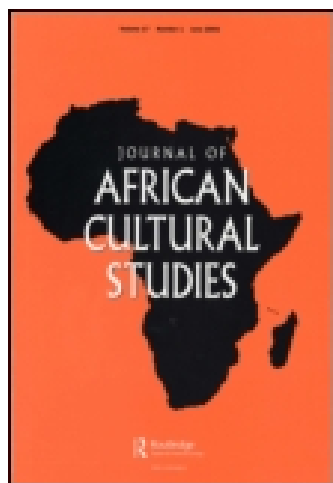


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*The best of guides: Sufi poetry and alternate discourses of reform in early twentieth-century Somalia**

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ABSTRACT *The Qādiriyya Sufi order has long been regarded as the largest and most successful Sufi tariqa in East Africa during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapters of the order were found from Somalia in the north to Mozambique in the south and as far inland as the eastern Congo. However, little research has been done to explain how an order with a reputation for literate learning as well as spirituality could gain such a broad following amongst Muslim populations who were largely non-literate. This article is divided into two parts. The first provides a brief discussion of the emergence of the Qadiriyya in Somalia during the late nineteenth century and provides an overview of the order's diffusion during this period, and its rise as a popular movement that crossed lines of clan and ethnicity as well as town and country. The second examines the teachings of the Qadiriyya shaykhs and the place of popular devotional poetry as the principle means of disseminating their message to their widespread, diverse and largely non-literate constituency.*

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 ‘Abd Allāh Ḥasan. The horsemen were searching for the Sufi leader Shaykh Uways bin Muḥammad, who maintained a compound within the village and who was rumoured 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 the Shaykh and his followers. The battle raged

* The first incarnation of this article began as a research presentation for an NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers on Sufi literature at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1999. I would like to thank all the members of that seminar and especially its convener, Professor Carl Ernst, for their valuable input. I would also like to extend my thanks to Valerie Hoffman and Knut Vikor who similarly provided valuable insights and criticisms that served to ‘keep me honest’ every step of the way.

throughout the morning, with Uways' followers valiantly defending the village and their Shaykh. By mid-afternoon, however, outnumbered and outgunned, the Shaykh and all but one of his followers lay dead or dying (Ibn 'Umar 1954: 70).

The murder of Uways and his students at the hands of a rival religious group was, in Somalia at least, a rare violent manifestation of a long-simmering conflict over differing views of the proper path to religious reform. The nineteenth century was host to numerous reform-minded thinkers searching for ways to arrest the political, economic and moral decay that plagued Islamic society. In East Africa this debate was shaped by the leaders of various local Sufi or mystical orders (Arabic *ṭarīqa*). Sayyid Muḥammad, the 'Mad Mullah' was head of the Ṣāliḥiyya order and was influenced by many of the most conservative reformist voices, including the teachings of the puritanical Arabian scholar Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d.1787). In accordance with this doctrine, Sayyid Muḥammad and his followers argued that reform could only occur through a strict reliance on the Quran and Hadith (the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad) as the only sources of inspiration, and on the individual believer's relationship with God. Popular practices that sought the deceased, such as the Prophet or the saints, as intermediaries with the divine were viewed as *shirk* or idolatry.¹ As the case of Shaykh Uways illustrates, however, other reformers opposed the pro-Wahhābī message of Sayyid Muḥammad and were more than willing to die for their beliefs.

A great deal has been written about Sayyidka, as he is known to Somalis, and his political and religious agendas. Much less, however, is known about those on the other side: the Somali Shaykhs and '*ulamā*' who opposed the Sayyid and advocated alternative paths to salvation. Among the most vocal opponents of Sayyid Muḥammad were the various leaders of the Qādiriyya Sufi order led by Uways. Earlier scholars have sketched the rough outlines of Qādiriyya ideology; however, these writings are extremely limited in detail. Theologically the Qādiriyya endorsed the idea that deceased holy men or saints could and should act as mediators between individual believers and God. Legally, most Qādirī leaders were willing to look the other way and, at least tacitly, allow the continued practice of *xeer*, or customary law, in local communities as long as it did not violate the spirit of the Muslim code too egregiously.² But what exactly did Qādirī leaders advocate, and on what basis? In addition, how did they refute the Wahhābī-esque arguments of the Ṣāliḥiyya?

The importance of these questions goes beyond the bounds of mere intellectual curiosity. Despite their 'victory' over Uways, Sayyid Muḥammad's disciples were not the winners in the long-term struggle for

¹ For a more complete discussion of the ideology and activities of Sayyid Muhammad, see Samatar (1983) and Martin (1976).

² The most comprehensive treatments of Somali Qādiriyya ideology are Lewis (1995, 1996), Trimmingham (1965) and Martin (1976).

reform in East Africa. By the early twentieth century the Qādiriyya Sufi order of Uways far outstripped Sayyid Muḥammad's Ṣāliḥiyya order in both membership and territorial scope. Under Uways and his successors thousands flocked to the Qādiriyya banner, and the order spread throughout southern and central Somalia and along the East African coast, as far south as Mozambique. In spite of the Shaykh's murder, the order continued to flourish while the Ṣāliḥiyya declined into obscurity following the Sayyid's death in 1920. To begin to comprehend the popularity of the Qādiriyya message, a detailed exploration of the order's teachings and methods of spreading their word is essential.³

This article is divided into two parts. The first provides a brief discussion of the emergence of the Qādiriyya in East Africa during the late nineteenth century. This section will provide an overview of the order's diffusion throughout Somalia and East Africa, and its rise as a popular movement that crossed lines of clan and ethnicity as well as town and country. The second examines the teachings of the order through the medium of popular devotional poetry that served as one of principal means of disseminating their message to this widespread, diverse and largely non-literate constituency.

