

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS INSTITUTE
DEPARTMENT OF CIVILIZATIONS STUDIES**

MASTER THESIS

**MUḤAMMAD B. YŪSUF AL-SANŪSĪ'S THEOLOGICAL LEGACY:
TRACING THE DISSEMINATION OF CREEDAL KNOWLEDGE
THROUGH COMMENTARIES AND GLOSSES ON AL-SANŪSĪ'S
WORK IN THE MEDIEVAL & PRE-MODERN MAGHRIB
(15-17th CE)**

ZAKARIA EL HOUBBA

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. DR. BRUCE B. LAWRENCE**

ISTANBUL, 2022

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by
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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Civilization
Studies

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ISTANBUL, 2022

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Civilization Studies

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

MUHAMMED B. YÛSUF EL-SENÛSÎ'NİN TEOLOJİK MİRASI: ORTAÇAĞ VE MODERN ÖNCESİ MAĞRİB'DE (15-17. YÜZYILLAR) İNANÇLA İLGİLİ BİLGİNİN YAYILMASININ EL-SENÛSÎ'NİN ESERİNE YAZILMIŞ ŞERH VE HAŞİYELER ÜZERİNDEN İZLENMESİ

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Bu çalışma, Mağrib'de (9/15 - 11/17. yüzyıllar) Muhammed b. Yûsuf el-Senûsî'nin doğrudan öğrencisi Ebû Hasan el-Yûsî (Fes, 1040/1630- 1102/1691) ile genel kabule göre sona eren kelâm mirasını oluşturan alimlerin ve eserlerin izini sürmeyi amaçlıyor. El-Senûsî'nin kelâm eserlerinin yayılmasının incelenmesi, 15-17. yüzyıl Mağrib'inde teolojik tartışmalara da konu olan halkın inanca dair konularda farkındalığın anlaşılmasını hedefliyor. Kelâmi kavramların felsefi bir incelemesinden ziyade, Senûsî'nin kelâmî mirasına esasen akide, kelâm ve fikhî metinlerde görülen yeni bir dini eğitim biçiminin ifadesi, gelişimi ve yaygınlaşması olarak bakılıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ağ analizi, betimleyici, Erken Modern Çağ, kelâm, taklit, yatay öğrenme

ABSTRACT

MUḤAMMAD B. YŪSUF AL-SANŪSĪ'S THEOLOGICAL LEGACY: TRACING THE
DISSEMINATION OF CREEDAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH COMMENTARIES AND
GLOSSES ON AL-SANŪSĪ'S WORK IN THE MEDIEVAL & PRE-MODERN MAGHRIB
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This study aims to trace the scholars and works in the Maghrib (from the ninth/fifteenth to the eleventh/seventeenth century) that comprise the theological legacy of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (Tlemcen 839/1436 - 895/1490) and, by convention, ends with the direct students of Abū Ḥasan al-Yūsī (Fes, 1040/1630- 1102/1691). The study of the dissemination of al-Sanūsī's theological works is a quest for the development and understanding of creedal literacy among non-elites which seems to mark the theological debates in the 15-17th Century Maghrib. Rather than a philosophical study of theological concepts, we attempt to look at al-Sanūsī's theological legacy within the Maghrib as the expression, development and consolidation of a new mode of religious instruction, one which is manifested primarily in Islamic creedal, theological and legal literary works.

Keywords: Horizontal learning, Islamic theology, taqlid, pre-modern societies,
descriptive network analysis

DEDICATION

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*All praise is to Allah alone, the Lord of the Worlds
And may He send His benedictions upon
our master Muḥammad, his Kin
and his Companions
and grant them
peace*



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The best of trades are those that indebt you to people whose company is a valuable life-lesson in itself. My debts are too numerous to sum up here hence I will suffice with a few but intending the whole. I would like to express my gratitude to the my fellow-students, teachers and staff-members of the Alliance of Civilizations Institute for establishing a space where thought, *ihsān* and *imān* are nourished with care. In particular I would like to thank Recep Senturk for convincing me to join his newly established institute, and Esra P. M. for her unwavering administrative support and assistance. As well as my companions Ayaz Asadov and Abdurahman Mihirig for they are truly lions of reliance and trustworthiness. Lastly, my supervisor Bruce Lawrence for showing me—through practice— the characteristics of an excellent mentor, a diligent *homo academicus* with an infinite curiosity. Not a letter would have made sense without them and not a letter would have been written if not by the illuminated companionship of my dear wife and our children, for I am but the product of their generosity that fills my days. Even though I benefitted immensely from all my teachers who shaped this thesis all mistakes and faults are my own.

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1. CHAPTER ONE: METHODS AND CONCEPTS PERTAINING TO THE STUDY OF THE MAGHRIB

So much has been written in recent years about these limitations on “Scientific” objectivity as to obscure the plain, outstanding principle that the historian’s basic task is one of presenting a corpus of ascertained fact. This is the hardest thing to get across to students today, especially to those who have been to the so-called progressive schools. Somewhere along the assembly-line of their education, these students have had inserted in them a bolt called “points of view,” secured with a nut called “trends,” and they imagine that the historian’s problem is simply to compare points of view and describe trends. It is not. The fundamental question is, “What actually happened, and why?”

Samuel Eliot Morison, Faith of a Historian¹

1.1. Introduction

This study aims to trace the theologians and works in the Maghrib (from the ninth/fifteenth to the eleventh/seventeenth century) that make out the theological legacy of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (Tlemcen 839/1436 - 895/1490) and, by convention, ends with the direct students of Abū Ḥasan al-Yūsī (Fes 1040/1630- 1102/1691). The theological trend that is expressed by these scholars forms into a prominent Sunni Islamic theological discourse that not only shapes the intellectual climate of 18-20th century Egypt, with as epicentre the Azhar madrasa system, but finds itself also taking up a prominent role in the theological, spiritual and pedagogical discourse in West-Africa, the Malay-Archipelago and

¹ Morison, Samuel Eliot. “Faith of a Historian.” *The American Historical Review* 56, no. 2 (1951): 261–75.

to a certain extent the 16th and 17th century outskirts of the Ottoman Empire. Through tracing al-Sanūsī's theological legacy in the Maghrib we aim to illustrate a shift in the purpose of authoring creedal texts gives a visualisation of the development and consolidation of a new mode of religious instruction in the region.

The historical timeframe we intend to investigate provides a couple of interesting cross-sections and areas of transition on different intellectual, social and cultural levels: Firstly, from the general perspective of global history the 15th century is considered as the end of the late Middle Ages of the post-classical era that shifts into the early modern period. While from the perspective of the study of Islamic intellectual history, the 15-17th century allows us to add additional weight to the plethora of arguments *against* a specific premise of the general decline theory, which Khaled El-Rouayheb aptly describes as “the intellectual “sclerosis” that has been thought to characterize the Arab-Islamic world between the 15th and 18th century.”² Thirdly, from the perspective of the history of philosophy and theology these centuries are the middle – sometimes subjectively referred to as a peak – of what is considered the post-formative era (11-19th century) of the so called doctrinal development within Islamic history.³ Much of the theological and intellectual debates that will occur in these few centuries will ultimately serve as the fertile soil for many of the 20th and 21st century debates revolving around the politics of confessional identity, when claims on who falls within and who falls out of the fold of confessional Islam make up the crux of the popular theological literature. Contemporary ideological discussions on concepts such as ‘ahl al-Sunna’, ‘orthodoxy’ —and thereby implicit or explicit

² El-Rouayheb, Khaled. “Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006): 267.

³ Wisnovsky, Robert. “The Nature And Scope Of Arabic Philosophical Commentary In Post Classical (ca. 1100-1900 Ad) Islamic Intellectual History: some Preliminary Observations.” *Bulletin - Institute Of Classical Studies* 47, No.83:2 (2004): 149-91

accusations of heterodoxy— are often based upon shallow expressions and readings of these medieval theological debates.

The study of the dissemination of al-Sanūsī's theological works is a quest for the development and understanding of creedal literacy among the non-elites which seems to mark the theological debates in 15-17th Century Maghrib. Rather than a philosophical study of theological concepts we attempt to look at al-Sanūsī's theological legacy within the Maghrib as the expression, development and consolidation of an intellectual phenomenon which is manifested primarily in Islamic creedal, theological and legal literary works. To the extent that one could raise the question if these works can be considered as the emergence of a new or distinct genre in Islamic theological literature based upon a specific mode of religious instruction that focuses on horizontal learning. By a descriptive study of the succession of scholarly texts that are based upon al-Sanūsī's theological works, we aim to display the immense amount of innovative scholarship produced as a response to al-Sanūsī's theological works . The scope of the study would suggest a network analysis being the appropriate tool for this endeavour. However, we will illustrate that the conceptual tools from memory studies – particularly the concept of perceiving legacy as community – serve the purpose of this study better. As we will illustrate later on Sanūsī's creedal work is a layered project of thirteen texts aimed to cater to all layers of a confessional society. This efflorescing intention not only pervades the texts itself as well as al-Sanūsī's pedagogical vision, but ignites a historical trend of commentaries and glosses on his work, as well as abridgements and creative literary works outside the strict confines of theology. All based on the communal realization that a different mode of religious instruction is necessary for the preservation of authentic faith. Despite being a contemporary of the towering prolific Jalāl al-Dīn al- Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) it is al-Sanūsī whose

theological works stand the test of time and ignite a renewed approach to creedal literacy by investigating and opening up the debate on the social foundations of creedal literacy rather than just the intellectual foundations (the position of classic authors such as Abu Ishḥāq al-Isfā'raynī, d. 418/1027; al-Ash'arī, 324/936) or the epistemological (Juwaynī d. 478/1085) or psychological foundations (al-Ghazālī d. 505/1111). Al-Sanūsī develops these foundations under the banner of his commitment to the 'avoidance of taqlīd' as being the axis upon which his own works as well as his subsequent theological legacy progresses. One of the conclusions I will argue for in this study is that this has much to do with the fact that the consolidation of the understanding of Sunni normativity in the modern period is indebted to the consolidation of Ash'arism and Malikism in the Maghrib where a focus on creedal literacy and the establishment of a profound holistic world-view for the theologian and educator to transmit— via education or companionship— to the nominal Muslim. It is in al-Sanūsī's historical scholarly network of the 14-16th century, and in his region, that Ash'arism as a methodology, originally embedded in the science of kalam, experiences a transition from *'ilm al kalām* to *fiqh al-kalām*.⁴ This transition seems to be primarily accelerated, or perhaps even caused, by the theological legacy of al-Sanūsī. And so it is al-Sanūsī's theological legacy that ought to be studied and analyzed in order to sustain the aforementioned conclusion.

On the one hand, the influence of al-Sanūsī's theological legacy on the formation of an *ahl al-Sunna* identity and the archetype of the Sunni scholar⁵ in the subsequent centuries and particularly in 18th-19th century Egypt cannot be underestimated. Yet at the same time, on the other hand, to understand its

⁴ See: Khālīd Zahri, *Min 'ilm al-Kalām ilā Fiqh al-Kalām: Muqārabā li-Ibrāz Ma'ālim al-Tajdid al-Kalāmī 'ind fuqahā' wa-ṣūfiyat al-Maghrib*.

⁵ Spevack Harun, *The Archetypal Sunnī Scholar : Law, Theology, and Mysticism in the Synthesis of al-Bājūrī*, 6–31.

effect this communal Sunni identity—i.e., ‘orthodoxy’— we must first inquire into the nature of orthodoxy as a concept and its validity for the study of Islamic theological thought. Lastly, we need to consider al-Sanūsī as very much a product of his time and region. As a native of the legendary, often mystified town of saints and scholars Tilimsān (Tlemcen), we find his legacy spreading rapidly east and westwards over the whole Maghrib region as well as West-Africa. Through al-Sanūsī’s theological legacy we find an opportunity to illustrate the richness and vividness of the intellectual landscape in the Maghrib; a region that is often neglected due to being reduced to its colonial past. In what follows we wish to commence by conceptually clearing the grounds, i.e., by a proper understanding of pivotal concepts within our study. Prior to discussing al-Sanūsī’s theological legacy we will commence with a short analysis of the concept of the Maghrib, which allows us to discuss the state of Maghrib historiography and the Maghrib as a (civilizational) unit of analysis. Secondly, in order to set the ground for the taqlīd debates that dominate al-Sanūsī’s theological legacy we will briefly discuss the concept of orthodoxy and argue for normative authority as a more viable conceptual substitute which will set the grounds for a discussion on network analysis and perceiving legacy as community.

1.2. Scholarship on the maghrib and the state of maghrib historiography

Any book about medieval North Africa, and this one is no exception, confronts at least two sets of related problems from the outset. First, the prevailing modes of scholarly interpretation incorporate multiple layers of conceptual difficulties. Second, so do the historical sources. In both cases the issues are often connected but not always in the same way, with the same effect, or for the same reasons. All historians who confront the relationship between their own notions and those of the sources they seek to elucidate share these two problems. However, when it comes to the study of medieval North Africa, modern history has engendered such entanglements that it has become very difficult to explain all the intricacies and complexities involved.

Ramzi Rouighi⁶

A quick survey of the titles produced by academic publishers such as Cambridge University Press, Harvard University Press, E.J. Brill or Walter De Gruyter illustrates the plethora of literature on a wide range of topics and historical events and periods for the Middle-East, Far-east Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Europe. The Maghrib as such seems to be a curiosity reduced to its colonial past. Most of the literature and publications focus on the early-Modern Maghrib whereby 'early-modern' denotes the advent of colonialization rather than an intrinsic value of the societies within the Maghrib itself. The ancient and medieval history of the region seems to likewise barely receive any focused attention. Of course, this is not an exhaustive survey nor a formal argument but serves as an anecdotal illustration of a deeper issue at hand within the scholarship on the Maghrib as succinctly pointed out by Laroui⁷ ('Arwī) and Rouighi⁸. The issue at stake here is the pervasive view and understanding of the Maghrib as of peripheral importance not only on the world-stage of civilizations but even within Islamic history, where it ranks beneath the rich literature of other major areas of Islamdom. Granted, recent scholarship

⁶ Rouighi, *The Making of a Mediterranean Emirate*, 12.

⁷ 'Arwī, *L'histoire Du Maghreb: Un Essai de Synthèse*.

⁸ Rouighi, 'The Mediterranean between Barbaria and the Medieval Maghrib: Questions for a Return to History', 308.

has aimed to break free from this unjustified silence. Yet there still remains much to be studied and re-evaluated. In order to analyse al-Sanūsī's legacy and role within the (intellectual) history of the Maghrib, we have to contextualize al-Sanūsī within his particular time period. For this we require three historiographical questions to be explored: 1) what is the unit of analysis for the Maghrib exactly, and 2) is the concept of 'the Maghrib' truly the most effective unit of analysis and concept for what we aim to study? Lastly, how do we deal with the chronological division of our civilisational unit of analysis? By exploring these three questions, we aim to set the grounds to understand al-Sanūsī's legacy within the Maghrib in order to illustrate and explain how the mobility existing within and through his legacy is both textual and scholarly. Both manuscripts and the scholars who produce and use them speak for the dynamics and characteristics of the region and its influence on the surrounding civilizations and intellectual traditions.

1.2.1. Historiographical unit of analysis

Scholarship on the concept and historiography of the Maghrib can be divided into several categories based upon the preponderance of a certain characteristic of the field over other characteristics. The Maghrib is either considered through its 1) geographical characteristics, or 2) through a comparative analysis of the modern national units that make up this geographical area, or 3) contextualised as the extension of the i.) Middle East, ii.) the Arab-world or iii.) the African continent in one way or another. If not east- or southwards then north-westwards by iv.) considering the Maghrib an appendix to the overseas Mediterranean societies. Finally, when all geographical directions are depleted, the Maghrib

can be considered as 4) a historical and cultural construct that therefore must be studied and considered from an exclusively historical and social vantagepoint.

1.2.2. The geographical argument

The geographical argument maintains that the distinctiveness of the region is due to the geography of it being an unique island surrounded by seas of water and a 'sea' of sand. With the Atlantic Ocean in the West of the region, the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara extending as a full border from the Atlantic Ocean, these served not as borders but rather as highways into neighbouring civilizations. As such, early geographers, like Yāqūt Ibn 'Abd-Allāh al-Ḥamawī (d.626/ 1229) would often refer to the region as *Jazīrat al-Maghrib*.⁹ The geographical argument defines the region based on the unique mobility within the territory and towards other regions, caused by the geographical constitution of either the mountains, the surrounding bodies of seas the deserts, or its 'islandness'.¹⁰ In that sense they would also refer to it as *Atlas land(s)* due to the Atlas Mountains configuring the inhabitable limits of the whole region and thereby adding the accentuation that the original inhabitants of the region lived in pockets in and around the feet of these mountains while the foreigners, predominantly Arabs, dwell in cities further away from the mountains and more often on nodes of the aforementioned natural highways. This imagery and connection between the mountains and the nature of the natural inhabitant of such surface and climate is pervasive during the late Roman Empire period as can be

⁹ For an overview of the different geographical opinions on the region see Hunwick, John O. "a Region of the Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and Their Legacy." *Sudanic Africa* 16 (2005): 103-36.

¹⁰ Broadly refers to the social, political and geographical qualities of an 'island' that are distinct from continents. See: Casey, Edward S. "Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 4 (2001): 683-93.

found in the writings of Tacitus and Sallust; it also gets picked up by the early Italian colonial literature.¹¹

Though the devastating effects of that imagery are fully championed by the Colonial French through their usage and ideological reading of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), it is the latter who uses a similar, yet not as far-reaching argument when describing the Maghrib and its inhabitants. Hence we will shortly discuss the necessary distinction between the historical ibn Khaldūn and the colonial ibn Khaldūn.

The fundamental problem with the geographical argument is its reliance on a trope within the historiography of the Maghrib. The geographical determinants of the region are in the relevant literature swiftly intertwined with what Brown calls ‘partisan controversies’¹² – which he traces back to the writings of ancient Roman historians such as Tacitus (fl. 56 -117) and Sallustius Crispus (BC 87-35) – and peaks particularly in the French, colonial propaganda machinery and their reading of Ibn Khaldūn’s *magnus opus* on the history of the Maghrib. It appears to be that the foundational text for the colonial ideological apparatus to understand the region is the French —rather creative— 1852 translation of Ibn Khaldūn’s *Kitāb al-‘ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada’ wa-al-khabar fī ayām al-‘Arab wa-al-‘Ajam* by the Irish-turned-French orientalist William McGuckin de Slane (d. 1878). It is on the basis of this translation that Slane would later on translate Ibn Khaldūn’s work as *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l’Afrique septentrionale* (1852–1856)¹³, which would, within the shortest timespan, serve as the standard reference for all things related to the medieval Maghrib as pointed out by Rouighi.¹⁴ The qualifier ‘medieval’ here serves solely to describe the period of the Maghrib that is “pre-civilization” i.e.,

¹¹ Pietro Romanelli in his *Storia della Provincia Romane D’ell’Africa* recycles imageries of the region, also of relevance is Davis, Diana. *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome*. Ohio University Press, 2007. “Introduction.” Where he examines the way French colonialists used Roman history to support their colonial claims.

¹² L. C. Brown, “Reconnoitering the Terrain Maghrib Historiography: The Unit of Analysis Problem” in *The Maghrib in Question : Essays in History and Historiography*. Texas University Press: 1997.

¹³ Ibn Khaldūn and Slane, *Histoire des berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l’Afrique septentrionale*. 32

¹⁴ Rouighi, ‘A Mediterranean of Relations for the Medieval Maghrib’. 7.

that which exists before French rule.¹⁵ Hence assessing the status of the Medieval Maghrib and subsequently the early Modern Maghrib requires an understanding of the *Khaldūnisation* of knowledge pertaining to the region. This Khaldūnisation centres mostly around the contested and mythologized invasion of Banū Hilāl into the North-African region, and Ibn Khaldūn's premise of attributing the *bedounization* of the local cultures and settlements of the Maghrib to the Hilālian invasion in the 11th century. Burke aptly illustrates how studies on Maghribī history and historiography are perpetrating two forms of revisionism based on their interpretation of this invasion. They either hold on to the French-Khaldūnian imperial revision, i.e., a colonial Ibn Khaldūn, or they are shaped by the local revisionist struggles of the national entities that inherited the colonial wreckage. Both approaches, despite being on two sides of the spectrum, rely on narratives centred around their conceptualization and reading (into) the events surrounding the allegedly historically crucial events of the entry of the Banu Hilāl into the Maghrib, also known as the Hilālian invasion controversy.¹⁶

Those who are pro-Hilālian,¹⁷ such as the colonial readers of Ibn Khaldūn, interpret this event as the symbol of the absolute opposition between the native inhabitants of the region and the invading Arabs. The Hilālian invasion marks for them the civilizational battle for the region's future development into cities and the subsequent flourishing of economy and culture instead of remaining a society of primitive towns and villages. The entry of the Banū Hilāl is, according to them, to be considered a dramatical

¹⁵ Rouighi makes a compelling argument illustrating the evidence for its popularity and effect on scholarship and understanding the region see Rouighi, 'The Mediterranean between Barbaria and the Medieval Maghrib: Questions for a Return to History', 18.

¹⁶ Note that the Banu Hilal is a standard reference to a confederation of tribes which is mostly the Banu Hilāl tribe but also includes the Banu Sulaym, amongst other fractional tribes that meandered from Yemen through the Arabian Peninsula to settle in north and west Africa, see Idris, AL-SANŪSĪ. R. (1971). "Hilāl". In Lewis, B.; Ménage, V. L.; Pellat, Ch. & Schacht, J. (eds.). The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition, Volume III: Iram. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 385–387.

¹⁷ The pro-Hilālian stance is explicitly stated and justified in R. Idris, 'De la realite de la catastrophe hilalienne, Annales (1968), pp. 390-96 and 'L'Invasion hilalienne et ses consequences', Cahiers de Civilization Medievale (Juillet-Septembre 1968). See also, Roger Le Toumeau, 'Ibn Khaldūn laudateur et contemptateur des Arabes, R.O.M.M. No. 2 (1966), 155-168.

catalyst for the region that exposed the absolute tension between the (semi-) nomadic and the sedentary lifestyle. From this approach only one of these lifestyles leads historically to the development of a civilization while the other does not. A tension which from then on will define the ongoing history of the entire region. As previously mentioned, this narrative is most famously described by the historical Ibn Khaldūn. Yet it is crucial to note that on the historical Ibn Khaldūn's perception of these events the colonial French scholarship adds an extra layer, i.e., a form of utilitarian racialization.

