at the end of the 1870s brought a flood of urban merchants back to the interior.

⁸ Ferrandi, *Lugh*, p. 113; Carletti, *I Problemi*, pp. 173ff.; Pantano, *La Città di Merca*, pp. 88ff.

⁹ Interview, Dheere Hajji Mahad, October 4, 1994; Ferrandi, *Lugh*, pp. 137–140.

¹⁰ Interview, Hajji Jaylani Hajji Ali, October 9, 1994.

Inland commercial expansion seems driven primarily by economic expediency. The principle beneficiaries of peace were a limited number of large urban merchants. Writing about Mogadishu at the turn of the century, the Italian traveler Gustavo Chiesi observed that once goods reached the town from the near interior, they were virtually monopolized by a few wealth traders. Upon the arrival of a caravan at the town's approaches, he wrote, "the principal traders... attempted to earmark its goods for themselves," sending their agents to appropriate the best merchandise for themselves.¹¹ A similar situation prevailed in the livestock and pastoral product market of Barawe located a short distance away from the city in the village of Soblalle. Here, once again, large merchants or their agents would descend upon the village buying up "the biggest part of the grain, ghee and livestock," then export it directly to larger markets like Zanzibar, Mombasa, the Seychelles and the Comoros, bypassing the town altogether.¹²

In effect, small scale urban traders were excluded from lucrative coastal markets unless they managed to affiliate themselves as an agent to one of the larger families. Most scraped out an uneasy existence "selling fish or whatever they could get their hands on," living lives of debt and poverty.¹³ With the return of relative stability to the interior, many turned to the untapped markets of the Upper Jubba and Shabeelle Rivers as a potential route towards prosperity. The majority of these small entrepreneurs settled in one of the inland towns, either trading on their own account or acting as agents of one of the larger coastal trading families. Those from Mogadishu and Marka settled primarily in Luuq or Buur Haqaba,¹⁴ while Barawe merchants rarely ventured any further inland than Baardheere.¹⁵ These interior markets offered small merchants the opportunity to participate in coastal commerce through the procurement of luxury goods such as slaves, ivory, gums and coffee

¹¹ Chiesi, *La Colonizzazione*, p. 342.

¹² Ibid., p. 476.

¹³ Ibid., p. 339; Ferrandi, *Lugh*, p. 11.

¹⁴ Both these population centers had substantial grain producing hinterlands that were independent of the agricultural areas of the coast. A day's journey northeast of Luuq was the region known as the *Ard Gudud* or "red earth" centered on the villages of Saramaan and Moalimat while an area known as *Ard Madow*, "black earth" was located between Buur Haqaba and Baydhabo. Together these areas constituted the "breadbasket" of the Upper Jubba and the epicenter of the region's commercial agriculture. Ferrandi, *Lugh*, p. 30.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 314, 344.

as well as play a major role in the regional interior economy through locally traded grain, livestock and salt.¹⁶

Expansion into the interior should have ushered in yet another era of prosperity for the towns of the coast. By 1880, the ports were bursting with grain, cattle and other exports. The region's cloth industry, known as *futa Benaadir*, which was the main currency of internal commerce continued strong despite competition from foreign imports and the peoples of the coast seemed set to maintain their upward economic trajectory.¹⁷ Events, however, were about to take a very unfortunate turn and the peoples of the Benaadir were about to follow a very different destiny.

Economic downturns

The upward trajectory of Benaadiri commerce was not to last. By the late 1880s, commerce along the coast was in a state of depression and near collapse, and mercantile society found itself in crisis. This state of affairs was precipitated by a number of factors. Some of these calamities, most notably drought and rinderpest epidemics, were natural. Others were created through human agency in the form of Indian financial leverage and foreign competition in the interior.

The severe economic difficulties of urban coastal East Africa during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century are a widely documented phenomenon.¹⁸ The Benaadir coast was hardly an exception to these hard times.¹⁹ A rinderpest epidemic coupled with drought, as elsewhere in East Africa, decimated local livestock herds in the mid-1880s. The first Italian administrators to arrive in Somalia in 1891, found the land in the near interior of Mogadishu "whitened by bones." The contagion crippled local exchange between nomads and the smaller coastal merchants that was based largely on pastoral products such as hides and ghee. "As a consequence [of the plague]" Italian official Ugo Ferrandi wrote, "many indigenous merchants of the coast, who had entrusted merchandize to people of the interior, received no return

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 314ff.

¹⁷ Edward Alpers, "Futa Benaadir: continuity and change in the traditional cotton textile industry of Southern Somalia, c. 1840–1890," in *Actes Colloque Entreprises et Entrepreneurs en Afrique IX et XX siècle*, Tome I (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1983) p. 85.

¹⁸ See for example Cooper, *Plantation Slavery in East Africa*, and Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar*, (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1987).

¹⁹ Ferrandi, *Lugh*, p. 11.

on their investment.” The result, he writes, was the impoverishment of scores of local traders.²⁰ The damage done to pastoral production by disease and climate appears to have been temporary judging by the prominence of pastoral products in export figures for the middle of the 1890s.²¹ Greater dangers emanated from foreign sources, particularly merchants and capital, that directly threatened the markets and livelihoods of local traders.

From the last quarter of the century, the Benaadir found itself the object of first Omani and then European imperial designs. In 1876, the Omani sultan of Zanzibar *Sayyid* Barghash sought to establish control over the Benaadir by placing governors and garrisons of troops in each town along the coast. Then, in 1890, under political pressure from the British, the Sultan agreed to lease his Somali possessions to a pair of British and Italian companies. The Italian Company received the lion’s share, gaining control over the ports of Mogadishu, Marka, Warshaykh and Barawe and their hinterlands as far inland as the town of Luuq. The Imperial British East Africa Company was granted the region surrounding Kisimaayo and parts of the Jubba River valley.²² The political impact of the Omani and later European presence was initially limited. Neither the Omanis, nor the Italians who administered the towns after them, affected much control over the coast before the turn of the twentieth century. Their presence did, however, have a severe negative impact on the local merchant community with the arrival of Indian capital.

Indian commercial presence in the Benaadir can be dated to the early decades of the nineteenth century, but appears to have become a significant factor only in the last three decades with Omani attempts to establish direct control over the region. In 1873, a group of Bohra Ismaili merchants could be found in Marka. By the 1890s, important communities of Indian traders were found in all the Benaadir ports as well as the British enclave of Kismaayo.²³ The significance of the South Asian arrivals lay in the quickness with which they came to dominate

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 11–12.

²¹ Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, p. 87; Pantano, *Citta di Merca*, pp. 110–111.

²² See Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia* for a detailed account of this process.

²³ Alpers, “Muqdishu in the nineteenth Century,” p. 453; Ferrandi, *Lugh*, p. 11; Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, pp. 593 n. 1 and 636; *Lettre dal Benadir*, p. 108; Chiesi, *La Colonizzazione*, pp. 337, 340, 354; Pantano, *Citta di Merca*, p. 20; Sorrentino, *Ricordi del Benadir* p. 411; Political Record Book/District of Kismayu/Gobwen Station DC/KIS/3/1/KNA.

vital areas of the mercantile economy. Italian observers, for instance, noted that by the end of the century the commercial life of Marka was a virtual Indian monopoly. Before his death in the mid-1890s, the trading house of Tharia Topan controlled the majority of the town's export trade, followed closely by the house of Kanji Chianji, an Indian resident of Zanzibar, as well as a host of other small Indian firms. Similarly, the lucrative ivory trade in Mogadishu was completely in the hands of Indian entrepreneurs.²⁴

The rise of Indian trading houses in the Benaadir was a severe blow, especially to small Somali merchants involved in the luxury and pastoral commodity trades of the interior. The droughts and epidemics of the 1880s, as noted above, caused many nomads to default on their commercial agreements with coastal merchants. As a result, imported goods, increasingly obtained from Indian houses and advanced in anticipation of pastoral goods, were never redeemed, ending in the bankruptcy of the local trader. A similar situation prevailed in the ivory trade. As a result of the economic downturn, few Somali merchants possessed the means to purchase cloth to exchange for ivory in the interior. Instead, most obtained advances in cloth from Indian houses that were to be repaid in ivory upon the former's return from the interior. Such deals were automatically to the disadvantage of the borrower, as Robecchi-Bricchetti noted, "...the Indians know how to manage their affairs very cleverly, [they] begin by assigning to the cotton goods a value superior to their real cost, and then, upon the arrival of the ivory..., they regain their credit with the exchange of merchandise, which comes estimated at a value inferior to that on the market. With this system they double their profit."²⁵ The affect of such arrangements was to tie local merchants into a circle of debt from which they were unlikely to emerge. Remarking on the trade in pastoral products, Ferrandi noted that such arrangements obliged small traders to "maintain their indebtedness to Indian merchants," and that delays in repayment were met with usurious interest rates and the ultimate impoverishment of the local merchant.²⁶

Not surprisingly, foreclosures became a regular feature of dealings with Indian creditors. One eighty-year-old informant from Mogadishu

²⁴ Sorrentino, *Ricordi del Benadir*, pp. 424–425; Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir* p. 563 n. 1; Chiesi, *La colonizzazione*, p. 471.

²⁵ Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, p. 593 n. 1.

²⁶ Ferrandi, *Lugh*, p. 11.

noted that during his grandfather's time, countless urban merchants lost both their property and their livelihoods through usurious deals with South Asian merchants, who regularly confiscated the real estate of traders who had defaulted on loans.²⁷ Italian colonial accounts cite one such instance in the case of 'Abdullāh Naṣr, a minor Mogadishu merchant, who was foreclosed upon by his Indian creditors for a debt of M.T. \$70. The *baraṣa*, a council consisting of local elders, the Zanzibari governor, the Italian resident and the Chief *Qāḍī*, declared that the merchant had two weeks to make good his debts or have his goods and slaves auctioned with the proceeds turned over to his creditors.²⁸

As if the situation on the coast were not bad enough, Benaadiri merchants also began to find their commercial dominance in the interior challenged by foreign interlopers. While Indian and Arab merchants were involved in Benaadiri commerce from the middle of the century, for most of that time their involvement was limited to the coast as importers and exporters. By the last decade of the century, they began to operate with increasing visibility in the interior. In 1899 British officials in Kismaayo reported that the Indian monopoly over the ivory trade was so strong that government intervention at the local level was necessary to prevent the complete ruin of local traders.²⁹ Their solution—providing Somali traders with free transportation to markets in Lamu and Mombasa—seems to have done little to halt the continued insinuation of Indian and Arab influence. By 1911, the same Kismaayo administration reported that Arab traders were gaining an increasing foothold in the local cattle market and that virtually all agricultural commerce with the cultivators of the Jubba River was in the hands of Arab merchants.³⁰ In 1914 an Italian commercial official reported that small scale Arab and Indian merchants had established bases as far inland as Balad, trading in all manner of local goods including grain, ghee, locally grown cotton and sesame.³¹

For the Benaadir, most of the nineteenth century was an era of prosperity, hope and security. It was ending, however, as a time of social

²⁷ Interview Abukar Hamud Sokorow, May 20, 24, 25, and July 5, 1994.

²⁸ Giorgio Sorrentino, *Ricordi del Benadir*, (Napoli: Francesco Golia, 1910), 64–65.

²⁹ Letter from Jenner to Commissioner, 26 April, 1899. Political Record Book, Kismayu. Kenya National Archives (KNA). PC/Coast/1/1/49.

³⁰ Kismayo Political Record Book 1911–1913, KNA DC/KIS/3/1 p. 38.

³¹ Luigi Cuffino, "Nell'Oceano Indiano: Rendicontodi Una Missione Inviata dala Società Africana d'Italia, Febbraio-Guigno 1914." (Napoli: Società Africana Italia, 1916) p. 16; "Opening Shops at Serenli, 1915–1921." KNA, PC/Jub.1/6/4.

and economic crisis, pestilence and trauma. But how could they arrest the turmoil around them? For many the solution was self-evident, in times of crisis one must turn to God.

Merchants and Ulama, Blood and Patronage: The Urban Sufi Phenomenon

At almost the exact moment the Benaadiri community began to experience the crises of the late nineteenth century, we also see the rise of organized Sufi *ṭuruq* in the towns of the coast. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth, the various *ṭuruq* played a central role in Somali society. While Sufism was known in Somalia before that time, it was largely the preserve of a few ascetics and only emerged as a prominent social movement under the guidance of a number of charismatic preachers after 1880. The efforts of these clerics were so successful by the beginning of the Second World War, it was estimated that virtually all Somali males identified, at least nominally, with one of the local schools of Sufism; the Qādiriyya, Aḥmadiyya, or Ṣāliḥiyya.³²

Modern scholars of Somali history and culture have amply demonstrated the importance of rural saints, *shaykhs* and local preachers or *wadaads*. In addition to their spiritual roles, these men of religion frequently acted as advisors, mediators and even political leaders amongst the clans of the interior.³³ An examination of the *manāqib* and urban oral traditions reveals that the townspeople of the Benaadir coast also participated in a vibrant mystical culture and, as we shall see below, played a pivotal role in Sufism's expansion.

Charismatic leadership and the Qādiriyya expansion

By the beginning of the twentieth-century, the Qādiriyya was by far the largest *ṭarīqa* in Somalia and East Africa. Founded by the Hanbalite theologian 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166) the Qādiriyya is believed to be the first organized Sufi order to arrive in the Horn of Africa. According to the written traditions of the order, knowledge of "the

³² A fourth *ṭarīqa*, the Rifa'iyya, was also present in the towns of the Benaadir during this period. However, its membership was limited largely to Arabs from the Hadramaut region of southern Yemen. J.S. Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* p. 236.

³³ See I.M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis*.

path” was first brought to Harar in what is now southeastern Ethiopia by the Hadrami *shaykh*, Abū Bakr b. ‘Abdullāh al-‘Aydarūs (d. 1503), also regarded as the order’s main popularizer in Aden. Sources of information about Qādiriyya activities in eastern Africa from this point until its expansion in the late nineteenth century are scarce. The little information that exists indicates that the order became a small but active component of town life, especially in Harar and to a somewhat lesser extent in the towns of the Somali coast.³⁴

This limited sphere of influence may have been due to the order’s traditional emphasis on the study of *‘ilm* or the “religious sciences” in addition to mystical training as a pre-requisite to progress along the path to enlightenment and union with God. The founder of the order, al-Jilani, was a noted scholar of *fiqh* and Hadith who argued that in order to access the esoteric (*al-bāṭin*—literally “the interior”) realms of the soul necessary for enlightenment, one had to first master the exoteric (*al-ẓāhir*) duties of religious observance and learning.³⁵ Given the centrality of this dictum to Qādiriyya teachings, it is likely that the virtual absence of literacy beyond the boundaries of urban centers before the late nineteenth century prevented the order from gaining popularity amongst the rural populations. For whatever reason, the Qādiriyya order did not obtain widespread currency in eastern Africa until the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

The emergence of the Qādiriyya as a popular movement was tied directly to the appearance of a number of charismatic *shaykhs* who embodied the Qādiriyya ideal of esoteric ability and formal learning. The earliest of these was *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Aḥmad al-Zayla’ī (c. 1820–1880), who represents the epitome of scholar and mystic that would come to define the image of a “true” *shaykh* in East African Sufism. As already seen in the last chapter, he studied elementary *‘ilm* in his home village of Kedilai under the direction of local *‘ulamā’*, and “when he became proficient in all that [they] had to teach him,” he moved to Mogadishu where he was tutored by the great scholars of his day.³⁶ Following this, he traveled widely in Ethiopia and the Hijaz, where he honed his intellectual skills.³⁷ After completing his education, however,

³⁴ Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, p. 240. Trimingham’s main source for the Qādiriyya during this early period appears to be the *Futuḥ al-ḥabasha*.

³⁵ See, “‘Abd al-Kadir al-Djilani.” In *Encyclopaedia of Islam* v. 1, pp. 69–70.

³⁶ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, pp. 2–4.

³⁷ B.G. Martin, “*Shaykh* Zayla’i and the Nineteenth-Century Qadiriya” in Said

Zaylaʿī returned to the countryside of his youth where he established a *jamāʿa*, or community of disciples, near the village of Qolonqool and set about spreading the teachings of the order throughout the region of the upper Shabeelle River. As a result of his erudition and spiritual achievements, Zaylaʿī experienced considerable success among both the pastoralists and villagers of the interior and the ranks of the religious elite. According to the primary hagiographic account of his life, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, his popularity among the “common folk” was based primarily on his miraculous abilities, especially his knack for curing the sick from such dread diseases as smallpox and consumption.³⁸ However, he was also credited with winning over many among the local *ʿulamāʾ* who regarded Sufism with deep suspicion, through his respect for and knowledge of *ʿilm*.³⁹

Shaykh Zaylaʿī is recognized as giving the order new life, founding a new branch known as the Zaylaʿiyya. His influence, however, was limited primarily to the rural areas of the upper Shabeelle. Credit for the widespread propagation of the order in Somalia and throughout East Africa is given to the slightly later *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad al-Barawī (1847–1909). Countless oral and written traditions exist extolling the learning and spiritual prowess of Uways, placing him among the greatest Qādiriyya *shaykhs*, second in holiness, in East African circles at least, only to the order’s founder, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlanī.

Uways, we have seen, was an individual of humble origins. He proved something of a prodigy, however, and eventually rose to study with members of Barawe’s religious elite, most notably two adherents of the Qādiriyya, *Shaykh* Muḥammad Taynī and *Shaykh* Muḥammad Jenay al-Baḥlūl. The future *shaykh* soon became so engrossed in his studies, his hagiographer states, that he “renounced employment and work and withdrew to the mosques,” where he devoted himself to learning and mysticism. His spiritual maturity was heralded by his ability to ignore spirits inhabiting a tower in which he was praying at the edge of the city. His teachers took this as a sign of Uways’ greatness and sent him to Baghdad where, after a period of initiation, he received the mantle of the Qādiriyya from the order’s chief *Shaykh* Muṣṭafa b. Salmān.⁴⁰

S. Samatar, *In the Shadow of Conquest Islam in Colonial Northeast Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1994), pp. 14–15.

³⁸ ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUmar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, p. 41.

³⁹ See Chapter 2.

⁴⁰ ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUmar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, pp. 8–10.

Uways' experiences during his travels in Iraq and Arabia are presented by adherents as confirmation of his credentials as a scholar and holy man and an indication that his spiritual stature was great enough for him to be recognized as the leader of the Somali Qādiriyya upon his return to the Benaadir in 1882. Between the time of his return and his death in 1909, what became known as the Uwaysiyya branch of the Qādiriyya spread rapidly not only throughout southern Somalia but over the entire East African littoral. His influence stretched as far south as Tanganyika becoming arguably the largest Sufi order in East Africa.⁴¹ Uways' significance, however, stems also from the fact that his movement permeated every level of East African Muslim society. As Qādiriyya oral and written traditions are quick to point out, the *Shaykh* attracted followers from every walk of life and social class. His adherents were drawn from both rural and urban segments of society as well as elites and non-elites. The Qādiriyya viewed their order as one that was pan-Muslim and aimed at all believers, attracting followers from both "town and countryside," both "free and slave."⁴² Information regarding actual *ṭarīqa* membership is scant. By combining data drawn largely from written and oral traditions, enough evidence can be gleaned to support the notion of Qādiriyya popularity in both rural and urban spheres.

The *Shaykh's* influence and popularity among the urban mercantile classes is demonstrated in numerous written and oral *manāqib*. Indeed, his very first miracle is said to have been performed in Mogadishu among the merchants of the town whom he "saved" from their reputedly immoral ways and initiated into the path of the Qādiriyya.

And among his first miracles...which were related to me by the transmitter *Shaykh* Nūr al-Dīn Hājj Yūsuf al-Qādirī from *Shaykh* Ṭahir Abū Bakr al-Bantūwī who said: When *Shaykh* Uways al-Qādirī came from Baghdad he stayed in the house of Imam Maḥmūd b. Benyamin al-Yaqūbī,⁴³ who received him and honored him, and the office of the Qādiriyya was installed upon him [by *Shaykh* Uways]. There was in that time in Mogadishu a disgusting practice called *ḥīkow*, which was followed by two factions; one was called *almugh* and the other *shabil*. Each was

⁴¹ See B.G. Martin, "The Qadiri and Shadhili Brotherhoods in East Africa, 1880–1910," in *Muslim Brotherhoods*.

⁴² 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs* pp. 11–12.

⁴³ Imam Maḥmūd b. Benyamin was the political leader of a section of the Abgal Hawiye known as the Yaqūbī, who were settled in the Shangani quarter of Mogadishu (Alpers, 1983).

a powerful party, composed of people from Hamarwayn and Shangani [the two principal quarters of the town]. The members of each faction aided one another with their assets. Among them were the Ashrāf, merchants, notables, clan elders, rulers, patrons, and people of the ships. All of them assisted and participated in this abominable practice until the breasts of the *‘ulamā*’ contracted [with anguish] as they were incapable of stopping it. *Hājj* Abī Bakr Muḥdhar emigrated nine times from the town, finally moving to Warshaykh, on account of this abomination and others, where he lived until his death... As for *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāh, known as *Hājj* Ṣūfī, he did not leave. He preached and exhorted them night and day [to stop]. But they continued in their abomination and did not listen even though he preached and exhorted until the arrival of *Shaykh* Uways al-Qādirī in Mogadishu.

[But] when they heard of his arrival in Mogadishu and his presence in the house of the Imam they took counsel in their meeting place and said: “Tomorrow, God willing, we will meet in the Friday mosque in Shangani and face *Shaykh* Uways al-Qādirī so that we may repent before him of the abominations.” They met in front of the mosque, performed ritual ablutions and went before *Shaykh* Uways. They greeted each other, and their leaders said, “O *Shaykh* Uways al-Qādirī, we repent of the abomination and fraud and abandon it. May God grant us victory and guidance...” Thus... they abandoned the repulsive practice and other abominations with his blessing...⁴⁴

This incident will be discussed more fully below. Here it is important to note that according to oral and written hagiographies, following this episode, hundreds of townsmen from all social classes flocked to the side of the *Shaykh* and joined the Qādiriyya as *muridūn* (sing. *murīd*) or followers.⁴⁵ These new adherents included many of the local *‘ulamā*’, including *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Abdullāh al-Shanshī, *Shaykh* Ṣūfī; members of the political elite, most notably Imam Maḥmūd b. Binyamīn al-Yaqūbī, leader of the Abgal clan, the dominant political force in the Shangani quarter of the city; and many members of the merchant class.⁴⁶

Although less dramatic than the arrival of the Qādiriyya in Mogadishu, the appearance of the Aḥmadiyya also attracted ready adherents

⁴⁴ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, pp. 119–120. Another less detailed version of this incident also appears in Qassim al-Barawī’s collection, *Ins al-Anīs*, where the “abomination” is referred to as *manyas*.

⁴⁵ In classical Arabic this term is generally translated as “disciple”, however, in the Somali context the term connotes a somewhat looser affiliation better characterized by the less formal term “follower”.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–24.

from the urban peoples of the Benaadir. The advent of the Aḥmadiyya on the coast is attributed not to the emergence of a single charismatic holy man but to the efforts of a number of *Shaykhs* deputized to spread the word of the order by an Aḥmadī leader from Arabia, *Shaykh* Maulan ‘Abd al-Raḥman.⁴⁷ According to most oral accounts, *Shaykh* Maulan⁴⁸ came to the Benaadir a few years before the return of Uways and installed five pious men as representatives of the order. These five, we are told, proceeded to spread the teachings of the order along the coast and up the Jubba valley.⁴⁹ While never as numerically large as their Qādiriyya counterpart, the Aḥmadiyya had, by the end of the nineteenth century, spread throughout the Jubba valley making it, by some accounts, the preeminent *ṭarīqa* along the river.⁵⁰ During the same period, large Aḥmadiyya followings formed in the towns of Barawe and Marka under the leadership of *Shaykhs* Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr and ‘Alī Mai respectively.⁵¹ A small Aḥmadiyya community also formed in Mogadishu, although some contend that membership there consisted primarily of immigrants from the other two towns.⁵²

Exact data for the numbers of townsmen attracted to the various *ṭuruq* are non-existent. However, family histories contend that by the turn of the twentieth century most men claimed at least nominal attachment to one of the main orders, the Qādiriyya, Aḥmadiyya, or, more rarely, the Ṣālihiyya.⁵³ Similarly, an early Italian administrator in the interior

⁴⁷ Earlier scholars have held that the order was introduced by an ‘*alim*’ from Marka, *Shaykh* ‘Alī Mai, after his return from the Hijaz around 1870 following several years of study. This version of the *ṭarīqa*’s arrival based primarily on a short biography of the *Shaykh* cited by Cerulli *Somalia Scritti Vari* v. I p. 190 and Trimmingham *Islam in Ethiopia*, pp. 242–43. This version of events, however, is roundly denied by current Aḥmadiyya leaders, who recount the story cited below.

⁴⁸ Identified by Gori as *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Wāḥid *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman, op. cit. p. 241.

⁴⁹ Interview, Ahmad Nurcin Bana Funzi, June 21, 24, 1994.

⁵⁰ Interview, Abd al-Qadir Mataan, June 2, 1994.

⁵¹ Moallim Nūr, *Manāqib Shaykh Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr*, (1925); Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, v. I, p. 190.

⁵² Interview, Abu Bakr Ahmad, June 26, August 9, 1994. This version of events is largely substantiated by Gori’s examination of *Shaykh* ‘Alī Mai’s recently rediscovered spiritual biography *Tadkhira Shaykh ‘Alī*. Gori, *Studi Agiografica*, pp. 238–244.

⁵³ Although following the death of *Shaykh* Uways in 1909 at the hands of Ṣālihiyya adherents at his rural retreat of Biyoole the vast majority of Ṣālihiyya followers are said to have shifted their allegiance to the Aḥmadiyya and the Ṣālihiyya largely disappeared, at least for a time, as an urban movement. Interviews, Muhammad Dheere, July 2, August 27, October 8, 1994; Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 15, 17, 1994; Jilani Hajj Ali, October 9, 1994.

trading center of Luuq in the 1890s noted the prominence of *ṭarīqa* membership among the community of merchants from the coast.⁵⁴

A scholar in the family

One of the distinguishing features of the *ṭuruq* in the towns was the extent to which the lives of religious practitioners and merchants were closely intertwined. While it was possible to find among the mercantile inhabitants of the Benaadir towns those who were concerned only with commerce and others who followed purely religious pursuits, the social lines between these groups were hardly distinct. The lives of religious practitioners and laypeople were closely linked. Their worlds intersected through ties of *ṭarīqa* affiliation, kinship and patronage. In many cases, individuals were *both* religious practitioners *and* merchants.⁵⁵

Few urban lineages maintained an exclusively religious character. An exception was, of course, the Banū Qaḥṭān, of Mogadishu, a clan of religious scholars, who as we have seen, until the advent of colonial rule held a local monopoly over the position of *qāḍī*.⁵⁶ In general, however, urban families and lineage units tended to be involved in both religious and secular spheres of society. Many families, in fact, counted both '*ulamā'*' and merchants among their members. While urbanites claim that this was a custom carried out from "time immemorial" evidence of its practice can only be dated to the later nineteenth century and is largely connected to the rise of the *ṭuruq*.

During this period most merchant families hoped ideally to direct at least one of their sons to religious pursuits and the study of '*ilm al-dīn*' (the religious sciences), while the others took up commerce or various trades. In most cases such a system produced scholars prominent only within their family or neighborhood. Such was the case of an individual known simply as *Faqīh* Yūsuf. According to family traditions related by his grandson, the *faqīh* and several other brothers dedicated their lives to study, supported by several younger siblings who became small

⁵⁴ Ferrandi, *Lugh*, pp. 241–42.

⁵⁵ It should be noted here that Benaadiri traditions and hagiographies make little or no distinction between members of the '*ulamā'*' and Sufi leaders. Both oral and written traditions hold that the nineteenth century saints were all learned in the Islamic sciences and that all '*ulamā'*' were members of one of the *ṭuruq*. Thus, there is no distinction between the type of ties maintained with members of the '*ulamā'*' and those sustained with the *ṭarīqa* leadership.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2.

merchants and tailors.⁵⁷ As a result Yūsuf and his brother's became well known religious figures within Mogadighu's Shangani quarter during the early twentieth century but with little reputation beyond. Occasionally, however, this strategy produced a more noted scholar or holy man. *Shaykh* Nūrayn Aḥmad Šābr, a respected nineteenth century jurist and early leader of the Aḥmadiyya *ṭarīqa* from Barawe, for example, was a member of the notable Hatimi clan of merchants. Similarly, *Shaykh* Abd al-Raḥman Šūfī, poet and early Qādiriyya leader in Mogadishu, came from the commercial Shanshiyya clan.⁵⁸

In other cases, even some prominent *ʿalims* found it necessary to pursue commercial ventures in order to meet their family obligations. The historian *Sharīf* ʿAydārūs, for example, spent his youth learning the tailoring trade and buying and selling mangrove poles in and around the island of Pate as part of his extended family's business. As an adult, while embarking on his writing career in the 1920s, he used his skills as a tailor to start a clothing factory that supplied the Italian police and military in the colony.⁵⁹ The even more prominent scholar *Shaykh* ʿAlī Mai of Marka also found it impossible, at least in his early years, to make ends meet from teaching alone. He noted in his autobiography that "upon marrying and being encumbered with the obligations of [supporting] a wife I designed clothes and we lived from that. I worked as a tailor and writing [amulets] and I saw my fortune in the balance [of the two], then I worked in commerce and I traveled to Zanzibar several times, but I found neither fruitfulness nor profit in that."⁶⁰ As *Shaykh* ʿAlī's example demonstrates, the worlds of scholarship and commerce were hardly foreign to one another.

Ties of patronage

Obviously, not every family or lineage could hope to produce a scholar or holy man of even local importance let alone broader prominence. For merchants who lacked a prominent relative among the ranks of the *ʿulamā* or Sufi leadership, supporting religious institutions such as mosques or student hostels through endowments of *waqf* or patronizing

⁵⁷ Interview, Hasan *Shaykh* Muhammad, October 9, 1994.

⁵⁸ Moallim Nūr, *Manāqib Shaykh Nūrayn Aḥmad Šābr* front piece; interview, Abukar Hamud Sokorow July 5, 1994.

⁵⁹ ʿAydārūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, Introduction.

⁶⁰ ʿAlī Mai, *Tadhkira Shaykh ʿAlī*, in Gori, *Studi Agiografica*, p. 335.

individual religious notables were the most common means of acquiring spiritual capital. In Mogadishu, as in most places in the Islamic world, notables regularly provided funds for the construction and maintenance of mosques and other religious structures. Evidence from inscriptions indicates that from as early as the eleventh century, local personages, including a number of women, supported the construction of mosques in the oldest sections of the town. Cerulli noted that one of the earliest inscriptions found in Mogadishu's main *jam'ī*, or Friday, mosque indicated that it was constructed around 1238 CE and endowed by a local notable, Kululah b. Muḥammad.⁶¹ Similarly, *Sharīf* 'Aydarūs provides a detailed list of prominent mosques built and maintained by local persons of note through the mid-twentieth century.⁶²

In the hagiographies and oral traditions of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, mention of such endowments are rare. Rather than endowing centralized institutions, benefactors subsidized the activities of individual Sufi masters, students, and scholars. The funding of scholarly activities could take a variety of forms. The most direct of these was the distribution of personal largesse. Local benefactors, for instance, might present regular or occasional gifts of cash, livestock, or other foodstuffs to a *shaykh* or *'alim* in order to help finance the latter's study and instruction of students or, more rarely, the practice of traditional/Islamic medicine. Alternatively, a merchant might provide an *'alim* with a quantity of goods such as cloth, spices or, coffee beans, which the latter could sell to finance his activities. Merchants are also said to have helped members of the *'ulamā'* finance larger trade ventures toward the same end.⁶³

In addition to the distribution of financial largesse, merchants and other notables also subsidized members of the *'ulamā'* and Sufi *shaykhs* through acts of hospitality. This often took the form of feasts provided for *shaykhs* and their followers on various holy days or the provision of permanent or semi-permanent housing. The provision of hospitality to scholars, saints, and students is a motif that appears constantly in both written hagiographies and oral traditions. Merchants might make their homes available to learned individuals on an ad hoc basis. During the 1920s, for example, a hide merchant and follower of the Qādiriyya,

⁶¹ Cerulli *Somalia, Scritti Vari*, v. I p. 8.

⁶² 'Aydarūs *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, pp. 39–41.

⁶³ Interview, Abukar Hamud Sokorow, July 5, 1994; Muhammad *Shaykh* Tahir, May 21, June 23, October 8, 1994.

from the Bendawow lineage, named Uways Nūr often hosted a certain *Shaykh* Ooyey al-Qādirī from Jawhar along with his followers. His hospitality usually consisted of providing them with food and occasionally lodging throughout their stay. Similarly during the 1930s, Hadī al-Barawī, a Barawe merchant living in Baardheere, frequently offered passing scholars lodging for a night or two in exchange for prayers of blessing or lessons in *ʿilm*.⁶⁴

Hospitality, however, could also take the form of more long-term, serious investment. Two vivid examples of this are recorded in the traditions of Barawe. The first centers around the Aḥmadiyya *shaykh* and *ʿalim* Maḥmūd Waʿis, who settled in the town of Barawe from the Ogaden during the later nineteenth century. According to this tradition, “*Shaykh* Maḥmūd Waʿis came to Barawe in the middle of the night and encountered *Shaykh* Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr and said ‘I am here by the order of God. Take me to the house of Suudow Abrar [the pious wife of a wealthy merchant].’ *Shaykh* Nūrayn escorted him there and when they arrived at the correct house the former shouted out to her that he had a guest. At this she is said to have replied, ‘Is it *Shaykh* Maḥmūd Waʿis?’ And both *Shaykhs* were filled with wonder at her foreknowledge.” The *Shaykh* is reputed to have remained in the house of Suudow Abrar until his death some years later.⁶⁵

Another example of relatively large scale largesse was the case of the wealthy Barawe merchant ʿAbd al-Qādir b. *Shaykh* Ismaan, known more commonly as *Shaykh* bin *Shaykh*. Oral traditions of the *Shaykh* bin *Shaykh* family state that following the death of *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad in 1909 no one dared buy his house in Barawe for fear that it was inhabited by *jinn*. As a result it remained unoccupied for months after his death. One night, however, *Shaykh* Uways came to *Shaykh* bin *Shaykh* in a dream and instructed him to buy the house. *Shaykh* bin *Shaykh*, who was not then as wealthy as he was to become, borrowed a large amount of money from his relatives and purchased the building. Following this, it became the principal place of residence for all Qādirī *ʿulamāʾ* visiting Barawe who stayed as the guests of *Shaykh* bin *Shaykh* for both long and short periods of time.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Interviews, Khadija Uways Nuur, September 20, 1994; Muhammad al-Hadi, October 6, 1994.

⁶⁵ Interview, Ahmad Nurcin Bana Funzi, June 21, 1994.

⁶⁶ Interview, Nuur *Shaykh* b. *Shaykh*, September 15, 1994.

Finally, merchants and notables also made long term financial and material commitments to the education of future *‘ulamā’* and religious notables. In addition to entertaining and housing religious practitioners, some urban merchants provided extensive aid to students who came from other parts of the region to study with local scholars. These patrons paid for the subsistence of the students during their stay and built and maintained special student hostels where students resided during the course of their studies.⁶⁷ In addition, a local notable might establish a *waqf* or endowment to finance the education of an individual student. The creation of a pious endowment for an individual rather than an institution, such as a mosque or school, is unusual and the extent of this practice in the Benaadir is unknown. However, there is at least one recorded instance of such an individual *waqf*. The hagiography of *Shaykh* Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr indicates that on at least two separate occasions the *Shaykh* initiated endowments for the purpose of financing the religious education of the unborn children of two Mogadishu *sharīfs*.⁶⁸

Urban dwellers and Sufi leadership

In the towns of the coast, the *ṭarīqa* and Sufi ritual became an integral part of urban life from the 1880s onward. Members met weekly, or even nightly, to perform *dhikr* between the *maghrib* (evening) and *‘ishā’* (night) prayers. This consisted of the formulaic recitation of poems, Qur’ānic verses, and other sacred rituals aimed at raising the spiritual awareness of individual participants, bringing them, hopefully, closer to God. Each *ṭarīqa* was composed of a general membership, known as *murīds*, led by a *khalīfa* with the assistance of a number of *na’ibs* or deputies.⁶⁹

Merchants and town notables were more than the followers and patrons of the Somali Sufi movements of the late nineteenth century. Many were also intimately involved in the leadership and propagation of the *ṭuruq*, forming the important second tier of leadership within

⁶⁷ Interview, Abukar Hamud Sokorow May 20, 1994.

⁶⁸ Moallim Nūr, *Manāqib Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr*, *manāqib* 9, 10. The creation of religious endowments for the benefit of particular individuals seems, in Barawe at least, to have been not uncommon. The *qāḍī*’s record book notes at least two other incidents where property was turned into a *waqf* specifically for the benefit of a person’s heirs. See Vianello and Kassim, *Servants of the Sharia*, documents 303.1 and 667.1.