For the Qādiriyya, as we shall see, the key to salvation was the establishment of a closer relationship of the individual spirit with God. This path to the divine, they taught, was obtainable only through the spiritual intervention of the Prophet. This was not an easy path, however, and for the average believer this goal might be realized only with the assistance of select shaykhs—both living and deceased—who acted as spiritual guides.⁴ While the acceptance of this belief by the masses may have been somewhat influenced by local ideas regarding spirit and ancestor worship, defence of this belief by the religious *élite* was not based on such notions (Lewis 1955, 1956). Instead, justifications for the necessity of spiritual mediation of the Prophet were derived from the seminal teachings of other Muslim mystics, both past and contemporary.⁵

1.1 The Qādiriyya in East Africa

At 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-Jilānī (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

³ The important question of *why* the Qādiriyya message was ultimately more popular than that of the Ṣāliḥiyya is beyond the scope to the present work and will be addressed in a larger forthcoming treatment of holy men in north-eastern Africa.

⁴ Note that ultimate object is 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 Buehler (1998).

⁵ For a fuller discussion of the place of Prophetic mediation in classical Sufism, see O'Fahey (1990), O'Fahey and Radtke (1993) and Jamil M. Abun-Nasr (1965). Also see Valerie Hoffman (1999), which provides an excellent discussion of the historical roots of this practice.

of the order, knowledge of ‘the path’ was first brought to Harar in what is now south-eastern Ethiopia by a Hadrami *sharīf*, Abū Bakr bin ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aydārūs (d.1503). 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 (Trimingham 1965: 240).⁶

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 prerequisite to progress along the path to enlightenment and union with God. The founder of the order, al-Jilānī, was a noted scholar of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and the *ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet) who argued that in order to gain entry into the esoteric (*al-bāṭin* – literally ‘the interior’) realms of the soul necessary for enlightenment one had to first master the exoteric (*al-zāhir*) duties of religious observance and learning (Braune 1990: 69-70). Given the centrality of this dictum to Qādiriyya teachings, it is likely that the virtual absence of literacy beyond the boundaries of urban centres before the late nineteenth century prevented the order from gaining popularity amongst the rural populations. For whatever reason, the Qādiriyya order did not gain widespread currency in eastern Africa until the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

1.2 Charismatic leadership and the Qādiriyya expansion

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-Raḥmān bin Aḥmad al-Zayla‘ī (c. 1820-1880). Born in the rural village of Kedilai approximately 100 miles north-west of Mogadishu, Zayla‘ī epitomises the scholar and mystic that would come to define the image of a ‘true’ Shaykh in East African Sufism. He studied elementary ‘*ilm* in his home village 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 (Ibn ‘Umar 1954: 2-4). Following this he traveled widely in Ethiopia and the Hijaz, where he honed his intellectual skills (Martin 1992: 14-15). After completing his education, however, Zayla‘ī returned to the countryside of his youth, where he established a *jamā‘a*, or community of disciples, near the village of Qulunquul 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, Zayla‘ī experienced considerable success among both the pastoralists and villagers of the interior and the ranks of the religious *élite*.

⁶ Trimingham’s main source for the Qādiriyya during this early period appears to be the *Futūḥ al-Habasha*.

According to the primary hagiographic account of his life, *Jalā' al-'Aynayn*, his popularity among the 'common folk' was based primarily on his miraculous abilities, especially his ability to cure the sick from such dread diseases as smallpox and consumption (Ibn 'Umar, 1954: 41). However, he was also credited with winning over many among the local '*ulamā*' who regarded Sufism with deep suspicion, through his respect for and knowledge of '*ilm*'.

Accounts of Zayla'i's life highlight his 'conversion' of the '*Ālim* Nūrow bin 'Umar al-Ḥusnī to the Sufi way. According to Zayla'i's hagiography, Shaykh Nūrow was a scholar who dedicated his life to spreading the religious sciences among the people of the interior. However, he loathed members of the Sufi orders, whom he regarded as loathsome and unlettered. One day, according to popular tradition, he encountered Shaykh Zayla'i and without a word submitted to him and instantly became a disciple of the Qādiriyya. When asked about his extremely sudden change of heart, Shaykh Nūrow defended himself, noting that he submitted to Zayla'i on account of his high spiritual station and proximity to God; but also because the Shaykh recognized 'our knowledge of the religious sciences while also giving us the esoteric (*bātin*) science of the *ṭarīqa*' (Ibn 'Umar 1954: 19-20)

Shaykh Zayla'i was the first of several Shaykhs to popularize the Qādiriyya order in the Horn of Africa, and he is credited with the foundation of a new sub-order known as the Zayla'iyya. His success was based largely on his ability to propagate a notion of Sufism based on spirituality and religious learning that attracted members from both the general population *and* the learned classes. Zayla'i's 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 a slightly later '*ālim*', Shaykh Uways bin Muḥammad al-Barāwī. Countless oral and written traditions extol 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, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī.