The pro-Hilālian scholarship that is of particular interest regarding our question on the medieval and pre-modern maghrib derives from the French reading of Ibn Khaldūn and the added layer of racialization, used as a justification of certain colonial policies. As earlier mentioned, it is Slane's ideological translation and subsequent work on Ibn Khaldūn's *Kitāb al-'ibar* that opens up the discourse of race, regarding the native inhabitants of the Medieval Maghrib, who are referred to as Berbers.¹⁸ This categorisation carries a racial connotation that is not self-evident in Ibn Khaldūn's work itself. Roughi, for example, argues that Ibn Khaldūn understands the term 'barbar', similarly to early geographers of the region, to simply refer to the inhabitants of the Mediterranean coast-line on the African continent, rather than being a denotation for the inhabitants of the whole region.¹⁹ The colonial French extension of the term to denote all inhabitants of the Maghrib as Berbers is the first component of the layer of racialization brought into existence through the colonial reading of Ibn Khaldūn. A second component can be exemplified by Georges Marçais's (d. 1962) *Les Arabes en Berbérie du XIe au XIVe siècle* (1913), or

¹⁸ For a conceptual analysis of the connection between berberness and barbarism see for example Collingwood's *New Leviathan* where he pervades the same anti-Hilālian idea by a threefold categorization of barbarism: 1) Arab barbarism in North Africa; 2) Turk barbarism; and finally German barbarism during the second World War.

¹⁹ Rouighi, 'A Mediterranean of Relations for the Medieval Maghrib', 7.

the French geographer Jean Despois' (1972) early works. Both are inspired by the orientalist Slane and his work on the Maghrib. Take for example the following quote from the work of Georges Marçais:

Taken in its entirety, this history [of the Berbérie] lacks almost any unity. We will not discover here anything comparable to the unconscious and laborious effort, sometimes so hesitant about its goal and so often upset in its march, which seems to lead Europeans towards the realization of a social ideal or a greater state. The *Berbérie* does not seem capable of progressing by its own means; it must latch itself onto someone else... In the grand duel between barbarism and civilization, how many times the latter was defeated ... [This] Reservoir of resources without cohesion, [the Berbérie] needs to receive these directing influences from outside, from Phoenicia or Rome, or from the Islamic Orient or Spain [i.e. al- Andalus]²⁰

Rouighi aptly points out that “Marçais’s “duel” as described in the citation betrays Ibn Khaldūn’s more complex attitude towards the Bedouin civilization. Yet to be fair, Marçais’ idea that a Bedouin Maghrib is civilized from the outside is not completely alien to Ibn Khaldūn. On several occasions Ibn Khaldūn remarks that when compared with 11-12th century urbanized al-Andalus, the Maghrib can indeed considered to be lacking.²¹ Though, the conclusion of such relative comparison cannot be extrapolated to an absolute statement. Claiming that Ibn Khaldūn found the Maghrib as a region in itself lacking in

²⁰ Translation by Rouighi from the introduction of Georges Marçais', *Les Arabes en Berbérie du XIe au XIVe siècle* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1913), 1–2., in Rouighi, *A Mediterranean of relations for the medieval maghrib: Historiography in question*, 8

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9

terms of civilization remains as much as the claim unsubstantiated as the claim that the religion did not have an authentic sense of civilization.

Slane's translation, Marcais' essays, as well as Jean Despois' geographical and historical notebooks share the common idea of colonial *Khaldūnian* thought that these medieval natives of this Mediterranean region—despite being part of the Mediterranean geographically—already witnessed foreign contamination from neighbouring civilizations prior to the Hilālian invasion. For them the Mediterranean is already a 'foreign element'. Hence the dwellers of the land, i.e., the Berbers, despite inhabiting the Mediterranean coast and being part and parcel of Phoenician, Roman and Greek history are not to be considered Mediterranean *per se*. For them the medieval Mediterranean relates to the Mediterranean only through its original whiteness which stems from the European civilizations that once were settled there. Whatever little remained of these civilizations and their cultures throughout the centuries was obliterated firstly by the invasion of the *Banu Hilāl* and secondly by the following 'violent' waves of Islamization and Arabization that these tribes brought to the north-African coastline. One can already read in this approach the forms of justification that will be presented as arguments for colonizing these lands, as well as for why certain forms of disciplining the inhabitants of the land into a more civilized manner of living (imperial) became commonplace. Both French and Italian colonization of parts of the north African coast line were undertaken in the name of the civilizing mission. The French translations of Ibn Khaldūn shaped, denoted by Hannoum as the colonial imaginary²² whereby

it absorbs and transforms local knowledge and understanding into colonial knowledge, i.e. the translation does not aim to represent the historical ibn Khaldūn but rather the colonial ibn Khaldūn.²³ Another example can be found through a look at the early Andalusian sources that refer to the (medieval) Maghrib as the *bilād al barbaria*, intending thereby a neutral reference of what was on the other side of the Gibraltar without the racial component to it. This can be found in the geographical observations of Abū ‘Ubayd al-Bakrī²⁴ (d. 1029), the travel stories of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī²⁵ (d. 1229) and to a certain extent one could argue that even as late as Ibn Khaldūn himself, geographers and historians did not necessarily denote with the term Maghrib only that specific region of *bilād al-barbaria* which resonates with the ancient Greeks usage of *Barbara*.²⁶ For these early natural scientists and historians, the denomination of the Maghrib is not limited to the north African Mediterranean coastline but also to its northern fringe.

To reiterate, these early modern French works are a striking example of the second racial component that gets introduced into Ibn Khaldūn’s thought. There is the colonial assumption of the ancient or medieval Mediterranean societies on the north-African coastline as somehow being part and thereby parcel of Mediterranean western civilizations, whether Greek, Phoenician or Roman. The claim is then that this primitive society by their essence showed no signs of civilization or the desire to civilize. Therefore the impulse for civilizing the region becomes a civilizational urgency from an exterior force. This also would illustrate why using a term such as the Islamic Mediterranean or the Islamicate

²³ On the notion of translation as transformation within historiography see Hannoum, Abdelmajid. "Translation and the Colonial Imaginary: Ibn Khaldūn Orientalist." *History and Theory* 42, no. 1 (2003): 61-81.

²⁴ Bakrī, *Kitāb Al-Masālik Wa-al-Mamālik*. 82-93

²⁵ Yāqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Kitāb Mu’jam Al-Buldān*.

²⁶ such as in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea for the same region along the North African coastline with several city-states

Mediterranean for this region would be out of the question, since it would reflect contemporary and Euro-centric understandings of the Mediterranean as well as its relation to the Maghrib as a region.

1.2.3. National sentiments and Maghrib historiography

Earlier we looked at the proponents of the pro-Hilālian camp whom we characterized as the first of two revisionist approaches with regards to the Maghrib as a region. The second revisionist approach comes forth from the anti-Hilālian camp, but is not limited to it. While the other party, those who are anti-Hilālian²⁷ will rightly claim that the Hilālian invasion and its radical importance with regards to the development of the region is distorted by the ideological ink of French historians. This camp consists predominantly of decolonial scholars, local nationalists and activists who desire to escape from beneath the yolk of the oppressive and racial categorization of Arab and Berber that dominated the oppressive regimes and policies of French and Italian rule in the region from 1830 till the Evian Accords in 1962 and its aftermath at the beginning of the sixties. Even from within the French *Académie*, a generation of elite historians started to explicitly debunk the idea that the opposition between nomadic and sedentary lifestyle served as the dramatic catalyst for the region. Claude Cahen²⁸ as well as Jaques Berque, for example, illustrate in their work that the historical evidence – supported by Goitein's ground-breaking research on the Cairo Geniza manuscripts – points more towards an interdependency and a gradual shift from one form of societal behaviour towards the other.²⁹ The Hilālian invasion as *the*

²⁷ Among the critics, see Jean Poncet, 'Le mythe de la catastrophe hilalienne', *Annales XXII* (1967), pp. 1099-1120; Yves Lacoste, *Ibn Khaldūn ou la naissance de l'histoire* (Paris, 1966), and Muḥammad Sahlī, *Pour Decoloniser l'histoire* (Paris, 1966)

²⁸ Cahen, 'Quelques Mots Sur Les Hilaliens Et Le Nomadisme', 130–33.

²⁹ Goitein, 'XVI. Medieval Tunisia The Hub Of The Mediterranean', 308–28.

dramatic catalyst for the Maghrib seems to have been based upon ideological assumptions rather than historical facts.

Despite the many benefits of the decolonial movement a few critical observations have to be made. Perhaps the most pertinent issue with this, ultimately revision approach lies in the fact that the history of the Maghrib is here reduced to the revisionist struggle of each of its national units in the pursuit not of truth but the justification of (national) identity. This means that the 'contemporary' nationalist struggle influences and shapes the perception of the nation's past and their perception of historical facts. The past is here *not a history* of the region but *'their history'* that is required to be reconstructed in order to legitimize, coalesce, and authorize the particular nation-state in itself. The society, culture and religious habits, basically the region's lived experience, ought to be reconstructed and retraced in the nation's history. Here the act of history as an academic activity becomes enmeshed with the quest for the symbols of that nation. History is politicized for the sake of retrieving symbols in name of the (re-) construction of a nation-state that supposedly was present or discernible throughout the centuries. The issue with the national units becoming politicized history is, of course, part of a larger problem with the periodization of the region. Classically the chronological division of the Maghrib follows either the conceptualization of a Roman then Arab then (partly) Ottoman then (colonial) French/Italian then (independent nation-state) independency pattern. This is the most general division but comes to be inordinately problematic since its ultimately based on the principle of dynasties and their succession as the standard reference; or to put it more bluntly it is based upon a racial criterium. As such, it not only accentuates a racial criterium as the most distinctive element of the region but it also fossilizes the dynamics of the historical events of the region itself by elevating the invasion, consolidation and defeat

of a foreign entity that then becomes the region's ruling dynasty as the red thread of the region's history. The second kind of periodization that can be utilized is the classical tripartite ancient-medieval-modern with the occasional introduction of a pre-modern period. The issue with this second form of periodization is its imprecise and generalizing character as well as the transfer of the observer's, —i.e., the cultured historian who in this case is often the Eurocentric scholar— cultural and intellectual framework. Both forms of periodization share in their lack of historical precision and the staggering absence of a way to deal with the overlap, i.e., the continuity, between the proposed units of their division. There is, for example, a significant and flourishing overlap between the Roman and Arab civilization in the early Islamic period. The transition from colonial to nation-state, i.e., the struggle for independence, becomes itself a significant period that falls between the static periodic division of pre-colonized/colonized/independent. This illustrates the strength of the geographical element that ought to be considered for the historiography of the Maghrib.

1.2.4. Claims of ethnogenesis

The scholars that consider the Maghrib – as a unit – solely as an extension of the Arab world often will propose considering it to be merely an extension of that world due to a proclaimed 'arabness' or 'islamicness' of the dominant culture in the region. The result, of course, is to marginalize the diverse pre-existing traits and local cultures within the north African region. These claims to a certain ethnogenesis could also mark a plea to go beyond the *Maghrib-Mashriq* bifurcation³⁰ of the Islamicate world. However, this would be again too broad to account for the diversity of customs, languages and

³⁰ G. Calasso sketches the conceptual genesis and historical development of both the Maghrib and Mashriq and their relation up to the 13th century in Maghrib in the Mashriq see: Fierro, *Maghrib in the Mashriq: Knowledge, Travel and Identity*, 35–78.

the different historical collective memory that exists in the region. The desire to go beyond the bifurcation of the Maghrib-Mashriq, however, contains a strong argument, since it's a bifurcation constructed on several tropes developed by a web of imperial policies of British and French rule in their battle against the Ottoman Empire. However, the strongest argument *against* the annulation of this bifurcation would —almost ironically— also be the dominance of the Ottoman empire over the eastern (*Shām*) region and urban Egypt to a certain extent in terms of cultural and political cross-pollination. The historical legacy of the most western part of the Maghrib, which coincides with contemporary Morocco, the Sahara and Mauritania, is that it has never been part of the Ottoman Empire; the cultural and social influence of the *Ottoman style* and administration has been minimal. The absence of a full dominance of the Ottoman empire over the complete geographic territory of the Maghrib becomes clear when taking a cursory view of the dynasties that dominated the region and are distinct from the dynasties in the *Mashriq*. The Andalusian Umayyads follow a radically different track from their eastern predecessors. Similarly, the *Zirid* split from the Fatimids colours their history rather differently.³¹ On the Islamicate level perhaps one of the most eye-catching differences between the Mashriq and the Maghrib in their historical development is the role of Christianity. As a practiced religion, Christianity in all its local variations witnessed a steep decline and ultimately end of its native presence in the Maghrib whereas the influential role of Christianity in the Mashriq cannot be overlooked.³²

³¹ Regarding the proclaimed role that the Fatimids played in the disruptive arrival of the Banu Hilal in the Maghrib, see King, Matt. "Reframing the Fall of the Zirid Dynasty, 1112–35 CE." *Mediterranean Studies* 26, no. 1 (2018): 1-25.

³² See the work of Nsiri, Mohamed A. (2019), "Between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo: Some Intellectual Preoccupations of Late Antiquity", in: John Tolan, ed., *Geneses. A Comparative Study of the Historiographies of the Rise of Christianity, Rabbinic Judaism, and Islam*, London–New York: Routledge, 98-113.

1.2.5. In Memoriam Defunctorum: the Maghrib as a historical and cultural construct

The fifth possibility for the historiographical unit of analysis maintains that the Maghrib as a concept is a historical and cultural construct that therefore must be studied and considered from an exclusive historical and social vantage point. This comes forth in the more recent scholarship of scholars such as Vincent J. Cornell, Alfred Bel and Bulliet. Cornell's position contains both a critique on the prevalent view on the region as well as the decision to go for this fifth form of the Maghrib as a historiographical unit. In his *Realm of the Saint* Cornell writes:

North Africa was never the backwater that many orientalists and social scientists have assumed. While Muslim Spain (Ar. *Al-Andalus*), with its sophisticated intellectual life and “civilized” ways, is often highlighted in surveys of Islamic civilization, the premodern Maghrib is still dismissed as either an appendix of Islamic Iberia or a mere sub region of peripheral and marginalized Islamic Africa. But the historian who looks at North African primary sources without prejudice finds that such an extreme center-periphery approach distorts reality. Rather than making a peripheralized North Africa dependent on Muslim Spain, it is better to view the entire Islamic West, —Al-Andalus, the Maghrib, Muslim Sicily, and parts of West-Africa—as a singular, relatively unified, cultural entity.³³

The appeal of this approach is the opportunity to highlight a relative unity within the cultural sphere. Yet as a social construct it's not immediately justified as such in the historical understanding of the term

³³ Cornell, *Realm of the Saint : Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*, xxiv.

and thereby leaves ample room for an ambiguous usage of the term. Roughie illustrates that before the 7th century Northern Africa was not considered a singular entity, nor did the Arabic 'Maghrib' become part of local wisdom a few centuries later based upon a historical and natural development of the conceptualization of the region³⁴. When referred to something as happening in this region, or to someone from the Maghrib this could, depending on the author's historical context, refer to Sicily and southern Italy as well as Spain, or *Ifriqiyya* and its surroundings in Tunis, or at a later stage a reference to Fez, current Morocco, and its surroundings.

Another argument against using the term Maghrib to denote a social construct is that there has never been a political unified power that could serve as the unifying element for the region as we'd see for example for the Ottoman empire, the Sassanian Empire or the Indo-Timurid empire. Even in the longest empire that survived in the region (Almohad 1062-1269), one could hardly argue that there was a sense of unity and identity that could be considered connected to a term such as Maghrib. The dynamism that seemingly unified the region must then be sought elsewhere.

1.2.6. Making a case for mobility as defining factor for the Maghrib as a unit

So far, we have analysed the different arguments for and against the concept of the Maghrib as a historiographical unit of analysis and enumerated the weaknesses and strengths of each position. The question remains: what then is the mechanic, the unifying thread that binds the region and defines its collective memory? Perhaps it's a little of all of the above? In this study I want to argue that the high level of mobility that existed throughout the region, constituted by its geographical characteristics, the

³⁴ Roughie, 'The Mediterranean between Barbaria and the Medieval Maghrib: Questions for a Return to History', 316.

relative ease of transport and established trade routes, ought to be considered a strong conceptual candidate to claim to be the dynamism of the Maghrib as a region. The argument would then be to consider the concept of the Maghrib as a multiplicity of actual regions with each region having its own set of unique political, cultural and economic traits. Attention must be paid to the continuities between the periods and cultural societal nodes within the history of the Maghrib. The unique geographical character of the region seems to have stimulated an intense mobility and interaction. Taking that in consideration I follow the impetus of Scott L Montgomery³⁵ in that knowledge is one of the most —if not the most— mobile form of cultures and societies in the formal sense. It is a commonplace that the transfer of knowledge and of learning has been pivotal in the development and evolution of cultures and societies. Once a body of knowledge reaches a different society and culture the weight of that society's culture, norms and habit will allow the engagement with the body of knowledge to be one of transformation. Montgomery's approach is a rather Hodgsonian way³⁶ of looking at the modality of knowledge in that it lends itself to the study of historical and societal continuities rather than singular events or systems. For Hodgson historical context and not succession is of methodological essence when studying Islamicate societies. Rather than considering static forms and blocs such as dynasties, economic and political systems as the subject of historical inquiry, the focus on the mobility of knowledge eloquently accentuates the overlap between societies without erasing the unique feats and identity of each particular culture and society. Here the transfer of knowledge through its mobility defines this critical historical process. What scholars call the influence that one society has over another society – by its literature, cultural habits, norms, and texts– is exactly an expression of that mobility of

³⁵ Montgomery, *Science in Translation : Movements of Knowledge through Cultures and Time*, 37.

³⁶ Burke, 'Marshall G. S. Hodgson and The Hemispheric Interregional Approach to World History'. 9

knowledge. Montgomery specifically argues that the mobility of knowledge is within the historical movements of translation, since it is translation that allows knowledge to be mobile. One could argue that translation ought not to be limited to the transformation of an idea from one natural language to another. Surely, translation can topically be understood as the (literal) interpretation from one natural language to another natural language such as from Greek to Aramaic, or from Arabic to Amazigh. But it can also include vertical translation, i.e., to contextualize the language used to one's own intellectual, cultural and societal framework. In that regard the commentaries (*shurūḥ*), glosses (*ḥawāshī*), poems and prose that are produced based upon Sanūsī's theological works are a fascinating demonstration of that principle. Tracing these texts will illustrate and visualize the mobility of a particular body of knowledge and its spread throughout the region.³⁷ Mobility of knowledge can *grosso modo* be considered as arising from an imperial impetus be it for the sake of military, scientific, economic progress. But it can also have another impetus, and it is this second impetus that of interest in this research, for the sake of preservation and authentication of a body of knowledge or beliefs, i.e., religious or spiritual conviction. Hence the mobility of creedal knowledge and theological knowledge, which we earlier referred to as the dissemination of creedal knowledge, pertains to the dissemination of authority or 'orthodoxy'.

³⁷ For example, within the discussions on a highly philosophical and juridical topic, the authenticity of faith, we witness this vertical translation in the commentaries and glosses. Here the engagement of the commentary is not with al-Sanūsī as the author but is immediately a conversation of the societal context and related issues of the commentator. Only an analysis of the proportional relationships between the different chapters can visualize the vertical translation that occurred in the authorship of the commentaries on his work particular to a specific region and century. see Zakaria El Houbba, "Authenticity and Faith in the 17th century commentaries on al-Sanūsī", Kalam Journal vol. 2, Dubai: Kalam Research and Media, forthcoming, 7

1.3. 'Orthodoxy and the Maghrib: an intellectual trend at stake

1.3.1. Contending 'Orthodoxy': The vantage point of Christian theology

In order to understand the role of al-Sanūsī and his theological legacy within the Maghrib we ought to reflect on what the 15th-17th century meant for the overall development and consolidation of Sunni theology, particularly the development of Ash'arism in the region, since al-Sanūsī is a pivotal element of that tradition. Even more, the intellectual history of Islam inevitable requires a reflection on the binary opposition and tension between what or who falls within the fold of creedal Islam and what or who does not. This is often depicted as the opposition between the terms 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy', such as described in the works of Watt³⁸ or the binary opposition preferred by Gibb³⁹ where Islamic intellectual history is put forward as the everlasting tension and struggle between scripturalist and non-scripturalist Islam in several fractions; which finds a similar perspective in social anthropology where the tension is defined as one between a lettered tradition and the popular version and variations upon that lettered tradition as in the works of Clifford Geertz and Shahab Aḥmed, and more recently Bauer⁴⁰. Especially this last dichotomy of a lettered tradition vis-à-vis a vulgarized tradition is hard to make in the case of medieval and early modern Islamicate societies. We will go over the arguments against these three conceptual dichotomies and put them in light of al-Sanūsī's theological legacy and period.

³⁸ William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy And Theology* (1987)

³⁹ Taylor, John. "An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Mediaeval Islām." *Religious Studies* 2, no. 2 (1967): 197-210.

⁴⁰ While in Al-Sanūsī's era it shifts to creedal literacy and creedal illiteracy away from state's creed and taqlid and a focus on authenticity rather than authority

The fundamental question that arises here concerns the validity of the concept 'orthodoxy' to approach Islamic thought and history. One could argue that the concept of orthodoxy carries an excess of conceptual baggage, or as Marshall Hodgson aptly describes it as "the historian's pre-commitments"⁴¹, to be able to be considered as an analytical starting point to talk about Islamic creedal thoughts and developments. Despite being a century-old term that can be traced back to ancient Greeks, its popularity within academic literature finds its roots in the crisis 19th century Judaism faced through modernization in northern Europe. To express the fraction that wanted to go against any reforms this these Jews would refer to themselves as *haredi* and distance themselves from – even physically – the more "liberal" reformists by creating a Jewish society within the larger Jewish society within a European society.⁴² The academic notion and connotation of orthodoxy hence is confined to its modern usage and within the academic framework carries certain pre-commitments to a Judaic tradition. On the other hand, the theological connotations of (Jewish) orthodoxy differ radically with and within Christianity and adds ample proof of the impossibility of the term to be utilized univocally. For the Eastern Orthodox Church, for example, orthodoxy is predominantly liturgical, while in Roman Catholicism it connotes institutional authority which is then later on substituted by a strict adherence to Luther's approach in Lutheranism.⁴³ Secondly, the notion of orthodoxy, even if abstracted from its relation to Judaism, inherently presupposes the existence and validity of a universal definition of religion which is a presupposition that is yet to be proven.

⁴¹ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* Vol. 1, p28, p. 58

⁴² Samet, Moshe. "The Beginnings of Orthodoxy." *Modern Judaism* 8, no. 3 (1988): 249-69

⁴³ Davidson, James D., and Gary J. Quinn. "Theological and Sociological Uses of the Concept "Orthodoxy"." *Review of Religious Research* 18, no. 1 (1976): 74-80

The practical question then remains: Is it necessary to understand the different ‘sects’ in Islam as heresies in the light of one sect that has been appointed the golden —orthodox—standard? This would more be an imposition of western or Christian theological categories on religion than it would discuss the nature of the different sects within Islam, for example. It actually confirms, what Hodgson brilliantly described as the *jamā‘a-sunnism* bias, where the standard is decided based on the existing geographical majority of a sect⁴⁴. Surely, even if that’s the case, does that mean that whoever is not orthodox, i.e. un-orthodox, is thereby un-Islamic? This would mean that Ghazali’s usage and intellectual alliance with the ideas and arguments brought forward in the theology of the *bātinīyya*, the Twelvers or the *Mu‘tazila* could be judged as much unorthodox as it is un-Islamic?⁴⁵ The overall issue here, of course, is the interpretation of history based upon a category or concept that is defined and developed in a later era. Unorthodox does not necessarily mean un-Islamic; the confessional is more ambiguous and dynamic than a binary static interpretation.