⁶⁹ In some locations these titles might be reversed, with the *na’ib* holding the superior rank and the *khalīfa* acting as subordinate.

the movements. In the urban setting, only a few of the *ṭarīqa* leaders or members were “professional” religious practitioners. Instead, many were men (and in some cases women) who integrated religious study into the course of their lives as merchants, artisans, and laborers. Both oral and written traditions provide ample evidence of merchants or members of mercantile families who were appointed as local *khalīfas*. Many of these were older, well established individuals who, as one informant put it, “had reached an age where [they] could be supported by their sons and so could devote themselves to religious pursuits.”⁷⁰ Among the most notable of these was *Sharīf* ‘Alawī b. Ḥabīb Āl ‘Alawī, a wealthy Ashrāf merchant, who was the first *khalīfa* appointed by *Shaykh* Uways in the town of Barawe and recognized locally as the leader of the Qādiriyya following the latter’s death.⁷¹

Sharīf ‘Alawī, however, was not the only merchant to hold a leadership position in the Somali Qādiriyya. Important evidence of urban mercantile involvement in the leadership of the Qādiriyya is also present in the hagiography of *Shaykh* Uways, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*. This collection contains a list of 150 *khalīfas* appointed by him during his lifetime. The *nisbas*⁷² of those on the list indicate that at least 55 of them (over one-third of the total list) were members of urban lineages. Twenty-one of these hailed from various urban Ashrāf families (lineages that claim direct descent from the Prophet Muḥammad). Over half of these bore clan *nisbas* such as Āl-‘Alawī and al-‘Aydarūs, lineages with deep commercial connections and long residency on the coast. An additional thirty-four had *nisbas* with clear urban connections connoting either a town of origin (e.g. *Shaykh* ‘Alim b. ‘Umar al-Maqdishī and *Shaykh* ‘Umar Ḥayralī al-Barawī) or a particular urban lineage (e.g. *Shaykh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* Yūsuf al-Shanshī and *Ḥājī* Aḥmad b. ‘Umar al-Dubbarwaynī). Conversely, only thirty-four of those on this list have *nisbas* clearly denoting rural origins.⁷³

The presence of merchants within the Qādiriyya leadership appears to have continued after Uways’ death. During the 1920s, *Sharīf* ‘Alawī

⁷⁰ Interview, Said Hamza, May 25, 1994.

⁷¹ Interview, Jilani Hajj Ali, October 9, 1994; ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs* p. 18.

⁷² Arabic adjectival noun form which designates a person’s place of origin or family affiliation. For example, one from Barawe would be known as “al-Barawī.”

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 18–24. Here I include not only those with clear pastoral lineages but also those from towns and villages in the interior as well as those with *nisbas* linking them to religious lineages from the interior. See Appendix 1 for the complete list.

b. Ḥabīb appointed a Barawe merchant from the Waili clan as a *khalīfā* in the Lower Jubba. And as late as the 1960s, the Qādirī *khalīfā* in the inland town of Baydhabo was a Marka merchant named *Sharīf Aw Aḥmad*.⁷⁴ While this list does not allow us to determine the exact size and scope of Qādiriyya influence within the urban community, it does suggest that urban elites played a significant role in the order's organization. Clearly, Sufi *ṭuruq* enjoyed a far greater presence in urban Somali society than previously thought. The question is what explains the appeal of mystical Islam within the commercial community?

Urban Woes and the Social Lens of Hagiography

One way to explain the proliferation of the *ṭuruq* is to consider them as a way for adherents to discuss the problems of society in relation to the crises of the period. The teachings of the *shaykhs* furnished a venue for townspeople to discuss the root causes of the difficulties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and suggest ways to resolve the crises facing their community through a kind of moral discourse and spiritual remedy. Such teachings were spread primarily through hagiographies known as *manāqib* or collections of "wondrous deeds" that grew up around the founders and notable figures of the orders.

One does not have to look far into the hagiographic literature to encounter stories in which public morality and piety are placed at the center. Such episodes invariably pit pious saints against impious, or at least morally misguided, townsmen. On the surface, these could be viewed merely as the moral invective of holy men against the apparent evils of the secular world. However, closer examination of these stories within the context of our knowledge of the social and economic environment of the late nineteenth-century Benaadir coast offers a deeper and more socially involved interpretation. While certainly constituting a modicum of invective they may also mirror a widespread belief that local society during the later part of the nineteenth century suffered from a genuine moral and social crisis, one which could only be remedied by turning to God and religion. This notion is amply demonstrated by the miracle recorded in *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad's hagiogra-

⁷⁴ Interviews, Jeilani Hajj Ali, October 9, 1994; Muhammad Dhecre, October 8, 1994.

phy, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs* quoted above, which is the first to appear in the collection. The written *manāqib* do not state the exact nature of the abomination known as *hikow*. Oral versions, however, contend that it was a kind of licentious dance which, depending on whose version one consults, was performed either by the townspeople or by their slaves. The written version does, however, link this immoral behavior directly to members of the urban elite, especially those involved in commerce:

Among them were the Ashrāf, merchants, notables, clan elders, rulers, patrons and people of the ships. All of them assisted and participated in this abominable practice until the breasts of the ‘*ulamā*’ contracted with anguish.⁷⁵

Furthermore, oral sources insist, merchants used the event to attract customers in the carnival like atmosphere that surrounded the weekly performances whom they then proceeded to fleece.⁷⁶ It was not only the immoral nature of the dance that endangered the souls of Benaadiris, but the fact that it drew them into sins that endangered the entire community. It was only the appearance of Uways, according to the hagiographer, that led to the immediate and miraculous renunciation of ‘the abomination’ by the parties concerned, a reconciliation between merchants and ‘*ulamā*’, and the adoption of the Qādiriyya *ṭarīqa* by the townsmen.

Another instance of immoral behavior amongst the mercantile elite comes to us from Barawe. In this case, however, rather than a pious *Shaykh* rescuing townsmen from the path of immorality, we see irate townsmen plotting the downfall of a supposedly overzealous *qāḍī* and Sufi saint; Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr.

During the reign of the Zanzibari Sultan Sayyid Barghash (1870–88), the Aḥmadiyya *Shaykh* Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr was appointed *qāḍī* over the town of Barawe.⁷⁷ According to both oral and written hagiographies, the *Shaykh* favored a strict interpretation of Islamic *sharʿa* over the use of local customary law or *heer*. Oral versions of this story emphasize

⁷⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, p. 119.

⁷⁶ Muhammad Kassim, “Aspects of the Benadir Cultural History” in Ali Jimale, *The Invention of Somalia*, (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1995) pp. 29–42.

⁷⁷ *Shaykh* Nurayn, in fact, served as *qāḍī* on two different occasions. He was first appointed by Sayyid Barghash in 1879 remaining in office until 1884. He served again, very briefly, under the Italian administration from February–December 1895. The story related here appears to refer to his first, much longer, period in office. Vianello and Kassim, *Servants of the Sharia*, Appendix 7, p. 2109.

that this privileging of 'orthodoxy' clashed with customs prevalent among certain Barawan lineages which, in contradiction to Islamic law, excluded women from inheriting wealth or property, thus limiting the distribution of wealth to the agnatic line.⁷⁸ This conflict led many local notables and merchants to conspire against the *Shaykh*.⁷⁹

In order to get rid of him, a number of leading citizens wrote to the Zanzibari Sultan making false claims about his lack of competence in the law and clamoring for his removal. Under this counsel, the Sultan resolved to have the *qāḍī* arrested and brought in chains to Zanzibar for punishment. The *Shaykh*, due to his *karāma* or holy qualities, the *manāqib* inform us, avoided the trap set for him by the jealous townsmen and proceeded to Zanzibar of his own volition in order to refute the charges against him. Upon his arrival, he was received by the Sultan and tested by members of the Zanzibari '*ulamā*' who proclaimed that he was, indeed, an erudite scholar worthy of his post. The Sultan then roundly denounced those who had leveled the charges against the *Shaykh* and immediately ordered his reinstatement as the *qāḍī* of Barawe.⁸⁰

It is instructive to note that *Shaykh* Nūrayn's problems did not end here. Following his return, an unnamed town 'leader' attempted to assassinate the controversial *Shaykh*.

One of the leaders of Barawe, who harbored ill will against the *Shaykh*, went one night to Balad al-Raḥma⁸¹ with ill intent, accompanied by one of his *askarīs* [soldiers]. As they drew near to the house of the *Shaykh*... they saw a person appear by the door whose shape was like that of the *Shaykh*'s... there was no doubt of it being *Shaykh* Nūrayn. The *askarī* fired his rifle and wounded the person, who fell to the ground. The two thought that they had killed him; but they had not. It seems that the deceased was a cow... And when the leader came to know that he had not killed *Shaykh* Nūrayn with the rifle he began to keep watch on the affair for fear that it would reach the government of the Italian Company...⁸²

⁷⁸ Interviews, Zeina Jeilani, September 12, 1994; Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 15, 1994. There are more than 144 cases dealing with inheritance in the Barawe *qāḍī*'s record book published by Vianello and Kassim. Many of these have female heirs all of whom eventually received their due. However, lest this be interpreted as evidence that this tradition is a fabrication two things need to be pointed out. First, all of these cases relate to the later Italian period in the 1890s. Second, the recording of inheritance appears to have been voluntary, those who did not wish to follow the dictates of *sharī'a* would not have brought their cases before the court for registration.

⁷⁹ Moallim Nūr, *Manāqib Nūrayn Ahmad Šābr*, (ca. 1925) m. 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid.; interview Ahmad Nurcin Bana Funzi, June 21, 1994; Vianello and Kassim, *Servants of the Sharia*, p. 52, though here he is identified as Nūrayn Muḥammad Šābr.

⁸¹ The *Shaykh*'s spiritual retreat outside Barawe.

⁸² Moallim Nūr, *Manāqib Nūrayn Ahmad Šābr*, m. 14.

Certainly, such anecdotes cannot be taken as faithful representations of 'historical fact'. At the same time, to categorize them merely as religious literary polemic aimed at the perceived ills of the imperfect and immoral secular world robs them of their potential value for the social historian. Instead, I suggest, these accounts constitute commentary on the many social and economic maladies of the late nineteenth century—ills brought about by the perceived general immorality and impiety of the urban elite that could only be remedied through a return to piety realized in the forms of the Sufi *ṭuruq* and the *sharī'a*.

Urban traditions also record the natural and financial calamities of the late nineteenth century, speaking repeatedly of the intrusive greed of Indian merchants, the general dishonest character of *qādlīs*, and the economic troubles of the era.⁸³ However, while countless academics, both Western and non-Western, have connected the decline of East African mercantile society to the growing world economy and encroaching European colonialism, the compilers of the Somali *manāqib* point in another direction: a lack of moral fiber.⁸⁴

The *manāqib*, unlike the European commentaries, approach the local social problems as ones based largely on the moral lapses of the townsmen. The center of strife in one case was the 'abominable pastime', *ḥikow*, while in another custom and 'orthodox' *sharī'a* form the basis of conflict. In both cases it is those who earn their living buying and selling that are identified as having deviated from the true path. Oral versions strengthen this connection between moral decrepitude and commerce, by indicating that trade and profit lay at the bottom of this immoral behavior. Traditions quoted by another researcher state that merchants used the carnival like atmosphere of the *ḥikow* ceremonies to fleece unsuspecting nomads who came to town to trade. Similarly, oral versions of the *Shaykh* Nūrayn *manāqib* state that the townsmen's opposition to the *Shaykh* was based on their fears that *sharī'a* would conflict with the traditional law of inheritance which prevented women from inheriting property from their fathers' estates. Such a shift would have been potentially detrimental to merchants who would no longer be able to keep all immovable assets (houses, storage facilities, looms,

⁸³ Interviews, Abukar Hamud Sokorow, July 5, 1994; Uways *Shaykh* Muhammad, October 10, 1994.

⁸⁴ This is not meant to imply that these factors did not have a hand in local decline. However, from the Benaadir perspective, these things were symptoms rather than causes of their plight.

tanneries, etc.) within the agnatic line.⁸⁵ From a strictly Islamic point of view, however, the traditional practice was in error, and the merchants who supported it were clearly guilty of immoral behavior.

Corruption among the merchant elite was certainly no figment of a hagiographer's imagination. *Sharīf* 'Aydarūs noted in his history of the Benaadir coast that during the late nineteenth century Mogadishu suffered from a general state of immorality.⁸⁶ A more detailed contemporary European account, that of Ugo Ferrandi, noted that, for those who had the right connections, in Mogadishu at least, the rule of law was something of a joke. "Customs administration," run by Zanzibari officials, Ferrandi wrote, "was a myth." The majority of large merchants routinely unloaded cargoes from their ships and transported them directly to their own warehouses, bypassing the Omani customs station and "later reporting to the customs officer that which they thought best, but always . . . much less than the truth." Those with connections to the Zanzibari appointed governor, he noted, need not even report their affairs at all. The court of the *qāḍī*, which handled most matters involving commerce, was apparently no better. "Justice," he concluded, "was a parody." Favorable decisions were sold to the highest bidder, the "testimony of the *sunna* [the practices of the Prophet Muḥammad] did not have preeminence," and "lies were accepted as truth . . ." Furthermore, usury, forbidden by *sharī'a*, seems to have become increasingly common in commercial contracts between merchants.⁸⁷

According to the hagiographies, with the abandonment of *ḥikow* and their adoption of the *ṭarīqa* in the story of *Shaykh* Uways, society, and the merchants, returned to an even moral keel and, presumably, prosperity. The resolution of conflict is not nearly as simple in the case of *Shaykh* Nūrayn. At the end of the two *manāqib* quoted above those who oppose the *Shaykh* are checked, but we are not told whether or not they return to the righteous path of Islam. In fact, in the second episode, the reader is told specifically that the perpetrator continued to lurk on the outskirts of proper society, fearful of discovery but, apparently not repentant. Later in the same collection, however, the rewards of piety for the merchant are specifically enumerated in another *manqaba*.

⁸⁵ Interviews, Zeina Jeilani, September 12, 1994; Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 15, 1994.

⁸⁶ 'Aydarūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*.

⁸⁷ Ferrandi *Lugh*, 11–12, 35.

Among the *manāqib* of *Shaykh* Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr is that related by the righteous brother Muḥammad b. ʿAbdullāh b. Shaddād from the Āl ʿAmr Ba ʿAmr. It is about the *Sayyid*, Aḥmad b. *Ḥājī* Muḥammad... who one day set out from Barawe with a group of others for Birtirre, having with them twelve camels carrying goods for trade. These were loaded to their capacity and it was not possible to place anything more upon them. They set out and arrived at a place halfway between Barawe and Birtirre, and in that desolate and dangerous place two of the camels died. This created a problem, as they could not place the loads of the two dead camels on the remaining ten and it was not possible for them to leave the goods where they were for fear of ruin through looting and fighting. So *Sayyid* Aḥmad declared that they should invoke the name of *Shaykh* Nūrayn, place themselves in his debt, and ask for help from their predicament. They did so and in less than half an hour a man appeared with two camels. He greeted them, although none of them knew who he was. They asked him to carry their goods on his camels to Birtirre and he agreed. When they asked him how much he wanted for his services he said, “Pray for me until we reach your destination then all will be well.” And they were happy with that.

When they arrived in Birtirre they again asked him what his reward should be. He said that he wanted nothing from them, as he had everything that he needed. And when they insisted, he said, “Pray for me, as I have been sent to you.” From this it was obvious that he had been sent to us by the *Shaykh*. Then we presented him a *Markani tob* [cotton cloth] and a kilo of *bunn* [coffee beans]. He took it from us but said, “This is only a present and not a payment.” And with that he went on his way.⁸⁸

As this story illustrates, following the righteous Sufi path led to blessings and prosperity, while the earlier episodes suggest nothing but frustration for the impious. Certainly, as a trope, there is nothing unusual in the portrayal of the rewards of piety over immorality within the realm of Islamic literature. Within the context of Somali *manāqib*, however, it constitutes more than mere moral hyperbole.

It is important to remember that many of the leaders, as well as members, of local Sufi circles from the late nineteenth century belonged to the mercantile elite. As a result, the fact that they include stories, in both their written and oral repertoires, that criticize the manner in which they earn a living suggests that the use of the pious trope is in effect a kind of social self-criticism and a narrative moral history of the community. Numerous urban traditions recount the economic and natural disasters of the late nineteenth century. It is only the *manāqib*,

⁸⁸ Moallim Nūr, *Manāqib Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr*, m. 37.

however, that offer a reason for these calamities as well as a solution. The stories cited suggest that at least certain elements of the Somali mercantile elite viewed the problems of the period as resulting from their community's own moral failings, a situation that could only be corrected by a return to the true path of religion and piety. For many, the Sufi way represented the best remedy for their social woes.

Merchants and the Spread of the Ṭuruq—A More Concrete Prescription

The spread of Sufism throughout southern Somalia is often largely attributed to the great holy men such as *Shaykh* Uways and *Shaykh* Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr. However, coastal merchants also tied themselves closely to the propagation of the “Way” in the interior. As we saw earlier, urban and mercantile backgrounds were common among the early leaders of the Qādiriyya. *Khulafāʾ* with commercial connections can also be found in the interior. In the village of Yaqounta north of Barawe the *khalīfa* of the Qādiriyya, at the turn of the nineteenth century, was a certain ‘Abdi Sharīf, a merchant and landowner from the Ajuran clan. During a somewhat later period, the leader of the Qādiriyya in the town of Baydhabo was a merchant from Marka known as *Sharīf Aw Aḥmad*.⁸⁹

Ṭuruq influence was also easily encountered outside the boundaries of the urban merchant community among people with close connections to the commercial world. The same oral tradition which spoke of the merchant *khalīfa* of Yaqounta noted that the local *ṭarīqa* counted most of the area's manual laborers as members as well as the majority of resident merchants. In Luuq, during the 1890s, local residents began to hold *dhikr* ceremonies on Thursday evenings, as Ferrandi states, “in imitation of coastal merchants who had settled” there. Sufi influence was even found along the caravan routes. While traveling towards Mogadishu from Luuq in 1897, he noted the veneration of the saint ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī among his caravaneers and the saint's position as the ‘protector of caravans’ throughout southern Somalia. Caravan departures were always prefaced with the recitation of the *fatīḥa* (the opening verse of the Qurʾān) and the invocation of ‘Abd al-Qādir

⁸⁹ Interviews, Ahmad Abu Dina, October 3, 1994; Muhammad Hajji Dheere, August 27, 1994.

al-Jilani's name in order to ensure a safe journey. When his caravan happened upon a small stream in an area where water was scarce, his men declared that the water had been provided by *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Qādir after invoking his name.⁹⁰

Spiritual motives for missionization by adherents of the orders, as we will see in the following chapters, should not be undervalued. However, the spread of the *ṭuruq* in the interior also provided coastal merchants with a valuable new social connection to the inhabitants of the interior. The growth in *ṭuruq* membership, according to one observer, increased the security of travelers and merchants in the interior, presumably because their mutual affiliation created a new found bond of trust and tolerance. In addition, merchants might also find new opportunities through their *ṭarīqa* brethren.⁹¹

Merchants, producers and the ṭuruq

Although the rise of the *ṭuruq* represented the emergence of a new social organism, the links between coastal merchants and rural producers within the *ṭuruq* were personal bonds based more often on ideas of piety and trust than corporate connections founded on mutual affiliations to a particular Sufi 'way'. The formation of such bonds were frequently facilitated by the emergence of the quintessential rural manifestation of Sufism, the *jamā'a*. By the 1890s the Qādiriyya and Aḥmadiyya *ṭuruq* had gathered considerable followings throughout the southern hinterland. The most visible manifestations of these were the *jamā'āt* or religious communities which dotted the interior landscape. Every leading Sufi figure of the late nineteenth century established at least one such community in the interior. Zayla'i, for instance, maintained a community in Qolonqool. *Shaykh* Uways founded two communities, one in Biyooley near Tijielo and another known as Balad Amīn near Afgoye; even the urbanite Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr had a rural retreat in a place called Balad al-Raḥma.⁹²

⁹⁰ Interview, Ahmad Abu Dina, October 3, 1994; Ferrandi, *Lugh*, p. 241 and *Da Lugh alla Costa*, p. 17.

⁹¹ Interview, Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 15, 1994; Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, p. 431.

⁹² Colucci, *Principi di Diritto Consuetudinario della Somalia Italiana Meridionale* (Firenze: Soc. An. editrice, 1924), p. 80 n. 1; Moallim Nūr Manāqib *Shaykh Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr* Introduction. Unfortunately, I have not been able to discover the exact location of this last community.

Numerous other communities could be found spread throughout the Jubba-Shabeelle river valley from the coast as far inland as Luuq, ranging in size from a few hundred to two thousand. Some were affiliated with one of the established *ṭuruq* (Qādiriyya, Aḥmadiyya or Ṣālihiyya) others had more complex and less sectarian affiliations.⁹³ The largest Aḥmadiyya community, called Basra, headed by *Shaykh* Ḥasan Mu'allim, the first Somali Aḥmadiyya *khalīfā*, was located along the Shabeelle upstream from the villages of Mahai and Warshaykh, and was home to more than 1500 adherents. Another important Aḥmadiyya community was formed in the village of Marille on the banks of the Jubba near Luuq. This *jamā'a* was home to about one hundred students and scholars but also served as a spiritual center for surrounding groups of pastoralists and agriculturalists. A third Aḥmadiyya community was located in Balad, headed by a *shaykh* from the Dighil clan named Qaboqow, and was home to about two hundred adherents.⁹⁴ Aside from the communities at Biyooley and Qolonqool, mentioned above, another large *jamā'a* dedicated to the Qādiriyya was located at Nimow south of Mogadishu near the village of Gazira, with about 500 members.⁹⁵

Other *jamā'as* existed, however, which were not directly affiliated with one of the *ṭuruq*. Several could be found around Marka which belonged to no particular order but instead were closely affiliated with the local clan structure, drawing both their leadership and adherents primarily from particular segments of the dominant Bimal agro-pastoralists or their clients. The largest of these communities was Wagaddi, which in the 1890s had approximately 2,000 members. Two smaller communities were located at Mallable and Qaitoi, both dominated by the Bimal.⁹⁶

The communities in the region surrounding Baardheere defied close affiliation with either a single order or clan. After its destruction at the hands of the Geledi in the mid-1840s, the site of Baardheere was rebuilt

⁹³ A report by the Commissioner for the Upper Jubba recorded the existence of 46 *jamā'as* with a known *ṭarīqa* affiliation. By residency there were 9 in Bhaydhabo; 18 in Bardheere; 13 in Bur Haqaba; 4 in Uddur; 1 in Tijiolo; and 1 in Luuq. Of these 18 were Aḥmadiyya, 22 Ṣālihiyya and 6 Qādiriyya. In addition to these there were numerous smaller communities which were responsible only to their heads and local clan leaders. The large number of Ṣālihiyya communities listed by the commissioner is at direct variance with oral traditions, which claim that the Ṣālihiyya were the smallest of the organized *ṭuruq*. At the moment I am unable to account for this discrepancy which is a matter for future inquiry. Colucci, *Principi*, pp. 81–82 n. 3.

⁹⁴ Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, pp. 422–427.

⁹⁵ Idem.

⁹⁶ Idem.

and a new, less politically militant *jamā'a* was established. The new community, however, did not follow a single order. Instead, adherents generally belonged to one of the three main *ṭuruq*, participating in the ceremonies of the *ṭarīqa* in which they were initiates.⁹⁷ Other similarly non-affiliated *jamā'as* sprang up in the region around Baardheere. The largest of these were the settlements of Mardah and Marille, both located north of Baardheere proper, along the Jubba. Numerous smaller communities could also be found along both the Jubba and Shebeelle as far inland as Luuq and Buur Haqaba.⁹⁸

The formation and composition of *jamā'as* followed different patterns. In some cases a *shaykh* with a few followers might arrive in a particular place and request protection from the local clan along with a cession of land on which to build their settlement and undertake cultivation. In other instances, a *shaykh* and his adherents might form a community on unclaimed land, eventually attracting others into their orbit, resulting in the establishment of a new village.⁹⁹ The membership of individual *jamā'a* also varied. *Jamā'as* often acted as a magnet for society's less fortunate. Members of outcast groups, former or runaway slaves, and persons belonging to minority lineages were all drawn to the Sufi communities as a means of social protection. This seems especially true of the smaller, more isolated communities, such as those located in the Shidle region, an area known as a haven for runaways.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, evidence suggests that some *jamā'as*, particularly larger ones, drew many of their followers from local pastoral clans. For instance, several communities located around Marka were closely linked to the powerful Bimal. Finally, some communities might draw followers from all of these sources. The *jamā'as* of Marda and Marille, near Baardheere, drew some of their members from client cultivator lineages, such as the Galjal and Gubihan, as well as some former slaves. However, the majority of their adherents came from elements of the agro-pastoral Rahanwayn clan.¹⁰¹

Jamā'as also attracted individuals on a more casual basis. Some communities, such as the small *jamā'a* located in Buur Haqaba around

⁹⁷ Interview, Muhammad Hadi, July 2, 1994; Colucci, *Principi*, pp. 80–81.

⁹⁸ Chiesi, *La Colonizzazione*, pp. 536, 546–549; Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, p. 426.

⁹⁹ Colucci, *Principi*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁰ Idem.

¹⁰¹ Chiesi, *La Colonizzazione*, pp. 546–549.

the tomb of *Shaykh* Mumin, were also pilgrimage centers that hosted large numbers of the faithful during the annual *ziyāra* held on the anniversary of the saint's death. Others had reputations as centers of religious learning, attracting students from both their surrounding communities and further afield. The settlement of Marille was home to one hundred scholars and students who provided instruction in the Qur'ān and the other Islamic sciences. The community at Baardheere had a similar reputation for learning, drawing students from among local pastoralists and coastal merchants resident in the town. Even some prominent members of the coastal *'ulamā'* are said to have studied in the interior. The noted Qādirī saint, *Shaykh* Moallim Nūr, for example, studied in a small *jamā'a* located near the town of Jilib at the turn of the century.¹⁰² Although anecdotal, this evidence suggests that the religious communities of the interior appealed to more than those in search of protection. In addition to being havens for the socially weak, they were also newly emerging religious centers and, most importantly for the merchant class, budding economic hubs.

Coastal merchants took advantage of the sudden profusion of *jamā'a* communities during the last decades of the nineteenth century as fresh sources of exchange and new bases of operations. The re-formed settlement of Baardheere presents an example of a community which served both these new purposes. As we noted above, the Baardheere *jamā'a* was rebuilt shortly after its destruction in the mid-1840s. The site was again abandoned in 1865 following the massacre of the German explorer Carl von der Decken and his party within the settlement's precincts. Fearing retribution from Zanzibar or one of the European powers, most of the inhabitants abandoned the site for other places along the river.¹⁰³ With the increased security which prevailed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the settlement gradually revived. The inhabitants, like other riverine communities, turned to agriculture as their primary means of subsistence.

According to Ferrandi, it was not long before the location turned in to an important commercial hub along the Jubba River. By the 1880s the settlement's inhabitants regularly sold their surplus agricultural

¹⁰² Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, p. 426; Chiesi, *La Colonizzazione*, p. 548; interviews, Muhammad Hadi, July 2, 1994; Uways *Shaykh* Muhammad, September 27, 1994. Not to be confused with Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr's hagiographer.

¹⁰³ Ferrandi, *Lugh*, pp. 314, 316, 321, 323, 367; Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir* pp. 422–427.

products on the commercial market to coastal merchants who shipped at least some of this produce to the coastal export market. In addition, the settlement also became an important center for the collection and marketing of luxury goods such as ivory, aromatic gums, and slaves. Finally, the settlement served as a staging point for merchants and caravans carrying goods to and from more distant communities, such as the one located at Marille.¹⁰⁴

The commercial relationships merchants sought out were frequently of an individual or personal nature rather than corporate ones. The leadership of individual communities exercised a great amount of religious and political authority over adherents who were members of the *jamā'a*. This authority, however, was considerably less with regard to economic activities, leaving substantial room for individual relationships between *jamā'a* members and coastal merchants.

Virtually all religious communities in the interior possessed landholdings which were used to support the *jamā'a*'s members. Some, such as the Wagaddeh *jamā'a* near Marka and the Marda, and Marille *jamā'as* near Baardheere, possessed livestock herds as well as large tracts of agricultural land, in order to sustain their adherents. Smaller communities maintained more modest holdings.¹⁰⁵ The larger *jamā'as*, at least, were regular participants in commercial agriculture. The inhabitants of Marda, for instance, grew *dura*, beans and sesame, which formed the basis of their diet. The surplus from their harvests, however, was regularly sold on the commercial market. Communities with access to herds, such as those around Marka, presumably were also active in the trade in animal products.¹⁰⁶

In general, while such lands were communally held, they were not communally worked. A *shaykh* and his followers, as already mentioned, established their community by either clearing unused land or receiving a grant of territory from a local clan. The leader of the *jamā'a* would then divide this land among his followers to be worked individually. The particulars of this process are vividly demonstrated in an account of the establishment of the Misr *jamā'a*, founded by the Šāliḥiyya *shaykh* Muḥammad Guled around 1880. According to oral traditions recorded in 1920, the land for the community was ceded to the *shaykh* by the

¹⁰⁴ Ferrandi, *Lugh*, op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, pp. 424, 426; Chiesi, *La Colonizzazione*, pp. 546–549.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 546.

Shidle sub-clans Reer Barre and Reer Issa. In turn, the *shaykh* allotted various parcels to his followers according to their ability to work the land and the needs of their families. The *shaykh*'s grant was only for the right to work the land and not ownership. Hence, the cession could be revoked if the adherent committed infractions of the rules or behaved in a manner incompatible with the spirit of the *jamā'a*.¹⁰⁷ More importantly, the fruits of the followers' labors were not centrally collected by the leadership of the *jamā'a*. Instead, each follower was permitted to keep his entire harvest, using it for his family's sustenance and selling any surplus.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, we have little information regarding the exact nature of the relationship between the coastal merchants and *jamā'a* members. Some traders reputedly formed close ties with the *jamā'a* leadership, however, such connections were characterized as personal, having only limited impact on the wider *jamā'a* membership. These relations might improve a merchant's local standing and provide him with greater access to local labor through the *jamā'a shaykh*'s right to a certain amount of annual *corvée* labor from his followers which could be transferred to his associates. Close links with the leadership, however, did not guarantee ready access to the crops of adherents who maintained the right to sell their surplus produce to whomever they wished.

Merchants, therefore, may have found the cultivation of relations with individual *jamā'a* members equally advantageous as those with the local leadership. Few Benaadiris living in the interior became formal members of communities, but many participated in the spiritual activities of the *jamā'as*. In Baardheere, for instance, some of the coastal merchants studied *ilm* under the tutelage of scholars belonging to the *jamā'as*, while others took part in the Sufi rituals of the community. Within the Baardheere community there existed both Aḥmadiyya and Qādiriyya circles. Rather than forming their own groups, Benaadiri merchants who were *ṭuruq* members participated in the weekly *dhikr* ceremonies held by *jamā'a* members belonging to their particular *ṭarīqa*.¹⁰⁹ Such associations suggest an atmosphere in which merchants and producers were free to build bonds of trust, facilitating the growth of commercial relationships.

¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the Shidle's grant only gave the community the right to occupy and work the land and was not a cession of ownership. Colucci, *Principi*, p. 263.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 263 n. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Interview, Muhammad Hadi, July 2, 1994.

The rise of the Sufi orders in southern Somalia clearly provided merchants with new opportunities for contacts with the interior. Despite the formal organization of *turuq*, bonds between members were characteristic of a loose network of individual relationships rather than a tightly knit organism. While coastal adherents might find business opportunities in the interior through their brethren, the *ṭarīqa* did not supersede familial and clan relationships. As one informant noted, *ṭarīqa* membership was often “not sufficient to guarantee successful trade in the interior.” Instead, one still had to count on clan or family relations for assistance. In the case of this informant’s grandfather, Sokorow Mude, despite his membership in the Qādiriyya, his start in the commercial circles of Luuq came through the assistance of two fellow clansmen, Manow Ḥasan and Ḥusayn Sunwayni (Bignose).¹¹⁰ Similarly, neither the Qādiriyya nor the Aḥmadiyya ever operated as united groups in a concerted effort to monopolize a particular commodity or geographic area to the exclusion of the other.¹¹¹

Turuq membership, rather than creating a new corporate identity for rural and urban Somalis, constituted a new layer of social bonding between individuals similar to the bonds of marriage and trust.¹¹² In many cases *ṭarīqa* affiliation was not the only, nor even the strongest, connection. Three of the principal business partners (*Hājī* Ḥasan Aḥmad, Moallim Ḥamūd, and ‘Asha Shaykh) of the Mogadishu merchant Uways Nūr were co-initiates of the Qādiriyya. Each of these partners, however, was also linked to Uways Nūr through at least one other bond. *Hājī* Ḥasan Aḥmad and Moallim Ḥamūd were both related to Uways Nūr through descent in the Bandawow lineage, while ‘Asha *Shaykh* was linked to him through marriage.¹¹³

When merchants and agents shared no other common bond, however, *ṭarīqa* membership served as an affirmation of both the merchant’s and the agent’s trustworthy character; that merchant and agent share the same *ṭarīqa* affiliation was, apparently, unimportant. The prominent Barawe merchant, Shaykh bin Shaykh, for instance, sought agents among Tunni clansmen living along the Jubba. Many

¹¹⁰ Interview, Abukar Hamud Sokorow, October 4, 1994.

¹¹¹ Interviews, Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 15, 1994; Mawlana Habib, Watamu Kenya, September 29, 1994.

¹¹² For a detailed discussion of intermarriage as a commercial tool see Reese, *Patricians*, Chapter 4.

¹¹³ See Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*, Chapter 4 pp. 204–206 for a discussion of this marriage alliance.

of those he recruited, according to his descendants, were affiliated with the Qādiriyya, while others belonged to the Aḥmadiyya. The important factor in their recruitment was that they belonged to a Sufi organization which attested to their character and moral fiber and, by extension, their trustworthiness as agents. The particular school with which agents were affiliated was largely irrelevant.¹¹⁴ Given the diffuse nature of the *ṭuruq* in the interior, the relative unimportance of specific affiliations should not be surprising. As noted above, many of the rural *jamāʿas* were not affiliated with a single *ṭarīqa*. Instead, a single community might be home to adherents belonging to several different *ṭuruq*. The ties to particular Sufi orders of those living outside of organized *jamāʿas* appear even more tenuous. The inhabitants of Luuq in the 1890s practiced a rather generic kind of Sufism characterized by simplified *dhikr* ceremonies and without any affiliation to a specific *ṭarīqa*.¹¹⁵ Nomads and cultivators living near *jamāʿas* often maintained only occasional relations with the religious communities, such as annual pilgrimages to holy sites or the consultation of prominent religious figures for the settlement of local disputes.¹¹⁶ In both these cases, association with a general kind of mysticism and religious life appears more important than affiliation with a particular *ṭarīqa*. In such an atmosphere, it is not surprising that coastal merchants did not recruit rural agents exclusively from among the followers of their own *ṭarīqa*. Rather than forming the basis for a new corporate identity, affiliation with a mystical order served as a new yardstick for measuring the piety and moral fiber of an individual, and thus his potential trustworthiness as a trade partner.

Given the paucity of direct evidence, it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty the exact nature of the bonds created by the *ṭuruq* between rural inhabitants and coastal merchants. The evidence suggests that the Sufi renaissance lessened the social distance between rural and urban inhabitants by emphasizing the unity of *all* Somalis through their common Islamic and mystical heritage; however, this did not result in the creation of new corporate identities based on *ṭarīqa* affiliation (e.g. identifying as Aḥmadiyya or Qādiriyya rather than by clan or ethnicity). At the same time, there is never any hint of a *ṭarīqa* attempting to supplant local identities with its own, or to maintain a

¹¹⁴ Interview, Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 15, 1994.

¹¹⁵ Ferrandi, *Lugh*, pp. 241–242.

¹¹⁶ Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Somalia e Benadir*, p. 426.

rigid separation between itself and other orders.¹¹⁷ On the contrary, oral traditions are remarkable for their emphasis on the lack of rivalry between the members of different orders and, indeed, the cooperation between them.¹¹⁸ Rather than undercutting old identities, the *ṭuruq* created additional bonds between rural and urban individuals founded on their common Islamic and mystical heritage.

As a result, the bonds created by *ṭarīqa* membership more closely resemble those of marriage and trust. Inter-marriage, a traditional tool of merchants to solidify networks in the interior, created a link between urban and rural individuals. *Ṭarīqa* membership paved the way for similar bonds of confidence based, not on blood relationships, but on their common association with the mystical orders. As we mentioned earlier, a *ṭarīqa* adherent from the coast not expect material and moral support from his brethren in the interior based solely on their common affiliation. At the same time, association with a *ṭarīqa* carried with it assumptions of an individual's piety, which facilitated the creation of bonds of trust between himself and members of other orders. Thus, as intermarriage created ties with both a single family and the wider clan, *ṭarīqa* affiliation connected adherents to members of their own order in the interior while at the same time offering them access to a looser network of associations with members of other *ṭuruq*.