Uways was born in the coastal town of Baraawe in 1847, to a family of modest means belonging to a servile client lineage of the Tunni clan. There is some indication that his father may have been a minor religious figure, and some accounts contend that as a child, Uways learned the weaver's trade. Muslim religious practitioners of secondary importance frequently practiced other trades in order to earn their livelihood. Thus it is certainly plausible that Uways was descended from a line of fairly well educated, but poor, '*ulamā*'.⁷ Uways, however, proved something of a prodigy and eventually rose to study with members of Baraawe's religious *élite*, most notably two adherents of the Qādiriyya Shaykh, Muḥammad Taynī and Shaykh Muḥammad Jenai al-Bahloul. The future leader of the Qādiriyya became so engrossed in his studies, his hagiographer states, that he soon 'renounced employment and

⁷ For a fuller discussion of the life and education of Shaykh Uways see Reese (1996).

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 head, Shaykh Muṣṭafā bin Salmān (Ibn 'Umar 1964: 1-10).

1.3 Attracting the faithful

Uways' experiences during his travels in Iraq and Arabia are presented by adherents as confirmation of his *bona fides* 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 Uwaisiyya branch of the Qādiriyya spread rapidly not only throughout southern Somalia but over the entire East African littoral, stretching as far south as Tanganyika, becoming arguably the largest Sufi order in East Africa (Martin 1976). 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 East African society as well as *élites* and non-*élites*.

Uways' earliest successes occurred in the towns of the Benaadir. There he developed a particularly strong following in Mogadishu, where he is believed to have led the people away from certain immoral practices by introducing them to the teachings and rituals of the Qādiriyya soon after his return from Arabia.⁸ However, as one of Uways' hagiographers, 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin 'Umar, was at pains to point out, the Shaykh's movement targeted all believers regardless of social class, economic station or way of life. Upon his return to Africa, ibn 'Umar wrote:

[Uways] settled down to the task of bringing God's worshippers to the rightly guided path by land and sea, to [both] men and women. Because of this, he traveled to distant towns in the land of the Swahili ... and the Benaadir, to its villages, hinterland [lit. *bādiyya*, referring to areas inhabited by nomadic pastoral people] and towns. If he wished to travel, a great crowd of men, women and children, both free and slave would accompany him ... (Ibn 'Umar 1964: 11-12).

As Ibn 'Umar's statement indicates, the Qādiriyya viewed their order as one that was pan-Muslim and aimed at all believers. Information regarding actual *ṭarīqa* membership is scant. However, 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 main sources for the life and works of Uways are written hagiographies (Arabic *manāqib*) compiled and published following his death in 1909: *Jalā' al-*

⁸ For a more complete account of his influence among the inhabitants of the Benaadir towns see Reese (1999).

'*Aynayn fī Manāqib al-Shaykhayn* (c. 1954) and *Jawhar al-Nafīs fī Khawāṣṣ Shaykh Uways* (1964).⁹ Both works supply ample anecdotal evidence of Uways' activity in rural and urban spheres, while the latter provides an important window onto the social make-up of the upper echelons of the order's leadership.

Numerous miraculous accounts tout Uways' influence among the well-to-do populations of the Benaadir coastal towns. Among the most famous of these, in oral and written traditions, is his 'salvation' of the Mogadishu *élite* from their reputed immoral ways and induction into the Qādiriyya way.

When Shaykh Uways al-Qādiri came from Baghdad he stayed in the house of Imam Maḥmūd bin Binyamin al-Ya'qūbī¹⁰, who received him and honored him, he was initiated into the Qādiriyya [by Shaykh Uways]. There was in that time in Mogadishu a heinous practice called *hikū* that was practiced by two groups; one was called the '*almūgh*' and the other the *shabilī*. Each was a powerful party, being composed of people from Hamarweyn and Shangani [the two principal quarters of the town]. The members of each faction aided each other with their assets. Among them were the Ashraaf, merchants, notables, clan elders, rulers, patrons and people of the ships. All of them assisted and participated in this abominable practice until the hearts of the '*ulamā*' contracted [with anguish] but they were incapable of stopping the custom ... [However,] when [the participants in this practice] 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-Qādiri so that we may repent before him this abomination. 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-Qādiri, we repent of this abomination and fraud and abandon it. May God grant us victory and guidance ...' And ... they abandoned the repulsive practice and other abominations with his blessing ... (Ibn 'Umar, 1964: 119-20).¹¹

The Shaykh is shown to wield great influence in the urban sphere in numerous other accounts. In various stories, he assists the Sultan of Zanzibar in solving a seemingly intractable inheritance puzzle, puts an arrogant Benaadiri merchant in his spiritual place and returns errant wives to their 'proper' place at home (Ibn 'Umar 1964: 133-34, 137-39). However, an equal number of stories (if not more) are set in rural surroundings, where the shaykh assists pastoralist and farmer alike in their times of need. In one such account, Uways assists villagers on the Shabeelle River who were victims of numerous attacks by the Amhara troops of the Ethiopian emperor Menelik II. According to the story, the villagers approached the shaykh and asked him to

⁹ The published versions of both these works were compiled by Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin 'Umar (ibn 'Umar 1954, 1964). However, the stories concerning Uways in the earlier collection were originally compiled in manuscript form by the saint's disciple Shaykh Qāsim al-Barāwī Qāsim bin Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Barāwī (al-Barawī [1917]).