1.3.2. The social historian’s vantagepoint

The scholarly output of Ash‘arī scholars in the Maghrib is often depicted being limited to the authorship of catechism⁴⁶; this is reflected in the general description of the *kalāmī* landscape of Ash‘arism in the 15-16th century and onwards as stagnating. Here Ash‘arism is perceived as a system of thought, a product, rather than a method. The problem with this perception is the social historian perspective that forsakes the undertaking of Ash‘arism as a normative project; while it’s exactly this subsequent normativity that

⁴⁴ For an exhaustive analysis of all the issues at stake see M. Brett Wilson, ‘The Failure of Nomenclature: The Concept of “Orthodoxy” in the Study of Islam’, *Comparative Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009): 169.

⁴⁵ See the introduction of al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 27-31

⁴⁶ See for example these early 20th century works on a particular work of al-Sanūsī’s legacy: J.-D., *Les Prolégomènes Théologiques de Senoussi / Texte Arabe et Traduction Française*, Par J.-D. Luciani; Faḍālī, *Muhammedanische Glaubenslehre : Die Katechismen Des Fudālī Und Des Sanusi*; Barny, ‘Creed of Al-Sanūsī’.

shapes the Ash‘arī project has consequences on how this project historically developed and how develops and behaves in contemporary debates. First and foremost, as a theological system that attempts to elucidate the rational framework for the Islamic tenets of belief it is not static, but rather dynamic by nature since the societal and cultural framework that challenges it is ever-changing. From a normative perspective, if someone in 7th, 12th, 17th or the 21st century would write a theological work that attempted to construct the rational framework upon which the Islamic religious beliefs are based—without the usage of any of the typical technical terminology or even without reference to any of the foundational Ash‘arī scholars or works—the authored work can still be considered Ash‘arī in nature if it adhered to a few central principles of Ash‘arism.⁴⁷ It is exactly because it still falls within the framework of the same normative project that is the core of the general kalāmī inquiry – an inquiry into the conclusive proofs of the foundational religious beliefs, *al-‘aqā’id al-dīniyyah*. This is fundamentally different from a social historian’s approach where the kalāmī project is perceived and understood as a social historical phenomenon. When perceived as a historical phenomenon, a certain stasis is imposed on the normative project. Hence certain secondary-order elements will be considered as first-order elements; a work that does not adhere to the *jawhar-‘arad* distinction will be considered outside the scope of Ash‘arism. Or, it will be concluded that Ash‘arism must always adhere to a certain theory of atomism. These perspectives lead to gross misunderstandings of what the purpose of Ash‘arism, as a normative project, aims to fulfil. More importantly they induce a stasis to the normative project that is not part of its nature. The social historian, holder of the observer’s bias, will dwindle down into a series

⁴⁷ An analysis of the central principles upon which the theological system is based is outside the scope of this study but can be found in Gimaret, *La Doctrine d’al-Ash‘arī*.

of false consequences. Knysh's evaluation of Ash'arism as a project is a striking example of the consequences of the social historian's bias:

Thirdly, as has already been pointed out, Ash'arism, with its emphasis on metaphysics, simply could not serve as a comprehensive religious creed that would meet the variegated needs of its followers. It was, in fact, one, predominantly speculative, allegiance that did not encompass a number of others, conceivably, no less important (e.g., those related to legal religious practice, political and social ideals, personal piety and spirituality, etc.⁴⁸

Knysh's understanding of Ash'arism is built upon the notion of a timeless a-historical notion of orthodoxy and the assumption that a system of belief such as Ash'arism has such lofty aspirations to which it historically fails. Ultimately these conclusions emerge from his understanding of Ash'arism as a static singular project. Knysh's statement is a general observation regarding the development of Ash'arism within the Islamic intellectual history but in a similar vein we find observation that focus on the intellectual history of the Maghrib; Gellner's study on the saints of the Atlas⁴⁹ shares the premise that all local societies experienced this fundamental and constant struggle of a scholarly understanding of the Islamic Law and more non-scripturalists understandings, habits, cultural expressions. Even in Geertz's monumental work *Islam Observed* the general premise of the book assumes this tension to exist. Geertz, however, avoided an absolute commitment to the idea of a constant struggle by shifting away from perceiving the religion of the local people as either falling into genuine or a corrupt form of

⁴⁸ Knysh, 54

⁴⁹ Gellner, Ernest. 1969. *Saints of the Atlas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

religion. In a similar vein Shahab Aḥmad and Bauer vouch for a margin of ambiguity as to fall into the Hodgsonian *'ulama-bias* or a static understanding of what Islamic orthodoxy means. Their approach could best be understood as defining 'orthodoxy' as something that's in the making; a product of collective efforts that is highly localized and inherently multiple. Though, ultimately Geertz and Shahab's work still depends on the assumption of the existence of the binary opposition of the lettered tradition of Islam versus the vulgarized tradition of Islam, Shahab, more than Geertz, favours privileging the essence of Islam to the former while Gellner, and Touati⁵⁰ are more inclined to the latter. Even the literature on the vulgarization of the theological scholarship⁵¹ – where postclassical scholarship is considered a mere accumulation of abridgements and summaries – is a consequence of reading the intellectual tradition through this binary opposition. When al-Sanūsī, like many other scholars in the 15-17th century, are derided as merely reiterating and recycling ideas of predecessors in commentaries, versifications and abridgements, the critics are mistakenly interpreting a shift of pedagogical commitments as a downwards trend in intellectual efforts.

1.3.3. Sharia-mindedness: Hodgson's approach as an anomaly

Hodgson's alternative for the notion of orthodoxy lies in his concept of *Shari'a-mindedness*. For Hodgson the conjunction of the state of the noun 'minded' to the proper noun 'Sharia' safeguards from the conventional readings of Islamic history that consider orthodoxy and Sharia to be interchangeable. For Hodgson the Islamic Sacred Law (*Sharia*) remains the core of normativity but by

⁵⁰ Touati, *Entre Dieu et Les Hommes : Lettrés, Saints et Sorciers Au Maghreb (17e Siècle)*, 78–96.

⁵¹ For an enumeration of this literature and a critique see Ismail Warscheid. 2017. "The Persisting Spectre of Cultural Decline: Historiographical Approaches to Muslim Scholarship in the Early Modern Maghreb." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 60 (1/2): 142–73.

adding the 'mindedness-' to it a certain sense of historical subjectivity and multiplicity is allowed, even encouraged. Rather than persisting in the idea of a binary opposition between scriptural or non-scriptural, or the lettered versus the popular, this concept allows us to consider the various particular expressions of Islam as the ephemeral consequence and creative synthesis brought forth from its core which is what Hodgson defines as *sharia*-mindedness:

an ethical orientation constituting the inner conscience of Muslim piety, and expressing opposition to the hierarchical and despotic systems of power that characterized the Mughal, Safavid and Ottoman empires (Hodgson 1974). It was the pious and learned scholars (ulama) who developed the religious activities that cultivated this Sharia-mindedness as the major religious impulse in Islam against the corrosive consequences of bureaucratic state power.⁵²

As such *shari'a*-mindedness is automatically detached from any theological or sectarian reference and at the same time it is detached from the societal and political implications and *force majeure* (formal authority) that attempt to hegemonize and monopolize the extension of orthodoxy. This brings us to the core of the debate: can the confessional, the normative project, be taken serious as an object of academic study?

⁵² Bryan S. Turner, 'Revisiting Weber and Islam: Revisiting Weber and Islam', *The British Journal of Sociology* 61 (14 January 2010): 161–66

1.4. The Normative Project: taking the confessional serious as an object of study

Hodgson's innovative approach sheds light on a pivotal characteristic that is absent in most interpretations of orthodoxy and its relation to culture and society. Let me expand on it. As an ethical orientation it reveals its priority and primacy over other concerns. Normativity is always prior. Any endeavour be it a scientific, i.e., a scholarly, cultural or social activity is a human voluntary activity. Each human act is embedded within a framework of normative assumptions. It is this normative framework which governs the activities any human being -be they religious or not. There are reasons, mental drives, for why they are engaging in those specific acts. If we focus on scholars, we can even state that there are specific normative assumptions that shape the 'why' of an inquiry. An inquiry is never *ex nihilo* in a conceptual vacuum; it is born out of normative, moral and social concerns. A scientific inquiry, whereby science is taken in the most general sense of the term, suffers the same fate. The aforementioned objections against the understanding of orthodoxy and the binary oppositions within the work of Gibb, Shahab and Geertz provide an example of laying bear the normative assumptions of an inquiry. A claim to academic objectivity is often a claim for the superiority of certain interpretive categories from a certain local epistemological or scientific framework, but it remains contingent and doesn't necessarily fit the same framework of the study of object. While not insinuating a mal-intent of these aforementioned scholars, this objection does serve as a stepping stone to a further consideration. Any scientific endeavour ought to be preceded by a reflection on the normative assumptions and drives for that inquiry. An inquiry for the sake of an inquiry is a century-old *topoi* that has not much scientific basis to it. Normativity precedes any form of objectivity, since the normative not only includes personal reasons but also economic, pragmatic and political drives. Transparency regarding normativity is a key

element of the Islamic intellectual tradition; the major crystallisation of this is the idea of the ten principles of a science (*mabādi al-‘ashra*), which precede the activity of any science. Hereby the inquirer- the scholar- lays bare the normative framework of his intellectual inquiry, or of the science – a systematized and consolidated set of inquiries – in order to be transparent with regards to the subjective starting point of the inquiry but more importantly as a consequence it unveils the conceptual framework that is used to interpret that science, in this case, that part of the religious science, of religion. These principles (*mabādi*) contain the subjective purpose of the inquirer’s inquiry and of the science in question. When we take into consideration that *kalam* as a scientific inquiry is the attempt of a person to make coherently sense of how to think and rationalise the wonders of this created world, then we can say that Ash‘arism, as a method, constitutes the normative assumptions of how these scholars want to pursue their scientific inquiry; it provided the normative framework by which they want to make sense of the wondrous reality of creation, the creator. A specific set of norms drive that activity. When Ash‘arism is considered a normative project, we ought to consider all norms within that project as *shar‘ī* obligations; they don’t derive from a purely rational obligation. The mind cannot discover obligations (rational obligations) but can be given them as conventional obligations. There are no obligations to be found in the world independently of any law-giver. The convention of obligation, of permission and prohibition is either man-made or divine-made. And this is where Ash‘arism as a normative project already shapes the way that al-Sanūsī understands his normative and pedagogical project. If we are to follow divine-made obligations, one must first have a certain understanding of, and agreement on, the existence of the Law-giver.

1.5. Methodology: Perceiving Legacy as Community

1.5.1. Navigating *ṭabaqāt* and *maṣādir*

In the second part of this study I aim to survey the available biographical and sources from 15th to 17th Century Maghrib that focus on theological scholars (*mutakallimīn*) of that period as well as the biographical work on al-Sanūsī, which includes the scholarly climate around al-Sanūsī himself⁵³; as well as the literature that informs us regarding the commentaries written on Sanūsī's theological texts and the (theological) texts that were inspired by al-Sanūsī's theological legacy.

Ultimately, al-Sanūsī's theological legacy relates to al-Sanūsī in two ways: through Scholars (*ulamā*) and through Texts (*nuṣūṣ*). Tracing the former will be done through the biographies written on al-Sanūsī and the *ṭabaqāt* and *riwāya* literature of those centuries. The latter will be achieved through an additional survey of a selection of the *masādir* literature for the region which condenses the major manuscript collections of the region per science, textual cross-references, and the perception within the scholarly networks of those appraised texts.⁵⁴

I will focus on the scholarly network around Sanūsī and to a certain extent on the (professional) mobility of his students and their students but this will be a rather ephemeral effect of a larger concern. Rather than focusing on the scholars and the scholarly network within al-Sanūsī's theological legacy, we focus on the perspective of considering the proponents of his legacy (scholars and texts) as a

⁵³ al-Mallāli, *Al-Mawāhib al-Qudusiyya Fi Manāqib al-Sanūsīyyah*; Bājī, *Idāra Al-Shumūs 'alā Hayāt Wa A'māl al-Sanūsī*; *Tarjamāt Al-Imām al-Sanūsī Ṣāhib al-Aṣl Wa-al-Sharḥ Mulakhkhaṣah Min al-Imām al-Sanūsīyah Li-Sidī Aḥmad Bābā al-Timbuktī Raḍī Allāh 'anhu*.

⁵⁴ The main works consulted are: Bājī, *Idāra Al-Shumūs 'alā Hayāt Wa A'māl al-Sanūsī*; Bin-Farḥī, *Al-Nubūgh al-Maghribī*: 'Abd Allāh Kannūn Namūdhajan; Dabbāgh, *Ma'ālim Al-Imān Fi Ma'rifāt Ahl al-Qayrawān*; Ibn al-Shaykh, *Ta'rīf Al-Khalaf Bi-Rijāl al-Salaf*; Ibn Maryam al-Sharīf al-Malīti al-Madyūni al-Tilimsāni and Bin Abī Shanab, *Al-Bustān Fi Dhikr al-Awliyā' Wa-al-'ulamā' Bi-Tilimsān*; Iḥnāna, *Taṭawwur Al-Madhab al-Ash'arī Fi al-Gharb al-Islāmī*; Qādi 'Iyād ibn Mūsá, *Tartīb Al-Madārik Wa-Taqrīb al-Masālik Li-Ma'rifāt A'lām Madhab Mālik*; Zahrī, *Al-Maṣādir al-Maghribiyah Lil-'aqīdah al-Ash'ariyah: Bibliyūghrafiyah Wa-Dirāsah Bibliyūmitriyah*; Zahrī, *Al-Maṣādir al-Andalusīyah Li-'ilm al-Kalām : Al-Masār Wa-al-Taḥawwulāt Wa-al-Khaṣā'is*; Zahrī and Bū 'Anāni, *Al-Taṣawwuf al-Maghribī Maṣdar Ish'ā' Wa-Tawāṣul : A'māl Muḥdāh Lil-Ustādḥah Naḥṣah al-Dhahabī*; Zahrī and Bukārī, *Fihris Al-Kutub al-Makḥṭūṭa Fi L-'aqīdah al-Ash'ariyya*.

‘community of practice’. This allows us to disregard the standard limitations of a scholarly network analysis and focus on the practice of horizontal learning as the pivot that binds the diverse proponents of al-Sanūsī’s theological legacy. Clearly this will steer us away from performing a network analysis in the conventional sense of the term. This kind of analysis is characterized by its focus on the underlying concepts of ‘social networks’ and ‘professional mobility’ of its scholarly proponents. The study of al-Sanūsī’s legacy as a community of practice rather than a network of *‘ulamā* is done for several reasons:

1.6. Making sense of community as a method

1.6.1. First contention: reconsidering the relational approach towards community

Despite the plethora of studies on the *‘ulamā* in medieval Muslim society there’s no consensus on how to exactly define the subject of this niche – *ulamology* – within the study of Islamic history. Precisely because these scholars “seem to cut across almost every possible classification of groups in Islamic society, playing a multiplicity of political, social and cultural roles.”⁵⁵ In the case of al-Sanūsī’s legacy, we find that a majority of the scholars are Asharites, but not all.⁵⁶ Some of them are considered *full-fledged expert theologians* (cf. *al-Yūsī* and *al-suktāni*) while others are categorized as *fuqahā* (cf. Ibn ‘Āshir) or the Sufis (e.g. Zarrūq) or a combination of two or more of these categories (Zarrūq, Yūsī); while some fall out the folds of the *ṭabaqāt* for not having authored any scholarly works despite their fame as teacher of these texts (cf. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī⁵⁷), while others are have managed to stay out

⁵⁵ Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, Revised Edition (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991), 187-208

⁵⁶ Granted this is mostly the case in the reception of al-Sanūsī in the Ottoman lands such as in the works of al-Nābulsi and al-Maqdisī al-ḥanbalī

⁵⁷ There is mention in some later biographical entries that he was of the habit to teach the *Sughrā* and the *Kubrā* and has at least one commentary on the *Sughrā*. See Abū Qāsim Sa’d Allah, *Tārīkh al-Jazā’ir al-Thaqāfi*. Vol 7, 173

of the *tabaqat* literature altogether and remain part of oral history with no written trace except anecdotes in the biographies of their importance in the legacy of al-Sanūsī (cf. Kunābshi). Even within those categories there's a variety of denominators that make it difficult to pinpoint a common denominator for all.⁵⁸ By focusing on the legacy of Al-Sanūsī's theological works, our research is not limited by a certain definition of a scholar (*‘ālim*) or a theologian (*mutakallim*) since we consider any historical person in 15-17th Century Maghrib, who has written– and thereby contributed– to and on al-Sanūsī's theological legacy, a viable proponent of that community. This will allow us to include for example poets that wrote and dedicated eulogies (*Qaṣā'id*) in honour of al-Sanūsī or his work, as well as Sufi's whose manuals on spiritual refinement are based on al-Sanūsī's methodology, *or core* parts of his creedal texts, as well as texts that are written as part of the basic tenets faith and worship curriculum which are developed in spirit of the methodology and pedagogy utilized by al-Sanūsī in his creedal texts (cf. *Maqqari's idāḥ al-dujunnah*).

1.6.2. Second contention: delimiting the boundaries in a classic network analysis

This brings us to our second contention which is that the study of social networks by default assumes the underlying understanding of a scholarly network as limited by geographical boundaries and related relative time-frame. While observations regarding al-Sanūsī's legacy will resist to adhere to those limitations precisely because the 'network' that is created through Al-Sanūsī's scholarship pervades

⁵⁸ Note how this difficulty is one of the questions scholars of Islam have tried to conceptualize. This same process of a shared theological core resulting in a vibrant variety of intellectual and spiritual creativity is what scholars attempt to conceptualize when discussing Islam and the local cultures that are reinterpreted in order to bring Islamically sound and meaningful patterns of creative syntheses. Hodgson brilliantly points this out in his *Venture of Islam* out by coining the term 'Islamicate' conceptualizing this process by stating what binds the diverse historical expressions of Islam by people of different societies, races and cultures is a certain theological core. This, of course, is a conscious decision of Hodgson to conceptually distinguish between the cultural and the religious yet in reality there is no dichotomy between the two in Islamic(ate) societies since the terms themselves as contrasting elements is modern in origin, as also in application, with 'secular' often substituted for 'cultural'.

centuries, professions societies and cultures. Rather than focusing on the concept of ‘network’, and its prosopographical method to inquire into their subjects social background and relationships, we prefer to consider Al-Sanūsī’s legacy as the development of a *community* with a focus on horizontal learning for itself (*al-‘ulamā*) and the nominal Muslims surrounding them (*al-‘awāmm*).

1.6.3. Third contention: against a solely ideational approach to Community

Thirdly, because the classical approach to understanding a community in the academic study of medieval and early modern societies focuses on community as the manifestation of tools (texts, rituals, language) that were pivotal to inquire a collective identity for that community it relies on the assumption of that particular community perceiving the experience of –communal–homogeneity as *a sine qua non*. A shared consensus becomes thereby a necessary precondition for the existence of that community which is a rather strong claim that neutralizes our reading of any diversity that arises or could arise within that community. In that regard the concept of a Community of Practice centred around a text –which is based on the principle of horizontal learning– aids in its approach to understanding Al-Sanūsī’s legacy as a community by considering it a “practice-based social group whose identity is based on shared performances of a repertoire that is in constant flux” through a communal learning.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Community & Horizontal learning Article notes of Tjamke Snijders, Consensus, Conflict and the Community of Practice

2. CHAPTER TWO: AL-SANŪSĪ & THE DERS KALĀMĪ IN MAGHRIBI

CONTEXT

Tlemcen in the 15th century is one of the main nodes of intellectual activity. Al-Sanūsī does not write within a vacuum or starts from scratch, but brings forth his own scholarly discretion (ijtihād) in the kalāmi tradition, building on the effort of regional predecessors to adapt the mode of religious instruction to the needs and requirements of their societies that will accelerate in especially 16th century Maghrib.⁶⁰ In hindsight, al-Sanūsī is especially pivotal for the dissemination and consolidation of Ash‘arism as part and parcel of the religious mode of instruction that will dominate the pre-modern Maghrib. In order to understand al-Sanūsī’s theological legacy in the Maghrib, we will give a general overview of the development of Ash‘arism in the region but we will also provide a specific focus on the development of the ders kalāmī upon which al-Sanūsī’s theological scholarship is built and will later on have a radical impact.

The first introduction of Ash‘arism into the Maghrib is centred in around the tenth century intellectual and political node of al-Qayrawān in Tunis. Scholars such as Abū Ishāq al-Qalānāsī (d. 359/ 971), Abū Maymūna b. Isma‘īl al-Fāsī⁶¹ (d. 357/968), and b. Abī Zayḍ al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996) seem to have been the main proponents of the Ash‘arī scholarship of that period.⁶² Especially the leading Māliki scholar of

⁶⁰ Abi-Mershed’s study on the biographical dictionary of Ibn Maryam illustrates the dynamics and concerns of the generation right after al-Sanūsī. See Abi-Mershed, Osama. “The Transmission of Knowledge and the Education of the ‘Ulama in Late Sixteenth Century Maghrib: A Study of the Biographical Dictionary of Muhammad ibn Maryam.” In Mary Ann Fay (ed.) *Auto/ Biography and the Construction of Identity and Community in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 19–36.

⁶¹ Originally from al-Qayrawān he travelled to Baghdad and Basra to study. He returned to al-Qayrawān where he was teaching; relocated to Fez in the last years of his life.