Ties of trust built by the Sufi orders, however, while closing the social gap between rural and urban adherents, entailed social obligations somewhat less onerous than those incurred with the construction of kinship ties. Marriage ties, as a number of informants pointed out, created a blood tie which obliged the merchant to assist his new in-laws. The weight of such relationships fell squarely on the shoulders of the merchant who was required to assist any of his wife's rural relatives and clansmen. Such relationships, unless carefully managed, posed a potential threat to the maintenance of a distinct Benaadiri identity.

¹¹⁷ Interview, Jeilani Hajj Ali, October 9, 1994 and Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 17, 1994.

¹¹⁸ A significant exception to this trend, of course, was the violent rivalry between the Qādiriyya and Ṣālihiyya orders during the time of *Sayyid* 'Abdullāh Ḥasan discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Qādiriyya-Ṣālihiyya animosity following the death of *Shaykh* Uways in 1909 ran very high for years culminating in a series of violent incidents between adherents of the two *ṭarīqas* in the 1920s and 1930s. While an important cleavage, adherents of the orders regard this as an aberration that resulted from extraordinary circumstances and not characteristic of relations between the *ṭuruq*. This would also seem borne out by the hagiographic literature in which other orders and their *shaykhs* are spoken of with respect.

Bonds formed through the *ṭarīqa*, on the other hand, were essentially the opposite. The duty to assist fellow adherents, rather than resting upon an individual, was spread among all the members of the order. More importantly, merchants were obliged to only assist other members, exclusive of their relatives and fellow clansmen and even that could often be limited. As a result, such bonds enabled coastal merchants to draw closer to their rural counterparts while leaving their own identities, and economic interests, largely intact. In an era of increasing competition from outsiders, Arab and Indian, the *ṭuruq* (which by and large appear to have been “Somali only” clubs) provided merchants with an extra edge without endangering their own corporate identities.

As a final caveat it must be remembered that the *ṭuruq*, first and foremost, existed to serve the spiritual needs of a community in crisis; providing religious explanations and solutions for the natural and manmade disasters which befell them during the last decades of the nineteenth century. As such, the *ṭuruq* should not be dismissed in crass materialist terms as a simple strategy for one community to better its economic position. Instead, it may be more useful to view the *ṭuruq* as a spiritual response to real economic and social problems, which, when placed within Benaadiri strategies of cross-cultural communication helped to solve, or at least mitigate, their predicament.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN IS KAFĀ'A KIFAYAH?¹—SUFĪ LEADERSHIP, RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Many of the moral guidelines laid down by the Sufi leaders of the Benaadir were hardly divisive issues. After all, following the laws of God, praising the saints and eschewing greed and lewd behavior were maxims that no urban East African Muslim could possibly find objectionable. Not all of the teachings of the orders, however, were so non-controversial. The wider moral program of the Benaadir's religious leadership contained at least one element that was contentious even within the ranks of the *'ulamā'*: the inherent spiritual—if not social—equality of all believers.

Despite the old adage quoted by Burton that among the Somalis “every man is a sultan,”² Somali society at large was one riddled with social divisions. Among the nomads there was the, at least theoretical, division between “noble” and “servile” lineages or *Gob* versus *Sab*. There was also an even more basic division between “free” and “slave” as well as a number of subservient or “caste” groups that fell outside of the regular clan structure altogether. This latter category included the *Midgan* hunters, *Tumal* leatherworkers and the *Yibir* traditionally regarded as a “caste” of magicians.³ Similar divisions between free and slave; noble and servile existed within the urban sphere. In addition, the free “noble” elements of urban society were themselves divided into a complex hierarchy. In some cases social standing was predicated on historic client-patron relationships—not unlike the institution of *sheegad* found among pastoralists—and the length of time one's lineage could claim residency within the town.⁴ In other instances, however, greater social standing was based on perceptions of an elevated spiritual state

¹ When is “sufficiency, sufficient?”

² Richard Burton, *First Footsteps in East Africa*, (London: Dover Publications, 1890/1856).

³ See I.M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society*, (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1994).

⁴ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, pp. 75–78.

founded on lineal descent from a respected holy figure. Such was the case of the Ashrāf who, as a result of their descent from the Prophet Muḥammad, were regarded by many as the spiritual and social superiors of their fellow townsmen.⁵

Within the context of all the other trials of the early twentieth century, the religious figures of the Benaadir also found themselves taking up the question of social and spiritual inequalities. Events of the 1920s saw issues of social difference come to a head, largely through the actions of the Italian colonial government. Italian policies regarding manumission and labor regulation—policies aimed at supporting their own plans for corporate agriculture in the Benaadir hinterland—appear to have precipitated a crisis within Benaadiri social hierarchy, causing many to question the way things had “always been.” For many religious practitioners the notion of institutional discrimination in a faith where all souls were thought to be equal was becoming a glaring contradiction. Others sought to defend the status quo. The data for this period is unfortunately limited,⁶ however; using existing European works in concert with local written sources, it is possible to at least outline the debates over social status in which Somalis in the urban and rural Benaadir were engaged during this period and the various options individuals proposed as a solution.

Finding a place in society

As East Africa entered the twentieth-century, many groups outside the traditional coastal elite began to agitate for greater inclusion within their respective communities. The presence of a subaltern discourse that challenged elite hegemony in the late nineteenth century has been a central theme of scholarly research into East African Islam since Abdul Hamid El Zein’s 1974 work *Sacred Meadows*.⁷ Contrary to his conclusions, as well as those found in the somewhat later work of

⁵ The Ashrāf were not the only urban lineage whose social standing was predicated on a pious ancestor. Of equal local importance were the Reer *Shaykh* Mumin whose members were regarded as sharing the mystical powers of their eponymous ancestor. See Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*.

⁶ Colonial records for the 1920s are spotty at best and thus for the Italian point of view, we must rely on a limited number of published works that range from scholarly works (e.g. Enrico Cerulli and Colucci) to travel account and political memoirs.

⁷ Abdul Hamid El Zein, *Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1974).

Randall Powels,⁸ the genesis of such movements was not a classical kind of Marxist class struggle in which the subaltern sought to resist and eventually throw off the yoke of oppressive elites. The object of this discourse was not revolution. Instead, it was aimed at redefining the boundaries of community and laying claim to full membership in the *umma*. As Jonathan Glassman amply demonstrated in his book *Feasts and Riot*, the ability of groups such as slaves, porters, and other new immigrants to challenge the power of traditional coastal elites was precipitated largely by the emergence of colonial rule and subsequent changes in local power structures. More recently, Laura Fair has shown that the goal of the disenfranchised was not necessarily to overthrow the reigning social system but to carve out their place in it. In her book *Pastimes and Politics*, Fair demonstrates how the poor of Zanzibar used various means such as popular song and dance, rent strikes and even soccer to assert their claims to membership in free urban society.⁹ Not surprisingly, a similar pattern can be discerned in the post-abolition Benaadir though realized in different forms.

In recent years, a number of scholars have written extensively about the slaves and servile groups of the Somali hinterland.¹⁰ Most of this literature has been devoted to examining the struggle of these groups to maintain both their autonomy and identity in the colonial and post-colonial milieus. This research has understandably tended to focus on the actions and discourses of the groups themselves. This chapter looks to broaden that conversation by exploring the perspective of some of those on the other side of the equation: the urban elite. It is presumed that the attitude of Somali elites towards servile peoples was one of

⁸ Randall Powels, *Horn and Crescent: Cultural change and Traditional Islam on the East African Coast, 800–1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁹ Jonathan Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1888*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman 1995); Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890–1945*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ These include Lee Cassanelli, “The Ending of Slavery in Italian Somalia: Liberty and the Control of Labor, 1890–1935,” in *The End of Slavery in Africa*, Suzanne Meirs and Richard Roberts, eds. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Kenneth Menkhous, *Rural Transformation and the Roots of Underdevelopment in Somalia's Lower Jubba Valley*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina (1989); Catherine Besteman and Lee Cassanelli eds., *The Struggle for Land in Southern Somalia: The War Behind the War*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Catherine Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia: Race, Violence and the Legacy of Slavery*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) and; Francesca Declich, *I Bantu della Somalia: Etnogenesi e rituali mwiko*, (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2002).

disdain and contempt and certainly this was true of many. However, as we will see in this chapter, there were others—particularly among religious intellectuals—who viewed such social distinctions as inherently contradictory to the spirit of the faith.

Commerce, Unfree Labor and the Patricians of the Coast

The urban prosperity of the nineteenth century was, as already noted, built in part on the ability of townsmen to capitalize on the growing agriculture sector of the inter-river region. This was a boom made possible only through the existence of various kinds of unfree labor. As Cassanelli has pointed out, a variety of “corporate client-patron” relations were common in pre-colonial Somali society, especially among the pastoral groups in the south. There existed formal agreements between stronger and weaker pastoral groups known as *sheegad*, in which dependant groups relinquished elements of their political autonomy to stronger ones in exchange for protection and access to grazing and water. Similar arrangements might also be concluded between pastoralists and outcaste groups such as *Midgan* hunters and *Tumal* leather workers.¹¹ The most economically visible client-patron arrangement, however, was that found between the pastoralists and cultivators of the southern region surrounding the Shabeelle River. Predating the nineteenth century, the origins of the Shabeelle cultivator groups are obscure. They may represent remnants of pre-Cushitic Bantu speaking farming communities that survived the later pastoral expansion. On the other hand, they may have been the descendants of earlier slave populations acquired by Somalis to produce grains and fruits ordinarily unavailable to those following a nomadic lifestyle. In either case, by the nineteenth century, they enjoyed a largely symbiotic relationship with their pastoral neighbors. Client cultivators provided produce to their nomadic patrons in exchange for various pastoral products such as meat and ghee as well as protection. Certainly, these groups were regarded as social inferiors referred to derogatorily as *timo aday* or “hard hairs”.¹² They were not, however, slaves in the strictest sense.

The emergence of slavery on a broad scale appears as a largely nineteenth-century phenomenon linked to the rise of commercial agriculture. Some time after 1800, the first slaves from the Mrima coast of

¹¹ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, pp. 75–76.

¹² Ibid., pp. 163–164; Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*, p. 52.

modern Tanzania were brought to the Bajuni islands laying off the Benaadir coast, as well the town of Barawe, as gang labor.¹³ By the 1840s hundreds of captives were being imported annually by pastoralists, recently turned agro-capitalists, as field labor to work grain and sesame plantations located along the Shabeelle and Jubba Rivers. It is impossible to determine the exact number of agricultural slaves used to work plantations during the nineteenth century. However, the rapid growth of runaway communities along the Jubba during the latter part of the century suggests that it was in the tens of thousands.¹⁴

The relationship between urbanites and the newly emerging slave-labor sector is complex. As we have seen, close commercial and political ties with the plantation owning Geledi of Afgoye can be dated to the 1840s. By the 1890s, Benaadiri merchants were counted among the region's principal suppliers of captives. The traveler Luigi Robecchi-Bricchetti noted that a number of Mogadishu merchants imported slaves from Zanzibar for both resale and use on their own plantations. He similarly named a number of prominent Barawan merchants as deeply involved in the trade. However, the extent of the urban merchant class's involvement in slave based agriculture is difficult to determine. Robecchi-Bricchetti's references constitute the only direct mention of urban ownership of agricultural slaves. Others, such as Ugo Ferrandi, Tomasso Carletti and, Gherardo Pantano—all of whom provide detailed discussions of agricultural slavery—make only vague references to the identities of masters. Instead, they state simply that owners were frequently from the "Benaadir clans," a term that is never carefully defined and may refer to pastoral clans as well as urban groups.¹⁵ The vagueness of many observers regarding the ownership of field slaves, coupled with Robecchi-Bricchetti's own indications that those urbanites who owned agricultural slaves were among the coast's wealthiest inhabitants, suggests that only a small proportion of the urban community possessed commodity producing slaves.¹⁶

¹³ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 169.

¹⁴ Lee V. Cassanelli, "Social Construction on the Somali Frontier: Bantu Former Slave Communities in the Nineteenth Century," in *The African Frontier, The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, ed. Igor Kopytoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) p. 219.

¹⁵ Ferrandi, *Lugh*, p. 113; Tomasso Carletti, *I Problemi del Benadir*, pp. 173ff.; Gherardo Pantano, *La Città di Merca*, pp. 88ff.

¹⁶ Rather than acquiring land to be worked by slaves, most merchants seemingly preferred to deal directly with local cultivators in client-patron relationships. Merchants provided seed, tools and sometimes grain for consumption between harvests

Slaves, however, were still an important—and apparently prominent—element of urban society. In 1903 Robecchi-Bricchetti carried out a systematic census of slaves and masters in the three major Benaadir towns—Mogadishu, Marka and Barawe. Using records kept by Italian administrators, manumission documents from local *qāḍīs*, as well as interviews with masters, he provides a broad overview of both the number and place of slaves in urban coastal society.¹⁷ The largest slave concentration was found in Mogadishu, where Robecchi-Bricchetti recorded a total of 2,095 slaves in a town of approximately 6,700 inhabitants. Eight hundred and twenty-nine were found in Barawe in a town of 3,000, while in somewhat larger Marka—with an estimated population of 5,000—he recorded 721. Of greater interest than the raw numbers are the compiler's notes on slave occupations. He found that only in Barawe were a significant proportion of slaves (395) utilized for commercial agriculture. The majority of slaves in Mogadishu and Marka, as well as Barawe, lived in close proximity to their masters, closely mirroring the roles of urban slaves elsewhere in East Africa.¹⁸ Many were employed in domestic service as general servants, water carriers (generally a female occupation), child minders, cooks and concubines. Others worked outside the master's home either as skilled artisans or wage laborers, a portion of whose earnings were returned to the master on a daily or weekly basis. Their occupations included most of those associated with urban slavery including tanners, weavers, masons, carpenters, guards, sailors, caravaneers, messengers, day laborers and clerks. An elite few appear entrusted with the affairs of their masters residing in other East African ports such as Mombasa or Zanzibar or at inland commercial entrepôts such as Luuq.¹⁹

to farmers primarily along the lower Shabeelle, in exchange for a proportion of the harvest. The main advantage of this arrangement for the merchant was the avoidance of large capital outlays in purchases of land, slaves and equipment. Such low levels of investment meant that even small merchants could participate in the agricultural export economy. Interviews with Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh, September 17, 1994; Jeilani Hajji Ali, October 9, 1994.

¹⁷ There are also numerous references to slaves in the *qāḍī's* record book recently published by Vianello and Kassim. However, the anecdotal nature of these records provides little insight into the numbers or distribution of urban slaves. See *Servants of the Sharia*.

¹⁸ See Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the east coast of Africa*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

¹⁹ Robecchi-Bricchetti, *Lettre*, pp. 68ff.

Robecchi-Bricchetti and other observers noted that the towns and villages of the coast were also home to hundreds of former slaves. Robecchi-Bricchetti's census counted 576 recently freed slaves living in the three major ports; while Gherardo Pantano found hundreds of former captives scattered among the region's villages employed in the production of sesame oil or local cloth known colloquially as "*futa*".²⁰ In addition, many of those involved in the textiles industry were free persons, most of whom shared a social status in urban society that was frequently akin to their unfree counterparts. Such was the lot of the Goigal lineage in Barawe. While possibly of slave origins, the Goigal were a client group of the Tunni who by the twentieth century were free but held a servile status. Many, such as the family of *Shaykh* Uways al-Barawī, made their livelihoods as weavers and even achieved a certain amount of economic prosperity. Socially, however, they were regarded by noble society as no better than slaves signified by common references to them in oral sources as "oji" and "abd" in written Arabic sources both meaning "slave".²¹

Responses to Emancipation

While slavery was becoming an increasingly important part of both urban and rural economies by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, actions were slowly being taken, primarily by outsiders, to either limit or end the institution of involuntary servitude. The first, albeit reluctant, steps were taken by the Omani Sultanate of Zanzibar. The ports of the Benaadir came under the mostly nominal control of Zanzibar following a unilateral declaration by the Sultan *Sayyid* Said in 1828. For most of the nineteenth century Omani presence was limited to a series of ineffective governors and customs officials.²² In 1873, under pressure from European advisers, the reigning sultan, *Sayyid* Barghash, issued a proclamation prohibiting the slave trade in all of his territories. This was followed in 1876 by a series of decrees that prohibited the transport of slaves overland and forbade slave caravans from approaching the coast.²³ In an effort to enforce these new policies, Barghash ordered the reinforcement of his formerly symbolic garrisons in the Benaadir

²⁰ Pantano, *La Città di Merca*, p. 28; Robecchi-Bricchetti, op. cit.

²¹ See below.

²² See Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, pp. 175–76.

²³ Reginald Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa*, pp. 182–184.

towns and the creation of several new forts or *garesas* as strategic points along the coast as a show of force and resolve.

Not surprisingly, the Sultan's actions met with almost immediate resistance. The merchants of the Shangani quarter in Mogadishu flatly refused to allow the construction of a new fortress within the precincts of their community. They relented only after the Geledi sultan threatened them with a commercial blockade. In the region around Marka, the Bimal undertook a campaign of harassment against the Zanzibari garrison, culminating in 1876 with the murder of the governor and his escort along the Marka-Mogadishu road.²⁴ In Barawe, an Egyptian naval expedition sent by Khedive Isma'îl to challenge Zanzibar's loose hold over the coast in 1875 was received with open arms by town elite, who hoped the invaders would reinstitute the slave trade. The Egyptians briefly occupied the city, disarmed the Zanzibari garrison and forced the governor to flee. After only three months, however, the Egyptian force withdrew under British diplomatic pressure, returning their toehold to Zanzibari authority.²⁵ Given the broad resistance in the Benaadir, Zanzibari efforts to end the trade were largely ineffectual. By the time they had ceded control of the coastal ports to Italy in 1889, little had changed for either slaves or slave owners in the Benaadir.

In 1889, Zanzibar—then under the rule of Sultan *Sayyid* Khalifah—divested itself of interest in the Benaadir coast by leasing the ports to the Imperial British East Africa Company. In turn the IBEAC sublet the ports, by prior arrangement, to Italy, reserving Kismaayo and the region south of the Jubba River for itself. The Italian government then turned the coast over to the Royal Italian East Africa Company (commonly referred to as the Benadir Company), a privately chartered concern modeled after the IBEAC.²⁶ While officially dedicated to emancipation and abolition, the Benadir Company did little to end involuntary servitude when it took charge of the coastal towns in 1893. Preferring to cultivate ties with the merchant community, Company officials adopted a stance that advocated the gradual eradication of slavery. Italian officials argued that to suddenly emancipate thousands of captives would have grave consequences for their ability to maintain

²⁴ Georges Revoil, *Voyage*, pp. 60–62; Ugo Ferrandi, “Estratto dal diario di Ugo Ferrandi,” in *Bolletino di l'esplorazione commerciale l'esploratore* (1895) p. 74ff.

²⁵ Marina Molon and Alessandra Vainello, “Brava, Citta Dimenticata,” *Storia urbana*, no. 53, (1990) pp. 201–202; Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 198.

²⁶ Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, chs. 1–4.

order in the towns. Former governor Tomaso Carletti wrote in 1912 that slaves could not simply be freed, as they had been “intellectually stunted” by their captivity, had no sense of self control and represented the dregs of coastal society. To simply free them risked unleashing a wave of moral depravity in the coastal towns. Emancipation, were it to take place at all, should occur in stages with slaves first going through a period of “serfdom.”²⁷ In reality, Company officials were not merely dragging their feet regarding the ending of slavery, but actively helping to perpetuate it. Successive investigations by the Italian government discovered that, although supposedly outlawed, Company functionaries played an active role in perpetuating domestic servitude and “aggravating the condition.” While the Benadir Company did use part of its budget to encourage owners to free their slaves by reimbursing them for their losses, a government report by Commander Onorato Di Monale in 1903 found that:

Not only did slaves [continue to] enter the Benadir [sic] ports, but that the last slaves to enter the town date back only to...December [1902]...Slaves are bought and sold in the Benadir towns not only under the eyes of Italian authorities dependent on the company, but according to the registers of the cadis [sic] of Mogadishu...with the sanction of those authorities.”²⁸

The publication of the Di Monale report in 1904 and the better known Chiesi and Travelli report a year later led the Italian government to strip the Benadir Company of its charter and take over direct administration of the colony. It also led to a series of decrees outlawing all forms of involuntary servitude.²⁹ For slaves in both the countryside and the urban centers, abolition initially meant very little. Fearing the creation of an unruly underclass, Italian policy, particularly before 1920, never seems to have become overtly interventionist. Slavery was allowed to slowly morph into new kinds of generally unequal relationships rather than wiped out by a kind of governmental *deus ex machina*. Slaves who suffered obvious physical abuse were freed, however, official policy was to encourage bondsmen to reach some form of accommodation with their masters. In the towns, as Cassanelli points out, this “meant a gradual

²⁷ Carletti, *I Problemi*, pp. 192–194.

²⁸ Di Monale report, February 8, 1903, ASMAI pos. 75/6, f. 56 quoted in Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, p. 78.

²⁹ Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*, p. 206; Cassanelli, “The Ending of Slavery in Italian Somalia”, p. 312; Hess, *Italian Colonialism*, chaps. 3 and 4.

transition for most slaves into domestic service with former masters or into poorly paid employment as porters, sweepers, waiters or house servants.”³⁰ In the countryside, for most, it meant their transformation from slaves to client-cultivators.

Emancipation and Islamization—“Fitting in”

The anthropologist Cathrine Besteman has noted that “whether arriving by sea through Benaadir ports, on foot in long forced overland marches, or through capture by Somali raiders, slaves entering Somalia . . . were part of a radically transformative period . . .” of political, economic and social change. “They joined a society characterized by fluidity, where Somali lineages were migrating and adopting new statuses along the way . . . and where points of ethnic interaction were marked by flux and shifting identities.”³¹ In the wake of abolition, both ex-slaves and former masters were faced with “reconstructing social relations and social identity.”³² Not surprisingly, much of “noble” society sought to maintain now former slave communities in positions of social, economic and political inferiority through various processes of denigration. Equally unsurprising is the reaction of the oppressed. While not meekly submitting to such patterns of denigration, former slaves did not seek to isolate themselves from, or overturn, broader Somali society. Instead, as Besteman points out, “rather than fostering a group sense of cultural distinctiveness and subjugation, most . . . oriented their cultural practices and identity politics toward dominant Somali patterns,” with the ultimate goal of both subverting institutionalized discrimination and carving out a place for themselves within Somali society.³³ Many of the political, cultural and economic strategies employed by servile groups in their search for a place in broader Somali society have been examined by a number of authors.³⁴ Here we want to focus on religion as a part of that process.

The majority of captives brought to the Benaadir in the nineteenth century were non-Muslims. By the early twentieth, however, the majority

³⁰ Cassanelli, “The Ending of Slavery,” pp. 313, 320.

³¹ Catherine Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*, p. 60.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁴ Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*; Cassanelli, “The Ending of Slavery”; Francesca Declich, *I Bantu della Somalia*.

of slaves and ex-slave communities placed themselves—at least nominally—within the Islamic fold. As we saw in Chapter 4, travelers to the interior saw Islam as an integral part of life along the rivers. They observed the presence of village mosques, Sufi *dhikr* and the regular invocation of the saints. Of the 2,126 slaves and ex-slaves Robecchi-Bricchetti lists by name in his census, over half (1,100) have names that clearly identify them as at least nominal Muslims, while twelve affixed the title *Hājī* to their names indicating completion of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Admittedly, the presence of mosques, regular performance of Sufi rituals, and the use of Muslim names give little indication of the overall depth of Islamization among the slave populations of the Benaadir. It does, however, suggest that by the early twentieth century the majority of slaves and ex-slaves saw the acceptance of an Islamic cultural paradigm as one way to carve out a place for themselves within wider society. Further evidence indicates that Sufism in particular filled important spiritual and social roles in the lives of servile people. Sufism was a common facet of rural life from at least the 1880s. The *jamāʿa* served as a place of refuge and social integration for ex-slaves, while *dhikr*—as Ferrandi noted—was becoming a common fixture in village life along the rivers.

Shaykh Uways al-Barawī's hagiographer, ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUmar, noted that many of the Qādirī leader's followers were slaves and ex-slaves. Many of the individuals invested by Uways as leaders of local Sufi circles bear *nishas* suggesting servile origins (e.g. al-Bantūwī).³⁵ The former slave communities of the interior, however, were not simply the passive objects of missionization by Muslim proselytizers from the coast. Oral traditions recall a number of prominent ʿulamāʾ of slave origins. Foremost among these were two holy men famed for not only spreading the faith but also serving as focal points for confronting social issues: *Shaykh* Murjān and *Shaykh* Farag. Little is known about either of these leaders other than the stuff of legend. The stories surrounding them, however, testify to the importance of the faith as a means for former slaves to reach an accommodation with wider “noble” society while asserting their place among their Somali neighbors as Muslims of equal spiritual, if not social, status.

According to tradition, Murjān was a domestic slave who belonged to a *sharīf* in the town of Marka. He learned the religious sciences by

³⁵ ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUmar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, pp. 19, 21.

listening to lessons given by an *‘alim* engaged to teach the children of his master, whom he quickly outpaced. As a sign of God’s pleasure with his spiritual achievements, Murjān began to perform miracles in and around Marka, including building a house in a single night and digging a well where no water had been found previously. Though his master was witness to these wondrous deeds, he refused to acknowledge Murjān’s gifts or to free him. The last straw came one day when the master ordered the saint to kill a cock for his noon meal. Murjān protested, saying that this particular bird told him the times of prayer. How could he pray, he argued, if the rooster was not there to tell him the appropriate times? However, the *sharīf* insisted and had another slave slaughter the cock and ate it for lunch. But when the time came for the afternoon call to prayer the bird began to crow in the *sharīf*’s stomach. The startled man cried out in wonder and fright, declaring that Murjān was truly a *walī* and freed him at once.³⁶ Murjān then moved from Marka to Bilakh near Jemame on the Jubba River, where he lived among the Bimal and founded a *jamā‘a*. However, he believed his true calling was to take the faith deep into the interior. So, he moved progressively further inland along the river until he finally settled along the right bank of the Jubba among the Gosha.

Dating to the middle of the nineteenth century, the Gosha were a loose collection of villages populated mostly by runaway slaves. Although originally autonomous, by the 1890s, there were perhaps as many as 30,000 people of slave origin living in more than sixty villages spread along the Lower Jubba under the leadership of the self-styled “sultan” of Gosha, Nasib Bunda.³⁷ When Murjān reached the Gosha he found it little touched by the faith he so loved. The inhabitants were, not surprisingly, suspicious of anything associated with their former masters, and the *shaykh* was at first rebuffed. He was able to overcome their hesitation partly through his willingness to reach out and respect village culture, but more importantly via his skills as mediator.

Upon arriving in the Jubba Valley, Murjān established a *jamā‘a* at a place called Mana Moofa on the southern edge of Gosha territory. The Jubba was not a peaceful place.³⁸ The various Gosha villages under Nasib Bunda found themselves in an intractable state of war with the

³⁶ Interview, Abd al-Qadir Ismaan Matan, June 2, 1994.

³⁷ Cassanelli, “The Ending of Slavery,” p. 321.

³⁸ The following is drawn from the account provided in Menkhaus, *Rural Transformation*, pp. 175–177.

surrounding pastoral clans, in particular the Ogaden. Gosha forces had fought a number of engagements against the Ogaden through the 1880s, but the best they could achieve was an uneasy stalemate. Murjān, who was gaining a growing number of converts, offered his services as a mediator to broker a peace between the warring sides. At first, Bunda refused, fearing that the *shaykh* would undermine his authority. As the war continued, however, Murjān eventually convinced the leaders of both sides to meet. Nasib Bunda and the Ogaden leaders met, Murjān led them in prayer and then dramatically stood, took up a string of prayer beads (Ar. *misbah*) and broke it, scattering them across the floor. Kenneth Menkhaus' informant takes up the story:

"If anyone starts a war they will become like this *misbah* (prayer beads) fallen to the ground" [Murjān said, and] both *akhyaar* [elders] agreed. If an Ogadeni becomes lost in Gosha territory, I ask the Gosha to lead him out. And if a *reer goleed* becomes lost among the Ogaden, the Ogaden must lead him back to his house. From now on, no more killing. If there is a killing, no more revenge, on the payment of money for the funeral.³⁹

In truth, Murjān's attempt at a truce did not hold. The Ogaden and Gosha continued to fight intermittently until the imposition of British rule over the Lower Jubba in the 1890s.⁴⁰ Murjān's efforts, however, are credited with beginning a process that would ultimately lead to a mutual bond between the communities: religion. As Menkhaus points out, the commonality of faith produced a common social point of departure for both cultivators and pastoralists while also giving rise to an institutionalized form of dispute resolution—the *shaykh*. Murjān and others like him were viewed as essentially neutral; able to settle disagreements in a fair and impartial manner. *Shaykh* Murjān is widely remembered for his ability to settle the endless disputes over grazing and river access that emerged between nomads and farmers. More importantly, Murjān and his memory provided a window through which ex-slaves could assert their place as members of a broader Muslim community within Somali society. The former slaves of the Jubba were no fools, they fully realized that acceptance of the faith did not make them the social equals of their pastoral and urban neighbors. Cultivators were still referred to by derogatory names like "hardhair" and "slave" and most remained the inferior clients of wealthy nomadic

³⁹ Menkhaus, *Rural Transformation*, p. 176.

⁴⁰ *Idem.*

or urban patrons. However, as *Shaykh* Murjān's master could eventually not deny the holiness of his servant, Somalis could no longer dismiss and exploit the Gosha and other cultivators as *kuffār*. While certainly not social equals, they were now firmly within the fold of believers and could demand to be treated as such.⁴¹

Shaykh Farag and Revolt along the Shabeelle

For others, however, this was precisely the problem. While the faith propagated by Murjān espoused the equality of all believers, it seemed to bring little tangible change in status. Such was the kind of thinking that gave rise to the movement of *Shaykh* Farag. The life of *Shaykh* Farag, the religious movement he led, and the events leading up to his murder at the hands of Italian troops are sketchy at best. The few facts we have are clouded further by the fact that they come solely from Italian sources, whose own information about the *Shaykh*, his beliefs and activities was derived from the very religious and communal elites who wished to have the populist religious leader eliminated.

According to published Italian accounts, (written by Cesare DeVecchi, the governor of Italian Somalia at the time the movement was crushed and Enrico Cerulli, whose account seems to draw largely on DeVecchi), Farag was a former slave named Ghella Baraki who was brought to Mogadishu as the property of the Zanzibari governor Sālim Sayf who later presented him as a gift to *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad.⁴² Uways took his charge to Barawe, where he had Farag educated in the Qur'ān and eventually initiated into the Qādiriyya. Following Uways' death in 1909, however, rather than being emancipated, Farag was resold to an individual living in an interior village called Moro Ido, a region not yet occupied by the Italians. When the region was occupied, Farag was emancipated by the Italian resident, and he returned to the coast to complete his mystical education in a Qādirī *jamā'a* founded by followers of Uways.⁴³ Di Vecchi writes that Farag became a well-known

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 235; for another insightful examination of Murjān's role in Gosha society see Declich, *I Bantu della Somalia*, pp. 151–155.

⁴² Unless otherwise noted, the following chronology of events is drawn from the accounts of Enrico Cerulli in *Somalia Scritti Vari* v.III pp. 166–168 and C.M. DeVecchi, *Orizzonti d'Impero: Cinque anni in Somalia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1935) pp. 38–46.

⁴³ The story of Farag's resale after his master's death appears highly unusual, since it is generally deemed meritorious for a master to free his slaves upon his death. Because of the sudden nature of Uways' passing the *Shaykh* may have neglected to leave such

popularizer of Qādiriyya doctrines and by 1917 was regarded by many as a living saint who, it was believed, had regular visions of his deceased patron, Uways al-Barawī.

Following the completion of his education, Farag once again headed for the interior, settling along the Jubba River north of Barawe. There he began to preach, attracting a sizeable following from among the *‘liberti’*, so-called ex-slave communities, and other low status agriculturalists who dwelt along the river. From 1921, he resided with a number of followers in a small closed community where he set about developing his own mystical doctrine.

Up to this point, there was little to distinguish *Shaykh* Farag from many other holy men of his time. He cured the ill, exercised spirits and “invoked the favor of the divine” for whomever petitioned him.⁴⁴ It was here, however, that things began to take a more radical course. He began to publicly decry the *‘ulamā’* of the coast as charlatans and the teachings of their schools as error. He then declared that he could attain *fanā’* with the spirit of the Prophet himself and, in fact, become *him* in essence, claiming the title *Ṣūfī Muḥammad Allah*. To make matters worse, Farag is also said to have begun to preach a doctrine which allowed his low status followers to spiritually identify with the Ashrāf. In the words of Cerulli, Farag encouraged his followers to “become the mystical descendants of Ali [sic] and Fatima [sic], as their master and father identified with the Prophet.”⁴⁵ Farag’s ideas found a receptive audience among many of servile origins who, Italian observers believed, saw it as an opportunity to challenge the dominance of the “noble” nomadic clans whose preeminence was supposedly based on the purity of blood and the idea that power only rested in the hands of certain lineages. As “mystical Ashrāf,” persons of servile descent could make claims to both spiritual and social equality (even superiority) with those who had dominated them for generations.

In early 1924, Farag shifted his efforts to the area between Baydhabo and Buur Haqaba in the Jubba-Shabeelle River valley. His preaching began to find a receptive audience amongst the leadership of the local

instructions for the disposition of his dependants after his demise. But at the same time, we can not rule out the possibility that Farag was indeed freed at his master’s death and the account of his resale is merely a story intended to disparage his memory by suggesting that he was at heart a troublemaker whom even Uways deemed unworthy of manumission.

⁴⁴ DeVecchi, *Orizzonte*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, p. 167.

Jiddo lineage as well as elements of the WaBoni (a small hunter gatherer group living along the Shabeelle). Within the space of a few months, according to Di Vecchi, the movement had taken on a serious political character that worried Somali notables and Italian officials alike. From the point of view of both the noble lineage leadership and the leaders of the Qādiriyya, Farag represented a growing threat to their authority. Again Di Vecchi proves perceptive when he wrote, “by gathering his followers under a new [social] order,” Farag assumed a “position hostile to the noble tribes.” In addition to preaching a return to a more pure faith and the rigorous observance of religious duties, the *Shaykh* began to group his followers into their own villages, “annulling the ethnic bonds of tribe and substituting it with the religion of the sect; disobedience to tribal heads and the negation of their authority and submission [instead] to the leader of the sect.”⁴⁶

Farag enjoyed the support of at least one Jiddo leader named as *Shaykh* Ibrāhīm Mūsā. In addition, he was also supported by a Rahanwayn leader, *Sharīf* Aliow Ishaaq. *Sharīf* Aliow belonged to a lineage known as the Sarmaan Ashrāf that, unlike the urban Sharīfian lineages, traced their descent through the Prophet’s grandson Ḥasan rather than the locally more prestigious Ḥusayn. The origin of the connection between *Sharīf* Aliow and Farag is unknown. The *Sharīf*’s affinity for the *Shaykh*, however, was strong enough to precipitate his migration from Tijjelo to Qooriolla in 1924, and it served to lend Farag a veneer of legitimacy at least among some of the Eelay and Garre clans.

By late 1924, the Italians saw a need to move against the *Shaykh*. During the celebration of *mawlid*, or Prophet’s birthday, Farag had gathered most of his followers at DaiDai, his newly constructed (and well defended) *jamā’a* located on the lower reaches of the Shabeelle River. Fearing that such a gathering could lead to widespread disturbances, Italian officials ordered the *Shaykh* to report to Barawe for questioning and presumably arrest. When Farag failed to present himself as ordered, the authorities sent the Resident with a small detachment of ten men commanded by a warrant officer to affect the arrest. DaiDai was constructed along an inaccessible stretch of the Shabeelle located on a spit of land that jutted out into the river surrounded by heavy brush and marshes. As the patrol advanced, they were ambushed by followers of the *Shaykh*. With arrows and spears suddenly raining down

⁴⁶ Di Vecchi, *Orizzonte*, p. 43.

upon them from the river bank, Di Vecchi writes, "the porters ran, the resident and the warrant officer fell into the water while the guide was struck by a spear and two men were hit by arrows." The Italian officers managed to regain the bank and return fire, but quickly decided to withdraw until they could come back in greater force.⁴⁷

Farag interpreted this as a sign that it was time to act. He sent messengers through out the Jubba-Shabeelle River valley, declaring a great victory and proclaiming that the hour was at hand for him and his followers to issue forth and command by the sword. The result was predictable. Both clan and *ṭarīqa* leaders rallied to the side of the Italian government. The Qādiriyya leadership lost little time in declaring Farag an irredeemable heretic and called upon the colonial administration to remove the threat. Di Vecchi needed little prodding and moved in with force.