¹⁰ Leader of the Abgal a sub-clan of the Hawiye settled in the Shangani quarter of Mogadishu. See Alpers (1983).

¹¹ This story continues frequently to be told by Somali Qādiriyya members today, and constitutes one of their favourite examples of the Shaykh's spiritual power. It is also recounted in a more abbreviated version in *Jalā' al-'Aynayn*.

use his powers to protect them from the raiders. He responded by going into seclusion for three days. When he emerged he informed the villagers that with the assistance of the Prophet Muḥammad and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, the Amhara had been expelled from their nearby encampment and were no longer a threat (Ibn ‘Umar 1954: 14). In other accounts, he similarly protects the people of the interior by expelling disease, saving cattle from marauding lions and bringing rain to draught-stricken crops (Ibn ‘Umar 1964: 123-24; Ibn ‘Umar 1954: 26-27, 42-43).

Hagiographic accounts of the saint’s efforts to serve both urban and rural constituencies may, in many instances, be apocryphal and represent the desire of Uways chroniclers to demonstrate the widespread popularity of the order, rather than any kind of verifiable reality. However, Uways’ influence among rural and urban populations can be shown in other, more historically demonstrable, ways. First, while Uways composed large amounts of devotional poetry in Arabic¹² he also wrote poems in Somali as well as the regional dialect of the Digil-Raxanweyn clans known as *af-maay* (Kassim 1993). Furthermore, he established a permanent presence in both rural and urban areas. According to most accounts he spent large amounts of time in urban coastal centres but also established a number of rural settlements, known as *jamā‘a*, the most important of which was his personal retreat in the village of Biyoole, where he met his untimely death (Ibn ‘Umar 1954).

The most important evidence for Uways’ influence among rural and urban sectors of society, however, lay in the record of his order’s local leadership. While Uways was the overall leader of the Qādiriyya in East Africa, local branches of the *ṭarīqa* were led by *khalīfas*, or deputies, generally chosen from the local community.¹³ According to Uways’ hagiographer, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umar, the Shaykh initiated more than 500 *khalīfas* during his lifetime throughout East Africa, all of whom were entitled to initiate new members into the order and perform *dhikr* ceremonies. Of these 500, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin ‘Umar provides a list of 145 of the most prominent in his hagiography of Uways, *Jawhar al-Nafīs*. Ninety-three of those listed have *nisbas*¹⁴ indicating a geographic, ethnic or clan identity. While these hardly provide a representative cross-section of *ṭarīqa* membership, they can give us an idea of the composition of the upper echelons of the order, which may be reflective of overall membership patterns.

Sixty-two of the names included on the list can be clearly linked to coastal and/or urban society. Forty-seven carry *nisbas* with solid urban pedigrees. This includes twenty identified as *Ashrāf*, a catchall for a number of lineages

¹² In addition to examples recorded in *Majmū‘at Qaṣā’id* to be discussed below, examples of Shaykh Uways’ Arabic poetry can also be found in both *Jawhar al-Nafīs* and *Jalā’ al-‘Aynayn*.

¹³ In rural areas the *khalīfa* was frequently a coastal merchant resident in the interior. See Reese (1999) for a fuller discussion.

¹⁴ The part of an individual’s name that identifies him or her according to place of origin, lineage or ethnicity, often used as a surname.

claiming descent from the Prophet Muḥammad and generally associated with commercial *entrepôts* through out East Africa, as well as twenty-seven whose names indicate an origin on the Benaadir coast either by town name (eg, Shaykh ‘Ālim bin ‘Umar al-Maqdishī) or lineage (eg, Shaykh Muḥammad bin Faqīh Yūsuf al-Shanshī, a well-known urban lineage from Mogadishu). The remainder are identified by *nishbas* that connect them either to other points on the East African coast (eg, Shaykh Ramaḍān al-Swahili) or foreign ethnic groups known to live and trade throughout the littoral (eg, Shaykh Aḥmad Ba Fadhl al-Ḥaḍrāmī). Although a large proportion of the identifiable names on Ibn ‘Umar’s list have clear urban connections, a significant number indicate rural or non-urban coastal origins. Twenty four of the *khalīfas* recorded by Ibn ‘Umar bear *nishbas* indicating rural pastoral origins (eg, Shaykh Issa bin Aliw al-Rahanweyni), while four others indicate rural agricultural roots (eg, Shaykh Ali bin Maḥmūd bin Thābit al-Jawharī and Shaykh Muḥammad Wafuruwī al-Bantuwi)¹⁵ and one is of coastal fisher origin (Shaykh Muḥammad al-Bajuni).¹⁶

Obviously, anecdotal evidence of hagiographical accounts and lists of local leadership do not allow us to determine the exact size and scope of Qādiriyya influence in rural and urban areas. However, they do demonstrate the East African Qādiriyya’s conception of itself as a movement that bridged the rural-urban divide found throughout East African civilization in general and Somali society in particular. Whether pastoralist or townsman, farmer or fisher folk, members were attracted to the Qādiriyya regardless of socio-economic status or clan/ethnic affiliation. The widespread popularity of the Qādiriyya is beyond dispute. The questions that present themselves, however, are what did they preach that made them so popular, and how did an order with such a reputation for ‘book learning’ spread its message to an audience that was largely illiterate?