⁶² Dabbāgh, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, Qāsim ibn ‘Īsā Ibn Nāji, Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ ‘Īsā Kinānī, and ‘Abd al-Majīd Khayālī. *Ma‘ālim Al-Īmān Fī Ma‘rifat Ahl Al-Qayrawān*, Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2005, 12-15

his region b. Abī Zayḍ al-Qayrawānī⁶³ is of importance as he had close ties with the major Ash‘arī Malikī *fuqahā* of Baghdad such as such Qādī Abū Bakr al Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and his student Qādī ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 433/1031) – who will also be one of the first commentators on Abī Zayḍ’s legal work *al-Risāla*. There’s also evidence of correspondence between Abī Zayḍ al-Qayrawānī and Mujāhid ‘Abd-Allah al-Shāfi‘ī. The latter is a direct student of Abū Ḥassan al-Ash‘arī the eponymous founder of this school of theological thought. Al-Qayrawānī, often referred to as Mālīk al-Ṣaghīr in reference to the eponymous founder of the Mālīki school of law, authors *al-Risālah al-Fiqhiyya*; which is written as an abridged textbook in Mālīkī *fiqh* but with a clear audience in mind:

I want [hereby] to instruct children in the same way as they are instructed and taught the letters of the Qur’an in order that an understanding of what this religion is and what God’s decree is [al-sharī‘a] can be instilled in their heart before they reach the age where they are blessed with it [i.e., reach the physical age where it become a moral responsibility].⁶⁴

With this audience intended, al-Qayrawānī adds to his legal text a short primer on the creedal matters that are deemed necessary to understand prior to delving into legal matters. As such his *Risāla* is often considered as the first textbook example of a creedal text embedded in a juridical context on the axis of Ash‘arism-Malikism. Even in terms of the content of the first chapter, it has the basic structure of what a classical theological Ash‘arī text looks like by starting his endeavour with a discussion on the

⁶³ For an academic study on the role of Abu Zayd’s *Risalah* see the legal and theological thought of Abi Zayd al-Qayrawānī, Phd Dissertation, Yale University, 2009

⁶⁴ Al-Qayrawānī, *al-Risāla*, 13.

necessity of reflection (*naẓr*) and proceeding with a brief discussion on the *ṣifāt*, *sam'iyāt* and *nubuwwāt*. However, it was not considered a definitive text on the subject nor was it studied as such in the region.⁶⁵

2.1. The Legacy of al-Qādī al-Bāqillānī: Framing Ash'arism within the Mālikī framework.

In the 11th and 12th century the development of Ash'arism in Maghribī scholarship peaks through the emergence of Qādī al-Bāqillānī's (d.403/1013) students in the region. Al-Bāqillānī is not only a pivotal figure in the dissemination and development of the Ash'arī normative project for the Maghrib but he is first and foremost a *faqīh* and authority of the Maliki-school of law; which will have a tremendous influence on the Maghrebi approach to Ash'arī kalām in the subsequent period. As the—almost unanimously agreed—Sunni *Mujaddid* of his time, al-Bāqillānī enjoyed a significant following of students that would come and sit in his gatherings where he'd teach primarily *fiqh* but was known to dive into creedal matters and connect them with the general principles and philosophy of Mālikī Law.⁶⁶ Most of the direct students who are known originate from Baghdād, Khurasān, and Mekka or Medina; while there are only a few formally known Maghrebi students among his following that will effectively return to the Maghreb and disseminate al-Bāqillānī's theological teachings⁶⁷ and methodology of tackling creed through the lens of the philosophy of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence. Among these direct students are Abū 'Abd-Allah al-Adharī, who settled down in al-Qayrawān and gathers a large

⁶⁵ The heated debates on the creedal part of the *Risāla* are a later event that pertains to confessional identity debates if he was to be considered an Ash'arī or not. A partial explanation for this tension can be found in Sayeed Sajjadur Rahman, *The legal and theological thought of Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (310–386 A.H./922–966 C.E.)*, Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University 2009,

⁶⁶ Thiele, *Discussing al-Bāqillānī's Theology in the Maghrib: 'Abd al-Jalīl b. Abī Bakr al-Dībājī al-Rabā'ī's al-Tasdīd fī sharḥ al-Tamhīd*, 8

⁶⁷ Naṣīr, Muḥammad, "Dawr al-Bāqillānī fī talqīn al-asānīd al-Ash'ariyya bi-bilād al-Maghrib", in Jamāl 'Allāl al-Bakhtī (ed.), *al-Fikr al-Ash'arī bi-l-Maghrib khilāl marḥalatay al-ta'sīs wa-l-tarsīm: al-mu'aththirāt al-Mashriqiyya wal- makhṣūṣiyyāt al maḥalliyya*, Tetuan, al-rābi'a al-Muḥammadiyya li-l- 'Ulamā' / Markaz Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, 1438/2017, vol. 2, 83.

following, as well as Abū al-Tāhir al-Baghdādī.⁶⁸ Their students, such as ‘Abd al-Jalīl b. Abī Bakr al-Dībājī (also known as b. al-Ṣabūnī) will go on to proceed disseminating and engaging the theological works of al-Bāqillānī in the region. The other two influential figures of this period are Abū Ḥassan al-Qābasī (d.402/1013) and his direct student Abū ‘Imran al-Fāsī (d. 430/1039). Al-Qābasī is originally from the Andalusian peninsula but studied extensively in Baghḍad and Khuraṣan where he mastered the Ash‘arī creed.⁶⁹ His student, Abū ‘Imrān al-Fāsī is considered one of the last, i.e., youngest, students of al-Bāqillānī who as his teacher was impressed by the impeccable memory of this young student of his own senior student, al-Qabāsī⁷⁰. Hence one of the main sources for the Ash‘arī kalāmī tradition is not necessarily through a *mutakallim pur sang* but through a *faqīh* whose method and understanding of the underlying framework for fiqh was based upon the Ash‘arī normative project. The effect al-Bāqillānī had on the development and dissemination of the Maliki school of Law in the Maghrib is in direct correlation with his influence on the creedal approach of these *fuqahā*.⁷¹ As much as the Maghrebi students took al-Bāqillānī’s legal opinions and juristic framework through his legal works back to the Maghreb for the creedal opinions, they were dependent on their memory or their notes and some of al-Bāqillānī’s references within his own legal and theological works. There was no formal compendium in which this mesh of *fiqh* and kalām was expounded but with Abī Zayḍ’s *Risāla* a major step in that direction was taken. It is only with the emergence of al-Juwaynī, “the spokesman of the *fuqahā* and the *mutakallimīn*”,⁷² that the next step in that process commences.

⁶⁸ In al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād, *Tartīb al-madārik*, 3:430

⁶⁹ Authors *al-Risālah al-Mufaṣṣillah li-Aḥwāl al-Muta‘alimīn* which does not become a textbook in the region.

⁷⁰ Abd-Allah kinūn, *al-nubūgh al-Maghrabi fī al-adab al-‘arabī*, 52

⁷¹ Iḥnāna, Yūsuf, *Ṭaṭawwur al-maḍhab al-Ash‘arī fī al-Gharb al-Islāmī*, 2nd ed., Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 2017, 283

⁷² Muḥammad al-Tha‘ālabī al-Fāsī, *Al-Fikr al-Sāmi fī Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, Dār al-Turāth, Cairo, vol.2, 115

2.2. Al-Juwaynī and the Maghrebi Irshād tradition: kalām in an *usūlī* framework.

Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) plays a decisive role in the doctrinal and methodical progression of Ash‘arism in the Maghrib.⁷³ His *kalāmī* works were the dominant text books for the study of *kalām* –and to a certain extent for the study of *usūl al-fiqh* – of 12-14th century Qayrawān, Fes and Tlemcen. What characterizes al-Juwaynī’s *Kalamī* works such as the *Nizamiyyah* and the *Irshād* is his innovative utilization of the modal qualifiers as the structure for his theological inquiry.⁷⁴ This decision to use the modal qualifiers as overarching structure for theological enquiry is the effect of his analysis and acceptance of the modal qualifiers as a better tool to classify knowledge, and thereby the sciences. When discussing the subject-matter and relation of *Usūl al-fiqh* to *kalam*, al-Juwaynī brings forth a new conception of the subject-matter of *kalām* as a science:

kalām means (*ya‘nī*) the knowledge (*ma‘rifā*) of the world and its parts, and its core-essences (*ḥaqā‘iq*), and its being temporally originated (*ḥadath*), and the knowledge of the one who has originated it (*muḥdith*), and those attributes (*ṣifāt*) which are necessary for Him (*yajib ‘alayhi*) and those which are impossible for Him (*yastahīlu ‘alayhi*), and what is possible concerning him (*mā yajūzu fī ḥaqiqihī*) And the knowledge (*‘ilm*) of prophecy, and how it is distinguished by miracles (*mu‘jizāt*) from the claims of forgers (*da‘awā al-mubṭilīn*) and the judgments (*aḥkām*) relating prophecy, and speaking about which universals of religious law (*kullīyyāt al-*

⁷³ For a discussion on the reception of Al-Juwaynī’s method see Mokdad Mensia, *Regards d’ibn Rushd sur al-Juwaynī; questions de methode*, Arabic Sciences and Philosophy, vol. 2 (2012), 199-216

⁷⁴ On the transition from the traditional theological enquiry to the enquiry structured around the modal qualifiers, see Eichner Heidrun, ‘The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological summae in Context’, Habilitation Thesis [unpublished], Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2009, 182-189

sharā'i) are possible or impossible. What is aimed at (*al-maqṣūd*) in kalām does not fall under a definition. It is supported (*yastamidd*) by the distinction (*mayz*) between knowledge (*'ilm*) and other kinds of convictions (*i'tiqādāt*), and the knowledge of the difference between proofs and *shubah*, and reaching the procedure of rational deliberation (*darak masālik al-naẓar*).⁷⁵

In sum, al-Juwaynī's conception of *usūl al-fiqh* pushed a new paradigm for the religious sciences and for *'ilm al-kalām* in general. This shift made it possible for the later Maghribī tradition, of which al-Sanūsī is a crucial part, to continue this development and utilize analytic tools drawn from logic as part of their theological inquiries and also to draw the domain of *fiqh* into their theological inquiry. If Juwaynī's conception of the theological inquiry is constituted in his *Kitāb al-Burhān* and his *Kitāb al-Talkhīṣ*, then the implementation of it is expressed in his *'Aqīda al-Niẓāmmiyya* and brought to its full philosophical extent in his *Irshād*.⁷⁶ For the purpose of our focus on al-Sanūsī the importance of the *Irshād* in the Maghrebi context will be most significant⁷⁷, given that the *Irshād* served as textbook for advanced studies in creedal matters in *zawāya* in Tunis, or *madāris* in al-Qayrawan.⁷⁸ When a scholar would be considered an expert in creedal matters, they would often be referred to as someone who had "*baṣr of the Irshād*"⁷⁹. Hence the plethora of versifications, abridgements, commentaries and glosses on this specific text come as no surprise. Of the early Maghrebi commentaries on the *Irshād* we might mention *al-Mihād fī sharḥ al-Irshād* by the Alexandrian Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Māzarī (d. 530/1135), *al-*

⁷⁵ Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 1:77, 11-78,5 the translation is by Eichner in Eichner Heidrun, 'The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological summae in Context', Habilitation Thesis [unpublished], Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2009, 173

⁷⁶ Muḥammad 'Ayshūn, *Al-Rawḍ al-'Itr al-Anfās*, Casablanca, 1997, 1193

⁷⁷ See Eichner on the influence of *usul* on the debates and textbooks in Eichner Heidrun, 'The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological summae in Context', Habilitation Thesis [unpublished], Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2009, 152-171

⁷⁸ For a detailed reference see Muḥammad Mannūnī, *waraqāt 'an al-ḥaḍāra al-maghribiyya fi 'asr banī Maryam*, Rabat Royal College: 1996. 310

⁷⁹ This is mentioned of Ibn al-Ishbīlī as well as al-Salālījī, see *al-Rawḍ al-'Itr* 194, for Salālījī see *al-Tashawuf*: 200

Is'ād fī sharḥ al-Irshād by b. Bazīza (d. 662/1264), and the commentaries by the Alexandrian Taqī al-Dīn al-Muqtaraḥ and his Tunisian student al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī al-Tilimsānī entitled respectively *sharḥ al-Irshād and Kifāyat ṭālib 'ilm al-kalām fī sharḥ al-Irshād*. The additional commentaries worth mentioning here are the ones that have an indirect relation to al-Sanūsī; either by being authored by his direct teachers or their teachers. Abu Hajāj b. Mūsā Al-Ḍarīr (d. 520/1126)⁸⁰ for example, authors *al-Tanbīh wa al-Irshād fī 'ilm al-i'tiqād*⁸¹ a versification of 1589 lines that simultaneously serves as al-Ḍarīr's commentary on the text. It is one of the first—if not *the* first— commentary on the *Irshād* where the commentator, Al-Ḍarīr, brings forth his own emphasis on the legal aspect of creedal matters; which is in line with Juwaynī's shift from making 'the creation' the crux of theological inquiry to making 'the relation of the individual' *vis a vis* the divine and the divine order integral.⁸²

One of al-Ḍarīr's most important students, al-Mahdī b. Tumart (ca. 473-525/1080-1130), becomes the future political and religious leader of the *Muwahidūn*.⁸³ Aside of spearheading the movement of the *muwahidūn* and a region-wide attempt to institutionalise Ash'arism as the formal creed for the state, he also stands out as one of the first to focus on teaching creedal matters in the local tribal languages in an attempt to consolidate Ash'arism and Malikism as the Almohad's 'Creed and Law'. One way through which he aimed to do this is via his succinct and short work the *Murshida*. Given the influence of his teacher and spiritual guide, al-Ḍarīr, the work can be considered a – rather condensed – ode to

⁸⁰ Another major figure who is considered of the mutakalimin but also known as a Murshid, and Saint of God to whom many miracles have been attributed. His sufi approach is explicitly mentioned in the beginning of his versification of the *Irshād*, see *Iḥnāna* 284

⁸¹ This versification is hitherto unpublished but available in Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya, no. 12369 [f. 216-219]) which is accompanied by another commentary of al-Sakūnī (n. 12995 [f. 1-79])

⁸² Note that this already occurs in al-Juwaynī's *Niẓamiyya* where *taklīf* is central in the opening chapter. However, within the Maghribi tradition the argument gets deepened further through the discussion and connection of *taklīf* within the framework of *taqlīd* and the particularities of the cultural, political and social unrest.

⁸³ Ibn Tumart traveled extensively in the pursuit of knowledge. He studied in Granada, Baghdād and Alexandria. His teacher, Abu Hajāj b. Mūsā al-Ḍarīr is a student of Abū Bakr b. Ḥassan al-Marādī al-Khaḍrāmī (d. 489) who is considered by the historian al-Zayyāt as one of the first scholars to formally introduce *kalam* as a literary genre to the Maghrib.

Juwaynī's *Irshād*.⁸⁴ Another teacher of b. Tumart⁸⁵ is the scholarly saint Abu Ḥassan b. Khalīd al-Lakhmī al-Ishbīlī (d. 567/1171) who will also be one of the main teachers of al- the scholarly saint Abū 'Umar al-Salālījī (d. 594/1198), whose abridged critical commentary (*ikhṭiṣār*) on the *Irshād* commentary of his teacher introduces a new phase in the *kalamī* tradition of the Maghrib. A regional shift whereby Fez becomes the main node of theological activity, and al-Salālījī the established authority and entry for reading the *Irshād* and reception of its chains of transmission (*asānīd*).⁸⁶

2.3. Abū 'Umar al-Salālījī: framing the *Irshād* in the framework of Sufism

In the aforementioned section we discussed how Juwaynī's epistemological shift allowed for the late medieval Maghribī scholars not only to utilize more analytic (logical) tools in their text-production but it also brought forth a focus completely on the individual's responsibility which brings us unto the borders where theology and juristic rulings (*fiqh*) regarding *taklīf* (moral responsibility), i.e., *taqlīd* and *tahqīq* meet. Through Juwaynī's conception of *kalām* – within a revised epistemological framework – the notion of *taklīf* brings the necessary coherence to the utility of the modal qualifiers which brings the debate back from a theoretical aspect to a practical aspect. The conception of knowledge receives a practical component (*'amal*) that needs to be considered. The moral responsible (al-*mukallif*) is envisioned as someone who puts in the work, i.e., reflects on their relation to the divine order. Evidently the theologian will focus on the content that is required for this form of reflection. But simultaneously this form of reflection brings in the problem of the human psyche. One can imagine a person 'knowing'

⁸⁴ *Iḥnāna*, 168

⁸⁵ For references with regards to their relationship see Ibn al-Qāḍī, *Jadhwat*, 479-480, Bakhtī, *Salālījī*, 124-6,

⁸⁶ See for example Ibn Rashīd, *Mala' al-'Ayba, dar al-Tunis*, 1982 who refers to receiving his *ijāzah* of the *Irshād* through his *Ijāza* on the *burhāniyyah*

the required set of creedal matters that is prescribed by the theologians but that does not mean that they 'believe in them as a truth'. This becomes the core question regarding *taqlīd*— i.e., imitation with regards to a set of beliefs—and *tahqīq*— i.e., to make a set of beliefs one's own. The axis of these two concepts can be better understood as the moral obligation to avoid inauthenticity in belief, opening up the realm of Sufism which will be the focus of the next series of commentaries on the *Irshād* through the innovative work of al-Salālījī.

From the late 12th century onwards al-Salālījī's *Burhāniyyah*⁸⁷ becomes the textual standard for the education in creedal and *kalamī* matters as an entry to the *Irshād*, but with its own characteristics; this to the extent that al-Bakhtī considers the *Salālījī* interpretation of the *Irshād* a proper movement in itself starting in Fes where al-Salālījī resides and teaches.⁸⁸ The distinguishing characteristics of this sub-school are not just in al-Salālījī opting for a different textual order of the creedal inquiries (*masā'il*), or other rather minor disagreements with certain *kalāmī* positions taken in the *Irshād*. It is his explicit disagreement with al-Juwaynī on the issue of human freedom and free will and his interpretation of the theory of human acquisition (*kasb*) that reveals the more spiritual concerns in his commentary. According to al-Bakhtī, al-Salālījī's response and alternative provide a more rigid interpretation of God's Potency (*qudra*) and absolute dependence of the individual upon God, while al-Juwaynī leaves room for the attribution of human acts to their own potency. This is revealing as the *burhāniyya* is considered as the element bringing the *Irshād* into the realm of Sufism; where Sufism is considered the science that occupies itself with the methods rectifying the individual's perception and position vis-à-vis the divine

⁸⁷ al-Bakhtī, Jamāl 'Allāl, *Uthmān al-Salālījī wa-madhābiyyatuhu al-Ash'ariyya: Dirāsa li-jānīb min al-fīkr al-kalāmī bi l-Maghrib min khilāl al-Burhāniyya wa-shurūḥihā*, Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 2005, 559-65

⁸⁸ Jamāl 'Allāl al-Bakhtī, *Al-Salījī wa madhabihī*, Tetuan, Markaz Abi l- Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, 2004, 38

order. Al-Salālī is considered not only the Imam of the people of the Maghreb in creedal and legal matters—as was the title for Al-Juwaynī (*Imam al-Mashriq*)⁸⁹— but he was also referred to as *al-Ṣālih*, the murshid of many scholars and important figures on the spiritual path.⁹⁰ It is in al-Salālī that the first explicit methodology of marrying the science of Sufism, Maliki *Fiqh* and Ash‘arī creed in the Maghribī intellectual landscape comes to fruition in a standard textbook for the Maghrebi *kalāmi ders*.⁹¹

2.4. Inheritors of Al-Ghazālī: revising the methodological approach of the

Maghribi ders *kalāmī*

Another track worth mentioning that flows back to al-Juwaynī but this time not through the *Irshād*, but through the works of his student al-Ghazālī and the reception of al-Ghazali in the Maghrib via his student Qādi Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī al-Mālikī (d. 543/1148), who is not only a direct student of al-Ghazālī but the main disseminator of the works and methodology of al-Ghazālī in the Maghrib. Evidently, al-Ghazālī is the pivotal interpreter and intellectual successor of his teacher al-Juwaynī and carries on the intellectual project that al-Juwaynī had ignited by revising the classification of the religious sciences based on a shift of their shared epistemological structure.⁹² Though, al-Ghazālī adds his own particularity to this shift through the lens of his spiritual background and concerns. The influence of al-Ghazālī and his direct student Qādi Abu Bakr is not *per se* perceived in the *ders kalāmī* since their books

⁸⁹ Ibn Abī Zar’ al-Fāsī, ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd Allāh, *Kitāb al-anīs al-muṭrib bi-rawḍ al-qirṭās fi akhbār mulūk al-Maghrib wa tārikh madīnat Fās, Dār al-‘Irḥān, Rabat, 1993, 349*

⁹⁰ Bakhtī, 151, 179-183; pivotal spiritual figures within this movement are al-Ṣamaḍ b. Nimrī (d. 614/1217) and al-Kharrijī (d. 603/1206)

⁹¹ Our focus is here on the *Irshād* commentaries that have a direct influence or reference in the al-Sanūsī works or of his teachers but there are many more pivotal commentaries not mentioned such as the commentaries of Ibn Dihāq (d. 611/1214), al-Māzīrī (d. 529/1135), Ibn Bazīza (d. 662/1264)

⁹² With regards to how al-Ghazālī develops Juwaynī’s epistemological project see Eichner, 171-213

were not studied that much in the region, but it is rather the attractiveness of Ghazali's methodological approach which provided a synthesis of the three sciences that the Maghrebi scholars were keen to hold together in their educational and theological approach.



2.5. The generational waves of Ash‘arī consolidation in the Maghrib

By the 13-14th century the Maghrib witnesses a progressed emphasis on studying the rational sciences and especially *‘ilm al-kalam*, based upon local commentaries on the *Burhāniyya* and the *Irshād* and to a lesser extent Baqillāni’s *Tamhīd*. While the central node seemed to have been al-Qayrawān (Tunis) and Fez for the 12-13th century, in the 14-15th century the emergence of commentaries and scholars in the Tlemcen seems to indicate a shift of the node of intellectual activity. Ultimately, as mentioned before, the *Burhāniyyah* serves as a gateway to a mastery of the *Irshād* but with the Maghribi characteristics of how this science ought to be approached and studied. Worth mentioning are Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Imām (d. 743/1342) and his brother Abū ‘Īsa al-Imām (d.749/1348).⁹³ These brothers are the main teachers of al-Ābilī (d. 757/1356) and Muhammad Sharīf al-Tilimsānī (d. 772/1370) both of whom will be the direct teachers of b. Khaldūn⁹⁴, b. ‘Arafah, and Sa‘ad al-‘Uqbānī. This generation of influential students of the brothers al-Imām, and in particular of Abū ‘Īsā b. al-Imām, will end up teaching and influencing the Maghrebi pillar of the Māliki school — and pivotal node in the network of Maghribi theologians—b. Marzūq al-Ḥafīd (d. 843/1439), who stands as the major source for Sanusi’s teachers; whose senior students⁹⁵ in Tlemcen are Naṣr al-Zawāwī, Akbarkān, al-Tha‘ālabī and b. al-‘Abbās al-Tilimsānī. All of them are direct teachers of al-Sanūsī while the last two mentioned also have a commentary on the *Burhāniyya*.

⁹³ All of the reports mentioned here are found in the work of their student al-Maqqarī, *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍarāt*, 132-133. It is important to note that al-Sanūsī himself does not appear to be engaged with any of Ibn Taymiyya’s works or opinions. there is only a sporadic mention of Ibn Taymiyya in an anecdote on Ibn Zikrī in the *Kubrā* – the fact that he is mentioned there is an accident by virtue of the relevance of the quote cited from al-Maqqarī’s work with respect to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, rather than a judgement on Ibn Taymiyya’s work.

⁹⁴ Nassar, Nassif. “*Le maitre d’Ibn Khaldūn: Al-Ābilī*”. *Studia Islamica* 20 (1964): 103–14.

⁹⁵ Another younger student is the brilliant contemporary of al-Sanūsī Ibn Zikrī.