A much larger contingent was sent against DaiDai during the early days of November. *Sharīf* Aliow and his followers fled north into the territory of his Eelay allies, however he received a less than warm reception. He was turned away by one village and was only allowed to settle with his followers on the outskirts of Qoryoley where he had previously been so warmly welcomed. On November 17th, after a brief skirmish, he and his followers were arrested by Italian forces from Barawe and over the next months, his few remaining devotees were turned in by the formerly loyal Eelay.

Farag, in the meantime, made good his escape and managed to avoid capture for nearly seven months. Then on May 31, 1925, his luck ran out. He and his followers were surprised by an Italian patrol and the *Shaykh* was gravely wounded in the exchange of fire. He was taken to Barawe where he died of his wounds a short time later.

Cassanelli has suggested that the *Shaykh's* movement represented local resistance to Italian forced labor practices of the early 1920s. In an effort to make the colony pay for itself, the Italian government began to award corporate agricultural concessions along the Jubba and Shabeelle Rivers with the intention of developing a plantation system devoted to cash crops including cotton and, later, bananas. The largest and most successful of these was the *Società agricola italo-somala* (SAIS) which established plantations first along the middle and later lower Shabeelle River valley. As Cassanelli notes, initially the directors

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 44–45.

of SAIS maintained a progressive policy with regard to their labor force. Local farmers were encouraged to settle on estates, where they were given a hectare of land half of which was to be used to grow cash crops for the company while the other half was for their own use. They also provided workers with housing, tools, seeds and medical care. By the mid-1920s, the company faced critical labor shortages due largely to a series of natural disasters. As a result, they turned to forced recruitment and coercion. Cassanelli points out that the Jiddo, who constituted a large number of Farag's followers, were among those who suffered particularly harsh treatment under this new regimen on the plantations around Jenale.⁴⁸

While fallout from the labor policies of SAIS should not be discounted as a factor in Farag's rise there is, unfortunately, no direct evidence to support the idea that it was the sole or even the most important precipitating cause. As noted earlier, our understanding of Farag's movement is handicapped by the fact that the only accounts of it come from official or quasi-official Italian sources.⁴⁹ No writings by the *Shaykh* have survived and there appear to be no oral testimonies of his followers that might shed light on the ideological foundations of the group. As a result, any conclusions we draw about the motivations of Farag and his followers are at best speculative. Based on the admittedly incomplete Italian accounts, however, it is possible to make a number of observations and place the movement within a broader social and religious context.

In its broad outlines, *Shaykh* Farag's movement mirrored other popular Islamic movements that appeared throughout the Muslim world from the eighteenth century. If we are to believe the accounts of Di Vecchi and Cerulli, Farag's group saw itself as a reformist movement meant to purify the faithful and reinvigorate what had become a morally decadent faith in practice. Like other revivalists in the early nineteenth century, Farag and his followers seem to have determined that the only way to achieve this was to physically withdraw from corrupt society and establish their own community in imitation of the Prophet's *Hijra*, or migration from Mecca to Medina in the seventh century. Armed resistance was adopted only after the community itself was attacked or at least perceived itself threatened. And finally, while attracting a large

⁴⁸ Cassanelli, "The Ending of Slavery," p. 328.

⁴⁹ Cerulli and Di Vecchi.

amount of support from among the most marginalized in society, Farag also found support among at least some of those who might be regarded as society's elites. ʿUthman Dan Fodio, for example, ultimately found support among a number of Hausa princes while Farag found backing in the shape of *Sharīf* Aliow whose status as a *sayyid* (albeit supposedly descended from the less prestigious line of Ḥasan rather than Ḥusayn) certainly placed him among society's power brokers.⁵⁰

Certainly, *Shaykh* Farag's group diverges from most militant revivalist movements when it comes to the more esoteric ideological elements attributed to him by the Italians. If the Italian accounts are accurate, a great deal of Farag's popularity was premised less on purifying the faith than on his ability to offer spiritual equality to his followers. By becoming identified with the *Ashrāf*, they could become the spiritual and, by extension, social equals of their noble patrons. While not in conformity with the Jihadist motif, Farag's sharīfian rhetoric, and its concern for spiritual equality, was certainly in line with that of other Somali Sufi leaders of the period. While not as overtly militant as *Shaykh* Farag, the Sufi leadership of the coast was no less strident about the notions of spiritual and social equality. And also like Farag, some saw the *Ashrāf* as an important key to revaluing the social order.

Spirituality, Discrimination and Social Status

Opposition to Farag notwithstanding, many ʿulamāʾ from "noble" society seemed bothered by the inherent inequities found in the Benaadir even before the formal ending of slavery. Some sought to lead by example. *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Raḥman Ṣūfī, the more or less patron saint of Mogadishu, had his own sons study the tailoring trade and at least one of them took a wife from a servile lineage. The Sāda scholar and historian *Sharīf* ʿAydārūs studied the tailor's trade as a boy and operated a large clothing factory in adulthood.⁵¹ Others, such as the noted follower of *Shaykh* Uways, Qassim Muhy al-Dīn al-Barawī, looked to popular literature as a way of disseminating their views on the inherent equality of all believers.

⁵⁰ For an overview of the West African jihads, see Nehemiah Levtzion and John O. Voll eds. *Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

⁵¹ Interview, Amina *Shaykh* Ali Nuur, October 6, 1994; ʿAydārūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, Introduction.

Qassim al-Barawī (1881–1921) was an almost archetypal Benaadiri patrician. His father, Muhy al-Dīn *aw* Mai b. ‘Umar, was a prominent local ‘*alim* and his mother, *Hājjiyya* Faṭīma bt. Rufa’ī Thira b. ‘Umar, was the daughter of a prominent lineage. He was trained in the Islamic sciences at a young age and was a protégé of both *Shaykh* Uways and ‘Abd al-Raḥman Šūfī. Furthermore, his followers believe that he alone among the Benaadiri Sufi leaders received his *ijāza* directly from the hand of the Prophet.⁵² Rather than establishing his own order, however, *Shaykh* Qassim is best remembered for popularizing the teachings of his two spiritual masters after their deaths. Famed largely as a poet,⁵³ Qassim al-Barawī was also *Shaykh* Uways’ principal hagiographer. He compiled the earliest *manāqib* of Uways, entitled *Ins al-Anīs*, around 1917 which is extant in two versions—a manuscript copy that dates to around 1950 and a *matbū’a* or printed version that was published in 1952.⁵⁴ A second collection, that shares numerous parallels with the first, entitled *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs* was compiled by *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar in 1964 with the permission of Uways’ son and head of the order, Muhy al-Dīn.⁵⁵ Like most hagiographies, both collections contain a variety of miraculous stories highlighting the divine favor granted to Uways. Unlike similar compilations, however, the details of Uways’ background are conspicuously absent from these written accounts of his life.⁵⁶ However, the difficulties presented by his low social status at birth play a central role in both and are especially prominent in the earliest work by *Shaykh* Qassim.

As we have already seen, Uways al-Barawī was born into a client lineage of the Tunni called the Goigal. His father, Muḥammad, was

⁵² *Manāqib Shamsa al-Dīn* m. 12. This act is immortalized in the line from a poem by al-Barawī’s son, Muḥammad Šūfī, “How many times did he see the Prophet and take the *ijāza*/From him with the revered *silsila*”.

⁵³ Most notably he produced a collection of his masters’ devotional poetry in *takhmīs* format, known as the *Majmū’a al-Qaṣā’id* generally regarded by Somali Qādirīs as the most important anthology of didactic verse. The importance of this work will be examined in detail in Chapter 6.

⁵⁴ Al-Barawī, *Ins al-Anīs* and ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jala’ al-Aynayn*. The manuscript copy bears the title *Majmū’a al-Karāmāt*. A few of the stories recounted in this version differ from the printed form. However, these differences are fairly minor and they are clearly two versions of the same work.

⁵⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*. ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, in fact, edited the published version of *Ins al-Anīs* that was published along with his own hagiography of *Shaykh* Zayla’ under the comprehensive title *al-Jala’ al-Aynayn*.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 3. One only hears such stories orally from followers, and only once they know and trust you. See Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*.

reputed to be a religious teacher, but numerous oral stories indicate that the family earned their livelihood primarily as weavers, an occupation whose status was on par with other lowly professions such as tanners and sesame oil pressers. Neither *Shaykh* Qassim nor ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Umar provide any indication of this less-than-prestigious background. Uways’ low birth, however, was far from a non-issue. We find a number of incidents in which the *Shaykh* is the object of active discrimination as a result of his origins. In each case, the transgressors receive their just desserts with the clear implication that to judge an individual based on their birth rather than the quality of their soul is a sin against God that will not go unnoticed. In one of the more colorful episodes, *Shaykh* Qassim’s *Ins al-Anīs* recounts the consequences of those who question his teacher’s social equality.

Once Uways was in a village called Mubaraku where he was about to marry a Barawan woman named Faḥima bt. AbaShaykh. One of her clansman called upon the ‘*ulamā*’ of Mubaraku, more than 12 men [in all] to take counsel with the *Shaykh* regarding the question of his lack of *kafā’a* (literally his “equality of status”) that would nullify the marriage contract. When they arrived the *Shaykh* bent over and revealed from his chest a glimpse of the light only present by the will of God and it penetrated their breasts causing them to forget their question [regarding his social sufficiency] and all of their knowledge. They left...bewildered with no knowledge. They returned a second and a third time and with the same results. On the third time he told them why they had come on his account and of their question, before any of them spoke and they were in awe of the *Shaykh* and he returned to them all of their knowledge—God reward us with it, Amīn! And with this great *manqaba* we ask almighty God that he protect us from opposing his *awliyā*.⁵⁷

In an incident with a less happy ending, Ibn ‘Umar’s *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs* tells a similar story of discrimination and retribution:

Mahād “the loathsome” of the Amudī clan was among the richest men in Mogadishu. One day, he came to *Shaykh* Uways al-Qādirī when the latter was in Mogadishu and said, after greeting him, “come to my house with your followers and be my guest.” The *Shaykh* replied “thank you” and he went to Mahād’s house on the appointed day with his students. A carpet was spread for them, an animal was slaughtered and the rice was cooked. [After sitting down] *Shaykh* Uways was suddenly overcome by a trance and he cried out. Mahād “the loathsome” was in the kitchen. He heard the *Shaykh*’s cry and remarked [to the cook, apparently], “the slave

⁵⁷ Al-Barawī, *Ins al-Anīs*, p. 29.

has smelled the food and cries out on account of it,” thinking that the *Shaykh* wouldn’t hear him because he was far away. But [his words] were revealed to the *Shaykh*, who got up quickly, put on his cloak and started to leave, followed by his students. Mahād “the loathsome” came running after them when he learned they had left and he shouted, “don’t leave ya’*shaykh*, I’ve spent money on your account.” *Shaykh* Uways turned to him and replied “the slave and his followers are leaving.” From that day on Mahād “the loathsome’s” fortunes waned. If he bought he would sell at a loss. If he stored provisions or hides, rain would get into his warehouse and ruin it. Soon all of his wealth was gone...⁵⁸

The moral of such stories is, on one level, self evident—crossing a “friend of God” carries with it dire consequences. However, they may also be read on a more general level—prejudice against a fellow believer also has its costs. The first story, in particular with its emphasis on an individual believer’s “legal sufficiency,” or *kafā’a*, as a marriage partner seems especially apropos.⁵⁹ In this tale not only are the transgressors urban elites, but learned members of the ‘*ulamā*’ who as a result of their blind prejudice literally lose their knowledge albeit temporarily, for discriminating against a pious Muslim.

Curiously, as in the rhetoric of *Shaykh* Farag the Ashrāf also play an important role in the stories surrounding *Shaykh* Uways. Although they are also elite members of society, the descendants of the Prophet are never portrayed in the same negative light—though at times their behavior may be less than exemplary. Instead, the descendants of the Prophet consistently recognize the literal light that shines within Uways and indeed, either pay him the respect he deserves or seek his aid. Several such stories are recounted by *Shaykh* Qassim one of the most interesting of which appears in an anthology of poetry, *al-Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id*, and is reported on the authority of his own brother, Muḥammad, who was also a student and follower of Uways. According to Muḥammad al-Barawī:

I was with [*Shaykh* Uways] in Mecca and we went to visit *al-‘arif Allah*, *Sayyid* Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad Shaṭa—a teacher in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf and the Shāfi‘ī Imam in the Ḥaram mosque—and his brother *Sayyid* ‘Umar. We entered their house and found all the Sāda sitting there. They drew the *Shaykh* near to them, greeting him warmly, overjoyed with his presence. *Sayyid* Abū Bakr said: Bless us with something from your

⁵⁸ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, p. 132.

⁵⁹ The concept of *kafā’a* will be discussed in greater detail below.

poetry. *Shaykh* Uways ordered me to deliver a poem, and I recited this *qaṣīda*...⁶⁰

The poem Muḥammad al-Barawī recited was entitled *Hadiyat alʿAnām ilā Qabr al-Nabī*, “Guidance of Humanity to the Tomb of the Prophet,” a work that advocates veneration of the Prophet and prophetic intercession.⁶¹ When he finished his recitation, *Sayyid* Abū Bakr declared: “*Wallahī nūr!* By God that’s light! Because all that comes from the tongues of the saints is light!” Al-Barawī continued:

and I marveled at this in my deepest heart, the reverence and exaltation they showed my *Shaykh*, master of interpretation. And *they*, descendants of the Prophet and [learned] *shaykhs*, teachers in the Ḥaram, authors of many books.

This might be interpreted as merely a typical account of a saint proving his *bona fides* before an esteemed audience, like those that populate numerous hagiographies, except for what happens next. As al-Barawī is thinking this, Uways turns to him and says, “Why are you in wonder of this *slave*, is he not among the sons of *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Qādir Jilānī?”⁶² As in the earlier stories, Uways makes reference to his less-than-noble lineage. This mild rebuke seems born from what Uways perceived as his student’s astonishment that those so high born and educated should be awed by one of such low origin. This assumption is confirmed when Muḥammad al-Barawī ends the story by stating “and this was yet another of his miracles, that he could see into the hearts of his students.”⁶³ Properly up braided, we are led to assume, Muḥammad the follower would not make the same mistake again.⁶⁴

This is not the only *karāma* story in which a member of the Ashrāf appear in order to validate Uways’ spiritual gifts. In a number of

⁶⁰ Al-Barawī, *al-Majmūʿa al-Qaṣāʾid*, p. 3.

⁶¹ The cosmological importance of this poem and encounter will be explored in Chapter 6.

⁶² Idem. Emphasis mine.

⁶³ Idem.

⁶⁴ This is not the only story in which the deep seeded prejudices of noble society are laid bare. In a similar story told orally, Uways and his students are invited to a feast where a bull is to be slaughtered in his honor. When the bull was being butchered, Uways sent a student to oversee the proper ritual procedures of the slaughter. The student, who was of noble birth, kept the best parts of the meat for himself which should have rightly gone to the *shaykh* saying, “Uways is just a slave, so let me take the best for myself which are really fit for me.” After he ate the meat, however, his stomach began to “swell like a pot.” In agony he begged forgiveness from the *Shaykh* and his stomach returned to normal. Interview, *Sayyid* Abu Bakr al-Marki, June 26, 1994.

episodes, Ashrāf actively seek the assistance of Uways and on at least one occasion this directly results in a boon for a member of noble society.

And from among his *karāmāt* there is what was related to me by *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. *Sayyidna* Muḥammad al-Barawī. He said, my uncle “Abū Nān” . . . left his house and went to sit with *Shaykh* Uways and his students, who were performing *dhikr*. The *Shaykh* was sitting and with him was a *sharīf* from the *ahl al-bayt* who said “*ya’shaykh*, give me a riyal.” And *Shaykh* Uways said, “Abū Nān, take the riyal that is in your pocket.” Abū Nān did so and gave it to Uways who in turn gave it to the *sharīf*. Abū Nān got up to return to his house when Uways called to him and said, “don’t return to your home, instead go to the market and buy what you want and you will profit from it and *inshallah* you will become the wealthiest of wealthy Barawans. And, indeed, this is what passed and there came to him wealth and virtuous off-spring with the blessing of *Shaykh* Uways.”⁶⁵

Finally, the high regard with which the Ashrāf held the *Shaykh* was not limited to miracle narratives. In ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar’s hagiography of Uways, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs* the compiler’s list of *khalīfas* installed by the *Shaykh* contains twenty-one are *Sharīfs*, including among others Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad Shaṭa, one of his brothers (‘Umar b. Muḥammad) and a nephew (‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar b. Muḥammad).⁶⁶

In the profane world the Ashrāf can be shown to be no different than any other group of urban East African elites. In historical terms, they appear to have been even more insular than other urban lineages, practicing a strict endogamy and observing almost pathological discrimination against any and all individuals who were not of the Prophet’s blood.⁶⁷ However, the Sāda of the hagiographies were quite different. While on occasion their behavior could border on the boorish, as in the case of the *Sharīf* who asks for a riyal, they differ from other well-born individuals in that they automatically recognize the spiritual worth of an individual (in this case *Shaykh* Uways) regardless of his lineage.

As such, both they and other elites represent two different tropes. The majority of elite Benaadiris represent the worst tendencies of society to discriminate against individuals as a result of perceived impurities of birth rather than treating them with the respect due to any fellow Muslim. The Ashrāf, on the other hand, do not simply represent the

⁶⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, p. 147.

⁶⁶ See Appendix I.

⁶⁷ Al-Zein, *Sacred Meadows*; Reese, *Patricians of the Benaadir*.

opposite side of the coin—i.e. the “good” Muslim who appraises his co-religionists based on their actions rather than accidents of birth. Were this the case, why not simply insert stories with elite protagonists acting righteously?

Rather, it can be argued, as the descendants of the Prophet, the Ashrāf represent a connection with divine will and a vision of the true order of the universe. Theologically, the Sāda are, as a line from a Qassim al-Barawī poem states “in the proximity of the Prophet” and “the Keys” to their ancestor, who naturally enough is considered the closest created being to God.⁶⁸ As the “keys” to the Prophet they represent an unassailable spiritual authority with an intimate knowledge of the “proper” shape of the universe and what is pleasing to God. Thus rather than serving as a simple moral trope, the use of the Ashrāf by the compilers of Uways’ hagiographies may also represent an appropriation of their spiritual authority to argue for a basic revaluing of the social order based on divine will. If the Ashrāf are able to recognize the spiritual value in all believers so easily, so should the rest of society. The goal was not to overthrow that order, but to redefine it in a manner that was more inclusive that provided a space for all believers on an equal footing. Thus, the *‘ulamā’* have their knowledge returned to them, the student Muḥammad al-Barawī is forgiven and Abū Nān becomes a wealthy man because they all ultimately recognize the essential spiritual equality of the *Shaykh*. In this sense, spiritual worth becomes an argument for social worth, and it is the Ashrāf who—even when they are being boorish—point the way.

‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī and the Status Quo Ante

Although certainly members of the social elite, appearances of the Sāda in hagiographic accounts served to reaffirm the spiritual equality of all believers—regardless of their origins—especially in the face of elite prejudice. Such prejudices, however, were not shed easily by many. In addition to the daily social slights and slurs recorded by Qassim al-Barawī, there was at least one member of the *‘ulamā’* whose response to the social shifts brought about by abolition was a desire to maintain the status quo. This was *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī, ironically a student of Uways and colleague of *Shaykh* Qassim.

⁶⁸ Al-Bakrī, *Manāqib Shams al-Dīn*, m. 27.

As we saw earlier, al-Quṭbī was a northerner who divided his time between his home region of Qolonqool and Barawe. In the latter town, he received the patronage of a number of the old Barawan elite. This included the town's arguably most important patron, Shaykh b. Shaykh, whose philanthropy directed at members of the Qādirī 'ulamā' was legendary.⁶⁹ Al-Quṭbī's fame, of course, was as a polemicist and anti-Ṣālihiyya propagandist as embodied in his *al-Majmū'a al-Mubarakā* or *The Blessed Collection*.⁷⁰ *The Collection* was, in fact, a series of pamphlets, the longest of which was the fourth in the set entitled *The Victory of the Believers Over the Rebellion of the Heretics*.⁷¹ Its goal was, in part, to marshal evidence from the Hadith and the Sunna to prove the heretical nature of the Ṣālihiyya and the religious duty imposed upon all believers to resist their teachings with armed force. The tract, as we will see in the next chapter, also dedicated a great deal of space to outlining what a good Muslim should believe and do in his daily life. This included many customs that we have come to expect at the center of disputes between locally oriented and Salafī minded reformists. The use of drums and music; the consumption of coffee, tobacco and *qat* (though not alcohol) and the veneration of the Prophet and tomb visitation were all practices that al-Quṭbī defended as within the bounds of Islamic law. Though, it should be pointed out, he placed these largely within the inadvisable or *makruh* rather than the permitted or *ḥalāl* category.⁷²

One topic taken up by al-Quṭbī not usually included in such discussions is the idea of *kafā'a*, or social parity.⁷³ The concept of *kafā'a* was one with pre-Islamic roots. In the Arabia of the Prophet, it was obligatory for married couples to be equals in terms of tribe, ethnicity and social status. While such a concept was difficult to reconcile with the idea of spiritual equality of all believers promoted by the Qur'ān, it did not disappear entirely as a social custom. Instead, as the rule evolved within Muslim jurisprudence, it was observed that an imbalance of *kafā'a* was only relevant when the woman's status was higher than that of the man. The basic rules for determining *kafā'a* were established by the early Ḥanafī scholars in the Iraqi city of Kūfa which were—in

⁶⁹ Interview, Nuur Shaykh b. Shaykh September 15, 1994.

⁷⁰ The broader teachings and importance of the *Majmū'a al-Mubarakā* will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

⁷¹ *Al-Naṣr al-Muminīn*.

⁷² Al-Qutbi, *al-Majmū'a al-Mubarakā*, pt. I, pp. 135–137; Cerulli, *Somalia Scriti Vari*, v. I, pp. 197–199.

⁷³ The following discussion is drawn from the entry for *kafā'a* in *EI2*.

turn—largely adopted by the Shāfi'ī school of law followed by the Muslims of East Africa. As it emerged under the Ḥanafīs, a potential husband's *kafā'a* was determined by the social status of his family, the seniority of his lineage within the *umma* (i.e. how long they had been Muslim) as well as the personal moral standing of the groom and his family. If any one of these was deemed beneath that of the potential bride, the whole affair could be declared null and void.⁷⁴

By the twentieth century the institution of *kafā'a* was widely challenged. It was largely abandoned by the late Ottoman state with the passage of the 1917 Family Rights Law and, if al-Quṭbī is to be believed, its elimination was widely supported by Salafī influenced reformers such as the Ṣāliḥiyya in East Africa. *Shaykh* 'Abdullāhī, however, saw this as the worst kind of *bid'a* or unlawful innovation. But, the *Shaykh* points out, they were not the only ones responsible for this abomination. In his pamphlet *al-Naṣr al-Muminīn* he provides a lengthy overview of *kafā'a*, its centrality to living life as a good Muslim, and his views on how its abandonment constituted a corruption of society perpetrated by those he viewed as heretics. He begins with a simple declaration: “[those] who link me to God and warn you of the rightly guided way and shelter us from deviation and heresy teach us that... Verily, God prefers some of his worshippers with others according to religion, lineage, occupation and things other than that. *Kafā'a* is essential according to our Imams.”⁷⁵ There are those, he argues, who would destroy society through their disregard of social and spiritual parity. These are “the innovators, God's disgust be upon them,” who, “feign ignorance of proper *kafā'a* in marriage” such individuals, “marry the woman of free lineage with the slave; the elevated *sharīfa* with one other than her equal; the daughter of the *ʿalim* or *qāḍī* with other than their equals...”

[Those who disdain *kafā'a*] say... their origins are from our father Adam and our mother Eve [Hawa] and they conclude this on evidence that is baseless and without authority. They conclude it from the Almighty's words “*inna akramakum 'and Allah itifakum*” and from what is in the Ṣaḥīḥ

⁷⁴ Though, even here there were loopholes. If the woman's *walī* or guardian agreed that such differences in personal status were inconsequential the marriage could go ahead.

⁷⁵ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū'a al-Mubāraka*, pt. I, p. 116. The one linking al-Quṭbī to God appears to be Muḥy al-Dīn Abū Zakarīyya al-Nawawī whose *Minḥāj al-Ṭalībīn* he quotes almost verbatim regarding *kafā'a* though without direct attribution. See Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1993) p. 162.

of Bukhārī—and other sources—that he [the Prophet] was asked which people were the most noble? He replied, the most noble of them are those who are most pious...and he gave them a sermon warning the people that “your lord is one and your father is one and that the Arab is not preferred over the foreigner nor the red over the black but with the piety of the best of you towards God...And, by God! we say, they claim baselessly that people are all equal in everything.”⁷⁶

Using the teachings of the “great Imams” of three of the four law schools, al-Quṭbī proceeds to explain why this interpretation of *kafā’a* is in error. For al-Quṭbī, issues of piety and blood lay at the heart of the matter; concerns that, for him at least, were deeply intertwined and could not be separated. Quoting an unattributed Hadith he writes, “in the view of the Imams of the *madhabs* and their supporters, except for Imam Malik⁷⁷...he [the Prophet] said ‘those who desire sons must place their sperm with equals as the son may carry the characteristics of his maternal uncles.’”⁷⁸ Social parity was essential in order to insure the spiritual purity of one’s progeny. The Prophet, he admonished his readers, warned his followers against “planting their seed” in *al-khadra al-damin* the “green dung,” defined as “the beautiful woman who comes from evil origins.” For al-Quṭbī piety and spiritual cleanliness were in essence hereditary. It was not enough that each partner in a marriage be of good character, but that their forefathers, to the fifth or sixth generation, needed to be equally free of blemish. Quoting another Hadith, he noted that the Prophet cautioned his followers to “humbly ask” about the purity of a woman’s family, “and their distance from wickedness and iniquity,” in that way they could be sure of always “planting their seed in a pure foundation.”⁷⁹

While clearly concerned that men find appropriate partners for their “seed,” al-Quṭbī was equally anxious over the fate of noble women. The majority of his discussion of *kafā’a*, in fact, is devoted to the duty of guardians to protect the purity of their charges. Citing “the Imams” once again, the *Shaykh* declared that “there is no equity between a married couple unless husband and wife are equal or he is greater to her in terms of his lineage with all of his forefathers in vitality, free

⁷⁶ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubaraka*, pt. I p. 116.

⁷⁷ The *shaykh* systematically excludes the Malikī legal school due to that *madhab*’s downplaying the importance of *kafā’a* arguing, unlike the other schools, that as long as both parties are Muslim “social parity” has been achieved. See *EI2*, *Kafā’a*.

⁷⁸ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubaraka*, pt. I p. 116.

⁷⁹ Idem.

status and nearness to Islam and notoriety in learning and piety...” An absence of parity may be due, he points out, to occupational standing so that “the cupper, the guard and the bath attendant are not the equals of the tailor the merchant or the draper as *they* are not the equals of the daughter of the *ʿalim* or the *qāḍī*...”⁸⁰ In addition, there were certain characteristics of parity that could not, under any circumstances be reconciled; in particular, slavery. Al-Quṭbī points out that the presence of servitude in one’s lineage made an individual automatically ineligible to marry a woman of noble background. A man with a servile background, even if that past were a distant part of his lineage, made him an improper marriage partner in the same way, al-Quṭbī notes, that a man with leprosy or insanity was ineligible because this “defect” would cause social damage to the bride.⁸¹ The duty of insuring social parity, he points out, lay squarely with the woman’s guardians, and it is they who must “be put to the test.” If it is shown that any of her forefathers “to the fifth or sixth generation” suffered from a defect then the couple does not have parity. In any case, he warned, all should exercise caution.

Kafāʾa, al-Quṭbī warned his readers, had become lax in recent years and was in need of strengthening and he leaves us with little doubt as to who he holds responsible. “As we see with our own eyes,” he concludes, “there are certain judges, servants of the Christians, who marry women of most glorious lineage and religion to ones not necessarily their social equals, maybe they even marry her to a slave, and it is they [the judges] who are responsible for the decline of religion and the world.”⁸² Certainly, al-Quṭbī goes on to warn against marrying a woman to or even surrounding her with the sinful, the slanderer and those who commit acts of unbelief e.g. people such as the Ṣālihiyya who, in his view, regularly commit such deeds. However, the real problem was a generalized decline of society through inattention to what can best be described as “moral hygiene.” Improper marriage arrangements, al-Quṭbī argued, led to a general moral decay which, like disease, had a negative affect on the well being of both the individual and society as a

⁸⁰ This quote is drawn directly from al-Nawawī’s *Minhāj* but without direct attribution, see Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, op. cit.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 117; Equality of occupation, it should be pointed out, is a requirement of the Ḥanafī tradition but not the Shāfiʿī. Al-Quṭbī does not acknowledge this directly stating only that certain scholars call for occupational parity while others do not.

⁸² Ibid., p. 119.

whole. Such practices were the result not just of heretical influences, but had crept imperceptibly into society through those who were supposed to be its moral guardians, the *‘ulamā’*! As al-Quṭbī forthrightly declares, it was the judges who accepted positions within the colonial regime who were largely responsible for the rot. It is one of the few moments when al-Quṭbī posited a direct link between the colonial state and the decline of society.⁸³ However, it should be pointed out, it was not so much the government of the “Christians” he held responsible, but the judges themselves. Whether he held them responsible for carrying out the policies of the state or simply being lax in their own enforcement of the law, is unclear. What is apparent, though, is that as guardians of the social good they were accountable. Only once the *qāḍīs* and, by extension, other members of the religious leadership ceased such careless implementation of the law would society begin to recover its bearings. Only once the old social boundaries were restored would society’s decline be halted.

Conclusion

If *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī’s ideas represent a minority view among the religious practitioners of the Benaadir, they demonstrate that, no matter what one’s position, no scholar could afford not to engage the shifting boundaries of ethnicity, class and social standing emerging out of the colonial period. A few, such as al-Quṭbī, sought to hold back the tide of change by invoking tradition.⁸⁴ The overwhelming trend, however, seems to have been to embrace the emerging social changes. *‘Ulamā’* belonging to so-called “noble” society sought to convince wider urban society of the righteousness of these changes through either their own example or broad public preaching. *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman Ṣūfī, for instance, led by personal example seeking marriage partners for his sons from among non-noble lineages and having them take up what were, until then, non-noble trades such as tailoring. Qassim al-Barawī,

⁸³ Upon confiscating and destroying some 200 copies of *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka* in Aden in 1922, the British Residency remarked that the book was in no way seditious but merely likely to sow religious conflict among the various Muslims of the Settlement.

⁸⁴ One important matter that is not clear is how al-Quṭbī reconciled such ideas with his devotion to his master *Shaykh* Uways who, it should be noted, was still alive when he wrote “The Victory of the Believers” in 1907.

on the other hand, actively proselytized his noble brethren to treat those of “non-noble” birth with greater dignity through the example of his master *Shaykh* Uways al-Barawī and the actions of the Ashrāf. Not surprisingly, religious practitioners from lower status backgrounds tended to take more direct action. *Shaykh* Murjān, an example of social mobility in his own right, devoted much of his life and ministry to bridging the gap between pastoral society and riverine cultivators. Using their common faith, he attempted to construct a rough equality between the opposing groups leading to, if not peace, then at least a less strained co-existence. Rather than reconciliation, *Shaykh* Farag encouraged his followers to look to a new world, one in which they would be spiritually elevated over those who had enslaved and dominated them. Instead of seeking acceptance, his was a message of separatism.

As any observer of contemporary Somalia will quickly point out, the success of any of these individuals was at best limited. Discrimination and victimization by “nobles” against “non-noble” groups continues and indeed has worsened since the demise of civil order in 1991. This, however, is largely beside the point. Successful or not, many religious scholars of the twentieth-century Benaadir—regardless of social background—saw it as their duty to mitigate some of the greater social injustices of their community. Relying on the idea that all souls were equal before the eyes of God, they tried to improve the lives of all believers by preaching against what they saw as an inherent social ill.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BEST OF GUIDES: SUFI POETRY, THEOLOGICAL WRITING AND COMPREHENDING QĀDIRIYYA POPULARITY IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Shortly after dawn on April 14, 1909, the morning calm in the Somali village of Biyoole was shattered by the hoof beats of a raiding party loyal to the religious reformer *Sayyid* Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh Ḥasan.¹ The horsemen were searching for *Shaykh* Uways b. Muḥammad, who maintained a compound within the village and who was rumored to be there with his wives, children and a handful of followers. *Shaykh* Uways, who had spent the previous two years preaching against the teachings of the *Sayyid*, refused to leave, swearing that he would remain in the village until death rather than flee in the face of the enemy. When the riders entered the village, they were met with a spirited resistance from Uways and his followers. The battle raged throughout the morning with Uways’ followers valiantly defending the village and their *Shaykh*. By mid-afternoon, however, out-numbered and out-gunned, he and all but one of his followers lay dead or dying.²

The murder of Uways and his students at the hands of a rival religious group was a stunning act of violence unprecedented in Somali religious circles. The tragedy, not surprisingly, resulted in a good deal of literature vilifying the Ṣāliḥiyya. *Shaykh* Qassim al-Barawī’s edited collection of poems, *al-Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id*, for example, first published around 1917, contains an untitled poem by *Shaykh* Uways that disparaged the Ṣāliḥiyya as—among other things—“mournful dogs” who “sell paradise for cash” and fornicate with their mothers.³ During the same period, as we saw in the last chapter, *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhi al-Quṭbī published two pamphlets, *The Butcher’s Knife for the Howling Dogs*, and

¹ Though frequently referred to in European literature as “*Sayyid*,” Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh Ḥasan was not a descendant of the Prophet. Rather the term was an, admittedly unusual, Arabization of the Somali honorific “Ina” or “son of.” With this caveat in mind we will continue to use the title *Sayyid* when referring to Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh, as it is the more commonly used in both colonial and contemporary literature.

² Al-Barawī, *Ins al-Anīs*, pp. 52–58.

³ Al-Barawī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id*, pp. 68–70.

Victory of the Believers Over the Heretics with the Righteousness of Religion, that ridiculed the Ṣālihiyya as dangerous heretics in league with the likes of the Arabian Wahhābiyya. While often shrill and always defamatory, however, these writings were never simple anti-Ṣālihi polemics. Instead, they also served as platforms for disseminating Qādirī ideology and cosmology to both popular and scholarly audiences. In this chapter we embark on a detailed exploration of the Qādirīyya order's teachings as well as methods for spreading the word as essential to comprehending the popularity of the Qādirīyya message.⁴ We will begin by examining the works of 'Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī as heresiography, looking at the *Shaykh's* charges against the Ṣālihiyya and using the fragmentary Ṣālihi sources available to help determine their validity. This, however, is simply a gateway to exploring a number of important questions that help us draw a much more detailed picture of Qādirī beliefs in the early twentieth century. The bulk of this chapter will be concerned with uncovering Qādirīyya ideology in terms of the proper path to salvation; the role of the Prophet and the saints in the theology preached by the Qādirī *shaykhs*; and, finally, how these ideas impacted the Qādirī mission in the interior. In part, such an examination begins to explain why the Qādirīyya believed it crucial to oppose the Ṣālihiyya. More importantly, it will provide us with a deeper understanding of what the Qādirīyya actually believed and how such ideas related to the lives of ordinary Somalis.

To accomplish this, two works compiled within a decade of *Shaykh* Uways' murder will be examined to provide insight not only into Qādirī ideology of the period but also how they sought to disseminate it to a wide, largely non-literate public. We begin with *al-Majmū'a al-Qaṣā'id*, a collection of popular devotional poetry compiled by *Shaykh* Qassim al-Barawī that served as one of principle means of disseminating the Qādirī message to this widespread, diverse and largely non-literate constituency. The poems contained in the collection outline the theological ideas (especially *tawassul*) the Qādirīyya regarded as central to the cosmological organization of the universe, the following of which were necessary for individual salvation. Al-Barawī's careful editing of each

⁴ The important question of *why* the Qādirīyya message was ultimately more popular than that of the Ṣālihiyya is beyond the scope of the present work and needs to be a topic of further research.

selection through the use of *takhmīs* or “fiving” was crucial in making these ideas accessible to the wider community of believers.

Second, we return to the collection of theological pamphlets written by *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*. Widely regarded as an anti-Ṣālihi polemic, al-Quṭbī’s work is actually more important for its positive commentary concerning not only the ideas that a true believer should oppose but what they should believe. In addition to its denunciation of the Ṣālihiyya, al-Quṭbī’s *Majmū‘a* outlined a program of Qādiri belief that included a detailed explication of permissible Muslim practice. In other words, al-Quṭbī’s work concerned itself with not only what made the Ṣālihiyya “heretics” but what made those who adhered to the Qādiriyya Way exemplary followers of God.