2.1 Spreading the Good Word

We have at least one theological text, titled *al-Majmū‘at al-Mubāraka* (literally *The Blessed Collection*) and written around 1917, by Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh Quṭbī that outlines the Somali Qādiriyya position. This, however, is a rather dense, difficult theological treatise that in reality was read by only the most advanced students.¹⁷ Instead, to begin to understand the popularity of the Qādiriyya we need to explore a text seemingly designed, at least in part, to disseminate the order’s message to a wider audience. This is a collection of poetry entitled *Majmū‘a Qaṣā’id fī Madh Sayyid al-Anbiyā’ wa al-Tawassul bi-Tāj al-Awliyā’ Sayyidi ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī* (‘A Collection of Qasidas in Praise of

¹⁵ Jawhar being an important agricultural settlement along the Jubba river and Bantu a common designation for an individual from the inter-riverine region of southern Somalia, often of servile origin.

¹⁶ For a complete translation of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bin ‘Umar’s list, see Reese (1996), appendix 1.

¹⁷ An analysis of this text will be included in an upcoming monograph.

the Master of Prophets and an Application to the Crown of the Saints 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī'). The *Majmū'a* was compiled by a student of Uways, Shaykh Qāsim bin Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Barāwī, probably around 1917 and certainly before his death in 1921 (Cerulli 1957: 188, 196). 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 were printed abroad – often in Egypt – and only through subsidies from wealthy patrons. The collection consists of a series of poems composed by the most famous Qādiriyya leaders of the late nineteenth century, including two composed by Uways, four by Zayla'ī and two composed by a popular Mogadishu shaykh, 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin 'Abd Allāh al-Shanshī (d.1904), known often simply as Shaykh Ṣūfī.

Rather than being a simple compilation of poetry, it is in fact an edited collection. All but one of the entries are in the *takhmīs* or 'fiver' style. Using this technique, al-Barāwī 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 (Schimmel 1985: 183). In addition, each poem is prefaced by a short *karāma* story that we could gloss here as a miracle, but that is more appropriately described as a notable incident involving the original author of the poem.

Signifying its status as a work to be recited, the text of each poem is 'pointed.' The inclusion of diacritical marks for vowels, generally omitted from 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 vowelling.¹⁸ It is a collection that could be easily recited even by *ṭarīqa* adherents who had a limited understanding of written Arabic, while actual meanings could be glossed by the presiding shaykh. 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 by the inclusion at the beginning of the first selection of a part of a well-known hadith often associated with poetry. *Inna min al-shi'r la-ḥikma*; 'in [some] poetry there is wisdom' (Al-Barāwī 1955: 4).¹⁹

¹⁸ A similar example of a teaching text in the Horn of Africa is a compilation of writings by Zayla'ī *Majmū'a Mushtamila* (Djibouti: Maktabat al-Islāmiyya, 1972) in which the entire text, both prose and poetry, is pointed for the benefit of the reader.

¹⁹ *Inna min al-bayān la-siḥran wa-inna min al-shi'r la-ḥikma*. 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.

2.2 Nabī Muḥammad: the best of guides

If one simply reads the 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 spirited defense of Prophetic and saintly mediation between believer and God as a necessary step along the path of salvation and—in the end—a scathing refutation of Ṣālihiyya/Wahhābī doctrine.

The collection begins in a fairly standard hagiographical manner with a story about an encounter between Shaykh Uways and the ‘ulamā’ of Mecca related by the compiler’s brother Muḥammad al-Barāwī, also a student and follower of Uways.

[I] was with [Shaykh Uways] in Mecca and we went to visit al-‘Ārif bi-Allāh al-Sayyid Abū Bakr bin Muḥammad Shaṭā 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 Sāda²⁰ 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 *qaṣidas*. Shaykh Uways ordered me to deliver a poem, and I recited this *qaṣida* (al-Barāwī 1955: 3).

The *qasida* is entitled *Ḥādiyat al-’Anām ilā Qabr al-Nabī*, ‘Guidance of Humanity to the Tomb of the Prophet,’ and begins:

إِذَا مَا شِئْتَ تَيْسِيرَ الْمُرَادِ فَصَلِّ عَلَى رَسُولِكَ خَيْرَ هَادِي
وَقُلْ مُسْتَنْجِدًا فِي كُلِّ نَادٍ صَلَاةُ اللَّهِ مَا نَادَى الْمُنَادِي
عَلَى الْمُخْتَارِ مَوْلَانَا الْحَمَادِ
حَبِيبُ اللَّهِ أَفْضَلُ مَنْ تَرَفَّى وَقَبْرُهُ قَاقُ كُرْسِيٍّ وَمَرْفَى
وَكُلُّ مَوَاضِعِ الْخَيْرَاتِ صَدْقًا يَفُوحُ الْمِسْكُ وَالرَّيْحَانُ حَقًا
لِقَبْرِ مُحَمَّدٍ نُورِ الْفُؤَادِ
تَنْوُرُ جَمِيعِ أَرْجَاءِ الْحَبِيبِ يَرَى الْأَنْوَارَ قَاصِدُهُ بِطِيبِ
وَيَلْقَاهُ الْبَعِيدُ مَعَ الْقَرِيبِ يَعُمُّ الْأَلَّ جِيرَانُ الْحَبِيبِ
بِعَرَفِ عَيْبِهِ أَهْلُ الْبِلَادِ

Whenever you wish to make easy your objective
Then give a prayer to your messenger, the best of Guides
And say, seeking aid in every circle
Blessings of God, as the crier cries
On the Chosen, our master the praised

Beloved of God preferred of those who ascended
His tomb is above any throne or high place
As is every pious place, sincerely
Musk and spices give fragrance, truly

²⁰ Another Arabic word denoting descendants of the Prophet.