In sum, the generational waves of the *ders kalāmī* in the Maghrib start with the works and students of al-Bāqillānī, while the second wave focuses on al-Juwaynī's *Irshād*. This second wave also brings forth the *Burhāniyya* of al-Salālijī which consolidates into being the first *Maghribi* textbook for the *ders kalāmi* that is also a standard textbook for the study of *ʿĀqīda*. A third wave of more advanced and intensified studies in *kalām* occurs through the commentaries and critical abridgements (*ikhtiṣār*) of the works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 607/1210) primarily his *maʿālim fī usūl al-dīn* with the commentary of b. al-Tilimsānī⁹⁶ – and to lesser extent with al-Bayḍāwī's (d. 719/1319) *Matālīʿ al-Anwār* through the critical abridgement by the Tunisian scholar b. ʿArafah (d. 803/1401).⁹⁷ So by the time al-Sanūsī commences his early studies in Tlemcen the main works in the *ders kalāmī* in the Maghreb are al-Salālijī's *Burhāniyyah* with the Maghrebi commentaries and Al-Juwaynī's *Irshād* with particularly the commentary of the Alexandrian Taqī al-Dīn al-Muqtaraḥ⁹⁸ (d. 612/1215) playing a central role for the theologians of Tlemcen, as well as Razi's and Bayḍāwī's work. The landscape of the *ders kalāmi* in the Maghrib hence focused on the *Irshād* tradition with its various intra-movements, while the more advanced authorship and scholarship extended the landscape to engage with al-Rāzī and al-Bayḍāwī's theological works.

⁹⁶ Ibn al-Tilimsānī, Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad. *Sharḥ Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Nizār Ḥammādī. Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1432/2011.

⁹⁷ Ibn ʿArafah, Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad. *al-Mukhtaṣar al-kalāmī*. Edited by Nizār Ḥammādī. Tunis: Dār al-Imām Ibn ʿArafah, 1435/2014.

⁹⁸ al-Muqtaraḥ, Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad. *Sharḥ al-ʿĀqīda al-burhāniyya wa al-fuṣūl al-īmāniyya*, ed. Nizar Hammadi, Kuwait: Manshurāt Maktabat al-Sunna, 2009.

2.6. Intellectual biography of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī

Al-Sanūsī's biography and general overview of his legacy has been established in several primary works. The earliest reference is the biography written by his direct student al-Mallālī (fl. 899/1494), which served as the foundational text for later biographies⁹⁹. For the purpose of this study I will provide a concise overview of al-Sanūsī's intellectual achievements and the historical intellectual context as well as some elements from al-Sanūsī as a person; often these anecdotes and observations give a revealing perspective on how personal traits affect one's approach to scholarship, the relationship to the *locale* and trends within scholarly circles, while also unveiling which elements for a normative project receive more attention based on their perception of the societal needs and scholarly lacunes. This certainly aids to understanding the concept of the scholarly saint which becomes the archetype and standard of excellence that is aimed for in these centuries. Al-Sanūsī lived during the Saadian Sultanate (1510-1659). Tlemcen had already been established as the epicentre for the Islamic intellectual elite of the region and the continent. The reign of the first *sharīfian* dynasty – and the subsequent implied legitimacy since the *Idrisids* – as also the sultanate's passion and patronage of the sciences – all made it the capital for refugees, scholars Christian¹⁰⁰, Jewish¹⁰¹ and Islamic, all of whom had been expelled from the Andalusian Peninsula. Al-Sanūsī was born into a family of respected scholars on the outskirts of Tlemcen. His father, Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 844/1440), was known in Tlemcen as a pious and knowledgeable man who devoted

⁹⁹ The subsequent biographical literature, primarily based on Mallālī's work, are al-Bustān by the historian Muḥammad Ibn Maryam (d. 1014/1605) which focuses on the scholarly saints of Tlemcen, *Nayl al-Ibtihāj* by Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbukṭī (d. 1036/1627) which is an appendix of his *Dibāj* with a focus on Maliki scholars, and Muḥammad Ibn 'Askar's *Dawḥat al-Nāshir* (d. 986/1578).

¹⁰⁰ Tarek Ladjal, John Caruana. The Christian presence in North Africa under Almoravids Rule (1040–1147 CE): Coexistence or eradication?, Gent: Cogent Arts & Humanities, 2017. 41,

¹⁰¹ Ageron Charles-Robert. Chemouilli (Henri) : Une Diaspora méconnue : les Juifs d'Algérie. In: *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, tome 64, n°237, 4e trimestre 1977. pp. 548-549 and Schwarzfuchs, Simon. 1995. Tlemcen: mille ans d'histoire d'une communauté juive. Paris: La Fraternelle, Union nationale des amis de Tlemcen.

his time offering instruction in the Quranic sciences at the local madrasa. Certain later sources¹⁰² suggest that he instructed at the famous *Ya'qubiyya madrasa*, considered the most prestigious madrasa of Tlemcen, where his son Muḥammad b. al-Sanūsī would also receive his early formal instruction. (However there's no concrete evidence of this element in the early biographies.) Al-Sanūsī's father was also his first teacher (*shaykh al-ta'lim*) of the primers of the foundational sciences, and it's reasonable to assume that Sanūsī's aptitude for educating the class of nominal Muslims is inspired by his father's legacy. Al-Sanūsī is considered a *sharīf*, descendent of the prophet Muḥammad ﷺ from his paternal side through Muḥammad b. Idrīs, the progeny of Rahmūn al-Qāṭanūn from Banī Asnūs, with several branches all across the Maghrib, The branch in the desert around Tlemcen became most famous for bringing forth the “reviver of the sunnah, the killer of innovation, and author of works in creed that have benefitted all corners of the world”¹⁰³ From his mother's side al-Sanūsī has an older (half-)brother by the name 'Alī al-Tālūtī al-Anṣārī (b. 895/1489) who instructed al-Sanūsī at an early age into several sciences but at a later stage of al-Sanūsī's life al-Anṣārī became his travel- and study-companion during the classes (*ḥalaqāt*) and *suḥba* with several pivotal teachers. In his biography on al-Sanūsī al-Mallālī mentions that al-Sanūsī had a sister who passed away at a young age during al-Sanūsī's youth. Al-Mallālī also notes that al-Sanūsī was in the habit of frequently visiting and honoring her grave.¹⁰⁴ As far as the sources inform us, al-Sanūsī was married to a certain 'Ā'isha who was of similar age, and a woman of saintly nature. Despite her absence in the biographical entries and literature, she is a valuable source of

¹⁰² al-Bustān, 87

¹⁰³ see 'Abd-Allah Ḥashlāf al-Mustaghānāmī, *Silsila al-Usūl fī Sajara Abnā al-Rasūl, Maktaba Babylon, Libanon, 2004, 87*. Note that the attribution of a prophetic lineage via his father is contested even amongst the biographers. Al-Mallālī for example brings the lineage back through the mother of his father whilst Ibn Maryam opts for the *aṣl* to be his mother, which is then picked up in later biographical entries such as al-Zarkalī without historical assessment.

¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately her grave is unmarked on the premises of the sidī Sanūsī graveyard in current Tlemcen. The premises of the graveyard are named after al-Sanūsī whom was considered a Saint of God (*Walīy-u-Allah*) already during his lifetime and remained to be revered as such after his passing.

conversation and information for al-Mallālī's biography of al-Sanūsī. One of the pivotal events in al-Sanūsī's education, especially with regards to the rational sciences (*al-ʿaqliyyāt*), is known through her narrations of the event. Somewhere prior to his authorship of the *Kubrā* al-Sanūsī hosted the mysterious scholar Abū Qāsim al-Kanābshī al-Bijā'ī¹⁰⁵ (fl. 1460?)¹⁰⁶ for a whole lunar month at his private quarters in the outskirts of Tlemcen. In attendance was his fellow-student and half-brother ʿAlī al-Tālūtī al-Anṣārī. On the final day of the lunar month they reportedly completed the study and reading of “a book in *Tawhīd*”¹⁰⁷, which, according to al-Mallālī, must have been Juwaynī's (d. 478/1085) *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā Qawāṭiʿ al-Adillah fi Uṣūl al-ʾItiqād* (*A Guide to the Conclusive Proofs for the Principles of Belief*). Though we do not have a lot of information on al-Kanābshī it is clear that the private tuition and residence of Kinābshī in Tlemcen had a profound impact on al-Sanūsī.

2.7. Muḥammad al-Sanūsī and the signs of sainthood

Al-Sanūsī's student-disciple— and first biographer/hagiographer— al-Mallālī, offers a fascinating insight into al-Sanūsī's upbringing and character with a particular focus on the saintly characteristics displayed by al-Sanūsī from a young age.¹⁰⁸ Already as a young child he was known for his shyness, his sincerity and calmness, to the extent that al-Mallālī mentions that al-Sanūsī —against the grain of usual pedagogical methods— was never physically punished during his classes, since his teachers foresaw and feared in him the signs of sainthood (*wilāyah*). As the traditional curriculum prescribes, his early

¹⁰⁵ Al-Kinābshī would be an interesting figure to study yet his scholarly life seems to have fallen between the cracks of the *tabaqāt* on North-African saints and scholars. For a reference see Mawāhib, 70 who only mentions his name; while Tinbuktū classifies him as bijā'ī in Nayl, 372

¹⁰⁶ Since there's no reference or dating in any of the biographical entries on the scholars of Beja or Tlemcen we based this date on the publication of the *Wuṣṭā* (anno 1471) and the note of Mallālī that al-Sanūsī wrote his *Kubrā* and other commentaries in a short period of time after having benefitted from all his teachers: Mawāhib, 278

¹⁰⁷ Mawāhib, 349, Nayl, 187

¹⁰⁸ It is interesting to note that the early biographies up until Ibn Maryam refer to al-Sanūsī as Muḥammad al-Sanūsī while in later biographies and commentaries on his work it is reduced to al-Sanūsī. His theological legacy weighs on his name.

intensive training focused on the various Quranic recitations with his *ijāza* coming from a double complete reading of the Quran with Abu al-Hujāj Yusuf b. Abū al-‘Abbās. In a similar vein his companionship and studies, at a very young age, with the saint Muḥammad al-Ḥassan b. Makhlūf, known as Abarkān al-Rāshidī (d.857/1453) suggest the potential that was witnessed in the young al-Sanūsī’s character and intellect. Abarkān, ‘dark-skinned’ in the Amazigh dialect, was already in his own lifetime considered one of the major saints of Tlemcen and in the subsequent years to be considered as one of the great saints of the Maghrib in general. It is a recurring anecdote that through the supplications (*du‘ā*) of this saintly teacher that Muḥammad al-Sanūsī ended up being known as *al-Sanūsī*, writer of the *Sanūsiyyah*, and defender of the Sunni Creed. In comparison with his contemporaries and the earlier generation of scholars of the region, al-Sanūsī is atypical in his limited scholarly travels. Most of his teachers, if not all, are known for their travels to the East for the sake of retrieving knowledge. The main reason for this seems to be the constant upheaval, wars and news of the Spanish Reconquista progressing with violent strides in Andalusia; as well as the subsequent surge of tribal raiders on travel routes due to the political instability¹⁰⁹ which not only slowed down professional mobility but also caused the fleeing bands of senior scholars to take up residence in or near Tlemcen. Al-Mallāli considers only two travels noteworthy of mentioning in his biography of al-Sanūsī.¹¹⁰ First, a trip to Algiers to visit ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tha‘alabī (b. 785/1385) and secondly a trip to visit Ibrahīm al-Tāzī (d. 866/1462), who resided in Oran at the time. Both figures are not only scholars in their own right but are also pivotal disseminators of the Maghribī Sufi tradition. It comes to no

¹⁰⁹ Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā’*, v. 8, 15.

¹¹⁰ Mawāhib, 288. Karīmullah in his unpublished MA thesis on Zarrūq (2007, p.108) mentions that al-Zarrūq might have studied and met al-Sanūsī in Cairo which is highly unlikely since the early biographies do not mention a trip to Cairo and on the contrary make note of a short stay by al-Zarrūq in Tlemcen prior to heading to Cairo.

surprise that these two visits prove influential in shaping al-Sanūsī's spiritual life and his pedagogical approach when authoring his *kalāmi* works. As a young, already established scholar and teacher, he was known for his meticulous discipline and routine. Mallālī narrates:

Al-Sanūsī would pray his five congregational prayers in the mosque, often leading the prayer himself, and would study and busy himself with litanies till breakfast. Afterwards he'd free himself for an hour to stand in [front of] his courtyard greeting and conversing with the people. Fellow-residents would to request supplications, legal opinions or spiritual advice. The remaining of his day would be devoted to deep reading (*muṭāla'a*) up until Maghrib. After the final congregational prayer he would busy himself with copying manuscripts (*naskh*) or study for an hour after which he'd be found in prayer till sunrise, with only a few hours of sleep.¹¹¹

There are several anecdotes of royal visitors, including Abū 'Abd-Allah the Sultan of Tlemcen, wanting to meet al-Sanūsī or read a particular *hadith* collection or *tafsir* with the "Master of Tlemcen". Al-Sanūsī, displaying a pietistic phobia for involvement of scholars with sultans, would anticipate their request and arrival by sending out a message that — due to shyness before their majesty— he would not be able to speak or teach in front of him; hence in order to not be put to shame in front of a public he had to kindly refuse lecturing them. We notice similar convictions expressed in al-Sanūsī's hagiographical work *al-Tayqīd fī al-Manāqib al-arba'a*.¹¹² Throughout the *Mawāhib* al-Mallālī, as well as Ibn Maryam in his *Bustān*, praise al-Sanūsī's resolution and active avoidance of any association with men of political

¹¹¹ Mawahib, 73

¹¹² Manāqib, 76-88

stature. His attitude stands in stark difference with major scholars in the region. Al-Sanūsī's resolution even went to the extreme that whenever invited to a wedding celebration (*walīmah*) of influential families he would often hide and discontinue lecturing a few days prior to the celebration in order to ensure he was not invited. A similar trend is noticeable in his oeuvre, of which not a single one is dedicated to a sultan or any political figure of importance. This is a rather stark contrast with the Ishrāqī kalāmī tradition where these works are often dedicated to the political patron or Sultan.¹¹³ Obvious examples that are implied by these scholars are the laudatory remarks in Ījī's introduction to the *mawāqif*, or to Jurjānī's commentary on the *Mawāqif*, and even al-Juwaynī's *Nizāmiyya*. It's the interplay of being commissioned, ordained and remaining close to the patronage, thereby dedicating the production of a certain work to a patron in power, for scholars in volatile societies— which is rampant in the Maghrib too under the Almohad dynasty— that seems to be halted in the post-classical Maghrib tradition around the time of al-Sanūsī. Al-Sanūsī's introductions to his work are actually an excellent example of the complete opposite approach. In the introduction of his auto-commentary on the *Kubrā*, and to a certain extent in the introduction to his *Wuṣṭā*, he explicitly states that what motivated him to author these creedal works and explain them is solely his compassion (*shafaqah*) for the wellbeing of the Islamic Community (*Umma*). This declaration connects with the principle that drives all of al-Sanūsī's theological works. A little further in the introduction of the commentary on his *Kubrā*, as well as in the *Sughrā*, he points out that it is not the conventional problem of *taqlīd* that is the main issue he wants to address —because he will even state that's a too optimistic conclusion of the state of the commonfolk (*al-awāmm*); but al-Sanūsī observes that most people in his *locale* are not even able to get

¹¹³ Khālid Zahri considers this point one of the main tendencies of the later Sanūsī tradition, see Khālid Zahri, *Al-Fiqh al-Mālikī Wa-al-Kalām al-Ash'arī: Muḥāwalah Li-Ibrāz Ba'ḍ Malāmiḥ al-Ibdā' al-Kalāmī Wa-al-Ṣūfi 'inda Fuqahā' al-Maghrib*, (al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Dār al-Rashād al-Ḥadīthah, 2011), 74–91.

to a form of *taqlid* that could be considered an externally correct —but internally problematic— *taqlid*, i.e., a *taqlid sahih mutaba‘ lil-wāqi*¹¹⁴ since they are merely imitating their ‘correct’ beliefs from a source that itself is not even aware if these beliefs are correct. As mentioned earlier these anecdotes, while seemingly trivial for discussing al-Sanūsī’s theological legacy, are a treasure trove for understanding the *raison d’être*, and the context in which he authors his creedal works. In the same vein his education and educational environment reveal that we cannot sum up his creedal works and the positions he takes, nor can we limit al-Sanūsī to being a dry rationalist theologian, rigorously trained in the theoretical sciences in order to defend the faith against foreign arguments and reasoning, as he is often depicted in modern and contemporary literature.¹¹⁵ It suffices to note that there was a holistic education through the gatherings and sitting with the saints and scholars of Tlemcen. In a similar vein the information in the biographies does not limit itself to informing on which books he studied with which scholar, but are also providing fascinating material on the scholarly dynamics – i.e., the immaterial culture and product of scholarly circles – through these anecdotes. In what follows I want to briefly introduce his main teachers, point out the unique relationship with them and how his main teachers instil in al-Sanūsī the Maghribī conceptualisation of the purpose and direction of creedal works.

¹¹⁴ *Kubrā*, 141

¹¹⁵ With the development of Wahhabism, the salafi movement and the identity politics of the 21st century al-Sanūsī is often reduced to a static image stripped from his spiritual and fiqhī scholarly contributions and framework and merely a component and instigator of the cultural decline. Similar ideas are expressed in Halverson, J. 2010. *Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam :The Muslim Brotherhood, Ash'arism, and Political Sunnism*. 1st ed. 2010.

3. CHAPTER THREE: A STRUCTURE ANALYSIS OF AL-SANŪSĪ'S

CREEDAL WORKS

3.1. The structure and purpose of the Major Creed (al-Kubrā)

It is clear from the structure of the *Kubrā* that it is greatly inspired and affected by al-Sanūsī's reading and mastery of Juwaynī's *Irshād*. To the extent that the *Kubrā* can even be considered a critical abridgement (*mukthaṣar*) on the *Irshād*, where theological and philosophical engagements on creedal matters remain dominant over the concern of *taqlīd*, and the subsequent content of religious instruction, which characterises Sanūsī's later work from the *Sughrā* onwards. In terms of works cited, it seems al-Sanūsī was mostly familiar with the gloss of Taqī al-dīn al-Muqtaraḥ and Sharīf al-Dīn b. al-Tilimsānī, as well as the commentaries on the *burhāniyya*. These recur as the most frequent used sources in the *Kubrā* alongside the works of al-Rāzī and al-Taftazānī

- o. The commentary starts with the a lengthy introduction regarding the first necessity or obligation for the morally responsible (*mukallaḥ*).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ This sets the tone for the subsequent works: "What we have gone over in this creed – i.e., that the first obligation is inquiry – is the position of a group of scholars including al-Shaykh al-Ash'arī. Meanwhile, the ustādh and Imām al-Ḥaramayn held that the first obligation was the intend to inquire, that is, directing the self toward inquiry by eliminating obstacles to it, such as arrogance, envy, and hatred for the scholars who call to the path of God the Exalted, and purifying the heart of these vices is the first guidance from God to His servants. The Qāḍī stated: the first obligation is the first part of inquiry. It has also been said that the first obligation is knowledge, and it is attributed to the Shaykh; but in reality, it does not differ from what was mentioned prior, because this view is in regard to the first obligation that is sought in itself, and the other is in regard to what is the first act of obedience and performance. I only selected from these positions that the first obligation is inquiry due to the repeated exhortations to reflect in the Book and the Prophetic norms, to the extent that it almost became an end in itself in contrast to all other mediums, for those [obligations] are derived only from the principle that states: the imperative to perform an act is the imperative to do all that this act is dependent upon from the actions of the moral agent, and on this principle there is disagreement. Lastly, reflection is sufficient for knowledge of God even without a teacher, against the *Ismā'īliyya*; indeed, without a teacher it may be very difficult." *Kubrā*, 183 translation kindly provided from the unpublished translation by A. Mihirig. A very long footnote; reason?

1. [Necessities and Impossibilities] Description of the several ways through which a nominal believer can authenticate their faith (*khurūj min al-taqlīd*) by observance of the *mawjūdāt* and reach the (binding) conclusion regarding the existence of God [i.e., God's Essence]
2. Necessity of the belief in the Eternality of God
3. Necessity of the belief in the Permanence of God
4. Necessity of belief in the attribution of absolute Will and Power to God
5. God's Divine Knowledge
6. The divine attribute of Life
7. The necessity of belief in God as Knowing , Hearing, Speaking, Seeing which are to be relied on through revealed evidence.
8. The necessity of the subsistence of the Real Attributes (*sifāt al-ma'ānī*) in God's Essence.
9. Affirmation of the (eternality) of the Real Attributes
10. Against the *Falāsifa* on the question of the Attributes
11. Unity of the Attributes [which al-Sanūsī connects with the impossibility of the human power (*qudra*) as having any causal effect (*ta'thīr*) via the theory of human acquisition (*Kasb*)].
12. [Possibilities] the beatific vision
13. On the Freedom of God's actions [includes the creation of mankind and their acts and relating to it the classic Ash'arī principle that God is not bound in his actions (*lā yajibu 'alayhi shay*)]
14. Illustrating the invalidity of Universal Moral Goods and Evils (*taḥsīn* and *taqbīḥ*)
15. God's choice of sending Messengers and providing divine assistance to their Message with Miracles

16. [The necessities of Prophethood] The necessity of the sincerity (*ṣidq*) of the Messengers
17. The prophethood of Mohammed, the Final Messenger, and his Miracle of the Quran
18. The necessity of belief in the sincerity of the prophet Muḥammad and thereby in the Quran and whatever else he ordained and came with.
19. Here al-Sanūsī finishes the chapter on Prophethood and offers a series of remarks (*tanbiḥāt*) that do not fall under the modal structure he intended to adhere to. These remarks include elements such as the belief in the corruption of previous revelations, the *ḍawābiṭ of ta'wīl*, and some elements of the discussions regarding the matters of the unseen (*ghaybiyāt*)
20. The text ends with a supplication that centres around a plea to God for making the *Kubrā* a means for strengthening the faith.

3.1.1. Network description of commentaries and glosses written on the Major Creed from al-Sanūsī to the 17th Century

In what follows we describe a non-exhaustive list of the commentaries on the *Kubrā* in 15-17th century Maghrib, with a focus on those that often mentioned in the *ṭabaqāt* literature and in the commentaries on the text in particular.

1. Auto commentary of al-Sanūsī¹¹⁷
2. Ibrahīm b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Fajjī (d. 920/1514). This is the earliest commentary on the *Kubrā* that is known since al-Fajjī is a direct student of al-Sanūsī

¹¹⁷ The list is sorted by the death date or estimation of the author since we don't have exact author details for most of these commentaries and glosses.