For the Qādiriyya, salvation depended as much on one’s personal and social behavior as it did on the establishment of a closer spiritual relationship with God. The Qādiriyya *shaykhs* taught that the path to the divine was obtainable only through *tawassul* or the spiritual mediation of the Prophet and, to a slightly lesser extent, the *awliyā*.⁵ This was not an easy path, however, and for the average believer this goal, if ever achieved at all, could be realized only with the assistance of select *shaykhs*—both living and deceased—who acted as spiritual guides.⁶ More importantly, such elevation could only be achieved through a thorough development of the *ẓāhir* (the external elements of the faith) as well as the *bāṭin* (the esoteric). In the final analysis, opposing supposed Ṣālihiyya

⁵ In the past, scholars such as I.M. Lewis have argued that acceptance of the Qādiri and the idea of *tawassul* on the part of the masses was influenced by local ideas regarding spirit and ancestor worship. For the learned elite, this was certainly not the case and it is not how they presented it to the wider community of Somali believers. Instead, arguments presented by leading Qādirīs like al-Barawī and al-Quṭbī for the necessity of spiritual mediation of the Prophet were derived from the seminal teachings of other Muslim mystics both past and contemporary. I.M. Lewis, “Sufism in Somalia: A Study in Tribal Islam,” pt. 2 pp. 151–153 *Bulletin of SOAS*, 1955–56. For a fuller discussion of the place of Prophetic mediation in classical Sufism see R.S. O’Fahey *Enigmatic Saint*; O’Fahey and Bernd Radtke “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered” *Der Islam* 70, no. 1 (1993) and; Jamil M. Abun-Nasr *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). Also see Valerie Hoffman’s article “Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice, *IJMES* 31 (1999) pp. 351–369 which provides an excellent discussion of the historical roots of this practice.

⁶ Furthermore, the ultimate object was not the Prophet, as suggested by proponents of so-called neo-Sufism, instead, the Prophet is simply the conduit for reaching the divine. The notion of the “mediating *shaykh*” and their importance in attaining spiritual elevation is more fully discussed in Arthur Buehler’s *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).

heresy seems of secondary importance to Qādirī writers. More important to the Qādirī mission was propagating a particular cosmological view along with ideas of orthoprax behavior which they perceived as essential to developing the soul of the believer and eternal salvation.

*“Heretics,” “Wahhābis” and Other Swear Words: The Roots of Qādiriyya-
Ṣālihiyya animosity*

The arrival of the Ṣālihiyya in Somalia dates to about the same time as the revival of the Qādiriyya (i.e. the 1880s), where it was first introduced along the middle Shabeelle River valley by *Shaykh* Muḥammad Guled. The ideological hostility between the two orders in the Horn, by all accounts, dated only to *Sayyid* Muḥammad’s introduction of the latter to Berbera in the 1890s. While apparently co-existing peacefully in the south, relations between the two orders in the north were marked by almost constant conflict. In this section we want to examine the roots of this conflict exploring, in particular, the Qādiriyya charges of heresy leveled against *Sayyid* Muḥammad and his followers.

Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh Ḥasan was born in 1856 in the Sa’Madeeq valley in what would become the British Somaliland Protectorate. Born of an Ogadeni father and a Dulbahante mother, *Sayyid* Muḥammad was the descendant of a line of itinerant religious practitioners that stretched back at least to his great-grandfather, *Shaykh* ‘Uthmān who was said to have been a member of the Baardheere *jamā’a*.⁷ Like most Somali Muslim religious figures, his intellectual biography is straightforward. He began his education at eight and by eleven had memorized the Qur’ān and begun to study the rudiments of the *sharī’a*. By the age of fifteen he was instructing beginning students and at nineteen, according to tradition, he was declared a “*shaykh*.”⁸ It was at this point (c. 1875) that he began a life as an itinerant preacher traveling throughout the Horn of Africa teaching the Qur’ān and other

⁷ Said Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Maḥammad ‘Abdille Ḥasan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) pp. 99–100. It should be noted that dates differ for the *Sayyid*’s birth ranging from as early as 1856 to as late as 1864, the date found in B.G. Marin, *Sufi Brotherhoods*, p. 180.

⁸ This latter information is supplied by B.G. Martin quoting ‘Abd al-Ṣābur Marzuq’s *Tha’ir min al-Ṣūmāl, al-Mulla Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh Ḥasan*, (Cairo, 1964). Interestingly there are no other references to any religious scholar in Somalia being “awarded” the title of “*shaykh*.”

basic religious sciences.⁹ He ended his wanderings in the early 1890s to marry, and in 1894 went on the Hajj with a group of his maternal kin. It was while in Mecca that he and his relatives were introduced to the teachings of the Sudanese *Shaykh*, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, the founder of the Ṣāliḥiyya order. The noted Somali intellectual, Muuse Galaal, recounted the *Sayyid's* initiation into the order that closely mirror those for *shaykhs* of other *ṭuruq*:

Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ asked the *Sayyid* to remain with him until God had given him direction as to the course of action [he should take]. Thus the two remained together for many days. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ took away all of his books, removed him to a quiet mosque where the *Shaykh* and *Sayyid* performed a strict *tassawuf* [sic]... The *Sayyid* was transformed during this period: he was transformed by the spirit of God, made to see visions of the Prophet and angels. When it was over, he was a changed man... the spirit which went into his head never really left him for the rest of his life.¹⁰

Galaal's account of the *Sayyid's* initiation resembles that of most other Somali Sufi leaders in a number of crucial ways. First, *Sayyid* Muḥammad's initiation occurred only after a long period of exoteric study (thus, the books must first be put away). This was followed by a long period of *khalwa*, or ritual seclusion, in which *Shaykh* Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ imparted to him fundamental esoteric knowledge (a period said to have lasted sixty days) and finally his induction was capped by encounters with the Prophet, the angels and ultimately union with the divine. Such stories of divine unction were generally respected by all of the orders in Somalia and *shaykhs* who had undergone such initiations were treated with respect regardless of *ṭarīqa* affiliation. However, from the time of his return to Somali territory via the port of Berbera, *Sayyid* Muḥammad found himself in conflict with the locally dominant order, the Qādiriyya.

The *Sayyid's* troubles with the Qādiriyya seem to have emerged almost as soon as he landed in Berbera in 1895. He hoped to begin his mission of spreading the word of the Ṣāliḥiyya immediately upon arrival by preaching to the local populace. Unfortunately, much of what he had to say was not well received. Never known for his diplomacy, the *Sayyid* began by attacking not only social customs that he deemed

⁹ B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, p. 180; Samatar, *Oral Poetry*, p. 102.

¹⁰ Muuse Galaal quoted in Samatar, *Oral Poetry*, p. 104.

sinful but also many of the rituals of the Qādiriyya. Like many other *shaykhs* of his day, the *Sayyid* found Berbera to be a den of iniquity. In particular, he found practices such as smoking, *qat* chewing and coffee drinking, as well as alcohol, repugnant and harangued the residents to foreswear their moral laxity. This might have been vaguely tolerable if not well received. However, the *Sayyid* went further, declaring that many Qādirī rituals and beliefs were unlawful innovations, or *bidʿa*. Foremost among these was the conviction that deceased saints could intervene with the Prophet and God on the behalf of living believers and the accompanying tradition of local pilgrimages, or *ziyārat*, to their tombs. Only a living *shaykh* could be such an intermediary, he preached, and his own *shaykh*, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ was the pre-eminent saint (*al-quṭb al-zamān*) of the day.¹¹

It comes as little surprise that such a message was ill received. The Qādirī *ʿulamāʾ* confronted the *Sayyid* with a combination of friendly advice and outright threats. *Shaykh* Madar, a leading Qādirī figure, “warned the *Sayyid* that in his enthusiasm for Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, he might be in danger of transgressing the ‘way of Islam.’”¹² Another Sufi leader, *Shaykh* Aw Gaas Muḥammad, went so far as to warn the British colonial administration of the *Sayyid*’s potentially troublesome teachings. In a letter to the Vice-Consul, H.E.S. Cordeaux, *Shaykh* Aw Gaas wrote, “This Mullah is brewing up something. If you do not arrest him here and now, some day you will go far, very far, to get him.”¹³ In the short term, *Sayyid* Muḥammad abandoned his effort to sway the unreceptive inhabitants of Berbera, and in 1897 he moved to the interior to spread the word among his maternal kin, the Dulbahante.

What followed is well known. In 1899 the *Sayyid* began an insurgency against both European and Ethiopian expansion into the Horn that lasted for more than twenty years until his death in 1920. The Qādiriyya remained implacable foes siding with the *Sayyid*’s opponents—both foreign and Somali¹⁴—and actively preached against him. As tradition holds, *Shaykh* Uways spent the last several years of his life far from his home in the south, preaching against the propagation of what he viewed

¹¹ B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, p. 180; Samatar, *Oral Poetry*, p. 106.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹³ *Idem*.

¹⁴ As Martin and others have pointed out, during his mission to the north, *Shaykh* Uways remained in close contact with the Mijeerteyn political figures, Boqor Cismaan of Boosaso and Ali Yusuuf Kenadiid of Hobyo, who resisted the military advances of the *Sayyid*. See Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*.

as heretical beliefs. In his most famous poetic attack on the Šālihiyya, he enumerated both their crimes against Somali believers as well as their perceived heresies.

- 1 *Blessed are Muḥammad and his family*
Turn to them in every evil calamity
- 2 *The person guided by Muḥammad's law*
Will not follow the faction of Satan
- 3 *They who deem lawful the bleeding of the 'ulamā'*
and wealth and women: they are libertines
- 4 *They hinder the study of sciences*
*Like law and grammar. They are the karrāhiyya*¹⁵
- 5 *To every dead Shaykh like al-Ḥilanī*
*They deny access to God, like the Janāhiyya*¹⁶
- 6 *Don't follow those men with big shocks of hair*¹⁷
Their characteristic mark is like the Wahhābiyya
- 7 *They sell Paradise for cash*
In our land, they are a sect of dogs
- 8 *They dally with women with license*
Even their own mothers, this is fornication
- 9 *They follow their own opinions, not our books*
And they call the light from Satan
- 10 *They deny God at their dhikr*
In word and action they are unbelievers
- 11 *Like their game of saying "God?"*
"Lodge a complaint with Him!" How they are glorified by the Northerners

¹⁵ The extant printed version of this poem reads "*ka-al-fiqh wa al-naḥwa hum al-karāmiyya*". Martin translates the last word "*karāmiyya*" as "a Muslim sect of eastern Persia name for Abu 'Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Karram (d. 225/869–70). One of their doctrines stated that God has a 'body.'" While strictly speaking a reasonable interpretation, it has been suggested that this is actually a misprint and that the correct word is actually "*karrāhiyya*" meaning "abominable" or "loathsome." Given that in subsequent lines, they are described as "*ka-al-janāhiyya*" and "*ka-al-wahhābiyya*"—i.e. "like" the *Jannāhiyya* and "like" the *Wahhābiyya*,—rather than actually "being" that which is described, this alternative reading that they *are* "loathsome" becomes more likely at least based on the structure of the poem. Thanks to Martin Orwin of SOAS for this alternative reading.

¹⁶ A minor Shī'ī sect who, among other things believed in reincarnation and the presence of the divine light in the person of the Imam. See, Djanāhiyya, EI2.

¹⁷ This particular line is something of a mystery, as al-Qutbī points out that one of the marks of the Šālihiyya is the shaving of their heads. Al-Qutbī, *al-Majmū'a al-Mubāraka*, pt. II p. 3.

- 12 *Great clamor they make, a moaning and groaning
And yearning and howling like mournful dogs*
- 13 *They add to the oath in divorce
And reject the divine ceremonies*
- 15 *They've gone astray and make others deviate on earth
By land and sea amongst the Somalis*
- 16 *Have they no reason or understanding?
Be not deceived by them*
- 17 *But flee as from disaster
From their infamy and unbelief*¹⁸

Uways' poem provides an important outline for Qādiriyya charges against the Ṣālihiyya. They are accused of, among other things, being followers of Satan (line 2), having routine unlawful relations with women—even their mothers (line 8), and committing the sin of unlawful innovation (*bid'a*), by adding “to the oath of divorce” (line 13). Worst of all, however, the Ṣālihiyya reject the notion of prophetic and saintly mediation. The disciples of the *Sayyid*, Uways declared, denied ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’s (and by association all saints’) ability to access God (line 5) and arrogantly encouraged their followers to approach the divine directly without mediation (line 11 “...saying ‘God?’ Lodge a complaint with Him!”) Uways’ words warn the faithful that rather than the Prophet and God, the Ṣālihiyya derive their “light” from the devil (line 9). They must be wary of their deceptions and flee from them “as from disaster” remembering all the time that it is “Muḥammad and his family” to whom they should turn “in every evil calamity” (line 1). This is the only direct example of anti-Ṣālihi discourse we have from the great *shaykh*. For a more detailed discussion of Qādirī antipathy and the exact reasons for their hostility, we need to turn to the writings of others.

The most vociferous Qādirī opponent of the Ṣālihiyya was, of course, *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī b. *Mu'allim* Yūsuf al-Quṭbī. In the years before and after Uways' death in 1909, al-Quṭbī wrote the series of pamphlets that would ultimately be published as a single volume known as *The Blessed Collection* (*al-Majmū'a al-Mubāraka*.) While most of it seems to have been written much earlier, the *Shaykh* polished and revised the collection during a period of self-imposed exile in Cairo between 1912 and the end

¹⁸ Al-Barawī, *al-Majmū'a al-Qasā'id*, p. 69.

of World War I, finally publishing it around 1920 while in residence at al-Azhar.¹⁹ As we have seen in earlier chapters, the *Majmū'a*'s importance as a cultural and social text extends into a number of arenas. However, it is best known as an anti-Ṣāliḥiyya polemic. Two of the collection's five pamphlets—*Grave Warnings of the Butcher's Knife for the Barking Dogs* and *Victory of the Believers Over the Rebellious Heretics with the Wisdom of Religion*—were aimed at least in part at enumerating their crimes and placing them within the larger historical context of Muslim heresies. The Ṣāliḥiyya, al-Quṭbī held, were simply the most recent in a long line of heterodox traditions having a great deal in common with many of them. In particular, he points to affinities they shared with, among others, the Kharijiyya, the Murjiyya, the Mu'atazilīs, the Wahhābiyya and those al-Quṭbī refers to as the *shī'ī al-mufrita* (the “extraordinary Shī'ī”), all of whom had “descended into hell.”²⁰

The Kharijiyya were a group of early followers of Imam 'Alī who withdrew their support for what they viewed as his unlawful compromise with Mu'awiyya following the battle of Siffin in 657 C.E. They became regarded as heretics by the wider community for their belief that any who committed a serious crime could be declared an apostate and killed.²¹ Murjiyya²² is a rather generic term used to refer to those who believed that faith alone could guarantee salvation to the exclusion of ritual actions. In many ways the exact opposite of the Kharijī, those subscribing to Murjiyya doctrine held that no believer could be stripped of his status as a Muslim because of his actions, though one could be labeled an aberrant believer. Many branded them as heretics because of their tendency to privilege faith over ritual practice so that one could still be considered a good Muslim even if they failed to follow the dictates of religious law and ritual.²³ The Wahhābiyya, of course, were the followers of the eighteenth-century Arabian *shaykh*, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792) who, preaching a doctrine of strictest monotheism, defined the concept of unrestricted *tawassul*,

¹⁹ IOR/R/20/A/3031. While published as a single volume, the collection's various pamphlets seem to have been written at different times. The longest and most important of these, the *Nasr al-Muminin* (*The Victory of the Believers*), according to al-Quṭbī's own publication, was written in 1907. See *al-Majmū'a al-Mubāraka*, p. 48 where he states, “this book was begun Sunday, 25 *dhu al-qa'adah* 1324 [January 9, 1907].”

²⁰ Al-Quṭbī, *Majmū'a al-Mubāraka*, pt. I p. 37.

²¹ Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, p. 232; see Kharijites in *EI2*.

²² From the word *'irjā*, “to defer judgement.”

²³ See Murdji'a, *EI2*.

saint veneration and tomb visitation as *shirk* and any who followed such practices as unbelievers.²⁴ Finally, “the extraordinary Shi‘ī” al-Quṭbī defines as those who hold extraordinary love for “our lord” ‘Alī but—and this is where they err—who also distinguish between the companions of the Prophet, arguing that some were better Muslims and purer souls than others.²⁵

Shaykh ‘Abdullāhī’s critique of the Ṣālihiyya and their affinities with other heretical groups is, to say the least, long and rambling. Thus, we must content ourselves with a summary. The followers of the *Sayyid* resembled the Kharijiyya because, like them, they were willing to declare any fellow believer a *kāfir* for any infraction against the community. More important was their willingness, like the Kharijīs, to shed the blood of their opponents—as demonstrated by the murder of Uways—and the plundering of their property.²⁶ They were like the Murjiyya as a result of their perceived disdain for ritual practice and willingness to incorporate their own unlawful innovations with abandon. They further “imitate the Murjiyya through worthless hopes...they tell us that he who recites [the *shahada*] his sins will be forgiven forever, though their number be like the waves of the sea and that there shall be no sin recorded against him...”²⁷ The notion that what one did in this life had no bearing on the next was, to al-Quṭbī, ludicrous.

No one is allowed to commit even the smallest sin. Everyone shall be dealt with according to his work, as God has said. Whoever does any good weighing an atom shall see it and whoever does wickedness weighing the same shall also see it. God has said whoever sins shall have the same done to him. The obedient are in luxury and the wicked are in Hell.²⁸

The logical consequence of such beliefs, al-Quṭbī wrote, would be the abrogation of the *shari‘a*. God, “has obliged us to follow religious law” as spelled out in the Qur’ān, a requirement from which not even the Prophet was exempt. Thus, he charged, the Ṣālihiyya regarded “the places where divine law is read as haunts of the devil,” a notion which only adds to their disdain for the ‘*ulamā*’.²⁹ Finally, they were like the

²⁴ Natana DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁵ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*, pt. I p. 60.

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Idem.

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

“extraordinary” Shiʿī because of their tendency to privilege their living holy men over the spiritual benefits offered by the deceased.

They have also imitated the Shiʿī and heretical parties by differentiating between dead and living saints, so much that they ignore the miracles of the dead such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī and our patron Abī Bakr al-ʿAydārūs³⁰ and similar great men. They never supplicate God through them and even run away whenever they are mentioned as I have personally witnessed. Their denial leads to their disdainfulness towards the saints which leads to great misfortune. Their hearts have been inflated with infidelity for they are impressed with the influence of the living... In so doing, they resemble the Shiʿī who differentiated between the Companions of the Prophet and, through their cursed opinion, preferred ʿAlī to the great Commanders of the Faithful Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Such a belief is not beneficial to them. It is a punishment for them in the next world and a disgrace in the present.³¹

However, al-Quṭbī saves his worst condemnation for their supposed affinities with the Wāhhābiyya who, in many ways, encompass all of these sins. Wāhhābī “abominations,” included their tendency to kill those, especially religious scholars, who do not agree with them; belief in the permissibility of pillaging those they consider apostates and; “abstinence from reading the divine law which is in effect a rejection of it.”³² For al-Quṭbī, the Ṣālihiyya were nothing but Wāhhābīs by another name, subscribing to all of these beliefs including what he considered to be the mark of the Wāhhābiyya, the shaving of their heads.³³ However, their worst crime, according to al-Quṭbī, was adherence to the Wāhhābī doctrine that forbids “supplicating God through the dead” and prohibits the faithful from making pilgrimages to either the tomb of the Prophet or the *awlīyāʾ*.³⁴ This is a recurring theme throughout the text, frequently running to several pages. The most comprehensive and concise of these is found in *Victory of the Believers*,

³⁰ Patron of the city of Aden and believed to have introduced the Qādiriyya order to the Horn of Africa in the 16th century.

³¹ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*, pt. I p. 61.

³² Idem.

³³ Idem.

³⁴ While Ibn ʿAbd-Wāhhāb’s prohibition against tomb visitation and the supplication of saints appears categorical, his stance on Prophetic intercession is more murky. He argued that the Prophet had the capacity to intercede with God on the behalf of a believer, but in the end it was the strength of the believer’s own faith that would determine whether or not such intercession would be successful. In any case, it does not appear that he greatly encouraged this practice. Delong-Bas *Wāhhābī Islam*, pp. 68–72.

where al-Qutbī provides his readership with a lengthy critique of this heretical prohibition.

Know, Oh brothers, that here I begin to describe certain things relative to the Ṣālihiyya and their loathsome practices. This serves as a rebuke to them and as a warning to the faithful. These [loathsome practices] are many, but among them is their refusal to visit the best of people [i.e. the tombs of the saints and prophets] the most noble of those being Our Lord Muḥammad, the blessing and peace of God be upon him. Their pretext is that he is like any one of the dead. They allege that they would visit their living *shaykh* even though their *shaykh* is not amongst the saints... We say that this is due to their ignorance and is irreconcilable with the principles of religion. Visiting the Prophet... as well as all other prophets and the saints is a necessity and is declared in both the Qur'ān and the sunna, as well as the unanimous declaration of the 'ulamā' and the learned. In the Qur'ān, God says 'It is unjust to themselves should they approach you and ask God for the forgiveness of their sins, but if the Prophet asks God to forgive them, they would find God a forgiver and kind.' This passage demonstrates the encouragement to visit him [the Prophet]... They are to supplicate God near him so he may pray for their forgiveness. This power does not cease with the Prophet's death. It is set forth that they should approach him [the Prophet] and that unless they do so they would not find God a forgiver and kind... All men and women are to partake in this in securing pardon... The traditions [sunna] regarding this are several fold among them his saying "whoever of you that performs the pilgrimage and does not pay me a visit would have offended me." As stated by Ibn Awday with authenticity and with which he argues, "the giving of an offence to the Prophet is prohibited." Of the traditions is also "whoever visits after my death is as if he has done so during my life"...

I say, undoubtedly, that the Ṣālihiyya, may God annihilate them!, are harmonious with the Wahhābiyya on this matter. Whoever says that our Prophet... is dead and that he can neither do any benefit or harm—even though he is the intercessor between us and God—then that person is an infidel and is not to be consider a Muslim!³⁵

Al-Qutbī explains that the Prophet and the saints are simply intercessors and that it is, in fact, only God who actually takes action to grant or deny a believer's request. Equally important, to argue that one among the living—be it an individual believer or one's *shaykh*—may supplicate God but not one from among the dead calls into question

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 61–62. The following extracts are taken from a rough translation completed by Muḥammad 'Alī Luqmān for the Aden Residency in 1921. It has been checked against the original text and found to be accurate.

the omnipotence of God. The saints and the prophets, he writes, “do not create anything nor do they influence anything...with respect to creation, production, annihilation, good and harm, all are attributable to God alone with no other partner.” However,

...those who differentiate between the dead and living persons are, by that act of differentiation, believing in the influence of the living and not of the dead. We say that God is the Creator of everything and he has created human beings and their works. Those who admit the supplication of the living and deny the same for the dead believe in an influence that emanates from other than God. They are, in fact, unbelievers in the faith of *tawhīd* [unity, but also omnipotence] *because they believe that only the living have influence...*³⁶

Thus, according to al-Quṭbī, the Ṣālihiyya were nothing more than Wahhābīs. The question that must be asked, however, is whether or not these charges were actually true. One thing that is noticeable about al-Quṭbī's text is that his charges are never substantiated by the words of any Ṣālihi writer, let alone those of the *Sayyid* himself. Instead, his attacks were drawn primarily from the works of anti-Wahhābī scholars such as the *Durar al-Asaniyya* of the famed Meccan jurist Aḥmad b. Zaynī al-Daḥlān (d. 1886) or anti-modernists such as the *Jama'a al-usūl* of Yūsuf Isma'īl Nabḥānī. As Enrico Cerulli noted, *Shaykh 'Abdullāhī's* arguments are characterized far more by *ad personum* attacks than ones based on actual evidence.³⁷ Given the lack of evidence from Ṣālihi sources, we need to ask ourselves whether or not al-Quṭbī's charges ring true. Enough information of the *Sayyid's* military activities exists to substantiate the charges of killing fellow believers and the looting of their property,³⁸ but what of Qādirī accusations of heterodox teachings?

Only two of the *Sayyid's* prose writings are known to have survived his death. The first is entitled *al-Qam' al-Mu'aniḍin* or *The Suppression of the Rebellious*, which was a response to the official disavowal of his actions by the Ṣālihiyya leadership in Mecca in 1909, and the *Risalat al-Bimal* or *Letter to the Bimal*, which dates to about 1905. Neither seems to be currently extant, but the historian B.G. Martin was able to examine all or part of each in the mid-1970s, leaving us with at least a partial overview of the *Sayyid's* theological teachings. Martin was able to

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 63–64. Emphasis mine.

³⁷ Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari* vol. I, p. 199.

³⁸ See, for instance, Francesco Caroselli's *Ferro e Fuoco in Somalia* (Rome: Sindicato Italiano Arti Grafiche Editore, 1931).

examine only a small portion of the *Qam'* and it seems to tell us little. In the *Risalat al-Bimal*,³⁹ however, the *Sayyid* devotes considerable space to a discussion of a number of doctrinal issues. Much of this deals with his belief in *jihad* as an obligation incumbent on all Muslims and the impossibility of Muslims living under Christian rule due to the latter's inherent hostility to Islam.⁴⁰ He also devotes considerable space, however, to the concept of *tawassul*. Given that the *Risalat* is no longer extant, we are left to quote Martin at length regarding the *Sayyid's* views on this matter:

The *Sayyid* [in the *Risalat*] turns to a point that occupied as much of his thinking as the *jihad* problem. This is the matter of *tawassul*—intercession for individuals by the Prophet or his companions. The *Sayyid* expressly excludes the validity of such intercession by a deceased saint. As a corollary, visits to the tombs or graves of deceased holy men are forbidden. This issue is crucial in comprehending Muḥammad Abdullāh Ḥasan's [sic] theological views and is the central doctrine of the *Risala*. To Muḥammad Abdullāh Ḥasan [sic] intercession through the Prophet or his companions was wholly acceptable, whereas intercession by way of local saints and traditional holy men was not.⁴¹

Though many of the heretical charges hurled by al-Quṭbī at the Ṣāliḥiyya are obviously exaggerated—in particular their affinities with the Wahhābīs—at least on this one point, the Ṣāliḥiyya do appear in line with the thought of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb. Martin points out the theological difference between the *Sayyid* and the Qādiriyya appears at first glance to be one of mere degree. However, their notion of a more limited form of intercession had serious implications for Qādirī ideology. Specifically, it called into question the very basis of their concept of personal salvation and the shape of the divinely created universe. In order to help explain Qādiriyya hostility towards the Ṣāliḥiyya over a matter of “mere degree,” it may be helpful to explore the Qādirī view of the cosmos.

³⁹ The *Risalat* was a lengthy letter to the Bimal clan of southern Somalia from the *Sayyid* praising them for their resistance to Italian occupation but also included a discussion of some his doctrinal beliefs. The following is drawn from Martin's account. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, p. 195ff.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 196.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 197–198.

Nabī Muḥammad: The Best of Guides

In order to understand the threat the Qādiriyya believe emanated from the *Sayyid*, we need to look beyond the heresiographic elements of both the *Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka* and *al-Majmūʿa al-Qaṣāʾid*. While elements of both works are devoted to the vilification of the Ṣāliḥī order, these diatribes constitute only a small portion of each text. Each work dedicates a far larger amount of space to detailing what a good Muslim should believe as well as what is and is not permissible.

Let us start with al-Barawī's *Majmūʿa al-Qaṣāʾid fī Madahī Sayyid al-Anbiya wa al-Tawassul bi-Tāj al-Awliyāʾ Sayyidī ʿAbd al-Qādir Jīlānī* (*A collection of Qaṣīdas in Praise of the Master of Prophets and an Application to the Crown of the Saints ʿAbd al-Qādir Jīlānī*) which provides the reader with an excellent primer for the shape of the Qādirī esoteric universe. The *Majmūʿa* was compiled by Uways' student, *Shaykh* Qassim b. Muhy al-Dīn al-Barawī probably around 1917 (and certainly before his death in 1926). It most likely appeared first in manuscript form, but by the early 1950s had been through at least three printed editions. This is no small feat in a country with virtually no printing industry, where most works of any size had to be printed abroad—often in Egypt—and were made possible only through subsidies from wealthy patrons.⁴² The collection consists of a series of poems composed by the most famous Qādiriyya leaders of the late 19th century: *Shaykh* Uways al-Barawī; *Shaykh* Abd al-Raḥman Zaylāʾ and; *Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿAbdullāh al-Shanshī "*Shaykh* Ṣūfī."

Rather than a simple compilation of poetry, however, all but one of the entries are in the *takhmīs* or *five* style. Using this technique, al-Barawī placed three of his own stanzas in front of each original two-stanza line creating a new five-stanza verse. The purpose of this classical technique, common in Islamic religious poetry, was to intensify, but not change, the original message of the work.⁴³ In addition, each poem is prefaced by a short *karāma* story relating a notable incident involving the original author of the poem.

Signifying its place as a work to be recited, the text of each poem is "pointed". The inclusion of diacritical marks for vowels, generally left

⁴² The same was true of al-Quṭbī's *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka* which was published during his own sojourn at al-Azhar in Cairo between 1911 and 1920. See IOR/R/20/A/3031.

⁴³ See Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, p. 183.

out of other kinds of printed texts, make it easily readable by individuals whose knowledge of the Arabic language was limited possibly even to mere knowledge of the alphabet and the basic concepts associated with vowelizing. Hence, it is a collection that could be easily recited even by *ṭarīqa* adherents with a limited understanding of written Arabic, while actual meanings could be glossed by the presiding *shaykh*.⁴⁴ This was a text meant for popular consumption, presenting Qādiriyya ideas in a simple and straightforward manner suitable for adepts with limited theological or mystical training. The notion that this was a text with lessons to impart to the seeker is reinforced at the beginning of the first selection with the inclusion of part of a well-known Hadith often associated with poetry. *Inna min al-sh'ir l-hikma*, “in poetry there is wisdom.”⁴⁵

If one simply reads the different poems at random, the work appears to serve no other purpose than what the title states, the glorification of the Prophet and, by extension, the religious leaders who composed them. If one reads the work from cover to cover, however, what rapidly emerges is a blueprint of the cosmological order premised on the notion of Prophetic and saintly mediation between believer and God as a necessary step along the path of salvation. Refutation of Ṣālihiyya doctrine is, indeed, almost an afterthought.

The collection begins in a fairly standard hagiographical manner with the story recounted in Chapter 5 about an encounter between *Shaykh* Uways and the ‘*ulamā*’ of Mecca. In that episode, Uways and his student, Muḥammad al-Barawī were warmly greeted by the religious notables of Mecca, who prevailed upon the great *Shaykh* to bless them with one of his poems. Uways called upon his follower to recite a *qaṣīda* titled *Hadayat al-Anām ila Qabr al-Nabī* (*Guidance of Humanity to the Tomb of the Prophet*) which begins:

*If you wish to make easy your objective
Blessings upon your messenger the best of Guides*

⁴⁴ The importance placed on local religious leaders in relaying Qādiri ideology to the larger body of believers will become even more apparent below in the discussion of al-Quṭbī's collection.

⁴⁵ Al-Barawī, *al-Majmū'a al-Qaṣā'id*, p. 4 “*inna min al-bayan la-sihran wa-inna min al-sh'ir l-Hikma*” Literally “in [some] eloquence there is magic and in [some] poetry there is wisdom.” Many thanks to Everett Rowson for providing me with the first half of this Hadith. Personal communication, April 12, 2000.

*And say, seek aid in every cry
 Ṣalāḥ Allah as the crier cries
 On the Chosen, our master the praised*

*Ḥabīb Allah [Beloved of God] preferred of the elevated
 his tomb is above any throne or high place*

*And every pious place, sincerely
 smells of musk and spices, truly
 As the tomb of Muḥammad, **light of the heart***

*Every aspect of the Ḥabīb is lit
 The one who seeks it, sees the lights with beauty*

*And he encounters him the near one and the far
 They become the Family in the proximity of the beloved
 With knowledge of his fragrance, people of the community⁴⁶*

When Muḥammad finished his recitation, *Sayyid* Abū Bakr, the leader of the *‘ulamā’* present, declared: “*Wallahī nūr!* By God that’s light! Because, all that comes from the tongue[s] of the saints, is light!” The narrator continues, “I marveled at this in my deepest heart, the reverence and exaltation they showed my *Shaykh*, master of interpretation. And they, descendants of the Prophet and [learned] *Shaykhs*, teachers in the Ḥaram, authors of many writings.”⁴⁷

Aside from being an expression of the love of all believers should have for the Prophet and his family, the poem’s opening lines provide a concise synopsis of the essential tenets of the Qādirī *‘ulamā’*. The path to God and salvation (*the objective* of the seeker) is obtainable only through the Prophet who is, indeed, “*the best of guides*.” His tomb, which is higher than “any throne or other high place,” in effect marks the mystical limit between the created world and the divine, making the Prophet the only conduit between the two.⁴⁸ The only way to reach this goal, the poem tells us, is through proximity to him.

⁴⁶ Al-Barawī, *Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id*, p. 4. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁸ As Hoffman points out, this is a notion endorsed by ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī in his work, *Qab al-qawṣayn wa multaqa l-namusayn* (*A Distance of Two Bow-lengths and the Meeting Point of the Two Realms*) which is found reprinted in Nabhānī’s *Jawāhir al-bihār fī fada’il al-nabī al-mukhlār*. This may suggest that al-Barawī’s understanding of classical Sufi teachings was mediated largely through the writings of Nabhānī, since, at least in the *Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā’id* he never quotes directly from the Masters but always via this secondary source. Hoffman, “Annihilation,” p. 358.

While the lines of this poem are important for outlining the importance of Prophetic mediation, the story that prefaces the poem provides the reader with “proof” of this view’s legitimacy. As we saw previously, the poem is recited before an assembly of Meccan religious notables who are overjoyed by Uways’ presence. The *qaṣīda* itself is enthusiastically endorsed by *Sayyid* Abū Bakr, who is not only a descendant of the Prophet but also a noted scholar and leader of the Shafīʿī school of law in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, the holiest and most important place in Islam. This stamp of approval from “descendants of the Prophet, learned professors, teachers in the Ḥaram and, authors of many writings” is confirmation, as seen in the last Chapter, of Uways’ own spiritual credentials but it is also proof of the permissibility of Prophetic mediation.

Certainly, these lines are somewhat ambiguous. Is the Prophet meant to act as a purely moral guide (i.e. by emulating the Prophet one may draw closer to God) or does he literally guide one to the presence of God and, by extension paradise? Al-Barawī lifts this ambiguity in a later vignette when the Prophet himself makes an appearance in a dream and directs the Sufi *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman Zaylaʿī to “Praise [him] with one hundred verses.”⁴⁹ Several of these verses openly declare the Messenger an intercessor with God. The most straightforward of which declares:

*Praise the Messenger of God who unveils our troubles
And obtains God’s forgiveness of our shame*⁵⁰

Nabḥānī and the Light of the Prophet

Throughout most of the *Majmūʿa al-Qaṣāʾid*, the evidence used by al-Barawī to support the permissibility of Prophetic mediation is rather anecdotal. He points to the approval of the Meccan ‘*ulamā*’ and saintly connections with the Prophet as both evidence of the existence of mediation and its permissibility. Al-Barawī, however, was not satisfied with such limited proof. He also sought to place the Qādiriyya position on firm theological ground by calling on the writings of other, non-Somali, Muslim scholars. In particular, he draws on the writings of Yūsuf b. Ismaʿīl Nabḥānī (1850–1932), a jurist and theologian from Lebanon.

⁴⁹ Al-Barawī, *Majmūʿa al-Qaṣāʾid*, p. 46.

⁵⁰ Idem.

Nabhānī was an al-Azhar educated jurist who led a long and successful career as a *qāḍī* in Ottoman Lebanon. He was also an archconservative (if such a label is applicable) staunchly opposed to the late nineteenth-century school of reformers led by Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanī and Muḥammad Abḍuh. As such, he wrote a number of works, beginning in the 1890s, denouncing the teachings of these reformers as heresy and warning against the evils posed by the introduction of such godless practices as Western style education.⁵¹ In retirement, Nabhānī dedicated himself to the compilation of several theological and hagiographical texts, all of which supported the notion of Prophetic and saintly mediation.⁵² His writings were for the most part compilations of the works of others rather than original, marshalling material from classical scholars to refute the arguments of reformers.

While Nabhānī and al-Barawī perceived the threat to Islam coming from different directions (the first feared rampant liberalism and encroaching Westernization while the latter was more concerned with those he regarded as followers of puritanical Wahhābism), al-Barawī considered both to be fighting the good fight to keep the community of believers on the right path. At the beginning of the *Majmūʿa*, he declares Nabhānī to be *al-mujaddid fī zamanana*, “the renewer of our age,” and, late in the collection, quotes extensively from the *Shaykh*’s works to both bolster the notion of Prophetic mediation and refute the Ṣālihiyya heretics.⁵³

Following his initial declaration of Nabhānī’s exalted status as the “renewer of our age,” al-Barawī does not mention the *qāḍī* again until nearly the end of the collection. When he does, however, he provides the reader with a long extract from Nabhānī’s work, *Wasāʾil al-wasūl ila shamāʾil al-rasūl* (*The Means of Attainment to the Sacred Qualities of the Messenger*), that provides a strong rationale for the necessity of Prophetic mediation:

Verily it is known that [the Prophet’s] sacred qualities [*shamāʾil*] suggest his love...because the people are molded by love of these beautiful characteristics...And there are no characteristics more beautiful or more perfect than his. No doubt, that one stamped by it will not have his heart stamped with...error. He loves the possessor of it with certitude. To the extent that he [the individual believer] increases his love, or decreases it, his faith will be increased or decreased, with the pleasure of God most

⁵¹ See Ghazal, “Beyond Modernity Beyond Modernity,” 1999.