To the tomb of Muḥammad, light of the heart
 Every aspect of the Ḥabīb gives light
 The one who seeks him, sees the lights with goodness
 The distance meets it along with the near
 It will encompass the Family, the neighbours of the beloved
 As well as the people of the community, with knowledge of his fragrance
 (al-Barāwī 1955: 4).²¹

When Muḥammad finished his recitation, Sayyid Abū Bakr declared: ‘*Wallāhi nūr!* By God that’s light! Because, all that comes from the tongue[s] of the saints, is light!’ Al-Barāwī then notes: ‘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’ (al-Barāwī, 1955: 3).

As the above excerpt shows, this *qaṣīda* is clearly an expression of the love all believers should have for the Prophet and his family. The opening lines of this poem also 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.²² The only way to reach this goal, the poem tells us, is through proximity to him.

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 ‘evidence’ of this view’s legitimacy. 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 Shāfi‘ī school of law in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, the holiest and most important place in Islam. Even the lowly student Muḥammad al-Barāwī confesses himself somewhat surprised that these ‘descendants of the Prophet, learned professors, teachers in the Ḥaram and, authors of many writings’ should be so impressed. Their stamp of approval is proof positive 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,

²¹ Many thanks to Dr. Martin Orwin of SOAS for assistance with this and other poetic translations contained in this article.

²² As Hoffman points out, this is a notion endorsed by ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jili in his work *Qāb al-Qawsayn wa Multaqā al-Nāmūsayn* (*A Distance of Two Bow-lengths and the Meeting Point of the Two Realms*) which is found reprinted in Nabhānī’s *Jawāhir al-Bihar fī Faḍā’il al-Nabī al-Mukhtār*. This may suggest that al-Barāwī’s understanding of classical Sufi teachings was mediated largely through the writings of Nabhānī, since, at least in the *Majmū‘a*, he never quotes directly from the Masters but always via Nabhānī (Hoffman 1999: 358).

paradise? In a later vignette, this ambiguity is lifted when the Prophet himself makes an appearance in a dream and directs the Sufi Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Zayla’ī to ‘praise [him] with one hundred verses’ (Al-Barāwī 1955: 47). 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 attains God’s forgiveness of our shame (al-Barāwī 1955: 55).

2.3 *Nabhānī and the light of the Prophet*

Throughout most of the *Majmū‘a*, the evidence used by al-Barāwī 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-Barāwī, 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 bin Ismā‘īl al-Nabhānī (1850-1932), a jurist and theologian from Lebanon.

Nabhānī was an al-Azhar-educated jurist who led a long and successful career as a Qadi in Ottoman Lebanon. He was also an arch-conservative (if such a label is applicable), staunchly opposed to the late nineteenth-century school of reformers led by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh. As such, he wrote a number of works, beginning in the 1890s, that denounced the teachings of these reformers as heresy and warned against the evils posed by the introduction of such godless practices as Western-style education (Ghazal 1999). 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 (Schimmel 1985: 134). All of his writings were largely compilations of the works of others rather than original work, marshalling material from classical scholars to refute the arguments of the reformers.

While Nabhānī and al-Barāwī perceived the threat to Islam as coming from different directions (the first feared rampant liberalism and encroaching Westernization while the latter was more concerned with puritanical Wahhābism), al-Barāwī considered both to be fighting the good fight to keep the community of believers on the right path. At the beginning of the *Majmū‘a* he declares Nabhānī to be *al-mujaddid fī zamānina*, ‘the renewer of our age,’ and late in the collection he quotes extensively from the Shaykh’s works both to bolster the notion of Prophetic mediation and to refute the Ṣālihiyya heretics (al-Barāwī 1955: 1).

Following this initial declaration of Nabhānī’s exalted status as the ‘renewer of our age,’ al-Barāwī does not mention the Qadi again until nearly the end of the collection. When he does, however, he provides the reader with a long extract from Nabhānī’s work *Wasā’il al-Wuṣūl ilā Shamā’il al-Rasūl*

(‘The means of obtainment 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 (*shamā’il*) suggest his love ... because the people are moulded 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 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 Sha‘rānī ... (al-Barāwī 1955: 67).²³

Nabhānī holds, and al-Barāwī 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 the most will end up in the deepest abyss. In supporting their view of Prophetic mediation, neither relies on his own words or ideas. Instead, as Nabhānī notes, they turn to the sixteenth-century Egyptian ‘ālim/Sufi and renowned popularizer of the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabi, Imam ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Sha‘rānī. By quoting Nabhānī, and by extension Sha‘rānī, al-Barāwī places the Somali Qādiriyya solidly within the context of a larger, although not uncontroversial, theological school that is discussed more fully in the following section. 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 Zayla‘ī writes, he is the one ‘who unveils our troubles and attains God’s forgiveness of our shame.’

2.4 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. However, mediation is not merely advisable but essential if the individual believer wishes to attain salvation. This imperative centres on the concept of *Nūr Muḥammadiyya* or ‘Muḥammadan light’.