3. Marzūq al-Kafif reportedly has a *mukthaṣar* titled *‘Aqīdah ahl al-Tawḥīd al-Mukhrija min Dalmat al-Taqlīd*.¹¹⁸
4. Shorter gloss on the *Kubrā* by Abū al-‘Abbās b. ‘Alī al-Manjūr al-Maknāsī al-Fāsī (d. 1587/995)
5. Advanced Comm. on the *Kubrā* by Abu al-‘Abbās b. ‘Alī al-Manjūr al-Maknāsī al-Fāsī (d. 1587/995)
6. Taqyīdāt al-*Kubrā* by ‘Ali b. Aḥmad al-Rasmūkī (d. 1049/1639)¹¹⁹
7. b. ‘Abd-Allah b. Ya‘qūb al-Samlālī, a prominent Nāsirī scholar from Marrakech (d. 1058/1648)
8. Gloss on Comm. *Kubrā* by Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Sulaymān al-Raḥmānī (d. 1065/1655)¹²⁰
9. Gloss on Comm. by Abū Ḥassan al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691)
10. Muḥammad B. Ibrahīm (ca. 1097/1685) titled: *‘Aqīda tukhriju min Ḍulmāt Ṣamīn al-taqlīd ilā daw’ al-dalīl*.¹²¹
11. Comm. by Abu Ḥafṣ ‘Umar b. ‘Abd Allah al-Fāsī al-Fihri (d. 1188/1774)¹²²
12. Gloss on Comm. by Abu Abd Allah Muḥammad b. Sa‘īd al-Manṣūrī al-Salwī (d. 1142/1729)¹²³
13. Several glosses by ‘Alī al-‘Akārī. His glosses can be considered an advanced exposition and engagement with the *Kubrā*,¹²⁴ was also known for teaching from the *Kubrā* during his advanced classes in Egypt.

¹¹⁸ Khālīd Zahrī, *Mīn ‘ilm Al-Kalām Ilā Fiqh al-Kalām: Muqāraba Li-Ibrāz Ma‘ālim al-Tajdīd al-Kalāmī ‘ind Fuqahā’ Wa-Ṣūfiyat al-Maghrib*, 157.

¹¹⁹ Hassaniyya mss 7699 [f.1-48]

¹²⁰ Mentioned by al-Maqqarī in his *Rawḍat al-ās*, high probability that Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya, MS no. 4673 is this commentary but has not been verified as of yet; Or could be a Gloss of al-Fāsī’s work on the *Kubrā* see Maṣādir, 678.

¹²¹ MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya, no. 14033, folio 232-236

¹²² Ṭalā’ī‘ al-bushrā fīmā yata‘allaq bi-Sharḥ al-‘aqīdah al-Kubrā

¹²³ Al-munza‘ al-laṭīf by Abd al-Rahman al Zaydān mentions this gloss.

¹²⁴ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Wallālī, *Mabāḥith al-anwār fī akhbār ba‘d al-akhyār*, ed. ‘Abd al- ‘Azīz. Bū ‘Aṣṣāb (Rabat: Jāmi‘at Muḥammad al-Khāmīs, Manshūrāt Kulliyat al-Ādāb wa-l- ‘Ulūm al-Insāniyah, 1999), 208

3.2. The structure and purpose of the Middle Creed (al-Wuṣṭā)

If the *Kubrā* can be considered as al-Sanūsī's theological engagement with the *Irshād* then the 'simplification' of the *Kubrā* into the *Wuṣṭā* –upon demand of his community – gives a first glance into the pedagogical method for religious instruction which he has in mind and which comes to full fruition in the *Sughrā*.

The introduction of the text, like in the *Kubrā*, frames the problem that this book attempts to resolve: the blind-acceptance of creedal matters, when a form of correct reasoning would illumine the reality of faith in the heart of the believer. The text continues the usage of the modal tripartite division to categorize all propositions that a believer is required to understand.

1. Arguments for the existence of God
 - a. Limiting the rational proofs to a discussion on the argument from the world's incipience (*hudūth*)
2. The Essence of God and His necessary attributes
 - a. Proofs for the knowability of God's essence based on the *hudūth* argument
3. Negative attributes
 - a. Rational proofs for the necessity of God's eternity
 - b. Rational proofs for the necessity of God's Permanence
 - c. Rational proofs for the necessity of his absolute Transcendence (*mukhālafatuhu li al-ḥawādith*)
4. The Real attributes

- a. Arguments against the existence of substantive attributes (refutation of the *Mu'tazili* position), against the absence of attributes (refutation of the *Falāsifa*)
 - b. God's Power
 - c. God's Will
 - d. God's Knowledge
 - e. The possible attributes affirmed by revelation as necessary: Hearing, Sight, Speech
 - f. The attribute of Life (or Giving Life, *muhyi*?)
 - g. Arguments for the unity (*wahdāniyya*) and eternity (*baqā*) of these divine attributes
5. [possibilities]
- a. Beatific vision
 - b. God's absolute freedom and independence towards human actions
6. Prophethood and Prophecy
- a. Proofs for the veracity of prophetic miracles and their conditions
 - b. The necessary attributes for Prophethood to be valid
 - c. The justification and elucidation on Abrogation in time of revelation (*naskh*)
7. Prophethood and Prophecy of the Final Messenger
- a. Proofs for the Quran as miracle
 - b. Proofs from previous revelations

Here al-Sanūsī finishes the chapter on the particular Prophethood and prophecy of the Final Messenger and offers a lengthy series of remarks (*tanbiḥāt*) that do not fall under the modal structure he intended

to adhere to hence get collated in the end. These remarks include elements such as the belief in the corruption of previous revelations, the reality of the (Saint of God) *Walī* and what a Saint's miracle (*karāma*) entails, the reality of magic (*siḥr*) and the occurrence of the evil eye (*īṣaba al-ʿayn*). Al-Sanūsī then devotes several pages to the need for repentance (*tawba*), the only way to redeem oneself from a disobedience (*fisq*) towards God's commandments. Finally, he discusses the principle of 'enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong' (*Amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahī ʿan al-munkar*). It is interesting to note that al-Sanūsī's ending (*khātima*) for the *Wustā* is a lengthy supplication of several pages invoking the Names of God and pleading for his assistance in aiding the followers of Muḥammad in maintaining on the Straight Path (?). The *Wustā* expresses al-Sanūsī's concern regarding the nominal believer and providing them with a general framework in which to understand creedal matters. The actual *matn* and subsequent commentary provide this 'guidance' through their strict adherence and application of the tripartite modal skeleton, while the *tanbihāt* are a mixture of *uṣūlī*, *fiqhī* and secondary theological observations that ought to be considered the fleshing of the skeleton in order to present a whole *weltanschauung*.

3.2.1. Network description of commentaries and glosses written on the Middle Creed from al-Sanūsī to 18th Century Maghrib

There seem to be no well-known commentaries on the *Wuṣṭā* up till the 17th century. A few manuscripts have been found with anonymous authorship.¹²⁵ The reason for this might be indeed that the *Wuṣṭā* ultimately is perceived as an abridgement of the *Kubrā*, Sanūsī's major work in *kalām*. As such the audience for both are the scholars who in their theological engagement would prefer the original work over an abridgement. It is interesting to note that by early 18th century this changed; a trend in *Wuṣṭā* commentaries particularly in and around al-Qayrawān can be discerned. The most prominent commentaries of that trend are:

- The gloss *al-hība wa al-‘aṭā fī sharḥ ‘aqīda al-Wuṣṭā* by Abu Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Sarqastī al-Tunīsī (d.1180/1710)
- Naẓm ‘alā sharḥ ‘aqīda al-Wuṣṭā by Ahmād b. Qāsim al-Bayūnī (d. 1139/1723)
- Gloss by Muhammad b. ‘Abd-Allah Zaytūna al-manastīrī (d. 1138/ 1725)
- ḥāshiya āla al-‘aqīda al-Wuṣṭā, Maḥmūd Maqḍīs al-Ṣafāqīsī al-Tūnisī (d. 1228/1772)
- Sharḥ al-Wuṣṭā, Ḥamūda al-Tunīsī (d. 1202/1788)

¹²⁵ Wisnovsky in his enumeration of the post-classical *kalam* sources mentions several commentaries on Sanūsī's work but not a single commentary on the *Wuṣṭā*. See: Wisnovsky, Robert. 2004. "The Nature And Scope Of Arabic Philosophical Commentary In Post-classical (Ca. 1100-1900 Ad) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations." *Bulletin - Institute of Classical Studies* 47 (S83PART2). 185-186; for the mention of the commentaries with undisclosed authors see: al-Zahrī, Maṣādir, 497.

3.3. The structure and purpose of the Preliminaries (al-Muqadimāt)

With the *Muqadimāt* we reach the fork in al-Sanūsī's writing. Where the *Kubrā*, the *Wuṣṭā*, and their commentaries focus on a *kalāmi* engagement – in line with the Maghribi *Irshād* tradition –, the *Muqadimāt* is the first work that displays al-Sanūsī's shift and focus on establishing his unique mode of religious instruction. Prior to instructing the nominal Muslim on the path of knowledge Sanusi's emphasis is on the building of virtuous character as a prerequisite. When once asked why the science of *tawḥīd* matters and takes precedent over the study of fiqh he replied:

And of the apparent (*dhāhir*) sciences there is none that enables the knowledge and awareness (*muraqabatihī*) except *ilm al-Tawḥīd* and by it one receives the grace of understanding in the other sciences. And depending on the level of *ma'rifa* of Him, Exalted be He and awareness of Him - will one's awe of Him increase and thereby also the proximity of the servant to their Lord.¹²⁶

With his response al-Sanūsī illustrates not only the classification of this science as the *first science* but also its importance for the development of a relation to God, hence bringing it back to the intimate existential level. It is also in this context, of the pedagogical aim for the student of knowledge, that al-Sanūsī often advises the abstinence—for the non-scholar—from creedal works that are steeped a little too much in the arguments and words of the philosophers. The argument is that this mixture of creedal

¹²⁶ mawāhib, 277

terminology and creedal-oriented arguments with philosophical arguments and terminology will leave the novice confused and unable to build a coherent and strong worldview.¹²⁷ There's a practical and spiritual concern at stake here for al-Sanūsī.¹²⁸ Ultimately, what Sanusi is aiming to achieve is the establishment of fundamental cognitive frameworks or a *Weltanschauung* that is firmly set prior to exploring the horizons of other *Welts*. The *Muqadimāt* concerns itself primarily with establishing the definitions and terminology upon which the next text, i.e., *Sughrā*, will rely on. In the classic sense one could say that the purpose of the *Muqadimāt* is the conceptualisation of the terms (*taṣawwur*) while the *Sughrā* aims to exclusively focus validating these terms and their relations (*taṣdīq*) through rational and revelational proofs.

In terms of structure it consists of eight preliminaries that ought to suffice the nominal Muslim to commence the (correct) reasoning with regards to the creedal tenets of his faith. They are a combination of epistemological concerns—often found in the *uṣul al-fiqh* literature—and differentiating terms that are often conflated in their epistemic value (e.g. the common misconception that innovation (*bid'ā*) is a theological matter instead of a legal (*fiqhī*) matter.

- 1st preliminary: The division of the concept of 'judgement' (*ḥukm*) but rather than limiting the focus on the rational judgement, as maintained in the *Kubrā* and *Sughrā* he expands on the

¹²⁷ Al-Sanūsī refers to the books of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Bayḏāwī as examples of this mixed methodology. However, this does mean they ought not be studied or engaged. As we've illustrated above, his *Kubrā* relies heavily on Rāzī's works and has the occasional reference to Bayḏāwī's work. It is the clear purpose of a text and the targeted audience which al-Sanūsī makes the basis for his statement.

¹²⁸ Sanūsī's mode of religious instruction is impregnated with elements of his spiritual background and education. In his own pedagogical approach he reprimanded students for taking a teacher in whom they did not discern the qualities of virtue. The transfer of knowledge requires the *sincere companionship* (*suḥba*) of a person. Since the companionship of a person, despite their extensive knowledge, who is steeped in vice will naturally rot the companionship and do more harm than good. *Rasā'il*, 68.

remaining two forms of judgement in the classic tripartite division of the rational, natural and conventional.

- 2nd Preliminary: On the nature of human acts, free will, and the three different dominant interpretations on free will within Islamic thought, i.e., the *jabariyya*, the *qādiriyyah* and the *ahl al-sunna*.
- 3rd Preliminary: on the nature and different types of *Shirk*
 1. The *shirk* of independence (*istiqlāl*): against the conception of the Magians
 2. The *shirk* of associating multiple (*tabʿīdh*): which is to compose one god out of many, such as the polytheism of Christians.
 3. The *shirk* of proximity (*taqrīb*): against the understanding of the pre-Islamic Arab culture.
 4. The polytheism of imitation (*taqlīd*)
 5. The *shirk* of holding on to proximate causes (*al-asbāb*): which is to attribute to empirical or nomic causes. Against the understanding of the Philosophers and the material scientists.
 6. The polytheism of hypocrisy (*al-aghrād*): which is to perform acts for other than Allah.
- 4th Preliminary: Seven categories of disbelief (*kufr*) and [blameworthy] innovation (*bidʿa*)
 1. Necessary causation (*al-tjāb al-dhātī*):
 2. Rationalization (*al-tahsīn al-ʿaqlī*)

3. Blameworthy imitation (*al-taqlīd al-radī'*)
4. Empirical correlation (*imān bi al-asbāb*)
5. Compound ignorance (*al-lahl al-murakkab*)
6. Literalism (*fahm'alā al-dhawāhir*)
7. Ignorance of evident principles and knowledge: e.g., grammar, axioms of logic

- 5th Preliminary: The four categories of existent things with regard to the substrate (*al-maḥall*) and the determinant (*al-mukhaṣṣis*)
- 6th Preliminary: The six contrary correlatives (*mutaqābilāt*) of contingent things (*mumkināt*)
- 7th Preliminary: On the eternity of certain Divine attributes
- 8th Preliminary: Elucidation on the definition of trust (*amānah*), and betrayal (*khiyānah*) which prepares the ground for understanding the necessary attributes required for prophethood to be successful.

3.3.1. Network description of commentaries and glosses written on the Preliminaries from al-Sanūsī to 17th Century Maghrib

1. *Al-Mawāhib al-ladhuniyya fī sharḥ 'alā al-muqadimāt al-Sanūsīyyah*; Abu Ishāq al-Sarqastī al-Andalusī (d. 1091)
2. *Risalāh fī 'aqā'id ahl al-Sunnah*; Abū 'abd-Allah al-Ghumārī al-Tunsi.(d. 1119). This seems to be an organic commentary on the *muqadimat* and the *Sughrā* where the *preliminaries* are

integrated in the first chapter and where he dives into the same terminology and definitions as in al-Sanūsī's *muqadimāt*.

3.4. The structure and purpose of the Minor Creed (al-Sughrā) and its relation to the Preliminaries, the Major and Middle Creed.

The *Sughrā* can be considered as the work that received the highest number of commentaries, and enjoyed the widest global reception while igniting an array of intense discussions on some of the theological positions it supports. This is not only for the Maghribī intellectual landscape but for the Sunni landscape of 17-20th century in general.¹²⁹

The first part of the *Sughrā* has a similar pattern to the *Kubrā* and *Wuṣṭā* in that it highlights the importance of authenticating one's faith (*khurūj min al-taqlīd*) through a better —more correct and intimate— understanding of the tenets of belief. It then continues in the same line by introducing the tripartite modal framework as guideline to understand divinity and prophethood. Al-Sanūsī proceeds then with the four categories of divine attributes that make up a total of twenty attributes. These are the same as in the *Kubrā* but due to the smaller structure of the *Sughrā* as well as delaying the proofs for each attribute for the second part of the *Sughrā* make it a much clearer structure. It's this categorization of 20 attributes that becomes dominant in the theological legacy of al-Sanūsī with local particularities such as the Malay-archipelago tradition where the eight *sifāt ma'nawiyya* are considered

¹²⁹ Wisnovsky, Robert. 2004. "The Nature And Scope Of Arabic Philosophical Commentary In Post-classical (Ca. 1100-1900 Ad) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations, 7

identical to the *ṣifāt al-maʿānī* and thereby this tradition propagates a 13-*sifat* tradition.¹³⁰ Notice how the proofs for the attributes are not mentioned with each issue but preceded by the summation of the creedal statements and only afterwards an expansion on the rational proofs is provided. This seems to be done as a methodological concern where one could suffice with reading the creedal statements first and then relate to their rational proofs.

In the second part of the *Sughrā*, al-Sanūsī brilliantly illustrates how all the rationalized tenets of belief are found in the testimony of faith; which he succinctly illustrates to then remind the reader of the crucial importance of the *Shahada* and its meanings and that the *dhikr* of the *shahādah* and the contemplation on it will increase understanding of the pivotal creedal matters that authenticate belief. It shows again how al-Sanūsī's theological approach remains embedded in a spiritual concern for the nominal believer. The *Sughrā* is the first text where the core beliefs are summarized and organized without too many addenda. In overall one could schematize the core beliefs and structure adhered to in the *Sughrā*, and thereby the structure, which is based on the modal qualifiers, adhered to by most commentators of al-Sanūsī's theological legacy.

¹³⁰ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The *ṣarḥ*/*ḥāṣhiya* Phenomenon in Southeast Asia", (MIDÉO, 32 | 2017), 27-52.

3.5. Schematization of the core beliefs as expressed in the *Sughrā*: Required beliefs regarding the divine as per modal qualifier

3.5.1. Necessity as the modal qualifier:

20 attributes in four categories: (essential attribute) Existence, (negative attributes) Unicity, Self-Subsistence, absolute transcendence, Permanence, Eternality, (Real attributes) Knowledge, Power, Life, Will, Speech, Hearing, Seeing, (Grounded attributes) Being All-Powerful (*qādiran*), Being All, Willing (*murīdan*), Being All-Knowing (*‘āliman*), Being Living (*ḥayyan*), Being All-Hearing (*samī’an*), Being All-Seeing (*basīran*) Being a Speaker (*mutakalliman*)

3.5.2. Impossibility as the modal qualifier

the 20 opposites for the necessary attributes: non-existence (*‘adam*), contingency (*hudūth*), annihilation (*fanā*), similitude (*mumāthala*), dependence (*iḥtiyāj*), multiplicity (*ta‘addud*), powerlessness (*‘ajz*), compulsion (*karāhah*), ignorance (*jahl*), death (*mawt*), deafness (*saman*), blindness (*āmā*), muteness (*bakam*), incapability (*‘ājiz*), compelled (*kārih*), ignorant (*jāhil*), dead (*mayyit*), deaf (*aṣamm*), blind (*a‘mā*) and mute (*abkam*)

3.5.3. Possibility as the modal qualifier

to act or not act upon all that falls under the modal qualifier of possibility, which is thereby a negative proposition of the aforementioned stipulations.

3.5.4. Required beliefs regarding prophethood as per modal qualifier

3.5.5. Necessity as the modal qualifier

the four attributes of truthful (*ṣidq*), trustworthy (*amānah*), intelligence (*faṭāna*) and being propagator for the ordained revelation (*tablīgh*)

3.5.6. impossibility as the modal qualifier

the four attributes of falsehood (*kadhib*), breach of trust (*khiyānah*), concealment (*kitmān*) and stupidity (*balādah*)

3.5.7. possibility as the modal qualifier

to be attributed with human traits that are not flaws, nor contradict their stature. Human attributes such as suffering an ailment are thereby possibilities for a Messenger

3.5.8. Network description of commentaries and glosses written on the Minor Creed from al-Sanūsī to 17th Century Maghrib

1. Auto commentary of al-Sanūsī.
2. Commentary by his direct student al-Mallālī. There's no reference to this commentary in Mallālī's *Mawāhib* so it's safe to assume that he wrote his commentary afterwards.
3. Al-Fajjī al-Tūzarī (d. 1048/1698) has a simplified commentary on the *Sughrā* (*unpublished*).

4. Most popular gloss on Comm *Sughrā* in the centuries around al-Sanūsī is by ‘Umar b. Muḥammad al-Kumād al-Anṣārī al-Qunsaṭīnī known as ‘Umar al-Wazzān (d. 965/1557-8)
5. *Ittiḥāf al-Maghrām al-Mughrī* comm. on the *Sughrā* by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqqarī al-Tilimsāni (d.1041/1632). Written in Fez in 1021/1612.
6. Commentary *Ittiḥāf al-mūridīn* by Abu Bakr al-Ghadamāsī (1094/1682).¹³¹
7. *I‘ānah al-mājidīn fī Tashiḥ al-ḍīn bi Umm al-barahīn* by Aḥmad ‘Arafah al-Shādili al-Maliki.¹³²
8. Gloss by Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Manjūr (d. 995/1587)
9. Commentary of al-Ḥafṣī al-Marākshī al-Tunṣī (d. 1037/1628) who mentions also in the introduction that he authored it for beginners and not for those who are steeped in this science.
10. Commentary by al-Samlālī al-Jazūlī (d. 1093/1682). Again a very simple commentary with an explicit mention that the focus is on the commonfolk.¹³³
11. Commentary on the *Sughrā* by Abu ‘Alī al-Ḥassan al-Hidājī al-Ma‘dānī (d. 1598/1006). Again a very pedagogical focused commentary.¹³⁴
12. Comm. on *Sughrā* by ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Aḥmad b. Khuddah al-Rāshidī¹³⁵
13. Comm on *Sughrā* by Abu ‘Abbas Aḥmad b. Aqdār al-Rāshidī (d. 1532/939). These two scholars, b. Khuddah and b. Aqdār, are two junior students of al-Sanūsī to whom the spread of Sanusi’s work in non-Arabic tribes is attributed.¹³⁶
14. *Ghāyat al-Ṭalibīn* commentary by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Maṣrī (d. 1066/1655)¹³⁷

¹³¹MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya., no.3223, 4509

¹³² MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya, no. 7508

¹³³ MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya, 7286; al-Maktabah al-Azhariyya, no. 8348

¹³⁴ MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya, no. 8989; 6071

¹³⁵ MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya, no. 4927, 9588; MS al-Maktabah Sayda Zaynab, no 1739

¹³⁶ Mallālī, Mawāhib, 348

¹³⁷ MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya no. 9964; Sayda Zaynab, 864

15. *Fath al-Raḥmān li-Aqfāl Umm al-barahīn*, comm. by Abu ‘Abd-Allah Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Bajūrī al-Maknāsī (circa 1149/1736) commentary also known as *al-Marqaṣ al-Muṭrab*.¹³⁸
16. *Al-farīdah al-gharā’ fī Naẓm al-‘aqida al-Sughrā*, versification in 137 lines by Abu al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. al-Hāj *warayandi* [or *waraybādī*].
17. Poem on the subject of *tawḥīd* that is an indirect commentary on the *Sughrā* by ‘Abd al-Salām b. Nāṣir. The introduction and ending of the poem are marked by laudatory remarks for the al-Sanūsī, the protector of *Tawḥīd*.¹³⁹
18. The West-African scholar Aḥmād Baba Tinbuktū (d. 1036/1627) produced a critical abridgement on the *Sughrā*. Interesting to note is his abridgement of Mallālī’s biography of al-Sanūsī titled *al-lālī al-sundusiyya fī al-faḍā’il al-Sanūsīyyah*.¹⁴⁰
19. Gloss by Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ḥassan b. Yūsuf al-Zayyātī al-Fāsī (d. 1023/1614). The gloss is written as a Sufi commentary and interpretation of al-Sanūsī’s commentary on the *Ṣughrā*.¹⁴¹
20. Gloss by Mahdī ‘Īsā b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rajājī al-Sūsī al-Suktānī (d. 1062/1653). A student of Ḥassan al-Yūsī who emigrates to Cairo. His work will become one of the major influences on the al-Sanūsī commentary movement in 18th-19th century Azhar circles.
21. Gloss by ‘Uthmān b. Ibrahīm al-Ifrīqī al-Jazā’irī, known as Qudūrah (d. 1061/1656)
22. Gloss by Yasīn b. Zayn al-Dīn abī Bakr al-‘Ulaymī al-Ḥumṣī (d. 1061/1656)
23. Gloss by Abu Zakariyā’ Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Shāwī al-Milyānī al-Jazā’irī (d. 1096/1685)
24. Gloss by Sa’dī b. Abd al-Raḥmān al-Wajhānī

¹³⁸ See *ittiḥāf al-a’lām al-nās*, vol. 4, 132-136

¹³⁹ MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya no. 12095, (f. 129-130).