⁵² Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, p. 134.

⁵³ Al-Barawī, *al-Majmūʿa al-Qaṣāʾid*, p. 1.

high and eternal bliss. Happy are the people of paradise that they obtain various levels in it. All of this may be alienated to the extent that the love of his slave is rejected...increasing and decreasing. Like the wrath of God almighty and the misery and pain of the people of hellfire and their lowest level, in it. His alienation will be to the extent of his hatred...increasing and decreasing. I do not recall where I took this from, but most of it is from the books of Imam Shaʿrānī...⁵⁴

Nabhānī holds, and al-Barawī concurs, that the path to heaven and, indeed, ascendance towards God, is paved through love and veneration of the Prophet. Those who love him the most will ascend to the highest levels, while those who reject him end up in the deepest abyss. In supporting their view of Prophetic mediation, neither relies on their own words or ideas. Instead, as Nabhānī notes, they turn to the sixteenth-century Egyptian Sufi and renowned popularizer of the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī, Imam ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Shaʿrānī (d. 1565). By quoting Nabhānī, and by extension Shaʿrānī, al-Barawī places the Somali Qādiriyya solidly within the context of a larger, although not uncontroversial, theological school. This school of thought, with its roots in the earliest centuries of Islamic mysticism, places the Prophet at the confluence of humanity and divinity. Within this context, Muḥammad serves not only as the sole conduit for interaction with divinity, but also becomes the primary mediator of divine grace and eternal salvation. As Zaylaʿī writes, he is the one “who unveils our troubles/And attains God’s forgiveness of our shame.”

Light of Creation

The permissibility and advisability of seeking the Prophet as an intermediary with God is the most readily apparent theme running through the poems of this collection and their accompanying introductions. As we noted earlier, the Ṣālīhiyya do not seem to have forbidden this practice entirely, but they minimized its importance as well as placing upon it severe constraints. For the Qādiriyya, however, mediation was not merely advisable but essential if the individual believer wished to attain salvation. This imperative centers on the concept of *Nūr Muḥammadiyya* or “Muḥammadan light”.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 67. The quote itself, al-Barawī states, comes from “his *majmūʿa*,” which is an apparent reference to Nabhānī’s 4 volume work, *al-Majmūʿa al-nabhāniyya fī al-madaʾih al-nabawiyya*, cited by Ghazal, “Beyond Modernity,” 1999.

The notion of “light” is a fixture in many of the *karāmāt* that accompany each poem in the *Majmū‘a*. As *Sayyid* Abū Bakr noted, “all that comes from the tongue[s] of the saints is light.” Similarly, we are told that there sat before Zayla‘ī, “two lights. The light of the Prophet... and the light of Jilanī,...” It is tempting to dismiss these references as the hyperbole of the pious.⁵⁵ However, these expressions of religious exuberance have deep theological roots that place the Prophet at the center of the universe and, indeed, all creation rendering his mediation not only desirable but indispensable.

As noted in Chapter 3, from as early as the ninth century, mystics began to argue that the Prophet was not a mere guide to the divine but the primary instrument of God in the act of creation. Classical Sufis such as Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 895) and later Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240)⁵⁶ argued that Muḥammad was the first being created from the Light of God appearing as “a light from His light.” As the first created entity, all else descended from him. God created even Adam, al-Tustarī held, “from the light of Muhammad.”⁵⁷ The eponymous founder of the Qādiriyya—‘Abd al-Qādir Jilanī—positioned Muḥammad even more explicitly within the process of creation when he wrote that the Prophet was “the pen of the Writer Who has written the growing of created things... the master who has smithed the seal of existence.”⁵⁸

In short, the Prophet Muhammad is seen as the conduit through which all matter was created. More importantly in regard to Qādiriyya ideology, it is only through him that Divine grace is mediated. For, according to Jilanī, the Prophet was sent to mankind in order:

To tear the veil of sorrow, to make the difficult easy, to push away the temptation of the hearts, to console the sadness of the spirit, to polish the

⁵⁵ Al-Barawī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā‘id*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ It is curious that while Ibn al-‘Arabī’s works are never cited in any Somali Sufi texts and his name hardly ever mentioned, many of his ideas are clearly present, and even advocated. As Engseng Ho has pointed out in his recent work, despite “widespread condemnation in... later centuries,” the ideas of Ibn al-‘Arabī continue “to exert a profound influence,” among Muslims in the Indian Ocean. While Ho’s study is concerned largely with the Hardramaut, it is clear the same argument can and should be made for the Somali Sufism as well. Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, p. 127 n. 8.

⁵⁷ Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, p. 125. It should be noted that in discussing the Prophet’s nature in other works, Zayla‘ī quotes liberally from the writings of al-Tustarī. See, for instance, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mushtamila*.

⁵⁸ Schimmel, op. cit., p. 135 quoting Jilanī, although her own citation is rather cryptic.

mirror of the souls, to illuminate the darkness of the hearts, to make rich those who are poor in heart and to loosen the fetters of the souls.⁵⁹

When viewed from this perspective, al-Barawī's references to the ability of the saints to share in the Prophetic light take on the air of theological imperative rather than ecstatic rhetoric. To take part in the Light of Muḥammad (transmitted to the believer by the tongues or hands of the saints) is literally to place one's self on the only path to redemption. By implication, those who deny this way (e.g. the Ṣāliḥiyya) are guilty of rejecting not only the Prophet but also God Himself, whose divine plan created the shape of the universe. In order to illustrate this crucial argument more clearly, al-Barawī once again calls upon the writings of Nabhānī:

It says in *al-Ibrīz*: the masters of the revealed and the seeing, witness the master of being—*sayyid al-wujūd* [i.e. the Prophet]... And they witness what God (powerful and illustrious) gave him, what honors he bestowed upon him, a fact of which would not be capable to other than [the Prophet]... And they witness that matter pervades from *sayyid al-wujūd* to all creation in threads from his light extending to the essences of the prophets and angels (upon them prayers and peace) and the essences of all else among the created. They witness wonder at that... And it is mentioned that some of the pious saw his light... *that extended and branched out in threads, every thread persisting with grace into [every aspect of] humanity, even the bread.*⁶⁰

And finally, it fell to one of the forsaken, (we ask God's peace) who said: Muḥammad is for me but a guide to faith. As for the light of my faith that comes from God (powerful and illustrious) not from the Prophet. The pious one said to him: I see we split [regarding] what is the light of your faith and his light and we leave you to that path which you have mentioned. Are you happy with that? He replied: yes, I am content. He said, God's pleasure be upon him: With regard to his last words he bowed to the cross and disbelieved in God and His Messenger, *and died in his unbelief.*⁶¹

As in the earlier excerpt, Nabhānī takes his example from another Sufi authority, 'Abd al-Azīz Dabbagh (1679–1719/20) a noted Moroccan Sufi cast in the tradition of al-Tustarī and Ibn al-'Arabī. *Al-Ibrīz fī kalām Sayyidī 'Abd al-Azīz*, from which Nabhānī draws this quote, is a little studied but standard work commonly found in modern Sufi libraries.

⁵⁹ Idem.

⁶⁰ Emphasis mine.

⁶¹ Al-Barawī, *al-Majmū'a al-Qasā'id*, pp. 67–68. Emphasis mine.

Written around 1717, it is an account of the life and teachings of al-Dabbagh written by his student Aḥmad b. al-Mubarak (d. 1742).⁶² Veneration of the Prophet is, clearly, a central pillar of al-Dabbagh's teachings. However, this was purely as a means to an end. The very essence of creation that emanates from God is channeled to the rest of humanity (and indeed all things) via the Prophet. The Messenger is, in effect, the conduit of creation and as such, recognition of this is a necessary step along the road to eternal bliss. To deny this and be so arrogant as to believe that one can reach God on his own is thus, in and of itself, unbelief.

At first glance, al-Barawī's argument might appear not to stand up to close scrutiny since, as we saw earlier in the chapter, the *Sayyid* does not seem to have rejected the idea of prophetic mediation out of hand. However, al-Barawī's *karāmāt* anecdotes further inform the faithful that holy men such as Uways—whose words emit light—and Zaylaī—who has the light of the Prophet and Jilanī literally at his finger tips—are themselves important access points to the mediating light of the Prophet. Attacks on them or their character are, by extension, acts against the Prophet and a denial of the cosmic order. Those who denied the necessity of the Prophet (and by extension, the saints) in attaining the divine presence were guilty of heresy and (in the words of al-Dabbagh) might as well “bow to the cross” and become Christian, as they were surely damned to Hell. If there is any doubt left in the reader's mind regarding whom al-Barawī regards as guilty of this unbelief, he quickly removes it by ending the collection with *Shaykh* Uways' scathing poetic indictment of the Ṣālihiyya, the only *qaṣīda*, to appear in its original format.

Al-Qutbī and the Exoteric Responsibilities of Believers

The Qādiriyya in Somalia, however, were not only concerned with defending and propagating their particular set of esoteric beliefs. They were equally concerned with spreading ideals related to being a good Muslim more generally. Ideas, beliefs and behaviors that were as important to salvation as esoteric knowledge. This concern for the external

⁶² Hoffman, “Annihilation”, p. 359. Also Bernd Radtke, “*Ibriziana*: Themes and Sources of a Seminal Sufi Work”, *Sudanic Africa* v. 7 (1996), pp. 113–158.

elements of faith is nowhere more evident than in the writings of *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī al-Qutbī. *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī’s work *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka* is best remembered for its stinging, if not always accurate, attacks on Ṣāliḥī doctrine. However, out of nearly 350 pages, only about fifty are concerned with refuting the teachings of the Ṣāliḥiyya. Much of the remainder (except for the section dealing with the *shaykh*’s genealogy) is concerned with the daily spiritual beliefs and personal actions of believers. In that sense, it is a didactic text in the same mold as al-Barawī’s poetry collection. Al-Barawī’s work was concerned largely with mapping the contours of the Qādiriyya esoteric worldview. Al-Qutbī’s *Majmū‘a*, on the other hand, focuses largely on the interplay between the esoteric and exoteric qualities that an individual must master in order to gain entry to that world and, ultimately, proximity to God. As such, it serves as a practical guide for the believer, detailing not simply the path to spiritual oneness with God, but advice on how to actually achieve it. In this sense, it was a text with a mission—bringing “orthodox” theology and practice to the nomads of the interior.

There is some discussion of the shape of the cosmos and the *Nūr Muḥammadiyya* in the early pages of al-Qutbī’s *Majmū‘a*.⁶³ But much of the text is dedicated to prescribing proper conduct for believers in both thought and deed. This is found primarily in the pamphlet known as *al-Naṣr al-Mumūnīn*, or *Victory of the Believers*. Although not published until about 1920, al-Qutbī wrote *The Victory* in 1907, more than two years before the assassination of Uways. It is a fascinating mixture of advice for this world and the next.⁶⁴ While providing guidance on how to “cleanse and purify” one’s soul and the sights one sees on the path to spiritual progression, he also instructs the reader on the necessity of being a good person in one’s everyday life. As such, large sections of *The Victory* becomes a discourse on the interconnected nature of the *ẓāhir* and the *bāḥin* and the necessity of observing and mastering the former in order to achieve the clarity of the latter. As I will argue in greater detail below, the timing of its writing, content and al-Qutbī’s later attempts to distribute the work, point to the pamphlet’s place as part of a more general Qādiriyya missionary campaign in the interior rather than simply an anti-Ṣāliḥī tract. Al-Qutbī’s aim was to spread not only Qādirī doctrine, but the order’s own vision of orthoprax observance

⁶³ Al-Qutbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*, pt. I, pp. 3–9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

into what was deemed the religious frontier of the interior where the threats included not only Ṣāliḥiyya heresy but suspect nomadic custom and general irreligiosity.

The Victory of the Believers

Shaykh al-Quṭbī begins *The Victory of the Believers* by declaring that, “it is incumbent upon every Muslim to warn others of what will bring about their downfall [in this world] and land them in Hell in the next.”⁶⁵ However, the tract focuses not only on what a believer must avoid, but what he or she must *do* in order to attain a spot in paradise. Curiously, Heaven is raised as a goal of the believer far more often than *fanāʾ* which is frequently mentioned only in passing. This observation is not meant to imply that al-Quṭbī’s work was not a “true” Sufi manual, but rather that the text was aimed at a variety of audiences. One of these was certainly the *murīdūn* or “seekers” whose ultimate aim was annihilation of the self in the divine (*fanāʾ*). But the pamphlet also had a far more general target audience. Al-Quṭbī’s intention for this larger group, whose contact with Sufi circles was no doubt more casual, was to guide them towards more “orthodox” beliefs and “orthoprax” behaviors that would result in making them better Muslims in this world and preserving their souls from Hell in the next.

The pamphlet is divided into four chapters plus an introduction. The Introduction concerns itself primarily with stories of the saints and their closeness to God, while Chapter One focuses on the evils of the *ahl al-bidʿa*, people of innovation, detailed above. A great deal of this, al-Quṭbī points out, are excerpts drawn from earlier writings such as *The Sweetest Fruit*, the genealogical tract discussed in Chapter 2, and *The Butcher’s Knife for the Barking Dogs*, his principal anti-Ṣāliḥiyya piece. The last three chapters (especially 2 and 4) have the character of a religious primer and hold the greatest interest for us here.

Chapter Two is called “*A Consideration of Objectionable Things that Bring About Dissension Among God’s Creation.*” Rather than a proscriptive list of what one should not do, it concentrates on the behaviors that a good Muslim should exhibit. *Shaykh* ʿAbdullāhī states that his intention in this chapter “is to put together those things which are of general necessity, those which are of practical [importance] and those things which are

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 47.

other than that.” His goal is to “turn our attention to the things which we should adhere to among the branches of knowledge” in order to recognize—and eliminate—what is false and enable the good follower to remain on the straight path; a problem, he notes, that is particularly pressing in their time.⁶⁶ The issues al-Quṭbī sees as critical certainly include matters of both spiritual and ritual observance (e.g. prayer, tomb visitation, observance of the five pillars etc.) But equally important are social customs and conventions for which al-Quṭbī provides either religious sanction or calls for believers to mend their ways.

Like any mystic in the tradition of al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-ʿArabī, the *Shaykh*’s main theme is that the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin* cannot be separated and that before one can set a single foot on the path towards God, one must first conquer the sinful temptations of this world and internalize a healthy sense of “God fearing.” Certainly, salvation is not possible outside the Sufi Way. At the outset of Chapter Four he states, “... One who does not come to Him via *taṣawwuf* fears Him the same as [one fears] the end of days.” Sufism, “cleanses [one] like a *ghazī* on a holy war; it purifies hearts from human ills like pride [*al-kabar*]; envy [*al-ḥasad*]; malice [*al-ḥaqad*]; hypocrisy [*al-ṛayaʿ*] and vanity [*al-ʿajab*]...” The Sufi Way, “is not about crying or yelling and flinging things on the ground, starving one’s self, rending one’s clothes... or shaving one’s head... It is not about foreswearing knowledge... Sufism is, as al-Ghazālī and al-Asyutī and others tell us... the freeing [*tajrīd*] of the heart for God and despising what is evil... The one who devotes his heart [to] all that, or even some of it, he is a true Sufi [*al-ṣūfī al-ḥaqīqī*].” Progress along the Sufi path, however, can be achieved only if one is first firmly “rooted” in “the doctrines of the faith and the various branches of law.”⁶⁷ Devotion, al-Quṭbī tells his reader, is the key, as “devotedness is an expression of [one’s] obedience to the authority of God and avoidance of the forbidden.” This includes both “the *ẓāhir*—such as performing physical devotions and foreswearing the forbidden, as well as the *bāṭin* including ornamental and laudable characteristics like learning, reason, nobility, and internal purity.”⁶⁸

As a natural precursor, the pamphlet’s second chapter starts with a detailed discussion of the *ẓāhir*, beginning with ritual observance. This

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

⁶⁷ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*, pt. II, pp. 2–3.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

includes the proper arrangement of communal prayer, a brief discourse on the number and proper performance of prostrations (*raka'āt*), the importance of tomb visitation and praying in mosques as well as appropriate conduct within such sanctuaries. The most intriguing of these is the section "Regarding the Regulations for [Behavior] in a Mosque," that begins with the benefits accruing to those who build and maintain places of worship. With regard to the construction of mosques, he notes, "there are concerns for both the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin* but both are praiseworthy. According to the Hadith of the Prophet, 'whoever builds a mosque, God builds a house in heaven for him.' Similarly, the Prophet said, 'whoever cleans the houses of God it as if he has made the Hajj 400 times, defended the faith 400 times...and fasted 400 years...'" Additionally, other acts may "benefit the *ẓāhir* as well as the *bāṭin*," including "devoting one's self to service in the mosque, study, reciting the Qur'ān and [performing] *dhikr*, maintaining lamps [in a mosque], etc.. All," he notes, "are praiseworthy acts."⁶⁹ From here the discussion shifts away from ideas of ritual piety towards the realm of personal social action. Some directly concern ritual, while others address broader notions of acceptable social conduct.

This begins with a detailed discussion of acceptable personal behavior within the precincts of the mosque both during prayer and at other times. When entering the mosque, he notes, one should "not sit before praying two *raka'a*." More importantly once in the prayer hall, he chides the reader to be certain to engage only in behavior that is appropriately reverential and pleasing to God. Thus, the one who "speaks words of the world in a mosque,...God thwarts him forty years..." The conducting of worldly affairs is similarly frowned upon, citing the words of the Prophet, "I saw one in the mosque who was selling and I said to him, God does not profit from your commerce." Lest we think that al-Qutbī wished to harangue the reader only with what is forbidden he also informs us about behavior that is permitted. So, he tells us, it is permissible to both simply sit and sleep within the mosque as long as you pray first. By the same token, food and drink are permitted, as long as they are shared with the others present and the discussion of "worldly" matters avoided.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Al-Qutbī, *al-Majmū'a al-Mubāraka* pt. I, p. 98.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 99–100.

Following a lengthy treatment of the Five Pillars,⁷¹ also an indispensable part of the *ẓāhir*, the *Shaykh* plunges even deeper into social behavior, starting with a section called, “Concerning Forbidden Monetary and Social Interactions.” This general theme takes up much of the remaining chapter, covering not only financial transactions, but also marriage options, divorce, dietary rules and dancing, among others, all in considerable detail. For example, al-Quṭbī devotes six pages to outlining those things which are permitted under the law and those which are prohibited. He starts with the permissible, stating that certain activities are permitted by *sharīʿa* including buying and selling, loans without interest, and the collection of rent, all of which are “praiseworthy.” Other activities, such as usury (*ribā*), bilking women out of their inheritance, extortion, gambling, theft, false witness, corruption, lying, price fixing and monopoly are, obviously, outside the bounds of the lawful.⁷² Lest one think that this is merely a moralizing list of right and wrong, al-Quṭbī inserts into the midst of it a two page discussion of how to formulate a proper contract as a way of providing guidance to those involved in commerce and who wish to avoid error.⁷³ The reader is then guided through lengthy sections on marriage and *kafāʿa*,⁷⁴ divorce, and the importance of *taqlīd*, the emulation of one’s scholarly predecessors.⁷⁵

The *Shaykh* then turns his attention from social and economic relationships to matters of the body, mainly local eating habits, as well as “vices” such as tobacco, *qat* and coffee, areas where he feels he either needs to condemn, clarify or endorse local practice. Regarding food, he notes, “God has forbidden to them [i.e. believers] meat that is already dead, blood that has already been poured from the body and pork, as these things are unclean.” A straight forward statement, but then he adds, “the *Muḥī* of the Ḥaram, Abū Bakr b. Shaṭa, regarded as unclean other things such as the mixing of blood with sour milk—which is like poison—as well as scorpions, frogs, . . . and those things which you ride except camels and horses.”⁷⁶

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 100–108.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 109–115.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 110–111.

⁷⁴ Discussed in Chapter 5.

⁷⁵ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*, pt. I, pp. 116–134.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 135.

There are other issues surrounding consumption, he declares, that “the *‘ulamā*’ discuss in overly long detail,” but because of the times in which they live need to be discussed at least briefly, these are: coffee, tobacco and *qat*. Some, he notes, consider these vices. Al-Quṭbī assures his audience that, in short, they are not. “As for coffee and *bunn*,⁷⁷ it is the fruit of the saints! And there is nothing either in the books of Nabhānī or others [that forbids it] . . .” Only al-Ṣawī, he notes, dislikes it and that only because he did not care for the taste. Tobacco and *qat*, for their part, are considered *ḥalāl wa ḥurma* “agreeable and holy.” Some may consider tobacco distasteful, but it is only a sin “if it has a negative impact on one’s quality of life or wealth.” By the same token, *qat*, unlike alcohol for instance, is acceptable because it does not “cloud one’s reason or drug the body” instead it merely intensifies sensation.⁷⁸ Finally, there is a lengthy discussion of the permissibility of hunting game with rifles or other guns. After a detailed consideration of the various positions, al-Quṭbī declares that game killed in such a manner is permitted as long as it was killed expeditiously and with skill.⁷⁹

Moving from what people consume to how they socialize and celebrate, al-Quṭbī next considers the topic of dancing and music in general. Citing Bukharī and Qushayrī, *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī contends that the Prophet had no issue with music and the beating of drums on festive occasions. “Announce this wedding [to ‘Aisha] in the mosques with the beating of drums,” he quotes from a Hadith. While a number of *fuqahā*’, he assures the reader, declare that one should “beat the drums in times of happiness and on special occasions such as *al-mawlid al-nabī* as well as for other happy events such as marriages, births and circumcisions.” Other activities were, not surprisingly, more problematic. Mixed dancing and dancing while cross-dressing (*al-mukhanathūn*) are not permitted nor is the singing of “foreign” songs. Similarly, rhythmic clapping—done outside of prayer—is generally acceptable, though stringed instruments and cymbals inhabit a gray area and are probably unwise.⁸⁰

Sufi *dhikr*, of course, is beyond reproach. Citing Ibn Ḥajjar Haythmī, al-Quṭbī writes that the Prophet did not find *dhikr* or dancing before him reprehensible, saying “things such as this are moral . . .” and that

⁷⁷ The actual coffee bean which is roasted and ceremonially eaten among Somalis on social occasions.

⁷⁸ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*, pt. I, p. 136.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

dancing during both *dhikr* and *sama*⁸¹ (which he defines as *dhikr* performed with music) were permissible forms of worship. Large numbers of “our greatest Imams” have declared this, al-Quṭbī argued, including *Shaykh al-Islām* Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām who related the following story from the Prophet:

God came down to Adam and found him crying for 300 years, he asked him why he was crying and Adam said ‘O’Lord I am not crying out of longing for heaven or fear of hell. But I cry because I am separated from the Angels who move about the throne (*‘arsh*) in seventy thousand rows dancing...all of them reciting with raised voices ‘you are our example, you are our Lord, you are our beloved...’ and they do this tirelessly until the day of resurrection. God said, ‘raise your head O’Adam’ and he raised his head to the sky and he saw the angels flying about the throne...to his delight...al-Salām said, listen my brother, this is a prophetic utterance...⁸¹

Using this as a “teaching moment,” al-Quṭbī points out that not only does this story support the practice of dancing in the worship of God, but the fact that so many scholars relate it, and others like it, how could they be leading generations of believers in to error?

The chapter concludes with a lengthy denunciation of magic and astrology and discussion of why these cannot be confused with the miracles associated with the saints.⁸² Chapter Three which follows is largely an exhortation to the believer to take what they have learned of correct behavior from Chapter Two and use it to guide their fellows back to the right path.

Our brethren teach us that the commanding of the good and forbidding of the abominable is a duty upon all Muslims and if one among us falls into error [*al-ḥaraj*, literally “the forbidden”] the Almighty says that it is up to those of you of the *umma* to call him back to the right path [*al-khayr*] and to command the right and forbid the wrong. As the Prophet said, he who sees wrong must correct it with his hand, and if that is not possible then with his tongue and if that is not possible, then with his heart...As it says in the Hadith ‘the believer struggles with his sword *and* his tongue...’⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 139–140.

⁸² There are no surprises here, as al-Quṭbī expounds the usual Sufi belief that magic and astrology are the work of unseen and evil forces, while the *karāmāt* of the saints are manifestations of God’s will and symbols of the saint’s grace. Ibid., pp. 146–152.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 152.

The duty of believers to champion proper conduct in the face of the forbidden will be discussed further below. With at least the groundwork well underway for the foundation of solid exoteric practice, in the next chapter al-Quṭbī is ready to begin educating the believer in the ways of the *bāṭin*.

On Sufism

It is only in the penultimate chapter of *Victory of the Believers* that Shaykh ‘Abdullāhī directly engages the idea of Sufism, which he regards as at the very heart of Muslim belief. He begins, “This greatly beneficial chapter is devoted to the worship of the Lord the Wise and wholesome knowledge [as recounted] in the following *al-hadīth al-qudsī*:

and the Lord almighty said to David, ‘O’David learn the knowledge that is beneficial,’ and David said, ‘what is the knowledge that is beneficial?’ And God said, ‘verily you know My glory and greatness, . . . and my perfect mastery over all things and that is what draws you close. (And I present) with this chapter many characteristics from those who have come before and those who wrote later (and they say) *any of those who say that Sufism is not contained in the Qur’ān or the Sunna they are unbelievers!* For all of it is a part of the *Muḥammadan Character*...⁸⁴

Sufism, he argued, was the only way to truly submit to God, and any who said otherwise was an unbeliever. And it is at this point that he enters into his only discussion of the esoteric journey of the soul toward annihilation in the presence of God. He talks of the need for overcoming one’s lower soul (*al-naḥs*) and the important distinctions between “The Law, The Path and the Truth” (*al-Sharī‘a, al-Ṭarīqa, wa al-Ḥaq*), each of which is an important element of spiritual growth. In developing the *bāṭin*, al-Quṭbī continues his theme of the overarching importance of the *ẓāhir*. He approaches it, however, not simply as a necessary precursor to enlightenment, but as a closely intertwined element of the process itself. While there may be divisions between “the law, the path and truth,” the door does not close behind the seeker as he or she progresses along the way. Instead, the soul encompasses and internalizes each of these as it moves towards greater awareness.

In this most esoteric part of his collection, al-Quṭbī continues to warn his reader that it is the corporeal world, indeed one’s own body,

⁸⁴ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*, pt. II, p. 2. Emphasis mine.

that represents the greatest obstacle to the development of the *bāṭin* and the achievement of *fanāʾ*. Citing al-Ghazālī, he notes that the greatest enemy the believer faces in this quest is his or her own body, the limbs of which constantly seek to lead one into “rebellion against God.” Each one⁸⁵ represents a potential doorway to Hell and only control over them will ensure the seeker’s progress along the path of enlightenment. Our limbs, he enjoins us, can serve us by communicating the wonders of God and His creation. However, they also represent pitfalls such as lust, greed and other behaviors offensive to the Creator. The eyes, for instance, can reveal the wonders of both heaven and earth. But they also expose us to the forbidden, such as lustful cravings and desires. Likewise, the ears enable us to imbibe the Word of God, the Sunna of the Prophet and the wisdom of the *awliyāʾ*. However, they may also “cause one to rebel against God through hearing unlawful innovation [*bidʿa*], slander [*ghayba*], obscenities or baseless falsehoods [*al-bāṭal*].”⁸⁶ The tongue allows the believer to do many wonderful things, such as “remember God, recite His dear Book, . . . and reveal one’s innermost conscience, but it can also lead us in to unbelief . . . and religious abomination.” These include not only things like *shirk*, but lying, telling hurtful jokes, breaking promises, and quarreling. Similarly, the hands and feet may “vex one” when they help commit an act that is unlawful, while female genitalia [*faraj*] naturally tempt one with lust, “vexing the *bāṭin* with uncertainty.”⁸⁷

While these limbs represent relatively simple and straightforward hazards, the stomach, al-Quṭbī warns us, is more complicated. God, he warns, is naturally offended by the believer who eats the *ḥarām* or even “the doubtful.” But He is equally offended by those who “are greedy about those things that are *ḥalāl*. “Truly, the satisfied appetite hardens the heart,” he states, “as well as the intellect and compromises one’s ability to comply [with the will of God] and encumbers the limbs of the worshipper and the *ʿalim*, [it] strengthens the passions and [gives] victory to the soldiers of the devil. *It is from an appetite for the ḥalāl that every ill begins.*”⁸⁸ Finally, he tells us of the ills of the heart, which he warns are many. The worst of these are envy, hypocrisy [*rayaʾ*], pride

⁸⁵ These include the eyes, ears, tongue, stomach, heart, female genitalia, hands and legs. Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmūʿa al-Mubāraka*, pt. II, p. 7.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 7–8.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 11–12.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 10. Emphasis mine.

[*ʿajīb*] and arrogance [*kibr*]; any one of which may wipe out all that one achieves by way of learning and good works. Quoting al-Ghazālī's *Ihya' ulūm al-dīn*, al-Quṭbī notes that "there are many objectionable qualities of the heart...and cleansing it of its vices is lengthy and the path of remedy is concealed."⁸⁹

Not surprisingly, all of al-Quṭbī's admonitions loop back to the social. Few of the sins he enumerates exist at the level of the purely personal (e.g. gluttony and lust, for instance). Instead, the majority of sins he lists as damaging to the soul are things that damage others. Thus, the tongue harms the soul through broken promises, slander and quarrels; the hand by striking a fellow believer; the ears by causing one to believe baseless falsehoods; the legs by causing the ruler to "walk" into oppression of his people. It is not only the body that represents an impediment to the soul's progress. It is the very world around us that offers its challenges. "The earth is a prison for the faithful," al-Quṭbī notes, "and a paradise for the unbeliever." However, it is not a selfish, sadistic prison where sins are offered merely to tempt the believer into perdition. Instead, the avoidance of sin offers the opportunity to obtain spiritual capital that may be cashed in at the "end of days" in exchange for salvation. Quoting al-Ghazālī, we are told "this world is the 'estate' for the next...you take from it from this world what is necessary for the next." If this is not explicit enough for the reader, al-Quṭbī adds, "the pious wealth of the pious man establishes his compassion and creates with it that which is beneficial [*ma'rūfā*] and this will have importance. As on the Day of Judgment, God will gather [all of the world's] gold and silver like two great mountains. Then He will say, 'this is what has returned to us, there is good that comes from it as well as bad...'"⁹⁰ Good works and managing one's social relationships well (along with belief) are at the heart of salvation. Mystical practice, of course, is a central pillar that enables a believer to build the spiritual character necessary to avoid the pitfalls of sin and at this point in the text al-Quṭbī enters in to a lengthy digression on the matter to which we will return below. Before doing so, let us continue outlining the social pitfalls one must avoid in order to maintain spiritual health.

Outside the body proper, miserliness and greed serve as al-Quṭbī's first targets. "My Brethren inform us of what is mentioned of generosity

⁸⁹ Idem.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

and liberality in the Qurʾān and the Sunna what is mentioned of misers and miserliness...” God, he tells us, does not countenance those who gather wealth for its own sake. Generosity, in fact, lay at the heart of Creation. “When God created the universe He first created superior morality and generosity. Then He said, ‘O’my angels, the generous are close to Me, close to My Heaven and close to My angels and far from the Fire [i.e. Hell]... God also said, I will not grant asylum to the greedy in My paradise.’” Al-Qutbī contends that generosity is, in fact, an essential element of faith. Quoting a pair of unattributed Hadith, he notes that “faith and stinginess cannot gather in the heart of a faithful man...” while “the generous ignorant person [i.e. non-Muslim] is better than the greedy worshipper.” To further illustrate the point, al-Qutbī relates another story, purportedly from the life of the Prophet:

Khalid b. al-Walīd came upon the Prophet when he had captured a number of Byzantines and he showed them Islam and they rejected it. And he ordered that their necks be struck until they accepted. There remained only one and as he was about to be struck, the Angel Jibrīl descended and said, ‘do not kill him, as he is generous and verily God loves the generous...and this is the blessedness of generosity...’⁹¹

“Greed,” *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī concludes, “is the enemy of God, the enemy of the Prophet and the enemy of the faithful.”⁹² Accompanying his admonitions against greed is a similar warning about “slander and calumny” which he notes is forbidden in the *sharīʿa* and a “menace.” It is a sin that fouls the air with its stench and worse than fornication; statements he backs up with Prophetic authority. The Messenger, he writes, was traveling with his followers, when they encountered an offensive smell, and the Prophet noted that it was “the smell of people’s calumny.” Another story, attributed to Jābir, quotes the Prophet as saying, “slander is worse than fornication [*ẓinā*]” and his followers said, ‘O’Messenger how is it possible that [it] is worse than fornication?’ He replied, ‘the one who fornicates may repent and God will pardon him, but the one who commits slander cannot be absolved until the one he has wronged forgives him.’”⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 26. It should be noted that al-Qutbī’s Cairo editor found this story somewhat incredulous, indicating in the margin that this was a “strange story,” for how could a *kāfir* not but be in Hell?

⁹² Idem.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 29.

This concern for curbing behavior that could damage one's social relationships continues in a subsequent section dedicated to "The Duty [*ḥaq*] of the Neighbor and Criticism of One Who Harms Him."⁹⁴ Here al-Qutbī informs his audience that one's responsibility towards his neighbors is among the most important social duties. As long as "they worship God and do not associate another with him, they are like one's parents, close relatives, orphans and the poor." You must, in effect, treat your neighbor as your own family and provide them with the same courtesy and respect. Wronging your neighbor, we are told, is far worse than sinning against one you do not know. So, "fornicating with the wife of a neighbor is worse than fornicating with ten women!" While stealing from ten houses is "less offensive than stealing from the home of one's neighbor." As with greed, ritual observance cannot atone for social misconduct. Citing Bukharī, we are told of a man who approaches the Prophet and asks—hypothetically, of course—"let's say there is a woman [*fulāna*] who prays, gives charity, and fasts, but she damages her neighbors with her tongue." The Prophet responded, curtly and unsurprisingly, "she is in hell." This, of course, is followed by the story of another woman, who doesn't pray, or fast but also does not damage her neighbors and she—naturally—is in heaven. Hammering home the point, al-Qutbī again cites the Prophet, "he who damages his neighbor, damages me [i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad], and he who damages me, damages God. He who attacks his neighbor, attacks me, and he who attacks me, attacks God...*the one who harms his neighbor is not my follower...*"⁹⁵

Shaykh 'Abdullāhī's advice for social conduct, however, was not merely proscriptive. In addition to telling believers what they should avoid, as with ritual, al-Qutbī also provides detailed guidance regarding what behaviors they *should* engage in, both in their spiritual lives, and their daily social interactions. Thus, there is an entire section of Chapter Four dedicated to the "Rules of Conduct in Social Relations." This section begins with a preamble that admonishes the faithful to do as God commands and actively seek obedience not only through prayer, charity, the building of mosques and hostels, but to seek out other kinds of piety (*birr*). This includes not only the strictly spiritual but also the realm of

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

⁹⁵ Idem. Emphasis mine.

social and moral rectitude (*adāb*), specifically observing manners and proper behavior in one's interactions with people as well as God.⁹⁶

We are reminded that, in the presence of God, believers are expected to comport themselves in a particular manner. So, for instance, you must remember to “bow your head, lower your gaze, observe continuous silence and calm your extremities...” Equally important, however, is the way the believer conducts his or herself in the presence of others. Thus, we are treated to a lengthy discourse on the etiquette surrounding social gatherings, eating, drinking, and general social intercourse. So, for instance, when attending a social gathering at the house of another, “first announce yourself and wait to be invited in.” Upon entering “do not presume to sit until your host invites you to do so... do not sit between two individuals except with their permission... do not presume to ‘plop’ yourself into the middle of a gathering, this is abhorrent... [and remember,] when you add yourself to a gathering, the noise increases...” Finally, always call for God's blessing upon your host.⁹⁷ If invited to stay for a meal, the *Shaykh* also provides guidance on proper table manners.

There are many rules of propriety regarding food and among these is what comes before the food what comes during and what comes after, but we limit ourselves here to two kinds [the before and during] to emphasize their necessity... First, it must be *ḥalāl* and fresh/unspoiled; Second, one must wash one's hand, as the Prophet said “*al-waḍū'* before the food...”; Third, place the food on a dining table on the ground; Fourth, the preferred manner of sitting [is sitting on the ground—with further instructions regarding one's position, which is to recline, and the placing of the legs]; Fifth, do not make pleasure your goal in eating; Sixth, share what you have with others and avoid eating alone as the Prophet said, “the best food is that which has many hands in it...”⁹⁸

Furthermore, “One must begin and end with the *bismillah*; one must eat with the right hand making sure that it is washed before and after... do not criticize what you are given; do not eat from the middle of the dish or cut bread or meat with a knife but break it off [with one's fingers]... make sure you drink with the right and don't burp [*jasha'*]!” Regarding the end of the meal, our guide provides copious

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 41–42.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

instructions on when and with what you may—and may not—wipe your hands.⁹⁹

A wide range of other social relationships are also addressed by the text. The *Shaykh* gives advice on how to treat strangers (kindly and never with contempt); how to choose companions (choose only those of good character) and; proper conduct with those who are above you in stature (i.e. parents, teachers and *shaykhs*) as well as one's brethren. Rather than examine these in detail, let us turn instead to an examination of why *Shaykh* 'Abdullāhī might choose to dwell so long on the personal behaviors of his audience.