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 Jilānī ...’ It is tempting to dismiss these references as the hyperbole of the pious (Al-Barāwī

²³ The quote itself, al-Barāwī states, comes from ‘his *majmū‘a*,’ which is an apparent reference to Nabhānī’s four-volume work *al-Majmū‘at al-Nabhāniyya fī al-Madā’ih al-Nabawiyya* cited by Ghazal.

1955: 8). However, these expressions of religious exuberance have deep theological roots that place the Prophet at the centre of the universe and, indeed, all creation, rendering his mediation not only advisable but essential.

From the earliest centuries of Islam, the Prophet has been depicted as the *sirāj munīr*, 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’ (Schimmel 1985: 124). 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 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’ (*ibid*: 125).²⁴ The place of Muḥammad in the process of creation is made even more explicit by ‘Abd al-Qādir Jilānī—spiritual founder of the Qādiriyya order of Uways and al-Barāwī – 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’ (*ibid*: 135).²⁵

In short, the Prophet Muḥammad 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 Jilani, 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 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 (Schimmel 1985: 135).

When viewed from this perspective, al-Barāwī’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 (eg the Ṣālihiyya) 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-Barāwī 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 honours he bestowed upon him, a fact of which would not be capable to other than [the Prophet] ... And they witness that matter

²⁴ It should be noted that in discussing the Prophet’s nature in other works, Zayla’i quotes liberally from the writings of al-Tustarī. See, for instance, *Majmū‘a Mushtamila*.

²⁵ Quoting Jilānī, although her own citation is rather cryptic.

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.*²⁶

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 (al-Barāwī 1955: 68).

As in the earlier excerpt, Nabhānī takes his example from another Sufi authority, 'Abd al-'Azīz Dabbāgh (1679-1719/20) a noted Moroccan Sufi cast in the tradition of al-Tustarī and Ibn al-'Arabī. *Al-Ibriz 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. Written around 1717, it is an account of the life and teachings of al-Dabbāgh by his student Aḥmad bin al-Mubārak (d.1742) (Hoffman, 1999: 359). Veneration of the Prophet is clearly a central pillar of al-Dabbāgh'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 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. Al-Barāwī's *karāmāt* anecdotes further inform the faithful that holy men such as Uways – whose words emit light – and Zayla'ī – who has the light of the Prophet and Jilānī before him – 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.

Nabhānī and al-Barāwī cite this passage with different opponents in mind. The former was concerned with what he viewed as modernizing liberals, while the latter was facing off against the pro-Wahhābī Ṣāliḥiyya. Their ultimate message, however, was the same. 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-Dabbāgh) 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-Barāwī regards as guilty of this unbelief, he quickly removes it by ending the collection with Shaykh Uways' scathing poetic indictment of the Ṣāliḥiyya, the only *qaṣīda* to appear in its original format.

²⁶ Emphasis mine.

وَأَصْرَفَ بِهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ سُوءٍ ذَاهِيَهُ	صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ
لَا يَقْتَدِي جَمَاعَةَ الشَّيْطَانِيَّةِ	مَنْ اقْتَدَى مُحَمَّدًا بِشَرِّعِهِ
وَالْمَالِ وَالْحَرِيمِ هُمْ إِبَاحِيَهُ	هُمْ الْمُبِيحُونَ دِمَاءَ الْعُلَمَاءِ
كَالْفَقْهِ وَالنَّحْوِ هُمْ الْكَرَامِيَّةُ	وَيَمْنَعُونَ الدَّرْسَ لِلْعُلُومِ
لَا يَتَوَسَّلُونَ كَالْجَنَاحِيَّةِ	بِكُلِّ شَيْخٍ مَاتَ كَالْجِيلَانِي
سِيَمَاهُمْ التَّحْلِيقُ كَالْوَهَابِيَّةِ	لَا يَقْتَدُونَ خَلْفَ مَنْ لَهُ شَعْرٌ
فِي دَارِنَا جَهْرًا هُمْ الْكَلَابِيَّةُ	وَيَسْتُرُونَ الْجَنَّةَ بِمَالِ
زَةِ كَأَمَّهُمْ قَدْ سَفَاحِيَّةُ	وَيَحْتَلُونَ بِالْحَرِيمِ لِلْإِجَا
وَيَدْعُونَ النُّورَ مِنْ بِلَاسِيَّةِ	يَتَّبِعُونَ رَأْيَهُمْ لَا كُتُبَنَا
فَعَلًا وَقَوْلًا يَقْتَضِي كُفْرَانِيَّةُ	وَيَفْعَلُونَ النُّكْرَ فِي ذِكْرِهِمْ
شَكَا بِهِ جَلَّهُمُ السَّمَالِيَّةِ	كَالْعَبِّ قَائِلِينَ أَلَلَهُ
نَّ وَفَحِيحُ كَالْكَلَابِ النَّاحِيَّةِ	لَهُمْ ضَجِيجٌ وَأَنِينٌ وَخَبِيرٌ
وَيُنْكِرُونَ الْكُلْفَةَ الْإِلَهِيَّةِ	وَيُكْثِرُونَ الْحَلْفَ بِالطَّلَاقِ
بَرًّا وَبَحْرًا أَيْ مِنَ السَّمَالِيَّةِ	ضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا الْعِبَادَ فِي الثَّرَى
بِهِمْ قَفَرٌ عَنْهُمْ كَالدَّوَاهِيَّةِ	أَلَيْسَ ذُو لُبٍ وَفَهُمْ يَغْتَرُّ