¹⁴⁰ Aḥmad Baba Tinbuktū, (Ed. Ibrahim Mahmud), *al-La’ālī’ al-Sundusiyya fī al-faḍā’il al-Sanūsīyya*, Enag, Algiers, 2011

¹⁴¹ MS Rabat, al-Maktaba al-Ḥasaniyya no. 10382 (f. 1- 60)

25. Gloss by ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Sufyānī (d. 1029/1619) who is a direct student of Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Manjūr.
26. Gloss *Al-farā'id al-sanniyah wa al-fawā'id al-sirriyah* by b. Muhammed al-Fāsī, al-‘Arif bi-Allah (d. 1036/1612).
27. Commentary on the *Sughrā* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Akhḍarī¹⁴² whose father was a disciple and student of Aḥmad al-Zarrūq (d. 888/1493). He’s particularly known for his didactic poems in the rational sciences and primers in Maliki *fiqh*.

3.5.9. Variations on the Minor Creed in the Maghrib 15-17th century and setting the scene for 18-19th century Egypt.

1. *Al-Durra al-farīdah fī sharḥ al-‘aqīdah*, ‘Alī al-Ḥamwī (d. 932/1526)
2. *Al-Faṭḥ al-Nabawī bi-Sharḥ ‘Aqīda al-Ḥamawī*; Muḥammad Faṭḥullah al-Baylūnī a direct student of al-Ḥamwī (d. 1042/1526)
1. *Al-Murshid al-Mu‘īn ‘ala al-Ḍarūrī min ‘ūlum al-dīn* by ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. ‘Āshir (d. 1039/1629).

This is one of the exemplary methodology examples that synthesises the core teachings of the three aforementioned sciences into one didactic poem to instruct the nominal Muslim. The creed introduction is based completely on the modality approach of al-Sanūsī as well as his commentary on the *shahada* as sufficient for the creedal matters that are necessary for authenticating belief and fulfilling the moral responsibility of *taklīf*.

2. *Iḍā al-dujunnah fī i’tiqād ahl al-sunnah* by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Maqqarī al-Mālīki (d. 1041/1631). Another pivotal didact text based on al-Sanūsī’s mode of religious instruction and

¹⁴² One extant manuscript is mentioned in the catalogues situation in the maktabah al-Wattaniyyah al-jaza’iriyah no. 1426.

- elements of the *Sughrā* and the *Muqadimāt*. A didactic poem of around 500 lines starts with the modality approach and expands on the *mumkināt*. Interesting to note that his text contains his *ijazat* on the books of al-Sanūsī; that go through al-Zarrūq. Al-Maqqarī's text becomes popular in 18-19th century Egypt with the most famous commentary written by the Azharite scholar and Maliki Mufti of Egypt in 19th century Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-ʿillīsh (d. 1299/1822)
3. *Jawhar al-Tawḥīd* by Ibrahīm al-Laqqānī (d. 1040/1630) technically outside of the scope of this study but worth mentioning since this becomes the standard textbook and reference in Egypt with a multitude of commentaries and glosses. The style and structure of the texts follows al-Sanūsī's *Sughrā* closely with some additional inquiries.
 4. *Sibal al-maʿarif al-abbāniyyah wa as-wāriḥā al-fāʾiqah al-ḥaṣīniyyah* by Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Ghadamāsī (d. 1080). This text follows the structure of al-Sanūsī's *Sughrā* with a focus on unfolding the meanings of the *shahādah*. However, al-Ghadamāsī brings in highly philosophical debates in epistemology as well as more *fiqh* oriented matters concerning what brings one out of the fold of faith.
 5. *Al-ʿaqīdah al-munawwarah fī muʿtaqad al-sādāt al-Ashʿarī* by Abū al-Hassān al-Nūrī al-Ṣafaqāsī al-Tunṣī (d. 1118/1706). A pseudo-commentary and abridgement of the *Sughrā* with some amendments to the proof. The title is telling on the consolidation that happened with regard to al-Sanūsī's creed as the representative of the Ashʿarī school altogether.
 6. *Risalāh fī ʿaqāʾid ahl al-Sunnah* by Abū ʿabd-Allah al-Ghumārī al-Tunṣī. (d. 1119/1707) This seems to be an organic commentary on the *Muqadimāt* and the *Sughrā* where the *Muqadimāt* are integrated in the first chapter in which he dives into terminology and definitions. The structure

tends to be more creative and personal and less a commentary than a creative attempt to categorize and figure this out in an easier way. Again the notion to present these *kalāmī* positions as the preponderant position (*mu'tamad*) of the Ash'ari school in general takes more and more prominence.

3.6. The structure and purpose of the Minor Creed and the differences with the Minor Creed.

The *Sughrā al-Sughrā* is also referred to as *Saghīra al-Sughrā* due to its limited size.¹⁴³ This is clearly an abridgement of the *Sughrā* with a focus on maintaining the elementary creedal matters to authenticate belief. According to Mallālī, it was his father who was attending al-Sanūsī's classes on the *Sughrā* but reached the age he could not make the trip to the mosque who sent a request via his son to al-Sanūsī to send him something tangible that he could memorize to heart and repeat it daily as a litany (*dhikr*) in order to realize the realities of *tawḥīd* and be reminded of God daily. In structure it follows the first part of the *Sughrā* with the omission of the proofs and three prophetic characteristics— *ṣidq*, *amānah* and *tablīgh* for prophethood, as well that the attribution of their conceptual opposites is impossible for Messengers. In this text the 4th category of divine attributes is also omitted. However, contrary to the 13-*sifāt* tradition that is dominant in the Malay-archipelago, this omission is not a change of opinion but based on the assumption that this kind of attributes, in a simplified sense, are naturally understood as

¹⁴³ Al-Mawāhib, 487

a consequence of understanding the *sifat al-ma'āni*. Adding them would complicate the matter for the targeted audience.

3.6.1. Network description of commentaries and glosses written on the Minor Creed from al-Sanūsī to the 17th Century

1. Auto-commentary by al-Sanūsī
2. Al-Suktānī al-marākshī (1062/1652) writes *al-tuḥfa al-mufida fi Sharḥ al-'aqidah al-ḥafīdha*
3. Commentary by Abu Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-'Arabī al-Fāsī (d. 1051/1641)
4. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥassan b. al-'Arḍūn al-Zijlī al-Ghumārī (d. 1012/1603)
5. Commentary by *Abu 'Abd-Allah Muḥammad al-Māmūn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥafṣī al-Marākshī al-Tunṣī* (d. 1089/1678)¹⁴⁴
6. *Sabk al-Jawāhir fi isthikrāj mā taḍamanahu qawl lā ill-Allah min al 'Aqa'id* by Muḥammad Sālih al-Awjilī (d. 1093/1682). Can be considered a variation on the *ḥafīda* since the proofs are not mentioned and the primary focus is on unpacking all necessary creedal matters from the *shahadah*.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ MS Rabat, al-Maktabah al-Ḥassaniyah, no. 13583 (f. 39-42)

¹⁴⁵ Zahrī, *Thalath 'aqaid Ash'ariyah*, 39-42.

3.7. The structure and purpose of the Beneficial Creed (al-mufidah) and the difference with the Minor Minor Creed

There is some contestation about this work, with some considering it another version of the al-hafida. Al-Zahrī deems that there is sufficient proof to consider it a separate, rather late, work of Sanūsī. It is often referred to as ‘aqīdat al-Nisā’ and is not more than 1-2 pages. It did not receive an auto-commentary which may indicate that al-Sanūsī did not consider it part of the series of texts and commentaries he had in mind.

3.7.1. Network description of commentaries and glosses written on this text from al-Sanūsī to 17th CE

There are only few works that can be considered variations of this work:

1. *‘Aqīdah ahl-al-Īmān* by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir b. ‘Alī al-Fāsī (d.1091/1680): (2-3 folios) wherein he expresses that he specifically wrote it to teach women and children.¹⁴⁶
2. *Sharḥ Naẓm ‘Aqīda al-Nisā’*, by Muḥammad b. Abi al-Ghayth Dhakhān (d. 1056/1646)
 - a. Commentary of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmi‘ (d. 1032/1622)
 - b. *Versification of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Sāsī al-Yūnī* (1116/1704)¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ The focus on women as the target audience is not from an emancipatory principle such as expressed in Ahmet Celik but rather the Maghribī understanding that authoring (*ta’lif*) is of two kinds: the authoring of books and the authoring of *rijāl*, i.e., the ‘ulāma of the next generation. Men are through the Islamic-arabic climate pushed to become scholars while women are considered responsible for the good upbringing of their young children and for that a minimal understanding of creedal matters is pivotal.

¹⁴⁷ *Iḥnāna*, 323

4. CHAPTER FOUR: GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND STRUCTURE OF AL-SANŪSĪ'S

CREEDAL TEXTS

4.1. General principles and structure of al-Sanūsī's creedal texts

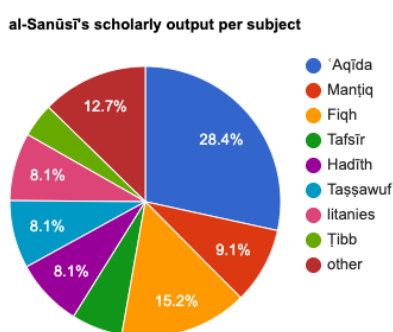


Figure 1: Al-Sanūsī's scholarly output per subject

Al-Sanūsī's scholarly legacy contains more than 75 works¹⁴⁸, of which the works in 'aḳīdah and kalām make up only 27% of his scholarly production (fig.1). While his scholarly output in *Fiqh* —and the sub-genre of fatāwa— takes the second place

with around 15%; his scholarly output with regards to the science of *Taṣawwuf* — including litanies, *adhkār* and spiritual admonitions— makes for another 18%. These three domains that interest us the most in our analysis of al-Sanūsī's legacy culminated that an estimated 60% of his scholarly output is part of his theological legacy in the broader sense of the term. While in a stricter sense his theological legacy makes up more than half of his scholarly output (fig. 3).¹⁴⁹ Given the dominance of his theological

¹⁴⁸ For an extensive analysis of his – published and unpublished – works see *Idāra al-Shumūs*, 119-301 which offers a categorized enumeration of works of al-Sanūsī and the location of the manuscripts in the collections of Algeria and partly for the collections of Tunis and Morocco.

¹⁴⁹ These numbers are based on Bāji 'Abd al-Qādir, *Idārah al-Shumūs*, 101-119 in which he provides an overview of al-Sanūsī's works based on his extensive research on the available manuscripts and mentions in the literature regarding the titles al-Sanūsī produced. Khālīd Zahri was kind to assist me with a revision based on his more recent discoveries (see *Maṣāḍīr*, vol. 2/130) regarding the al-Sanūsī manuscripts. The percentages we found confirmed Bāji's finding with a (negligible) margin of 0.9- 1.3% percent.

output it comes to no surprise that he receives the laudatory name of “*al-Tawḥīdī*”¹⁵⁰ by al-Tinbuktu. Of his *kalāmī* works our focus is particularly on a series of works written with a certain organic inter-textual dependence and with a different audience in mind. These works are the *Kubrā* (Major Creed), the *Wuṣṭā* (Middle Creed), the *Muqadimāt* (Preliminaries) the *Sughrā* (Minor Creed), the *Sughrā al-Sughrā* (Minor, Minor Creed) and the *mufīda*. Except the *mufīda* each of these foundational texts (*matn*) has been provided with an auto-commentary. If we consider these commentaries as separate texts then we can account for thirteen texts that encompass his theological legacy of al-Sanūsī¹⁵¹. The first in line is the *Kubrā* which is the first work authored in the series¹⁵² and so provides a clear insight not only into the structure and purpose but also the *spirit* of the text. In that regard the title of the first creedal text (al-Kubrā) and its adjacent commentary set the tone of what the text aims for:

When God the Glorified and Exalted had aided the completion of the creed known as the *Creed of the People of Divine Unity which by God's Aid Emancipates from the Darkness of Ignorance and the Yoke of Imitation and by God's Favour Crushes Every Adamant Heretic*, some of its readers have asked me to produce a short commentary on it that will complete its aims and ease the approach to the pleasures of its meanings. Thus, I have answered their request; and from the Generous Lord I seek His beautiful assistance and His aid in achieving the truth both in the outward and the inward which is so prone to deficiencies; and I have named it *The Reliance of*

¹⁵⁰ *Nayl al-Ibtihāj*, 78

¹⁵¹ The remainder are texts such as *Wāsita al-Sulūk*, *Sharḥ al-Jazā'iriyah*, *al-Ḥaqā'iq*. Since our focus here is on the scholarly production that is based upon the theological legacy of al-Sanūsī we omitted those due to not receiving as much attention as the aforementioned theological texts.

¹⁵² See the introduction of the *Wuṣṭā* where al-Sanūsī makes a reference to the *Wuṣṭā* being written on a request to simply the matters he discussed in his *Kubrā*. See also *Mawāhib*, 218 for a reference of al-Mallāli to al-Sanūsī's authoring of the *Kubrā* as the first text and the subsequent texts as the result of several requests from within his community.

the People of Success and Truth in Explicating the Creed of the People of Divine Unity. I ask God the Exalted to make it and its basis a means of benefit, and to bestow all those who study seek to understand it the stations of the people of intimate knowledge and the achievement of perfection in the Two Abodes, by His Power and Might. And blessings and peace be upon our Master and Patron Muḥammad, the Greatest of the World, both its parts and its whole.¹⁵³

Al-Sanūsī's concern for writing the *Kubrā*, and the subsequent commentaries, stems from his concern regarding the 'yoke of imitation' that has run rampant in the region.¹⁵⁴ This concern translates into a revisiting of the approach pertaining to the removal of the yoke of imitation, i.e., a revisit of the approach on how to authenticate fundamental religious beliefs (*taḥqīq al-imān*,) through the steering away from the stagnating epistemic state of *taqlīd*, since that particular state of—inauthentic—belief does not guarantee a safe consideration as a true believer (*mu'min haqqan*). Hence the main principles and focus that shape the structure as well as the content of his commentaries on his own theological works centers around this concern. The *Wuṣṭā* seems to be written immediately with its commentary. The earliest references to the text keep the title as *al-'Aqīda al-Wuṣṭā wa Sharḥuḥa*, which Joseph Kenny¹⁵⁵ assumes to indicate that, contrary to the traditional approach, the commentary and the *matn* were written simultaneously. This is an argument in line with al-Sanūsī's own explanation¹⁵⁶ in the introduction of the commentary when he mentions that some people came to him with difficulties

¹⁵³ *Kubrā*, 122; the translation is from the unpublished draft translation kindly provided by Abdurrahman Mihirig, 2021

¹⁵⁴ El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century*, 175–87.

¹⁵⁵ J. P. Kenny, *Muslim Theology as Presented by M.b Yusuf as-Sanusi- Especially in His al-'Aqida al-Wusta*. (Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1971), 52.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Sanūsī, *Wuṣṭā*, 87

understanding the Kubrā and found the commentary lengthy hence the Wusṭā is written to be fit their needs and easier to grasp (*akhaṣṣ wa aqrāb*).

4.2. The inter-textual relationships of the creedal works

These serial *kalāmi* works are hence authored in a top-down approach based upon the principle of *tahqīq al-imān*, i.e., the removal of inauthentic belief (*taqlīd*) but the removal of inauthentic belief is deemed by al-Sanūsī to be different depending on the intellectual needs of the person in question. Especially the *mutūn* seem to be catering to different levels of intellectual understanding, which is mentioned explicitly in the beginning of each *matn*. methodological structure of religious instruction in the *mutūn* is based upon the *taqlīd* concern, while the commentaries display in their titles that they are written for scholars in training or people of intellect who fulfil a pedagogical role in their community. We could state that the *matn* on each level of instruction has a specific audience in mind while the commentaries have the scholars or teachers in mind that ought to provide religious instruction on creedal matters for the targeted audience. The theological texts thereby seem to fork into a branch for the commonfolk, while considering the internal degrees, and a branch for the scholars. As we will see this differentiation of audience becomes explicit when al-Sanūsī writes the *Sughrā* which breaks with the general structure of the previous written *mutūn* and primarily focuses on an elucidation for local teachers.

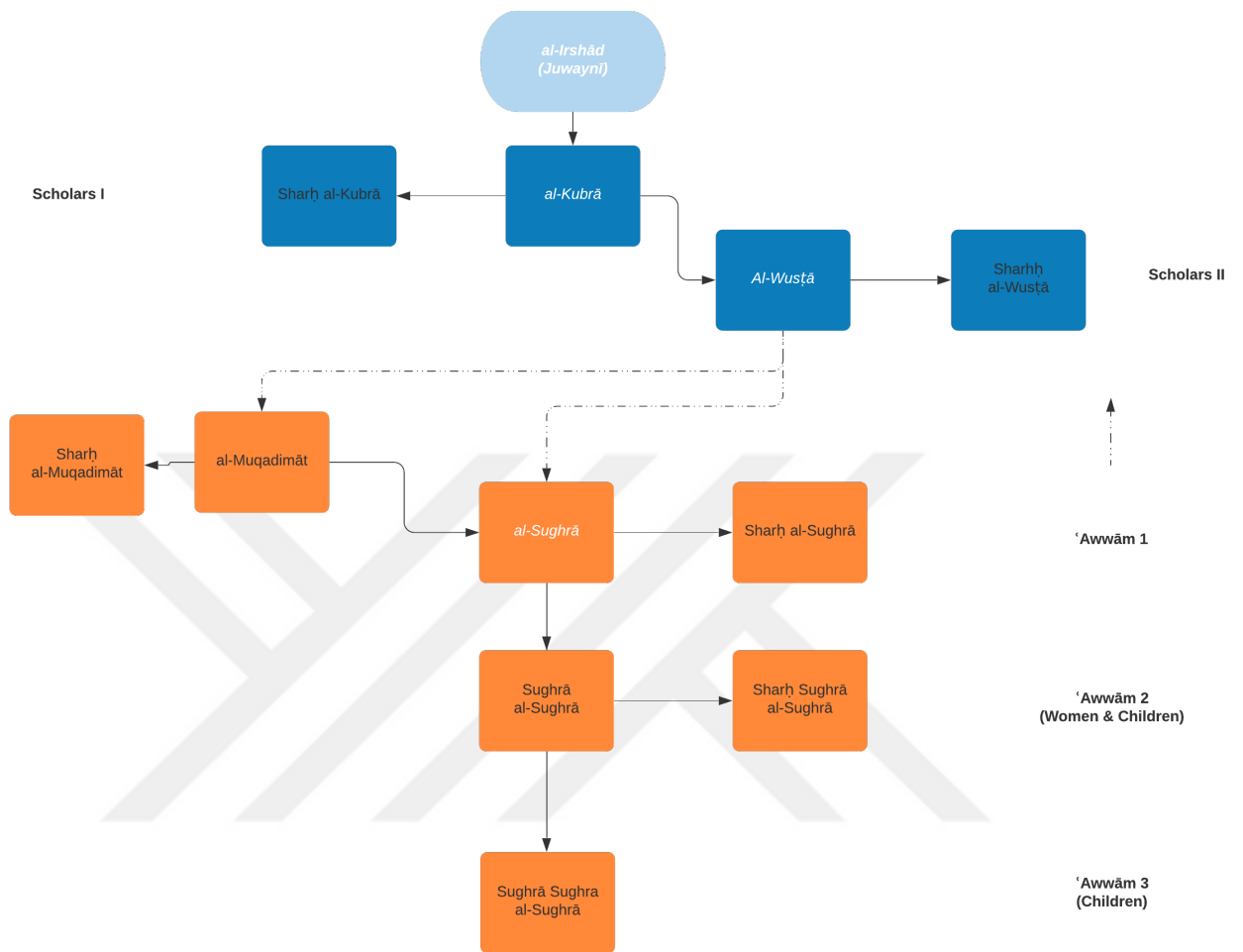


Fig 2. The inter-textual relationships of al-Sanūsī's creedal works

The visualization illustrates clearly that the tradition of the *Irshād* as the basis for an advanced theological engagement remains a Maghribī tradition respected by al-Sanūsī. However, the practical concern of his *locale* motivate al-Sanūsī to write a more concise version of the *Kubrā* which results in the *Wuṣṭā* and its commentary. the *Muqadimāt*, written as the descriptive preliminaries for the *Sughrā* makes explicit mention of the *Wuṣṭā* and the *Kubrā* —and their commentaries— in its introduction. With no exact date of publication given by al-Mallāli or ibn. Maryam we can only confidently state that the *Kubrā* and its commentary is written prior to 875/1471, while the *Wuṣṭā* was written on the Day of ‘Arafah of that same year¹⁵⁷ while the remaining works are written somewhere (shortly?) after 875/1471. This means that al-Sanūsī was in his late thirties or early forties when writing the bulk of these theological works. The *Sughrā* can then be considered as the first creative work of al-Sanūsī where he focuses on distilling his pedagogical concerns regarding *taqlīd* within the modality framework as the religious mode of instruction that will suffice the nominal believer in their quest to authenticate their faith. The *Sughrā al-Sughrā (Ḥafīdha)* and the *Sughrā Sughrā al-Sughrā (Mufīda)* are then even shorter abridgements or simplifications that reiterate the same core principles of the *Sughrā* but will suffice with solely enumerating the—necessary, impossible and possible—propositions regarding God and Prophethood, without mention of rational proofs, that are required to be understood for the *tahqīq al-Imān*. If taken from the bottom, we can consider the *Mufīda* as the bare minimum for the novice nominal Muslim, i.e., children, that is required for a nominal Muslim for his faith to be considered as valid up till the *Sughrā*, which can then be considered as the minimum for any nominal Muslim of

¹⁵⁷ Based on Joseph Kenney’s reading of 1Ms. El, f. 83a (Algiers) in Kenny Joseph, ‘Muslim Theology as Presented by Yusuf As-Sanusi- Especially in His al-‘Aqida al-Wusta’, 49.

adult-age with a healthy intellect. The commentary on the *Sughrā* is then the transitory realm to the more advanced works, i.e., *Wustā* and the *Kubrā* and their commentaries. All of them are now focusing on the nominal Muslim with an intellectual appetite for theological concerns. The audience intended here are current or future instructors of the tenets of faith, i.e., *ʿulamā* and *ṭullāb al-ʿilm*.