Interspersed prominently amongst the advice on behavior and proper living throughout Chapter Four "On Sufism" are sections devoted to justifying Sufism as the only sure way to attain salvation. As we have already seen, al-Quṭbī argues for the centrality of Sufism in attaining paradise, stating "the one who does not come to Him via Sufism fears Him the same as the end of days."¹⁰⁰ In several sections labeled "Concerning the Division of the Soul"; "Concerning The Qualities of the Soul" and "Concerning the Pillars of the *Ṭarīqa*," al-Quṭbī describes the maladies of the *nafs*, or lower soul, and the various stations of the Way that will assist the seeker in ridding him or herself of these vile characteristics, replacing them with good. Among the qualities of the lower soul, he tells us are "greed, covetousness[*ḥarṣ*], pride [*kubr*], lust [*shahwa*], envy [*ḥasada*] and indifference [*ghafla*]." In order to rid ourselves of these things, "the seeker must follow the Path and imbibe the qualities of the Prophet and its process." The one who is adorned with ill qualities must strive to replace them with those which are good, including "learning, gentleness [*ḥalūm*], inner purity [*ṣafā*'], generosity, self-abasement [*tadhllal*], patience, and abstinence..." The pillars of the Way, he goes on, aid the seeker in ridding one's self of these undesirable characteristics and cultivating those which are desired. These are hunger, sleeplessness (*sahar*), silence (*ṣam*), and seclusion ('*azila*) all of which aid the individual in attaining the various stations (*maqamāt*).¹⁰¹ As one sheds undesirable qualities, the seeker progresses through the various stages, which al-Quṭbī marks with colors. Achieving the level of obeying the law is "blue" reaching the level of 'the Path' and being

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 38–39.

able to rid the soul of the things of censure is ‘yellow’, reaching the level of gnosis is ‘red’ while the level of ‘reality’ is ‘white’ that of *fanā* ‘green’—not surprisingly—the last stage, of course is, *baqa*’ or “remaining” “for which there is no color.”¹⁰² However, he also argues, as witnessed by his first stage noted above, none of this is possible without proper theological belief and knowledge of—among other things—the law and rightly-guided behavior.

In the section “Concerning the Distinction Between the *Sharī’a*, the *Ṭarīqa* and the *Ḥaqīqa*,” al-Quṭbī explains that each of these represents an integral part of attaining annihilation in the Divine. He points out that, before the believer can even set a metaphorical foot on the Path, he must first master the *sharī’a*, which will result in the purification of the *ẓawāhir* or external things of religion, then turn his attention to the *ṭarīqa*, which leads to the purification of the *bāṭin*. From there one can move on to the *ḥaqīqa*, which will reveal the radiant colors of the heart. The “*ḥaqīqa*” he writes, “is the fruit of the *ṭarīqa* that may not be harvested until after being molded by the *sharī’a*,” an idea analogized in the following verse.

*If the sharī’a is like a boat, and the ṭarīqa
Is like the sea, the Ḥaqīqa is the rare [lit. expensive] pearl*¹⁰³

The call to knowledge, however, is not left as a vague platitude. Rather, al-Quṭbī spells out to the reader exactly what he considers the parameters of acceptable knowledge. The believer must be guided, first of all, by a qualified ‘*alim*. This means, in part, one who (quoting al-Ghazālī) does not “seek knowledge for his own glory among the ‘*ulamā*’ or lord it over the foolish or to draw attention to himself among the people, God places him in hell, because the fruit of learning is its own accomplishment. . . .”¹⁰⁴ More importantly, “the faithful are required to follow” those ‘*ulamā*’ “who are knowledgeable in the wisdom of the *sharī’a* that revolves around *sound dogma*, and is within the action and intention of the pious ancestor[s].” According to al-Quṭbī “sound dogma” and the “pious ancestors” include:

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁰³ Idem.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

- 1– The four Imams and other than them among the *Mujtahids*...
- 2– The doctrines of Abī al-Ḥasan al-‘Asha’rī and Abī Maṣṣūr al-Maturīdī and their followers.
- 3– And those who are in agreement with the practice and interpreters in the spread of the this knowledge including Imam Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, Ibn Ḥajjar and al-Ghazālī.¹⁰⁵

Missionary work on the religious frontier

Certainly, the idea of the intertwined nature of the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin* is nothing new in Sufi thought of this period. In fact, al-Quṭbī draws heavily on the works of Abū Hamīd al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in his discussion of the practices and beliefs a person must hold in order to live life as a devout Muslim. Much of the above discussion is derived directly from two of al-Ghazālī’s most famous works *Ihya’ ulum al-dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*) and *Bidayat al-hidāya*. The first was the ‘alim’s *magnum opus* that sought to synthesize mysticism and theology. In addition to being a highly theoretical text, however, the *Ihya* combined “mainstream Sunnī piety” with the “introspective and ascetic discipline” of Sufism.¹⁰⁶ As such, it has served for centuries as a guide for devout Muslims in both religious and everyday life. The second is a similar, if more practical guide aimed at laying out a “rule for daily life for the devout Muslim, together with counsel on the avoidance of sin.”¹⁰⁷ By the early twentieth century, this is hardly an innovation in Sufi thought.

Al-Quṭbī’s work on one level was meant to serve as a manual for initiates of the order—*murīdūn*—seeking spiritual elevation under the guidance of a qualified *shaykh*. The ambitious *murīd*, however, was not the text’s only audience. With its emphasis on piety in the every day and calls for orthoprax observance, al-Quṭbī’s *Majmū‘a* also appears to have been a work for missionizing the Muslims of the Somali interior. Scholars from Enrico Cerulli onward have frequently noted that the religious practices of the Somalis of the interior were generally less than “orthodox.” Practices such as tree veneration, local spirit cults, and magic were rife among the nomads of the hinterland.¹⁰⁸ By the same

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000) p. 146.

¹⁰⁷ Idem.

¹⁰⁸ See, Cerulli, *Somalia Scritti Vari*, vol. I, pp. 177ff.

token, ritual and dietary rules were more often honored in the breach. As al-Quṭbī notes, the drinking of animal blood (usually camel's) mixed with milk and a less than strict observance of prohibitions against eating certain animals appear as the norm. At least by implication, other rituals such as regular prayer and fasting seem also to have been less than rigidly practiced. Numerous authors have recognized the role of mystics in missionizing the hunter-gatherer and former slave populations of the Jubba and Shabeelle River Valley.¹⁰⁹ What has not been recognized, however, is that the leadership of the various orders may have felt the need for the same kind of mission among much of the nomadic, and supposedly already Muslim, population.

Al-Quṭbī's vision of *Victory of the Believers* as a didactic piece meant to be, if not read, by rural people then at least, transmitted to them by competent religious teachers is apparent from the first pages. He states that he wrote this text in order to "use it to divert the faults of the people and to strip those faults of their power...and witness the victory of religion over the innovators." Many of the Hadith and attendant lessons have been abbreviated by "necessity" but the *Shaykh* stresses that he has "not gone outside the teaching of the four Imams who are the pillars of the *Ahl al-Sunna*." Perhaps most importantly, however, he notes that in writing this work "I have not used anything except general speech and performance...things that are easy [and within people's] ability [to grasp.]"¹¹⁰

Within the body of the text, there is certainly a great deal of evidence to support the notion that *Victory of the Believers* was meant to call rural believers to a more faithful way of life. In particular, it is al-Quṭbī's wide ranging discussion and advocacy of particular social behaviors that lends the work its missionary quality. His discussion of the permissibility of coffee, *qat* chewing and the use of firearms for hunting can certainly be read as a desire to provide guidance to the faithful on matters of contemporary relevance. His concerns, however, go far beyond the topical, and the *shaykh's* discourse appears aimed at far more fundamental matters. Al-Quṭbī is concerned not simply with external piety, but with living a life that is pleasing to God in all its aspects.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance Catherine Besteman, *The Unraveling of Somalia*, Ken Menkhaus; Francesca Declich, *I Bantu della Somalia* and; Lee Cassanelli, *Shaping of Somali Society*.

¹¹⁰ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū'a al-Mubāraka* pt. I, p. 48.

While there are many sections devoted to prescribing proper moral conduct, there are as many that deal with more mundane matters of social behavior. So, while the reader is admonished to avoid slander, miserliness, and fornication, for instance, he is also instructed in manners such as proper conduct while sitting in a mosque or, indeed, at a dinner party. Al-Quṭbī appears as interested in instilling what he views as “proper” Muslim social behavior among his readers as he is in proper moral and spiritual behavior. Furthermore, al-Quṭbī is far more likely, within the body of the text, to exhort his audience to strive for Heaven (or at least avoid Hell) rather than *fanā*’. This allows us to at least speculate that his intent was as much to provide moral direction to the general body of the faithful as guidance to those seeking annihilation in the Divine.

Shaykh ‘Abdullāhī’s intentions for his book would remain largely speculative, had he not come to the attention of the British authorities as he returned from exile in Egypt.¹¹¹ As he set out for his homeland, the *Shaykh* arrived in Aden in February 1921, carrying with him more than 250 copies of the *Majmū‘a*. Rather than heading directly for Somalia, he settled for several months teaching *fiqh* in a Qādiriyya run mosque in the Maalla neighborhood. Precisely what went on over the next several months is not clear. However, on the evening of April 11th, while the Qādirīs were performing *dhikr*, a group of children—supposedly at the instigation of Ṣālihiyya adherents—pelted the mosque with stones, injuring several individuals.¹¹² When questioned, the Ṣālihiyya leadership held that the incident was caused by the offensive nature of the *Shaykh*’s book, as well as the fact that during his tenure in the Settlement, he had consistently preached against their order, referring to them as “infidels and informants of non-Muslim Rulers.”¹¹³

Following continued name-calling, street scuffles and an abandoned attempt at mediation between the two orders, British authorities opted to confiscate the *Shaykh*’s supply of books and began contemplating whether or not to exile him to the Seychelles.¹¹⁴ Ultimately, they

¹¹¹ There is, in fact, an entire file in the Aden records dedicated to the “intrigues” of *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī under the “Suspicious Persons” category. The following account is drawn entirely from that file. India Office Record R/20/A/3031.

¹¹² IOR/R/20/A/3031 Letter from *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī Muḥammad ‘Uthman, 13 April, 1921.

¹¹³ IOR/R/20/A/3031 Petition from Ṣālihiyya leaders Ḥājī ‘Aden ‘Alī, Nūr ‘Alī and ‘Alī Sa‘īd 23 May, 1921.

¹¹⁴ See various memoranda IOR/R/20/A/3031.

determined that while the book could not be considered “seditious,” its anti-Šāliḥī sections could result in a breach of the peace, and all copies of it were to be destroyed by dumping into the harbor.¹¹⁵ While the matter played itself out in Aden, *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī had already left the Settlement and returned to British Somaliland. But because he’d earned the designation of “troublemaker,” Aden authorities requested regular updates on his activities from the Governor of the Somaliland Protectorate.

According to Government surveillance reports, the *Shaykh* returned to northern Somalia by way of Berbera at the beginning of March 1921, carrying a number of copies of the *Majmū‘a*.¹¹⁶ He remained only briefly in Berbera, though long enough for trouble to break out between the Qādiriyya and Šāliḥiyya, altercations for which he was blamed. He then left for Zayla, Djibouti, and finally Dire Dawa.¹¹⁷ British officials lost track of his movements at this point, but not before noting that the *Shaykh*’s “baggage, including a number of the books,” had been sent into the interior from Zayla.¹¹⁸ The British Governor further observed that the *Shaykh* was restricting his movements to regions dominated by the Qādiriyya. From the Governor’s perspective, the importance of this was that it meant al-Quṭbī had ceased inciting altercations between the two orders. I would argue that the *Shaykh*’s movements suggest that, while real and borne from a sincere dislike of their doctrine, his confrontations with the Šāliḥiyya were, in fact, opportunistic and not the main focus of his efforts. Instead, his primary goal was to promote a greater observance of “orthodox” ritual and practice in areas already under Qādirī influence through the distribution of his work.

The perception of the *Majmū‘a* as a didactic work is attested to by *Sayyid* Muḥammad al-Battah, the *Qāḍī* of Aden, who noted, after reviewing it at the request of the British, that the book contained

¹¹⁵ IOR/R/20/A/3031 No. C-286, First Assistant Resident Reilly to Ashoor Mohamed and others, 7 March, 1922. The books were actually destroyed in August 1921.

¹¹⁶ IOR/R/20/A/3031 Memorandum, Governor Somaliland Protectorate, 12 May, 1921.

¹¹⁷ British officials only speculated that he had moved into Ethiopian territory. However, it was from there that he petitioned the Italian Consul—based on his status as a resident of the Italian Benaadir—to write the British in Aden requesting the return of his books. See IOR/R/20/A/3031 Letter from F. Scola 24 May, 1921.

¹¹⁸ IOR/R/20/A/3031 Confidential Report from the Governor of British Somaliland, May 8, 1921.

several excellent points on the law, “its desired tenets and excellent etiquette... Had he restricted himself to those... the book would have been greatly appreciated.”¹¹⁹ He further noted that the offensive passages were largely limited¹²⁰ and the majority of the text was concerned with providing sound advice to the faithful. The implication here is, as far as the *qāḍī* was concerned, this was not a polemical heresiography (though there were elements of this in the text) but a book designed to truly help the faithful. That it was viewed in this light by al-Quṭbī, as well, is supported by the fact that, following his departure from Berbera, he seems to have limited his activities to regions of the interior already under Qādirī influence. His goal was not to seek out confrontation with the Šālīḥiyya, but to guide followers of his own order along the right path.

Unfortunately, we still have no direct evidence as to whether or not al-Quṭbī's *Majmū'a* was intended as a primer for the general body of the faithful and not only formal *murīds*, although its structure certainly points in that direction. In the 1950s, however, the anthropologist I.M. Lewis noted that the *jamā'āt* of the various Sufi orders served “as training centres for the devout (*wadaad*) usually described as ‘bush teachers’ or ‘bush preachers’, who wander from camp to camp... stopping now and then to hold classes where at least some rudimentary knowledge of theology is imparted.”¹²¹ In addition to teaching children a basic knowledge of the Qur'ān, these itinerant preachers also acted “in the capacity of unofficial *qāḍīs*” overseeing affairs involving marriage, inheritance and, contracts.¹²² Lewis does not tell us the exact texts these itinerant preachers studied. However, given that it is frequently referred to as among, in Cerulli's words, “one of the most important works” to emerge from Somali Sufism, it is not difficult to imagine that it served as an important part of the Qādiriyya curriculum. In any event, what this examination does demonstrate is that al-Quṭbī's

¹¹⁹ IOR/R/20/A/3031 Letter from the Qāḍī *Sayyid* Muḥammad b. Da'ud al-Battah to First Assistant Resident and Superintendent of Police, 18 April, 1921.

¹²⁰ As noted earlier he cites the offending passages as limited to between pp. 36–92. The limited nature of the attacks, in the *qāḍī*'s opinion, did not absolve *Shaykh* al-Quṭbī and he concluded the note by indicating that the *Shaykh* was still in the wrong for fomenting discord.

¹²¹ I.M. Lewis, “Sufism in Somaliland: A Study in Tribal Islam” pt. 1, *Bulletin of SOAS*, v. 17, 1955 p. 595.

¹²² Idem.

Majmūʿa constituted more than just a polemical rant against perceived enemies. Rather, it provided a valuable tool in the Qādiriyya mission to disseminate both their view of the proper order of the cosmos and “normative” acceptable practice to a broad audience. *Shaykh* al-Quṭbī’s goal was not just to turn Somalis into good Sufis, but to make them better Muslims as well.

Conclusion

By the time al-Barawī and al-Quṭbī’s collections appeared, the Qādiriyya was arguably the most influential and largest Sufi order in eastern Africa. With branches extending from Ethiopia to Mozambique, the order formed the basis of a widespread social movement. It was an order that easily cut across most major social, cultural and economic boundaries. As the hagiographer ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar noted, they attracted followers from among town and country, men and women, free and slave. But the question has remained: what exactly did they preach that so attracted people and how did they reach such a vast and disparate following? The *Majmūʿas* of al-Barawī and al-Quṭbī suggest at least a partial answer.

The primary role of both texts was didactic rather than polemic. Composed in clear simple language, using formats with which all followers were familiar (e.g. poetic verse, hagiography and Hadith), they provided a clear statement of Qādiriyya ideology aimed at a wide popular audience. More importantly, both illustrate the extent to which Somali scholars were in touch with the intellectual currents of the wider Muslim world, as well as their desire to transmit that learning to their less well-traveled brethren. Their justification of Prophetic mediation was based not on local tradition or notions of ancestor worship, but on classical Sufi teachings and imagery dating to the earliest centuries of Islam.

Not satisfied with hagiographic and poetic endorsements of the order’s position, al-Barawī also called on the writings of a contemporary, Ismaʿīl Nabhānī, and by extension, earlier scholars including, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Shaʿrānī, ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Dabbagh and ultimately Ibn al-ʿArabī and Sahl al-Tustarī for support. Similarly, al-Quṭbī invoked contemporaries like Zaynī al-Daḥlān and classical figures such as al-Ghazālī in his promotion of—what he believed was—orthoprax behavior and

orthodox belief. These teachings were only in part deemed imperative in combating *Ṣāliḥiyya* led heresy. Of at least equal importance was the desire of both these intellectuals to propagate what they saw as the appropriate moral path for the faithful. Each provides a clear blueprint for individual believers to improve their lives and ultimately attain salvation in what were viewed by all as troubling times.

EPILOGUE: END OF THE SUFI ERA

The 1920s represent something of a high water mark for the Somali Sufi leadership. Qassim al-Barawī died in 1926 at a youthful 49. Following a brief period publicly antagonizing the followers of the Ṣālihiyya in Mogadishu in the 1920s, *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī appears to have settled down to a quietest life of teaching eschewing a high public profile and commenting little on social issues. Following his death in 1950, there was no new generation of Sufi *‘ulamā’* waiting in the wings to continue mediating public moral discourse.

‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar was a mere compiler, who had only put together his collections under instructions from his own *shaykh*.¹ If anyone came close to taking up the mantle, it was the businessman, *‘alim* and historian, *Sharīf* ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Alī. In 1950, ‘Aydarūs published what he touted as the first “scientific” history of Somalia, one based on books and “manuscripts” and not the “tales which persist on the tongues,” of Somalis.² The purpose of his work was to provide a comprehensive history of the region that carved out a space for urban Benaadiris in a society increasingly defined by its rural and pastoral character.³ He even seems to have fancied himself as a leader of the community, courting the favor of the Somali religious leadership, as well as the Italian Trusteeship Administration and local United Nations representatives.⁴ However, his efforts seemed to have produced little in the way of real influence. Instead, this was to be the era of the nationalists with Western-style political parties such as the Somali Youth League and Benaadir Youth Club holding sway.⁵ When he died in 1960, his tomb would become a stop on the network of local Sufi pilgrimages but little else.⁶

¹ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*, p. 1.

² ‘Aydarūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, p. 8.

³ See Scott S. Reese, “Tales Which Persist on the Tongue: Arabic Literacy and the Definition of Communal Boundaries in *Sharīf* Aydrus’ *Bughyat al-Āmāl*. *Sudanic Africa* v. 9, 1998 pp. 1–17.

⁴ The evidence for this comes largely from photographs of himself with various leaders published in the *Bughyat al-Āmāl*.

⁵ Paolo Tripodi, *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia: Rome and Mogadishu: from colonial administration to Operation Restore Hope* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999).

⁶ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs*, pp. 183–84.

While the influence of Sufi leaders as intellectuals with broad social influence seems to have declined after the 1920s, and been more or less eclipsed by the 1950s, this should not diminish their historical legacy. As we have seen throughout this book, the Somali *‘ulamā’* envisioned themselves as central social and political actors almost since the time of Islam’s arrival on the Benaadir coast. The Banū Qaḥṭān viewed themselves as literal king-makers, physical protectors and social guides (through their position as *qāḍīs*) from time immemorial. By the same token, the Sufi leadership of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw themselves not only as moral guides, but true social mediators playing an active role in resolving the problems and disputes facing Somali society at large. On the one hand, they sought to mediate man’s relationship with God in an effort to save souls and guide the community along a more moral path that would ultimately result in a revival of their social and economic fortunes. On the other, they played a crucial role in mediating relationships between rural and urban communities as well as so-called “noble” and “servile” elements of society. Whether it was *Shaykh* Uways warning townsmen of the moral dangers of *ḥikow* or Murjān arbitrating relations between pastoralists and client cultivators, the Sufi *‘ulamā’* saw themselves, and are remembered, as the principal shapers of a great deal of social discourse.

The relationships they mediated, however, were not purely local. While adjudicating affairs between men and God, town and country, or “noble” and “servile,” the *ṭarīqa* leadership also saw themselves as providing a bridge between their own community and the intellectual world of the much broader *umma*. The Sufi leadership of Somalia considered itself cosmopolitan and well-traveled both regionally and further afield. All, or so it seems, went on the Hajj at least once, while the learned centers of the Hadramaut and royal courts of Zanzibar and Harar were no strangers to their presence. Some, such as ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī, traveled in even wider circles. While al-Quṭbī seems among the first Somali *‘ulamā’* to study in Cairo, he was by no means the last. His *Majmū‘a*, was endorsed by another Somali *‘alim*, *Shaykh* ‘Umar Aḥmad “the Somali”, who was long resident in Egypt and an instructor at al-Azhar.⁷ By the 1950s, a sufficient number of students were trained in

⁷ Al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*, pt. II, p. 194. *Shaykh* ‘Umar wrote a glowing review of al-Quṭbī’s work which is appended to the last page. He was labeled a “troublemaker” by both the British and Italians for his trouble and ultimately refused permission to return to either British or Italian Somaliland. See R/20/A/3031.

Egypt for *Sharīf* ‘Aydarūs to refer to the “group of ‘*ulamā*’ trained at al-Azhar,” in a number of photos included in his history of Somalia.⁸

The Sufi *shaykhs* mediated this world through a combination of intimate and intellectual connections. *Shaykhs* like Uways and Zayla’ī mediated the world through close personal connections. Uways counted the Muftī of the Ḥaram, *Sayyid* Muḥammad al-Shaṭa and his sons, among his followers, as well as two sultans of Zanzibar and the famous *qāḍī* of the island Sultanate, ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Amawy.⁹ Al-Zayla’ī was equally well regarded in the precincts of Mecca and counted an Amir of Harar among his students.¹⁰ More importantly, the *shaykhs* saw themselves as connecting Somali believers with the vibrant intellectual world of the *umma*—in terms of both “classical” and contemporary Islamic thought. Qassim al-Barawī, for instance, introduced his readers to the ideas of Sahl al-Tustarī as well as ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Sha‘rānī and Yūsuf Nabḥānī. Al-Quṭbī familiarized his readers with important exemplars such as al-Ghazālī and Aḥmad b. Zaynī b. al-Daḥlān, while at the same time warning them against the errors propagated by the likes of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Ibn Taymiyya and other “heretical” thinkers.¹¹ As such, Somali scholars certainly sought to reinforce their own ideological positions. But at the same time, they brought their brethren into closer contact with contemporary views of the faith that would likely integrate them more fully into the broader Muslim intellectual community in the long run.

Neo-Sufism

As will be clear from any contemporary text or conversations with anyone of the older generation, Sufism clearly played an important religious and social role in Somali society during much of the colonial era. But does a history of Sufism in the Horn of Africa serve any greater purpose than to fill in one more gap in our understanding of colonial society in the region? The history of the Sufi revival in Somalia has clear ramifications for our continually evolving notions of so-called

⁸ ‘Aydarūs, *Bughyat al-Āmāl*, pp. 208–209.

⁹ See Appendix I. The Sultans purported to have been followers of Uways were Barghash and Thuwayni.

¹⁰ ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Umar, *Rāḥat al-Qalb*.

¹¹ In addition to a chapter entitled “A response to the Wahhābiyya and those who are similarly in Error,” the following section is called “A Criticism of Ibn Taymiyya,” al-Quṭbī, *al-Majmū‘a al-Mubāraka*, Pt. I, pp. 39–46.

“neo-Sufism.” At the same time, it suggests that the trajectory of more recent events may, in fact, be traceable to this period and, in that light, not at all surprising.

In his recent book, *The Graves of Tarim*, Engseng Ho argues that, at least in the Hadrami case, there is nothing “new” in neo-Sufism. He contends that the sharp distinctions between the “classical” Sufism of the Medieval and Early Modern periods and post eighteenth-century Sufism, offered by the idea’s proponents, are wholly artificial. Ho convincingly refutes the notion that the eighteenth century represents the beginning of a “reconciliation of Sufism and Islamic law.” As he notes, the co-existence of law and mysticism was hardly novel in the 1700s, as generations of Hadrami religious adepts from as early as the fifteenth century can be shown to have been both Sufis *and* legal scholars.¹² While Ho and others amply demonstrate the flaw in the idea of an eighteenth century “reconciliation” between law and mysticism, the Somali case reveals yet another fault in the neo-Sufi argument. Although certainly representative of the neo-Sufi ideal of mystics who emphasized the importance of the *ẓāhir* and the necessity of following the divine law, the Sufi *shaykhs* of the Benaadir were no less dedicated to the ideas of the *bāṭin* and the ultimate goal of the seeker—annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and “remaining” (*baqaʾ*) in God. We have seen through the writings of ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Zaylaʿī, Qassim al-Barawī, ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī and others that the ideas of mystics like Sahl al-Tustarī and Ibn al-‘Arabī were alive and well among the Sufis of Somalia well into the twentieth century. As we have seen, the Sufis of this period perceived themselves as on a “mission” to bring their view of a more normative faith to their brethren in the interior. While emphasizing the importance of observance and every-day piety, the ultimate objective of the Sufis remained the same, to draw every believer closer to God according to his ability. For the vast majority of the faithful, this would mean attaining paradise through proper observance and perfection of the *ẓāhir*. For a select few, it still meant *fanāʾ* and an eternal existence in close proximity to the divine. As al-Quṭbī points out, this is a perspective that dates at the very least to al-Ghazālī and the eleventh century.

¹² Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, pp. 164–165. Though not engaging the neo-Sufi debate directly, Vincent Cornell amply demonstrates the same point in his study of Early-Modern Morocco, *Realm of the Saint*.

From his point of view, and that of his fellow Somali mystics, there was hardly anything “neo” in their approach to the faith.

Yet, even while the Somali case is instructive on a broad historical level, it may also be useful in understanding more contemporary events in the Horn of Africa. In 1959, *Shaykh* Aḥmad Dalmar, a disciple of ‘Abdullāhī al-Quṭbī, lay on his deathbed. *Shaykh* Aḥmad had become an important Qādiriyya leader in his own right, important enough that his own grave might well be expected to become a sight of at least local pilgrimage. However, as he lay drawing his last breath, he called one of his sons to him and said, “my grave is to rise no more than six inches above the ground. Under no circumstances are you to allow a *qubba* [domed tomb] to be built over me. This is *shirk* [association or idolatry].”¹³ This story is revealing for what it tells us about the possible longer term consequences of the Sufi revival.

The leaders of the Qādiriyya and other orders introduced their followers to the broader intellectual currents of the Islamic world in the hopes of making them better Muslims. Their efforts, however, opened a sort of Pandora’s Box that exposed Somali believers to the entire panoply of contemporary Islamic thought, including ideas that earlier *shaykhs* would have found abhorrent. As Somalis became increasingly familiar with wider intellectual trends of the Muslim world, ideas of what constituted acceptable “orthodox” practice clearly began to change, so that beliefs once deemed to belong to “heretical” groups like the Salafiyya were, by the 1960s, gaining currency and acceptance as right and proper. The shape and impact of globalized, reformist discourse in the post-colonial Islamic world is only now being explored.¹⁴ What we can say for certain is that the movements that we see emerging in East Africa and other parts of the Muslim world today are ripples that clearly have their origins in the currents of the not so distant colonial past. Contemporary Somalia stands as an important, not to mention unfortunate, example.

While largely eclipsed in the early post-colonial period by nationalist politics from the 1960s through the 1980s, when the Barre regime collapsed, it was ultimately the religious leadership that emerged as a

¹³ This story was related to me by the son, also named Ahmad Dalmar, London, July 10, 2003.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Kai Kresse, *Philosophising in Mombasa: Knowledge, Islam, and Intellectual Practice on the Swahili Coast*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International Africa Institute, 2007).

source of stability. With the fall of Siad Barre's regime in early 1990, Somalia descended into a protracted civil war that, as of the writing of this book, still has no end in sight. By the late 1990s, members of the *'ulamā'* began to set up Islamic courts—usually affiliated with particular clans—in an attempt to establish some sort of civil order and peace amidst the chaos. Successful at creating calm within limited spheres, by 2000 these individual courts had coalesced into a single movement known as the Islamic Courts Union and by 2004 they had managed to bring much of southern Somalia under their control, lowering violence and returning at least the semblance of order to the region.¹⁵ Accused of terrorist links, the ICU was overthrown by the Ethiopian backed forces of a self-proclaimed “provisional government” in late 2006. While the outcome at the time of writing remains to be seen one thing seems clear; the social forces that brought the ICU to power were hardly new. They, in fact, seem a clear echo of the circumstances that saw the emergence of an influential Sufi movement little more than a hundred years before. In a time of trouble and confusion it was not solely to the comforts of clan that Somalis turned. They also sought out the wisdom and guidance of their religious leaders. It was the *'ulamā'* to whom they looked as the Renewers of their Age.

¹⁵ BBC News *Profile: Somalia's Islamic Courts*, June 6, 2006.

APPENDIX ONE

KHULAFĀ' OF SHAYKH UWAYS B. MUḤAMMAD AL-BARAWĪ

The following is the list of prominent Qādiriyya Khulifā listed in the hagiography of *Shaykh* Uways al-Barawī, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs* (pp. 17–24), divided, where possible, according to lineage affiliation or place of origin.

Benaadiri townsmen

Hājjī 'Abd al-Qādir known as *Hājjī* Shayghow b. *Hājjī* Uways b. Muḥammad[†]

Hājjī Muḥammad known as *Shaykh* Sha'ir b. *Hājjī* Uways b. Muḥammad[†]

Shaykh Shakh'a famous as *Shaykh* Shaykhow

Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥman Ṣūfī [al-Shanshī]

Shaykh Aḥmad b. *Hājjī* Mahad al-Muqdishī

Shaykh Abū Bakr b. al-Khātīb Nūr al-Markī

Shaykh *Hājjī* Muḥammad b. Muhy al-Dīn al-Barawī known as Batir

Shaykh Qassim b. Muhy al-Dīn al-Barawī

Shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān b. Ma'ow al-Yaqūbī

Shaykh Yaḥyah b. 'Adow known as *Hājjī* Wahiliyya

Shaykh 'Alim b. 'Umar al-Muqdishī

Shaykh Imām Maḥmūd b. Benyamīn (al-Yaqūbī)

Abū Bakr Ab 'Adī al-Shanshī

Shaykh Ismā'īl [sic] al-Muqdishī b. 'Umar

Shaykh 'Uthmān b. *Shaykh* Ṣūfī al-Shānshī

Shaykh Muḥammad b. Faqīh Yūsuf al-Shānshī

Shaykh 'Umar Hayralī al-Barawī

Shaykh *Hājjī* Maḥmūd b. Ḥasan al-Warshaykhī

Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Mamzaylī al-Barawī

[†] Offspring of *Shaykh* Uways.

Shaykh Zāhir b. Muḥammad al-Barawī
Shaykh ‘Abdullāh b. Husayn al-Hathmī
Shaykh Shaykhī Barawī al-Ḥatīmī
Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān al-Wa’issī
Shaykh Aḥmad Yāwalī al-Shānshī
Shaykh ‘Adī al-Markī al-Qādirī
Shaykh Maḥmūd b. Ḥasan al-Dāu’dī
Shaykh Muḥammad b. Kabow al-Barawī al-Qādirī
Shaykh Ṭahir from the family of *Shaykh* ‘Uthmān al-Markī
Mu‘allim Qassim al-Dubbarwaynī al-Qādirī
Shaykh Abūd al-‘Amūdī
Shaykh Aḥmad b. *Mu‘allim* ‘Uthmān al-Kandrashī
Shaykh Mukhtār Askūb al-Kandrashī
Shaykh Aḥmad b. *Hājī* Nūr Jaḥbaz al-Kandrashī

 34

*Ashrāf** (In the original list all of the following names were prefaced with the title “Sayyid”)

‘Umar b. *Sayyid* Qulatayn al-Zanzibarī
 Muḥsin b. ‘Abī Bakr al-Jaylanī
 ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Aydārūs al-Naḍīrī al-‘Alawī
 ‘Alawī b. Ḥabīb
 ‘Alawī Ba Saqūt al-‘Alawī
 Muḥammad b. *Sharīf* Aḥmad al-‘Alawī
 ‘Alī b. Abī Bakr al-‘Aydārūs
 ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥaddād al-‘Alawī
 ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Ḥaddād al-‘Alawī
 Muḥḍar b. Nūr al-Ahdal
 Nūr b. Muḥammad al-‘Alawī
 ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Sarmānī
 Maulana b. Nūr al-‘Alawī
 Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad Shaṭa al-Ashrāf
 ‘Umar b. Muḥammad Shaṭa al-Ashrāf
 ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar b. Muḥammad Shaṭa al-Ashrāf
 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Hanzwānī al-Ashrāf
 ‘Uthmān b. Muḥammad b. Nūr al-Ashrāf

* The title “Sayyid” which accompanies each Sharīfian name on the list has been eliminated.