- 1 Give a prayer to Muḥammad and his family
And turn, through them, from all evil calamities
- 2 The one who has imitated Muḥammad through his law
Does not follow the faction of Satan
- 3 They are the justifiers of [spilling] the blood of the 'ulamā'
and of wealth and women, they are libertines.
- 4 They prohibit the study of sciences
such as law and grammar. They are the *Karrāmiyya*.²⁷
- 5 Through every Shaykh who has died such as al-Jilānī
They do not seek petition, like the faction of *Janāhiyya*.²⁸

²⁷ An alternative reading of this word suggested by Dr. Martin Orwin of SOAS is that the text contains a misprint and the correct reading may be *karāhiya*, 'repugnance.' For the given translation see Martin 1976: 161 and 228, footnote 43, on which Martin says: 'The Karramiya was a Muslim set of eastern Persia named for Abu 'bdallah Muhammad b. Karram (d. 225/869-70). One of their doctrines stated that God had a "body"; this shocked their contemporaries.'

²⁸ An alternative reading of this word suggested by Dr. Martin Orwin of SOAS is 'sinfulness' derived from *junāh*, 'sin, transgression'. For the given translation see Martin 1976: 162 and 228, footnote 44, on which Martin says: 'The Janahiya were followers of 'Abdallah b. Mu'awiya; they are also known as the Tayyariya. This minor Shi'i sect believed in reincarnation, metempsychosis, and an allegorical exposition of the *Qur'an*.'

- 6 They do not follow behind the one who has locks of hair
Their characteristic is to wear their hair like the *Wahhābiyya*.
- 7 They trade Paradise for cash
Publicly, in our land, they are a sect of dogs.
- 8 They dally with women who come for licence
Like with their own mothers, and this is fornication
- 9 They follow their own opinions, not our books
And they lay claim to the light from the faction of Satan
- 10 And they practice denial at their *dhikr*
In word and action it requires blasphemy
- 11 Like their game of saying “Is it God?”
– doubting him. The northern faction glorify them.
- 12 They make a clamour, a wailing and groaning
And howling like mournful dogs
- 13 And they frequently use the oath “By the divorce”
And reject the ceremony of God
- 15 They have gone astray and make the people go astray on earth
By land and sea anyone from [among] the Somalis
- 16 Is not the owner of reason and understanding deceived
By them? Then flee from them as from calamities
(al-Barāwī 1955: 69).

Uways’ poem spends a great deal of time denouncing and defaming the followers of Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh Ḥasan. The Ṣāliḥiyya are accused, among other things, of being followers of Satan (line 2), having routine unlawful relations with women – even their mothers (line 8) – and committing the sin of blasphemy (line 10). Even worse, however, the Ṣāliḥiyya reject the notion of prophetic and saintly mediation. The disciples of Sayyidka, Uways declares, deny ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (and by association all saints) ability to access God (line 5). Uways’ words warn the faithful that rather than the Prophet and God, the Ṣāliḥiyya derive their ‘light’ from the devil (line 9). The faithful must be wary of their deceptions and flee from them ‘as from disaster,’ remembering all the time that ‘Blessed are Muḥammad and his family’ and that they should be turned to ‘in every evil calamity’ (line 1).

3. *Closing remarks*

By the time of the *Majmū‘a*’s compilation, 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. As the list of *khalīfas* amply demonstrates, it was an order that easily cut across most major social, cultural and economic boundaries. As the hagiographer Ibn ‘Umar noted, the Qādiriyya attracted followers from among town and country, men and women, free and slave. But the question remains of how the order’s tenets were preached to such a vast and disparate following. The *Majmū‘a* suggests at least a partial answer.

The role of the *Majmū'a* was not just as a collection of poetry. Composed in clear, simple language using formats with which all followers were familiar (i.e. poetic verse and hagiography), it provides a clear statement of Qādiriyya ideology aimed at a wide popular audience. It is an endorsement of Prophetic mediation as a necessary step towards communion with God and a clear condemnation of Ṣālihiyya doctrine. More importantly, the *Majmū'a* illustrates the extent to which Somali scholars were in touch with the intellectual currents of the wider Muslim world. 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-Barāwī also called on the writings of a contemporary, Ismā'il al-Nabhānī, and by extension earlier scholars including 'Abd al-Wahhāb Sha'rānī, 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dabbāgh and ultimately Ibn al-'Arabī and Sahl al-Tustarī, for support. What the *Majmū'a* reveals is not only the existence of an East African '*ulamā*' vehemently opposed to the spread of pro-Wahhābī reformism but one able to muster classical teachings and Muslim thought in order to support their beliefs. Furthermore, these are teachings they deemed imperative to transmit to their followers in order to combat what they view as Ṣālihiyya-led heresy.

The *Majmū'a*, however, also demonstrates the extent of their connection to the global Muslim community. While clearly al-Barāwī was concerned mainly with the local, his extensive use of Nabhānī suggests a much broader cognizance of the issues and debates engulfing the wider Muslim world. The struggle against the Sayyid and his followers, al-Barāwī seems quite aware, was only part of a much wider conflict being fought on many fronts throughout the Muslim world from many theological positions. This was a threat being faced not only by East Africans but by *all* members of the *umma* and which could only be met through intellectual and spiritual unity.

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