Ḥabīb b. Abī Bakr al-‘Aydārūs al-Ashrāf
 Aqīl al-Ashrāf
 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-‘Alawī al-Makī al-Qādirī

21

Southern Arabian or South Asian Origin

Aḥmad Ba Fadhl al-Ḥadramī
 Ḥājj Muḥammad Burī al-Karkatī
 Aḥmad Namāt al-Hindī al-Qādirī
 Aḥmad b. Muhy al-Dīn Ba Fadhl al-Qādirī

4

Rural/Pastoral lineages

‘Issa b. ‘Aliow al-Raḥanwaynī
 ‘Alim Ṭad al-Ogadenī
 Ḥājj Muḥammad b. ‘Abdullāh al-Marīthanī
 ‘Abd al-Raḥman Yarow b. Aḥmad al-Dūsow
 Adam b. Ishāq al-Maīhanī
 Maḥmūd b. Ḥasan al-Darūdī
 Nūr b. Muḥammad al-Wartoble al-Qādirī
 Muḥammad al-Ogadenī al-Qādirī
 Aḥmad Yarow al-Sa‘adī al-Qādirī
 Mūsa b. ‘Aralī al-Ishāqī al-Qādirī
 ‘Umar b. Mu‘allim Tayr al-Mubarakī al-Qādirī

11

Rural/Pastoral lineages with close connections to commerce

‘Uthmān Qublī al-Bīmālī al-Qādirī
 Yūsuf al-Bīmālī al-Qādirī
 Bilshaf Ṣūltan of the Goobroon al-Qādirī

3

Rural Religious Lineages

Maḥmūd b. Ḥājj ‘Issa Muḥammad Mumin
 ‘Abdullāh b. Mu‘allim Yūsuf al-Quṭbī

‘Abd al-Salām b. *Hājj* Jama‘ al-Quṭbī
 Muḥammad b. *Hājj* Jama‘ al-Quṭbī
 Ḥasan b. Barre al-Quṭbī al-Qādirī
 Abū Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-Quṭbī al-Qādirī
 Aḥmad al-Quṭbī al-Qādirī
 Yūsuf al-Quṭbī al-Qādirī
 Ḥājj Maḥmūd Fūlow b. *Mu‘allim* ‘Umar al-Quṭbī
 ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Aḥmad al-Zayla‘ī

10

Urban Centers in the Interior

‘Abd al-Shakūr b. *Shaykh* Abdiow b. ‘Uthmān [*Shaykh* of the Baardheere
jamā‘a]
Al-Qāḍī ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd b. Thabit al-Jawharī al-Qādirī
 Kaliyya b. Adam al-Gālwaynī
 Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī b. Thabit al-Jawharī
Hājj Mu‘allim Mumin al-Gālwaynī
 Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Yūsuf—Sultan of Būlow Mureer

6

Swahili/Bajuni other East Africans

Uways b. Mai al-Bantūwī
 ‘Abd al-Azīz b. ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Amawī [*Qāḍī* and *‘alim* native of
 Barawe but resident in Zanzibar]
 Ramaḍān al-Swahilī al-Qādirī
 Sha’ūr al-Swahilī al-Qādirī
 Muḥammad al-Bajunī al-Qādirī
 Muḥammad Wafuruwī al-Bantūwī

6

Unidentified Nisba

‘Abd Raḥman b. Aḥmad Kilī
 Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad Kilī
 ‘Abd al-Shakur b. Aḥmad Kilī
Al-Mu‘allim ‘Abdullāh Minjān Kharī

Abī Bakr Ibrāhīm Ayhalāwī
 ‘Abdullāh b. Maḥmūd al-Awramlī
 Muḥammad Ghayzbirkān
 Ja‘far al-Wathalānī
Hājj Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān al-Balkrī al-Qādirī
Mu‘allim Aḥmad Amūlī
 Aw Fars al-Kalūbnī al-Qādirī
 Muḥammad ‘Ashramā dhu al-Qādirī
Hājj Yūsuf al-Malamadī
 Muḥammad Reer Adam Tayr al-Qādirī
 ‘Alim b. Amān from the people of ‘Uthmān Ḥasan

15

“Al-Qādirī” or no Nisba

Aḥmad b. Jam‘āl b. Fāzaḥ
 Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān b. Ḥaltir known as *Shaykh* Awbī
 ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Muhthala
Mu‘allim Qassim
 ‘Abd Furūr ‘Alī b. Nūr
 Ṣultān Ṣalād
 Halūla b. *al-Shaykh* Muḥammad bin ‘Uthmān Ma‘ow
 Zubayr b. Aḥmad
 ‘Uthmān b. ‘Alīow
 ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Qādirī
 ‘Abdīow Karkar wa al-Qādirī
 Ḥasan b. Mu‘allim al-Qādirī
 Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Qādirī
Hājj Nūr al-Qādirī
 Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Qādirī
Hājj Nūr al-Qādirī
 Faqīh Ma‘ow al-Qādirī
 Aḥmad Antūlī al-Qādirī
 Ḥusayn b. *Mu‘allim* Sha‘ayb al-Qādirī
 ‘Abd Malāq al-Qādirī
 Isma‘īl Qād al-Qādirī
Hājj Mayrow al-Qādirī
 Dahūk b. ‘Uthmān al-Qādirī
 Maḥmūd b. *Shaykh* Amānkī al-Qādirī

Mu‘allim Muḥammad al-Qādirī
 Muḥammad al-Qādirī
 Maḥmūd al-Qādirī
 Ḥasan b. Mutī al-Qādirī
 Muḥammad b. Mūtī al-Qādirī
 Idrīs b. Ḥusayn al-Qādirī

32

Political or “Honorary” Ijāza

‘Alī b. Mai al-‘Uqaybī (Aḥmadiyya *ṭarīqa*)
 Nūrayn Aḥmad Ṣābr al-Barawī (Aḥmadiyya *ṭarīqa*)
 Murjān b. Sharīf Nūr (Aḥmadiyya *ṭarīqa*)
 Barghash b. Sa‘īd—(Sultan of Zanzibar)
 Aḥmad b. Thuwaynī b. Sa‘īd (Sultan of Zanzibar)

5

APPENDIX TWO

Selected Genealogies of the Banū Qaḥṭān, Shanshiyya and Ashrāf of Mogadishu Collected from Enrico Cerulli's *Somalia scritti vari editi e inediti* v. I pp. 25–35 and Qassim al-Barawī's *Mawlid Šūfī*

I–VII from *Nouvi Documenti Arabi per la storia della Somalia*. (Enrico Cerulli's *Somalia scritti vari editi e inediti* v. I pp. 25–35)

- I. I found the following document in two copies: one in a register of the Reer Faqīh as a marginal annotation to a genealogy of the Prophet; and one in a register of the Gudmana in a foglio containing diverse genealogical notes.

“This is the genealogy of Ismāʿīl, who settled in Mogadishu in the Sunday year after the *hijrah* of the Prophet 149. Came Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Raḍī, coming from the Banū ʿAffān.”

Corresponds to the years 766–767 C.E.

- II. Under the relative annotation of Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar is written—in the registers of the Reer Faqīh [Banū Qaḥṭān]—the following:

“This is the genealogy of ʿAqab al-Shirāfī al-Maqdishī in the Saturday year 150 after the *Hijrah* of the Prophet: ʿAqab b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad. He was in his house, the house of Reer Faqīh—their tribe is descended from Kananah his grandfathers and fathers were Ibrāhīm b. Ḥarūn, people of Mecca, God benefit us with their *baraka*.

- III. In the registers of the people of Reer Shaykh, living in the Shangani quarter, is written the following document, which is considered the oldest proof of their origins:

“This is the genealogy of Abrār b. Ḥasan b. Amīn b. Naḍir b. Muʿallim b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAdal b. Muḥammad b. Mūsa b. ʿAbdullāh b. al-Jad b. ʿIssa al-Kanaylī who came to Mogadishu,

b. Nūr b. Shaykh b. Shaykh ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad and their ancestors were Ibrāhīm al-Makkī b. Ḥarūn b. Nūr b. Yūsuf b. Naṣar b. Hadar.”

- IV. The genealogy that follows was given to me by the Chief Qadi [sic] of Mogadishu and was written out—by his order—by one of his nephews on the basis of their documents, that were not communicated to me.

This is the genealogy of the Āl Faqīh found in Mogadishu. ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad b. Ṣūf b. *Shaykh* ‘Uthman b. *Shaykh Mu‘allim* Makram b. *Mu‘allim* ‘Umar b. ‘Alām b. Maḥād b. *Mu‘allim* ‘Umar b. ‘Uthman b. Abī Bakr b. Musharraf b. *Ḥājī* Abī Bakr b. *al-Faqīh* Abḥāj b. *Ḥājī* Abī Bakr b. *Ḥājī* Uways b. *Faqīh* Abī Bakr b. *Faqīh Ḥājī* Abbū [Somali Abbo] b. ‘Umar b. *Ḥājī* Faqīh b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* ‘Uthman b. *Faqīh* Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* Abī Bakr b. *Shaykh Faqīh* Abūr b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. al-Faqīh b. *Faqīh* ‘Uthmān b. ‘Umar b. Abḥāj b. Faqīh b. *Faqīh* Ṣūma b. *Faqīh* Sulaymān b. Ya‘qub b. Qaḥṭān b. Wā’il b. Hajar b. Rabī’a b. Wā’il b. Sabā b. Ḥaḍramawt b. Ayman b. al-Hamaysa’ b. Wa’ithla b. Ḥamīr [or Himyar] b. Sabā b. Yashjub b. Ya‘rub b. Qaḥṭān b. Hūd and he was ‘Ābar b. Shālakh b. Arfakhsad b. Sām b. Nūḥ b. Lamak b. Matūshalakh b. Idrīs b. al-Yārid b. Muhla’il b. Qaynān b. Anūsh b. Shayth b. Adam upon him peace.

- V. A copy of the manuscript of the *Tanbīh* of al-Shīrāzī had this notation attached:

At the end of the script of the book *al-Tanbīh* between *zuhr* and *‘asr* on Saturday 29 Rajab in the year 1182 AH...

The writer of this book is *Shaykh* ‘Umar b. ‘Alim b. Aḥmad b. *Faqīh* Uways b. *Faqīh* Amīn b. *Mu‘allim* ‘Umar b. *Mu‘allim* Abū Bakr b. *Qaḍī Shaykh Faqīh* Abū Bakr b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* ‘Alim b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* ‘Alī b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* Burhān b. *Faqīh* ‘Umar b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* Aḥmad b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* Abū Bakr b. *Faqīh* ‘Umar b. *Faqīh* ‘Uthmān b. *Faqīh* Ḥusayn b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* ‘Uthmān b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* ‘Umar b. *Faqīh* ‘Uthmān b. *Faqīh* ‘Umar, he was a *shaykh* of the beauty of religion and station of the splendor of religion al-Nawawī al-Muqdishī b. Naba’īm b. *Faqīh* Hudmay b. ‘Affī al-Gudmane al-Hodekaynī, *Shāfi‘ī* by *madhhab*...and he was

a son of Kinana b. Khuzayma b. Mudrika b. Alyas b. Mudar b. Nizar b. Ma'add b. Adnān etc.”

Ends by noting that it was created from an exemplary copy and making great attestations to its accuracy. Dates the text to 1768

- VI. Attached to the front piece of a lithographed copy of the *Tafsir* of Baghdādī, now belonging to a notable of the Shanshiyya living in Hamarwayn reads:

In the name of God the beneficent, the merciful. Praise be to God the singular. And after. On Sunday the 29th of *dhu al-qa'ida* of 1306 was declared *waqf* and created as a religious bequest and dedicated to charitable purpose this first part of the *tafsir* of the venerable Qur'ān entitled “*The Gate of interpretation on the significance of revelation by Shaykh Ala' al-dīn b. Muḥammad al-Baghdadī known as al-Khāzin* [the repository]”...and I am *Shaykh Ḥusayn b. Ṭabar b. Muminow b. Jabrīl b. Amīn b. 'Alī b. Ḥājī Ḥaramayn b. Ḥājī Yūsuf b. Shaykh Abāl b. Shaykh 'Umar b. Shaykh Muḥammad b. Mu'allim 'Umar b. Faqīh Qasim b. Faqīh Ismā'īl b. Faqīh Ḥājī Yūsuf b. Faqīh Muḥammad b. Faqīh 'Umar b. Faqīh Dinlow b. Faqīh Aḥmad b. Shaykh Abū Bakr b. 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Qasim b. Mūsa Jida'tī* who came to Mogadishu from al-Shām and he was Ibn Maymūn b. 'Uthmān b. Āssim b. *Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥman b. Mu'allim b. Dāwūd b. Sulayman b. Ibrāhīm b. Jabrīl b. Assad b. 'Uthmān b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥman b. 'Awūf b. 'Abd al-'Awūf b. Hārith b. Zahra b. Kilāb b. Murra b. Ka'b b. Luwayy b. Ghālib b. Fahr b. Mālik b. Naḍr b. Kanāna b. Khazīma b. Mudrika b. Yāman b. Yūsuf b. Muḍar b. Nazār b. Ma'ad b. Adnān.*

- VII. “In a notebook belonging to the Ashrāf of the Shangani quarter recorded the—following genealogy.”

“In the name of God the Beneficent, the Merciful, from who we request help. And as for *Sayyid al-ṣāliḥ Sayyid 'Alawī b. Sayyid Abūd b. the famous walī Sayyid 'Alawī b. al-walī al-ṣāliḥ Sayyid Aḥmad b. Sayyid Abū Bakr b. Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Shaykh Sayyid Abī Bakr b. walī al-ṣāliḥ Sayyid Aḥmad al-Naṣīr b. Sayyid 'Alī b. walī al-ṣāliḥ al-shahīr Sayyid 'Alawī al-Kabīr b. walī al-ṣāliḥ Sayyid Aḥmad aḥmar al-ayūn* [red eyes] b. *al-walī al-ṣāliḥ Sayyid 'Umar b. al-walī al-ṣāliḥ*

al-shahīr *Sayyid* Muḥammad *al-naṣīr* b. *Sayyid* ‘Abdullāh b. *al-walī* *Sayyid* ‘Umar *aḥmar al-ayūn al-Shanḥajī* b. *al-walī al-salaḥ Sayyid* ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. *Sayyid* Aḥmad b. *Sayyid* ‘Alawī b. Faqīh Aḥmad b. *al-walī al-ṣāliḥ* ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. *al-walī al-shaykh Sayyid* ‘Alawī ‘*am muqqadīm* b. *al-Shaykh* al-kabīr Muḥammad *Ṣāhib al-murabāt* b. *al-shaykh* ‘Alī “who renounced his portion” [*khāla‘ Qasimū*], b. *Sayyid* ‘Alawī b. *Sayyid* Muḥammad b. *Sayyid* ‘Alawī al-Kabīr, *ancestor of the entire Family Ba ‘Alawī* b. *Sayyid* ‘Abdullāh b. Shaykh al-Muhāhhirīn ila Allah *Sayyid* Aḥmad who migrated from al-Basra to Hadramaut b. *Sayyid* ‘Issa b. *Sayyid* Muḥammad b. *Sayyid* ‘Alī al-‘Araydhī b. al-Imām Ja‘far al-ṣāddiq b. al-Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir b. al-Imām al-kabīr *Sayyid* ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Abdīn b. al-Imām Ḥusayn b. The Imām of east and west, commander of the faithful ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib b. ‘Abd al-Muttalib etc.

VIII. Genealogy of *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad “*Shaykh Ṣūfī*” from Qassim al-Barawī, *Mawlid Ṣūfī* p. 1

Praise be to God who created humanity from mud and placed his progeny from water . . . and prayers and peace upon the master of messengers and upon his family and companions, all of them. This is the genealogy of the late saint *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥman known as *Hājj Ṣūfī* b. *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāh b. *Shaykh* Muḥammad b. *Shaykh* ‘Abdullāh b. Imām Abī Bakr b. ‘Alī b. Ḥaramayn b. *Hājj* Yūsuf b. *Shaykh* Abālī b. ‘Umar b. *Shaykh* Muḥammad b. *Mu‘allim* ‘Umar b. *Faqīh* Qāssim b. *Faqīh* Ismā‘īl b. *Faqīh* Ḥājj Yūsuf b. *Faqīh* Muḥammad b. *Faqīh* ‘Umar Muhy al-Dīn b. *Faqīh* Aḥmad b. Qāssim b. Abī Bakr al-Shāshī (his name) Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ismā‘īl al-Qafāl [the repatriated one.] b. Aḥmad b. Mūsa b. Jad‘ah (he who emigrated from al-Shām to Mogadishu) b. Maymūn b. ‘Uthmān b. ‘Assim b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Muslim b. Dāwūd b. Ṣulaymān b. Ibrāhīm b. Jabrīl b. Assad b. ‘Uthmān b. Qāssim b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. ‘Awūf b. Hārith b. Zahara b. Kilāb b. Marah b. K‘ab b. Luwayy b. Ghālīb b. Faḥr b. Mālīk b. al-Naḍir b. Kanānah b. Khazīma b. Mudrika b. Alyas b. Madhar b. Nizār b. Ma‘ad b. Adnān to here it is agreed upon and from Adnān to Adam there is divergence and only the Lawgiver grasps it.

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INDEX

- ‘Abd al-Azīz b. ‘Abd al-Ghanī
 al-Amawy, 72, 226
 ‘Abd al-Azīz Dabbagh, 192
 ‘Abd al-Qādir b. *Hājī* ‘Alī, 75, 77
 ‘Abd al-Qādir b. *Shaykh* Ismaan, 119
 See also, Shaykh bin Shaykh
 ‘Abd al-Qādir Jilanī, 1, 11, 27, 84, 86,
 88, 96, 99, 161, 185, 191
 ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Abdullāh “Šūfī”,
 21, 28, 70, 71, 84–86, 89, 92, 111,
 114, 157, 158, 168, 185, 223, 232
 ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Umar, 6, 12–13,
 30–31, 73, 86–88, 90, 93, 96, 103,
 111–114, 121, 123, 149, 158–160,
 162, 214, 217
Jala’ al-‘Aynayn, 14, 30
al-Jawhar al-Nafīs, 6, 12–14, 26, 30,
 88, 96, 103, 112–114, 121, 123,
 149, 158–160, 162, 217, 223
 ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Aḥmad Zayla‘ī, 6,
 12, 30, 64, 72, 73, 86, 87, 89, 93,
 188, 193, 220, 226
 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Sha‘rānī, 190, 214,
 219
 ‘Abdullāh BāKathīr, 21, 82, 88
 ‘Abdullāh al-Haddād, 7, 8, 42, 224
 ‘Abdullāh Naṣr, 109
 ‘Abdullāhī b. Yūsuf al-Qutbī, 2, 7, 8,
 14, 20, 64, 73–79, 91, 100, 163,
 168–214, 217–221, 225
abdāl (substitutes), 98
 Abgal clan, 47–48, 66, 114
 Abiker Adan Dhurow, 54
 Abū ‘Abdallah al-Idrīsī, 36
 Abū Bakr b. ‘Abdullāh al-‘Aydārūs, 111,
 181
 Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad Shaṭa, 160,
 161, 162, 187, 188, 191, 198, 224
 Abū Bakr b. Nūr Shay al-Bakrī, 30, 95
 Manāqib Shams al-Dīn, 30
 Abū Bakr al-Šiddīq, 75–76, 78, 80
 Abū Hamīd al-Ghazālī, 85, 196, 202,
 203, 209, 214, 219, 220
 Aden, 111, 168, 181–182, 211–212
 al-Afghanī, 5
 Afghanistan, 27
 Afgoye, 50, 54, 57–58, 103, 129, 143
 Aḥmad b. *Faqīh* Abū Bakr b. *Faqīh*
 Abḥāj, 48
 Aḥmad b. *Hājī* Ḥabīb al-Dafaradī, 93
 Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-‘Attās, 92–93
 Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Fāsī, 10, 11, 27, 96
 Aḥmad b. al-Mubarak, 193
 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Muḥdhār,
 92–93
 Aḥmad b. Sumayt, 7, 21, 88, 92–93
 Aḥmad b. Zaynī b. Daḥlān, 8, 90
 Aḥmadiyya, 10–11, 21, 27–28, 52–53,
 74, 91–92, 103, 110, 114–115, 117,
 119, 129–130, 134–136, 228
 Aḥmadī, 103, 115
 Aḥuran clan, 44, 65, 128
 Āl-Naḍīr, 6, 91
 ‘Alawī b. Ḥabīb Āl ‘Alawī, 121, 224
 ‘Alawiyya, 10, 21, 91, 92
 ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, 28, 179, 181
 ‘Alī Duur, 54
 ‘Alī Mai, 92, 115, 117
 ‘Alī Nairobi, 11
 Amīn Khalifow, 44–45, 65
 Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain), 65
 Arba’ Rukn mosque, 39
 Ashrāf (Šāda), 65, 68, 69, 72, 80, 88,
 91, 92, 114, 121, 123, 140, 153, 154,
 157, 160, 161–163, 169, 224
 ‘Aydārūs b. ‘Alī al-Naḍīrī, 33, 34, 38,
 39, 40, 41, 45, 51, 83, 91, 92, 93,
 117, 118, 121, 126, 157, 217, 219
 al-Azhar, 7, 80, 179, 185, 189, 218–219

 Baardheere (Jihad), 35, 51–57, 60, 103,
 105, 119, 130–134, 174, 226
 Baḥr Šūfī, 45, 66
 Balad al-Rahma, 124, 129
 Banū Qaḥṭān, 34, 42–44, 48, 63–64,
 66–71, 116, 218, 229
baqa’, 208, 220
baraka, 60, 93, 94, 229
 Barawe, 6, 9–10, 24, 35–38, 40–42,
 44, 46, 50, 54, 56, 65, 66, 72, 74,
 96, 103–105, 107, 112, 115, 117,
 119, 120–124, 127, 135, 143–146,
 152–155, 164, 226
baraza, 109

- Barghash b. Šultān, Sultan of Zanzibar,
12, 59, 107, 123, 145
bāṭin, 29, 85, 173, 194, 196–197,
201–202, 208–209, 220
Baydhabo, 54, 56, 153
Benaadir, 6, 9, 10, 20, 23–27, 33–38,
44, 46–51, 57, 59, 62, 66, 68–69, 72,
74–75, 80–82, 85, 87–88, 91–93, 96,
101–110, 113, 115–116, 120, 122,
126, 135, 139–149, 157–158, 162,
168–169, 217–218, 220
Benadir Company, 146–147
 See also, Italian Company
Bendawow clan, 44–45, 65, 119, 135
 See also, Amin Khalifow
Berbera, 174–176, 212–213
bid'a, 11, 41–42, 44, 65
Bimal clan, 50, 58–61, 66, 130–131,
146, 150, 183–184
biographical dictionary, 83–84
Biyooley, 129–130
Borha Ismaili, 107
British Somaliland Protectorate, 174,
212
Bughyat al-Āmāl fī Tarīkh al-Šūmāl, 33, 34,
38, 40, 91, 92, 93
bunn, 60, 127, 199
Buur Haqaba, 51, 105, 131, 153

Cairo, 1, 2, 7–8, 14, 17, 30, 52, 80, 82,
88, 174, 178, 185, 204, 218
Carletti, Tomaso, 29, 101–102, 104,
143, 147
Cerulli, Enrico, 24, 26, 28, 33–34, 36,
42–44, 47, 49, 63, 66–71, 74, 115,
118, 140, 152–153, 156, 164, 183,
209, 213, 229
Chiesi, Gustavo, 105, 107–108,
131–133, 147
Chiesi and Travelli Report, 147
Christopher, William, 52–54, 57, 58
client cultivators, 12, 50, 218
Cordeaux, H.E.S. vice-consul, 176
cross-dressing (*al-mukhanathin*), 199
Cunha, Tristan de, 46

DaiDai, 154–155
Daftar al-ashraf, 80
Darood clan, 28, 40, 55
Darood, Shaykh, 28, 40
Decken, von der, Carl, 132
dhikr, 12, 19–20, 28, 74, 120, 128, 134,
136, 149, 162, 177, 197, 199–200, 211
Dire Dawa, 212
Di Vecchi, Cesare, 152
Djibouti, 6, 212
Do'an, 92
Dubbarwayn clan, 44–45
dugsi, 81–82
Dulbahante clan, 11, 174, 176

East Africa, 1, 6–11, 13–14, 17–18,
20–21, 23, 26, 33, 35–36, 46, 50,
63–64, 79, 83, 88, 92, 94, 97, 102,
104, 106–107, 110–113, 125,
139–141, 144–146, 162, 165, 221,
226
Egypt, 5, 6, 8, 13, 27, 79–80, 82, 93,
99, 211, 218–219
Egyptian, 4, 7, 80, 146, 190

Fakhr al-Dīn, 42–44
fanā', 29, 94, 153, 195, 202, 208, 211,
220
faqīh, 37, 70, 116
Farak, *Shaykh*, 149, 152–157, 160, 169
Ferrandi, Ugo, 51, 104–108, 116, 126,
128–129, 132–133, 136, 143, 146,
149
fiqh, 12
futa, 106, 145
futa Benaadir, 106

Gaas Muḥammad, *aw* 176
Gama, Vasco da, 46
Geledi, 35, 50–51, 54–61, 103–104,
130, 143, 146
 Gobroon, 54–61
 Yūsuf Muḥammad, 54–57, 60
Garreh, 40
 Aw 'Alī, 40–41
Geledi wars, 35, 51, 104
Genealogy, 20, 65, 69, 232
Geography, 35
ghawth (helper), 98
Ghella Baraki, 152
 See also, *Shaykh* Farag
Gob, 139
Gobroon, 54–61
Goigal clan, 71, 145, 158
Golwayn, 58–59
Gosha, 150–152
 Nasib Bunda, 150–151
Gramsci, Antonio, 16
green dung (*al-khadra al-damin*), 166
Gudmane clan, 44

- Hadith, 2, 19, 42, 78, 83, 111, 164,
 166, 186, 197, 199, 200, 204, 210,
 214
Hadiyat al'Anām ilā Qabr al-Nabī, 161
 Hadramaut, 6, 8, 10, 42, 70, 82, 88, 92,
 110, 218, 232
 Hadramī, 7, 20
 hagiography, 25, 30
 See also, *manāqib*
 Hajj, 6, 18, 28, 86, 89, 96, 175, 197,
 218
 See also, pilgrimage to Mecca
ḥalāl, 164, 202, 206
ḥalqa, 82
ḥaqīqa, 208
 Haramayn, 8, 231–232
 Harar, 86, 111, 218–219
 Hatimi clan, 41, 44–45, 65, 117
 Hawadle clan, 44
heer, 123
 Hijaz, 5, 88–89, 111, 115
ḥikow, 113, 123, 125–126, 218
 Himyar, 70, 230
 Horn of Africa, 9, 70, 110, 174, 181,
 219, 221
 Ḥusayn b. Tabar, 71

 Ibadhi, 12
 Ibn al-'Arabī, 6, 19–20, 98–99, 190–192,
 196, 214, 220
 Ibn Battuta, 37–38, 46, 81
 Ibn Ḥajjar, 6, 199, 209
 Ibn Taymiyya, 219
 Ibrahīm Hasan Jeberow, 52
 Ibrāhīm Mūsā, 154
Ihya' ulūm al-dīn, 203
ijāza, 86–87, 97, 158
ijtihād, 19
 Imperial British East Africa Company
 (IBEAC), 146
 Indian Ocean, 5, 8, 20, 36, 46–47,
 50–51, 62, 81–82, 88, 91, 191
 Ishaq, Shaykh, 28
 Islamic Courts Union (ICU), 222
 Italian Company, 107, 124
 See also, Royal Italian East Africa
 Company
 See also, Benadir Company
 Ivory-frontier, 51

jamā'a (*jamā'āt*), 12, 51–56, 60, 101, 112,
 129–134, 136, 149–150, 152, 154,
 174, 213, 226
 Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanī, 189
 Janāḥiyya, 177
 Jawhar, 119
al-Jawhar al-Nafīs, 6, 12–14, 26, 30, 88,
 96, 103, 112–114, 121, 123, 149,
 158–160, 162, 217, 223
 Jiddo, 154, 156
 jihadist, 4, 54, 56, 157, 184
 Jubaland, 9
 Jubba River, 9–11, 54, 107, 109, 132,
 143, 146, 150, 153

al-khadra al-damin (“green dung”), 166
Kafā'a, 139, 159, 160, 165–167, 198
Kāfir (*kuffār*), 38, 100, 152, 180, 204
 Kanji Chianji, 108
 karrāhiyya, 177
Karāma (*karāmāt*), 1, 12, 30, 31, 82, 86,
 87, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 124, 161, 162,
 185, 191, 193, 200
 Kedilai, 111
 Khalīl al-Bakrī, 80
khalwa, 97, 175
Khalīfa (*khulafā'*), 75, 79, 88, 120, 121,
 122, 128, 130, 162
 Kharijīyya, 179–180
khatīb, 43
 Khedive Isma'īl, 146
 Khidr, 93, 95–96
 Kismayu, 9, 107, 109
 Kululah b. Muḥammad, 118

 Lamu archipelago, 35
 Land of Punt, 35
 Levant, 5, 8, 13
 liberti, 153
 Luuq, 51, 54, 105, 107, 116, 128,
 130–131, 135–136, 144

madīh, 77, 84
 madrasa, 82
maghrib, 39, 120
 Mahdī, 4
 Maḥmūd b. Binyamīn al-Yaqūbī, Imam,
 114
 Maḥmūd Wa'is, 119
al-Majmū'a Karāmāt, 30
al-Majmū'a al-Mubāraka, 2, 7, 14, 20,
 74–76, 80, 90, 100, 164–166, 168,
 173, 177–181, 185, 194, 196,
 198–202, 218–219
al-Majmū'a al-Qasā'id, 1, 14, 20, 158,
 160, 171, 172, 185, 187–188, 192

- Makram b. 'Umar, 63
 makruḥ, 164
 Malindi, 46, 47
Manāqib (manqabah), 26–30, 86, 99, 102, 110, 113, 120, 122–127, 158
Manāqib Shams al-Dīn, 30, 95, 97, 99, 163
 Marka, 9–10, 24–25, 35–36, 50, 57–60, 66, 92, 105, 107–108, 115, 117, 122, 128, 130–131, 133–144, 146, 149–150
 Maulan 'Abd al-Raḥman, 10, 115
mawlid, 154
Mawlid Šūfī, 70, 84, 85, 229
 Mecca, 18, 53, 82, 86, 89–90, 96, 99, 149, 156, 160, 175, 183, 186, 219, 229
 Medina, 96, 156
 Midgan, 139, 142
 Moallim Nūr, 30, 103, 115, 117, 120, 124, 127, 129, 132
 Mogadishu, 6, 9, 24–25, 34–38, 40, 42, 44–50, 54, 58, 60, 63, 65–66, 69–72, 81, 84, 86, 91, 103–109, 111, 113–118, 120, 126, 128, 130, 135, 143–144, 146–147, 152, 157, 159, 217, 229–232
 Mombasa, 24–25, 31, 35, 47, 105, 144, 221
 Monale, di Onorato, 147
 Morshow clan, 45, 65
 Mrima coast, 142
 Mu'atazilī, 179
 Mu'awiyya, 179
 Muḥammad Abduḥ, 5, 8, 189
 al-Minār, 8
 Muḥammad 'Abdullāh Ḥasan, 11, 14, 74, 90, 171, 174–176
 Muḥammad Abū al-Su'ud al-Bakrī, 79
 daftar al-ashraf, 80
 naqib al-ashraf, 80
 shaykh mashayikh al-turuq al-šūfiyya, 80
 Muḥammad al-Barwānī, 7, 13–14, 21
 Rihlat Abī Harith, 13–14
 Muḥammad al-Battah (Qāḍī of Aden), 212
 Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, 53, 90, 179, 219
 Muḥammad b. Šāliḥ, 11
 Muḥammad Guled, 11, 133, 174
 Muḥammad Jenay al-Bahlūl, 88, 112
 al-mukhanathin (cross dressing), 199
 Mumin 'Abdullāhī, 45
 murid, 19, 114, 209
 Murjān, Shaykh, 10, 12, 149–152, 169, 218, 228
 Murusade clan, 44
 Murjiyya, 179, 180
murshid, 19
 Muṣṭafa b. Salmān, 88, 96, 112
 Muzzafar *Shaykhs*, 42
 mystical Ashraf, 153

 Nafata, Hausa Sultan of Gobir, 4
 na'ib, 120
 naqib al-ashraf, 80
 Nasib Bunda, 150–151
navha, 82
 Neo-Sufism, 3, 18–21, 173, 219
nisba, 12, 73
nujāba (nobles), 98
nuqāba (leaders), 98
 Nūr Chande, 6, 41, 72
Nūr Muḥammadiyya, 20, 98, 190, 194
 Nūrayn Aḥmad Šābr, 10, 21, 30, 102, 103, 115, 117, 119–120, 123–124, 127–129, 228

 office of sainthood (*walay*), 96
 Ogaden clan, 11, 44, 119, 151, 174
 Omani, 59, 104, 107, 126, 145
 Ottoman, 1–4, 7, 79–80, 165, 189

 Peasant Intellectual, 16, 102
 Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, 35
 Pilgrimage to Mecca,
 See Hajj
 Port Said, 7
 Portuguese, 46
 Ptolemy, 35–36

 Qablallah, 55
qāḍī, 10, 37–38, 43, 63, 70, 81, 116, 120, 123–124, 126, 144, 165, 167, 189, 213, 219
 Qāḍī of Aden, 212
 Qādiriyya, 6, 10–11, 18, 21, 27–28, 52–53, 70, 72–74, 84, 86–88, 91–92, 103, 110–115, 117–118, 121–123, 128–130, 134–137, 152–155, 171–176, 178, 181, 184–186, 188, 190–194, 211–214, 221, 223
 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī, 1, 11, 27, 84, 86, 88, 96, 99, 161, 185, 191
 Qādirī, 21, 73, 88, 103, 119, 122, 132, 149, 152, 164, 172–174, 176, 178, 183–187, 194, 212–213
 Qassim b. Muhy al-Dīn al-Barawī, 1, 185

- Ins al-Anīs*, 30, 61, 72, 89, 95, 114, 158–159, 171
Majmū‘a Karāmāt, 30
 Uways b. Muḥammad, 1, 12, 60–61, 71, 84, 88–89, 95, 112, 122, 152, 171, 223
 Uwaysiyya, 12, 113
 Zayla‘iyya, 12, 112
 Qaḥṭān b. Wa‘il, 44, 70
qasīda, 87, 96–97, 161, 186, 188, 193
 Qassim b. Muḥy al-Dīn al-Barawī, 1, 13, 20, 21, 30, 64, 72, 82, 84, 91, 95, 96, 98, 99, 114, 158, 163, 168, 171, 172, 217, 219, 220, 229, 232
 qat, 164, 176, 198, 199, 210
 Qolonqool, 72–75, 112, 129–130, 164
qutb (pole of the world), 98
 Rahanwayn clan, 131, 154
Rāḥat al-Qalb, 30, 73, 86, 87, 90, 93, 96, 112, 217, 219
 Rahman Fazlur, 18–19
 Rashīd Riḍa, 5
 Reer Hamar clan, 44
 Reer *Shaykh* Mumin clan, 45, 140
 Riḥlat Abī Harith, 13–14
 rinderpest, 61, 104, 106
 Robecchi-Brichetti, Luigi, 108, 143–145, 149
 Royal Italian East Africa Company, 146
 See also, Italian Company
 See also, Benadir Company
 Sab, 139
 Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukharī, 6, 78
 Sahl al-Tustarī, 6, 98, 191, 214, 219, 220
 Salafī, 8, 164–165
salah, 15
 Ṣāliḥī, 11, 172, 183, 185, 194
 Ṣālihiyya, 10–11, 14, 74, 90, 110, 115, 130, 133, 137, 164–165, 167, 171–175, 177–184, 186, 189–190, 192–195, 211–213, 215, 217
 Salma “Um Khayr” bt. Sakhr, 79
ṣarf, 82
 Sayyid Qutb, 5
 Sayyūn, 92
 Shabeelle River, 11, 50, 54, 56, 66, 104–105, 112, 142, 154–155, 174, 210
 Sha‘ir b. Uways, 91
 Shangani, 47–48, 59, 66, 91, 113–114, 117, 146, 229, 231
 Shanshiyya clan, 44, 65, 69, 71, 117, 229
shar‘a, 10, 15, 21, 85, 87, 123–126, 174, 180, 198, 204, 208
 Shaykh bin Shaykh, 71, 119, 135
 See also, ‘Abd al-Qādir b. *Shaykh* Ismaan
 Shi‘ī, 181
 shī‘ī al-mufrita (the), 179
shirk, 180, 202, 221
 Siad Barre, 222
 Siffin, battle of, 179
silsila, 75, 86, 97, 158
sirajūn munir, 98
 Slavery, 106, 141, 144, 147–148, 150, 156
 Slaves, 106, 144, 147
 See also, *liberti*
Societa’ agricola italo-somala (SAIS), 155–156
 Somali Youth League, 217
 Suez, 7
Ṣūfi Muḥammad Allah, 153
 Sultan of Zanzibar, 9, 12, 228
 Sunna, 15, 164, 201–202, 204
ṭabaqāt (biographical dictionary), 83–84
ta’dar (“sacred magic”), 55, 60
Tafsir [Quranic commentary] of Baghdadī, 69, 231
 al-Tahtawī, 5
takhmīs, 158, 173, 185
 Tanzania, 16, 143
 Tarīm, 92
Tarīqa (*Turuq*), 8, 9, 10–12, 19, 21, 28, 29, 52, 53, 72, 86, 87, 92, 103, 113, 115–117, 120, 121, 123, 126, 128–129, 130, 131, 134, 135, 137, 138, 155, 175, 186, 207–208, 218
Tarīqa Muḥammadiyya, 19
Taşawwuf, 12, 85, 196
Taqīd, 19, 198
Tawassul, 74, 172, 173, 179, 184, 185
Tawḥīd, 29, 183
 Tharia Topan, 108
Timo ada (hard hairs), 142
 Tūmal, 139, 142
 Tunni clan, 41, 50, 66, 71, 135, 145, 158
umma, 2, 5, 16, 42, 100, 141, 165, 200, 218–219
 United Nations (U.N.), 25, 217
 Uways b. Muḥammad al-Barawī, 1, 12, 13, 60–61, 71, 84, 88–89, 95, 99, 102

- 112–114, 121, 122, 126, 128, 129,
145, 149, 152, 153, 157–162, 169,
171, 172, 185, 193, 218, 223
Uwaysiyya, 12, 113
- wagf* (*awqāf*), 80, 82, 117, 120, 231
wadaad, 110, 213
waḥdat al-wujūd, 19–20
Wahhābism, 11, 21, 53, 189
 Wahhābī, 52, 53, 90, 181
 Wahhābiyya, 53, 172, 177, 179,
 181–182, 219
walaya (office of sainthood), 96
walī (*awlīyāʾ*), 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98,
 150, 159, 165, 173, 181, 202, 231
Warshaykh, 107, 114, 130
- Yāqūt al-Hamawī, 36
Yibīr, 139
- Yūsuf Ismaʿīl Nabhānī, 1, 183
 al-ġāmaʾ al-karāmāt, 2
 Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq, 2
Yūsuf Muḥammad, 54–57, 60
- ẓāhir* (*ẓawāhir*), 29, 85, 87, 111, 173, 194,
 196–198, 201, 208–209, 220
Zanj (East Africa), 36
Zanzibar, 7, 9, 12, 18, 21, 49, 59, 72,
 88, 105–108, 117, 124, 132, 141,
 143–146, 218–219, 226, 228
Zanzibari, 7, 13, 21, 59, 61, 92, 109,
 123–124, 126, 146, 152
ẓāwiya, 101
Zayla, 36–37, 72–73, 82, 99, 212
Zaylaʿiyya, 12, 112

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