4.3. Textual differences with the pre-Sanusi kalāmī literary genre

It's also noteworthy to observe the theological issues that al-Sanūsī does not tackle nor mention in these kalāmī works. Since his works initiate a whole movement shift in literary and methodological style of writing creedal works in the Maghrib, it will indicate that these topics in the theological legacy also barely receive any attention.

- Absence of a separate chapter in the *Sughrā* line of works, on the types of proofs and the various tools of reasoning (*istidlāl*) such as we see in Juwaynī's *Irshād* and in al-Baḳillānī's *Tamhīd* for example. Again, this does not mean that al-Sanūsī does not mention the issue but they come up rather sporadically while discussing arguments and this genre as a whole is absorbed into his modality framework that frames al-Sanūsī's *kalāmī* inquiry. This is in line with the Maghribī logician's trend to more comfortably integrate the tools of logic within their normative projects.¹⁵⁸
- The (political) issue of *imāmah*, which still plays an important role in the works of al-Sanūsī's sources such as al-Juwaynī's *Ghiyāth*, or his *Nizāmiyyah*, a reference to *Nizām al-Mulk* (d. 485/1092) as well as the final chapter of al-Ghazālī's *Iqtīṣād*. With the focus on the modality framework to extract the foundational tenets of faith (*uṣūl al-dīn*), topics such as *Imāmah*, which are then classified as *furū' al-dīn* are shaved off. Note, that al-Sanūsī discusses it rather topically in the *Irshād* line of works, such as his commentary on the *Kubrā* towards the end, but

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Kenny, 'Muslim Theology as Presented by Yusuf As-Sanusi- Especially in His al-'Aqida al-Wusta', 49.

already in the commentary on the *Wustā* and especially from the *Sughrā* onwards it disappears completely.

- Discussions on the status of certain contested companions of the Prophet Muhammad are considered as non-essential to the *usūl* of one's faith. Hence the intra-Islam debate only emerges during the argumentation in the *Kubrā*, *Wuṣṭā* and the *Sughrā*; while some basic references are made in the preliminaries.
- The disappearance of the classic Ash'arī question on the increase and decrease of faith as a central topic of discussion.
- The absence of the classic Ash'arī argument against the Mu'tazili notion of God's justice (*'adl*).

In conclusion, the absence of these classic *kalāmi* inquiries (*masā'il*) is not perse based on the avoidance of political controversies and heated debates in highly philosophical matters, but derives from the core principle that drives al-Sanūsī's work (i.e., *khurūj min al-taqlīd*) where these *masā'il* don't necessarily need to concern the nominal believer who requires knowledge on the content of his faith rather than on the dynamics of the shared faith in prior history.

4.4. The general principles of al-Sanūsī's theological legacy in the Maghrib

The theological legacy of Sanūsī, expressed in poems, didactic poems, commentaries and glosses, shares a large framework of agreement in the mode of religious instruction that best fits the nominal Muslim.

One could summarize the theological textual legacy of al-Sanūsī as based on 8 general principles:

1. The modal qualifiers— necessary, possible, and impossible— provide the structure for the theological enquiry and for the religious mode of instruction: It is in fact through relating these modal qualifiers to the divine and to prophecy that an organized and firm sense of one's creedal beliefs can be achieved.

2. The problem of *taqlīd* as a direct admonition to the reader: It serves almost an existential confrontation where the nominal Muslim ought first and foremost to be pushed to realize the importance of the actual *tahqīq* of one's faith over *taqlīd fī al-imān*. Even when one's inauthentic beliefs are identical in form with the original creedal tenets, for example believing in the veracity of the Quran and the Final Messenger only because one's elders did so. These 'beliefs' can still be problematic because their motivating force is not authentic. There arose a staunch response against this rather hard approach which al-Sanūsī takes in the *Kubrā* and the *Wustā*. It falls within the historical debates regarding the fate of the commonfolk in a time and region where the religious and military diversity of the ruling class left its mark on the common believer. Works such as *radd al-tashdīd fī masala al-taqlīd* by Abu al-'Abbās al-Sijilmāsī (d. 1156/1743) and *al-jaysh wa al-kamīn li-qitāl man kafara 'āmata al-Muslimīn* by Muḥammad Shaqrūn al-Waharānī (d. 1156/1743) engage with this issue. Nevertheless, the general shift to focus on authenticating the faith of the nominal Muslim remains central.

3. The fourfold conceptual division of the Divine attributes resulting in 20 attributes. Though this division is present in the Ash‘arī *kalāmi* literature prior to al-Sanūsī, it’s only with al-Sanūsī’s scholarly contribution that this becomes the established exposition of the Divine attributes in the post-classical tradition. This, of course, does not mean that there is an absolute consensus on this division. In the later post-classical tradition that is building upon Al-Sanūsī’s, quite a few scholars will take a stand against the addition of the *ṣifāt al-ma‘nawiyya* based on their complete rejection of the theory of *aḥwāl*. By the rejection of any notion of *aḥwāl* the conceptual difference between the *ṣifāt al-ma‘ānī* and the *ṣifāt al-ma‘nawiyya* remains to be only semantic with no metaphysical implications. This decision is not explicitly mentioned in the later educational creedal texts but it is discernible through their introduction of the sum of necessary attributes being 13 rather than 20. This understanding becomes the dominant *ṣifāt* tradition in 17-18th century pre-modern Egypt, and by a network-consequence, becomes the Sunni tradition in the Malay-archipelago through the influence of the Azhar and the Hijāz scholarship of the 17-18th century.¹⁵⁹

4. Interpolation of God’s acts such as the creation of the world, the creation of human acts, the sending of prophets and revelation, the beatific vision, as qualified by the modality of ‘possible’.

5. the modular qualifiers for Prophethood and prophecy in terms of what is necessary for these concepts, and what is possible and impossible. While the earlier commentaries would maintain all attributes as stipulated by al-Sanūsī (necessary: *amāna*, *ṣidq*, *tablīgh*, *faṭānah*, impossible: *khiyāna*, *khadhib*, *kitmān*, *baladah*, possible: human faulty traits such as diseases, physical specifications, marriage), the later tradition reduces these by focusing on what is necessary and impossible for Prophet.

¹⁵⁹ See Philipp Bruckmayr, “The *ṣarḥ*/ḥāṣiya Phenomenon in Southeast Asia”, (MIDÉO, 32 | 2017), 27-52.

Even among the necessary attributes we see in the later post-classical reception of al-Sanūsī's work that *al-faṭānah* and *balādah* are omitted.¹⁶⁰

6. All matters regarding the unseen that are part of creedal belief are first and foremost integrated into the concept and belief in *Ṣidq al-anbiyā* under the modality of (onto)logically possible but epistemologically necessary if conveyed by a prophet. Those are events such as the Resurrection of corporal bodies, the events of the End of Times, the scales of Justice. They are considered important information but they ought not to worry the believer too much as long as he affirms his belief in their reality. The existence of these matters is given priority over the quality of these theological secondary matters (*al-kayf*)

This is the general set of principles along which the theological legacy of al-Sanūsī in the Maghreb is developed. Of course, there will be significant textual differences with the al-Sanūsī *kalāmī* literary genre in its reception. There will be additional *kalāmī* issues that receive attention in the later tradition such as 1) the *ta'liqat al-sifāt* such as in the work of Sijilmāsī¹⁶¹, and al-Fasī and the post-classical Maghribī persistence on refuting any form of causal dependency in natural causes (*tabʿ*) which is the expression of another pedagogical concern and societal observation where one creates the habit of trusting in causes; if not reminded of their non-causal ontological nature this habit might consolidate into a belief. The conflation of an habitual assumption with a belief which goes against the Ashʿarī principle of *tawḥīd al-afʿāl* has been expressed by al-Sanūsī in his *Kubrā* and in the *Muqaddimāt*.

¹⁶⁰ See for example the gloss by Abu Zakariyā' Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Shāwī and the commentaries on the *Suḡhrā* by Aḥmad al-ʿAlīysh and Ghadamāsī.

¹⁶¹ Aḥmad b. Mubārak al-Sijilmāsī, *Risalah fi ta'liqāt sifāt Allah*, Tetouan: Dār al-ʿirfān. 2013



4.5. Concluding remarks: Al-Sanūsī's theological legacy as a Community of Practice

4.5.1. The Role of Horizontal Learning in al-Sanūsī's Theological Legacy

Horizontal learning leans itself to al-Sanūsī's methodology in his creedal oeuvre. Ultimately, the creedal works are introduced to educate all segments of society. All texts except the *Kubrā* and the *Wuṣṭā* and their commentaries are catered for different levels of nominal Muslims while the aforementioned two texts and commentaries are directed to those who have more intellectual appetite for the theological and philosophical discussions (*ṭālib al-ʿilm* and *ʿulamā*) upon which the creedal texts are based. Again, one should keep in mind that al-Sanūsī wrote the *Kubrā* and its subsequent commentary first and then wrote each subsequent *matn* with its conjoined *sharḥ* to accommodate a demand within his societal circles for that level of creedal explanation which is an internal pattern of horizontal learning as we will discuss shortly. Al-Sanūsī's texts are written to develop knowledge of God, the necessary knowledge of God in order to commence a path of worshipping and polishing the interior spiritual life; they are a means and not an end and thereby the creedal texts are presented in a pattern of horizontal learning. Al-Sanūsī's creedal works are not just theological (*kalāmī*) texts enunciated with theological 'facts' and arguments but are subtly sprinkled with statements regarding the necessity of sound thinking (logic), the philosophy of *fiqh* such as in his statements on *taklīf* and the two types of taqlīd—theological and legal. They include as well references to an individual's relationship to God through spiritual formation; personal appeals and reflections, and anecdotes of Islamic intellectual history. Despite commonly being

categorized as a creedal work, it has significant elements of a narrative text woven within it, further solidifying our argument that Sanūsī's text are written in the patterns of horizontal learning.

This form of learning that is displayed in and through Al-Sanūsī's texts has been coined as a "top-down perspective on the learning processes where the learning is transmitted and acquired not necessarily by means of traditional categories"¹⁶² such as 'teacher', 'student', '*murshid*' and '*murīd*' but is characterized by horizontal interactions such as between peers, through commentaries and didactic poems and more importantly the intellectual – and spiritual- formation that is intended by the creedal texts to be found in spiritual companionship (*suḥba*), and relationships of friendship that mark an important part of al-Sanūsī's legacy. Al-Sanūsī is promoting a different conception of literacy; rather than superseding the written discourse of theology his texts create an innovative interdependence between written and oral forms of literacy.¹⁶³ The creedal texts of al-Sanūsī are promoting creedal literacy as a practice¹⁶⁴ shifting away from normative authority to normative authenticity; and highlighting self-formation and individual conscience of the common folk. Thereby he introduces and accents the idea of creedal knowledge as practical knowledge where it is seen as a necessary spiritual exercise on the path of the Believer.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Long, Snijders, and Vanderputten, *Horizontal Learning in the High Middle Ages : Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Transfer in Religious Communities*, 8.

¹⁶³ This argument is in line with Brian Stocks thesis for the Medieval European societies during the 11th and 12th centuries see Stock, *Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the 11th and 12th Centuries*.

¹⁶⁴ Similar to the aforementioned idea of 'ilm al-kalām to fiqh al-kalām as suggested by Khālid Zahrī, *Min 'ilm al-Kalām ilā Fiqh al-Kalām: Muqāraba li-Ibrāz Ma'ālim al-Tajdīd al-Kalāmī 'ind fuqahā' wa-ṣūfiyyat al-Maghrib*.

¹⁶⁵ The idea of taking a text as creedal practice is not new at this point. It can be found in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) work *Bidāyat al-Hidāyah* which is written in the form of a daily regimen including litanies, legal routines and forms of prayers. The difference with al-Sanūsī is the exclusive dedication of the text , as a practice, to creedal knowledge. Both authors are play a pivotal role in the development of learned Sufism For Ghazālī see for example Keyvan Boland hematan, 'Spiritual Education in Islamic Tradition: Revisiting Ghazali's "Deliverance"', *Religious Education* 114, no. 2 (2019): 110–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2018.1560585>.. Nothing exists as of yet on the methods of spiritual education in Sanūsī's work but some references are made in works on his student Aḥmad al-Zarrūq such as in Kugle, *Rebel between Spirit and Law : Aḥmad Zarruq, Sainthood, and Authority in Islam*; Karimullah, 'Aḥmad Zarrūq and the Ash'arite School'.

4.5.2. A Community of Practice

Al-Sanūsī, through his theological works, starts a legacy in the 15th century; it is best understood as a community of practice regarding creedal knowledge. Traditionally a community is defined as the continuous interactions between people with a shared consensus. However, when we consider the notion of horizontal learning that is pivotal in Al-Sanūsī's work and his later legacy, we can interpolate and understand it as the form of interaction that binds the community that ultimately makes out al-Sanūsī's legacy in the Maghrib 15-17th Century. Horizontal learning in this context can be "understood as a form of interaction that took place on all levels of the community and created the repertoire, joint enterprise and mutual engagement of that community." So while a focus on al-Sanūsī's legacy as a social network would inevitably divert our attention to the historical how and why members were integrated in that community (authors of commentaries, student-teacher relation) through the concept of horizontal learning, we can and should focus more on the constitution of the community, i.e. al-Sanūsī's theological legacy, as a community of practice. We illustrated that the rich textual tradition emerging out of al-Sanūsī's creedal texts constitutes a community of practice by shifting away from the notion of formal authority towards authenticity (*khurūj min al-taqlīd*) whereby the focus is shifted from the state or the scholar constantly informing the confessional subject, i.e., the believer, of his faith towards the confessional subject being pushed to self-formation and individual conscience. Especially the latter, the focus on the individual conscience of the common folk, consolidates the idea of creedal knowledge being the pivot of the normative project and thereby must be considered as practical knowledge. A community of practice such as the one developed via al-Sanūsī's text can then opt to do this via the constant teaching and providing simplified creedal texts and poems, or through the establishment of

creedal hymns as spiritual litanies or even through the permeation of basic education in *fiqh*. Through whatever means the proponents of al-Sanūsī's legacy deemed the goal achievable they kept a thread of continuous interaction and intellectual dynamics between themselves as scholars and as members of their *locale*, striving for the continued existence of both communities. No scholar is an island and no (common) folk shall be left stranded...



5. FIGURES

- 5.1. Fig. 1. Al-Sanūsī's scholarly output per subject
- 5.2. Fig. 2. The inter-textual relationships of al-Sanūsī's creedal works

6. APPENDIX

6.1. Al-Sanūsī's teachers

6.1.1. Abu Ya'qūb Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (fl. 1420?)¹⁶⁶

The father of al-Sanūsī known as a pious man, loved in his community for his reverence and good character and – as his son will be later on – often remembered through the ease with which they cried out of reverence. His grave is a place of frequent visit at the outskirts of Tlemcen. He devoted himself to teaching the Quran to children.¹⁶⁷

6.1.2. Nasr al-Zawāwī (fl. 1430?)¹⁶⁸

Al-Zawāwī or Zwāwī was Sanūsī's primary teacher for the Arabic linguistic sciences and al-Sanūsī seems to have been spending a lot of time in general with him throughout his youth.¹⁶⁹ Al-Zawāwī was one of the main students of Muḥammad b. Marzūq (d. 1379), a 14th century scholar renowned for his legal works and close affiliation with the Marinid sultan Abū al-Ḥaṣṣan b. 'Uthman. Al-Zawāwī seems also be

¹⁶⁶ Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad al-Ḥafnāwī, *Ta'rif al-Khalaf bi-Rijāl al-Salaf* (Algiers: Pierre Fontana, 1906), v. 1, 179.

¹⁶⁷ *Mawāhib*, 20

¹⁶⁸ *Bustān*, 283

¹⁶⁹ *Mawāhib*, 193

the first Andalusian teacher for al-Sanūsī since al-Zawāwī was the official Friday preacher of the al-Hambra mosque in Granada for a few years prior this migration to Tlemcen.

6.1.3. Abū ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad b. Qāsīm b. Ṭunazt al-Ṣanhājī (fl. 1420)

Al-Sanusī used to attend his formal gatherings in the famous lodge *zāwiyyah* Ibn al-Bannā, where al-Ṣanhājī taught calculus, and *‘ilm al-fara’id*¹⁷⁰ to al-Sanūsī and al-Zikrī. The young Sanūsī was one of the daytime formal students attending these gatherings. However, Ṣanhājī – noticing the difficulty al-Sanūsī had with the material and being too shy to admit– would offer him private tuition after the formal instruction ended at the lodge. Al-Sanūsī would bring his own dinner from home and share it with his teacher after which they’d continue studying till the early hours of dawn, resulting in al-Sanūsī at a later age becoming the local reference for any legal issues regarding inheritance.

6.1.4. Abū al-Ḥaṣṣan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Baṣṭī al-Qarshī bil-Qālṣādī (d.891/1486)¹⁷¹

Emigrated from Baza, a southern town in the province of Granada, to Tlemcen in order to study with Ibn Marzūq al-Ḥafīd. He was considered the authority in *ḥisāb* in Tlemcen. Of importance are his extended stays Granada where he studied with Abū Ishāq b. Futtūḥ and Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Sarqaṣṭī. In Tlemcen he studied with Qāsīm b. ‘Uthmān al-‘Uqbānī and the sufi Abū ‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Zāghū. In Tunis, prior to his stay in Tlemcen, he studied with Ūqqāb al-Jadhāmī, an important direct student of Ibn ‘Arafa. He emigrated from Tlemcen to Beja where he passed away.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ The legal rules on how to calculate the division of inheritance among the rightful heirs and agnates.

¹⁷¹ MB 25, Bustān 237, nayl 553. Note that this is a most likely a local variation of Abu al-Qalsadi

¹⁷² Al-qaṣādī, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad. Rihla. Ed. by Muḥammad Abu al-Ajfan. Tunis: al-Shirkah al-Tūnisiyya li’l-Tawzi’, 1978.

6.1.5. Al-Ḥassan b. Makhlūf al-Mazīlī al-Rāshidī (d.857/1453)¹⁷³

Also known as Abarkān, an Amazīghī reference to the darkness of his skin. He studied with Ibrahīm al-Maṣmūdī and Ibn Marzūq al-Hafīd in Tlemcen. In *al-Bājah* (Béja in current Algeria) the other major intellectual node of the Maghrib he sat with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Waghīsi while in 14th century Constantinople he studied with the famous mufti Abū ‘Abd-Allah al-Marākshī. Al-Sanūsī’s scholarly relation with Abarkān is mostly centred around Maliki Fiqh (*al-Mudawwanah*) while his effect as a spiritual guide on al-Sanūsī must not be neglected.

6.1.6. Abu al-Qāsim al-Kinābshi al-Bajā’ī (fl. 1440?)

Al-Kinābshi was a temporary resident or visitor of 15th century Tlemcen who taught, and authorized, al-Sanūsī and his half-brother al-Talūtī the *Irshād of al-Juwaynī*. Aside from the reference to him by al-Mallālī in the *Mawāhib* there seems no additional information or reference in any of the biographical entries on al-Kinābshi. Even the specification that he is from Beja is a later addition by Tinbuktū in his entry on the teachers of al-Sanūsī.

6.1.7. Abu Zayd b. Muḥammad b . Makhlūf al-Tha‘ālabī al-Jazā’irī (d. 876/1471)

Al-Sanūsī studied with him the *Saḥīhayn* (Saḥīḥ Bukhārī and Saḥīḥ Muslim). Al-Sanūsī travelled to Algiers specifically to study with him. He and his half-brother, al-Talūtī, received their *ijaza* in the books of hadith from al-Tha‘ālabī. Al-Tha‘ālabī himself is a student of the dominant scholarly circles of 8th

¹⁷³ Bustān, 74-93

century Bāja, of which Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad al-Waghliṣī and the circle around Aḥmad b. Idrīs, which included major scholars such as ‘Uthmān al-Mānjalātī, Sulaymān b. al-Ḥassan, al-Buzaydī al-Tilimsānī, Ibn Khaldūn. and Abū al-‘Abbās al-Naqāwasi¹⁷⁴. In Tunis he studied with Abū al-Qāsim al-Birzīlī (b. 844) and Abū ‘Abd-Allah Muḥammad b. Marzūq al-Ḥafīd who granted him the permission to teach all the sciences (*ajāzahu bikulli mirwayatihi*). He is considered the main teacher of not only al-Sanūsī, but also for al-Zarrūq, al-Maghīlī and Ibn Marzūq al-Kafīf.

6.1.8. Ibrahīm al-Tāzī al-Wahrānī (d. 866/1463)

Al-Tāzī s a prominent student of the Meccan scholar Ṭaqī al-dīn b. al-Fāsī and a student of Ibn Marzūq al-Ḥafīd. Referred to as *shaykh al-shuyukh wa farīd ‘aṣrihi*¹⁷⁵ He took the ceremonial cloak (*khirqā*) from the hands of Ṣāliḥ b. Muḥammad al-Zawāwī with a *sanad* to Abu Madyan, one of the foundational figures of early Sufism in the Maghrib, in what seems to be a Silsila of the Qādiriyya path; he also took the ways of Abū ‘Abd-Allah al-Huwārī for whom he will become the spiritual successor. He is a main murshid for al-Sanūsī, Ṭalūtī, Ibn Sa’d and al-Zarrūq.¹⁷⁶ Al-Sanūsī spent 25 days with him in at his private quarters and lodge after which he was given the *khirqā*.¹⁷⁷

6.1.9. Al-Qāḍī Abū ‘Abd-Allah Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maghīlī (d. 850/1446).

Often referred to as al-Qāḍī al-Jallāb. He was one of the main teachers of al-Wansharīshī as well as of al-Sanūsī and seems to have been the main source of *fiqh* teachings for al-Sanūsī. He has a commentary

¹⁷⁴ Rihlat al-tha‘alabi p 107-108

¹⁷⁵ Bustān, 58; ta‘rif al-khalaf, 1/11

¹⁷⁶ Nayl, 61, Bustān, 60

¹⁷⁷ mawāhib, 45

on the *Jumal* of al-Khūnajī, an advanced work in logic, which later biographers consider a work al-Sanūsī also studied with him. While the earlier sources limit the books studied under al-Jallāb to the *mudawwanah*.

6.1.10. Abū ‘Abd-Allah Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥabbāk al-Tilimsānī (d. 867/1463)

A master of astrolabe and astronomy in which he instructed al-Sanūsī. He’s mostly known particularly as the teacher of Ibn Fahhām and as a maker of hydraulic clocks.

6.1.11. Muḥammad b. al-‘Abbās al-‘Ubbādī (d. 871/1467)¹⁷⁸

Ibn. ‘Abbās al-Tilimsānī is Considered by Zarruq as *shaykh al-shuyukh* of his time in Tlemcen.¹⁷⁹ He is a student of b. Marzuq al-Hafid and Qāsīm al-‘Uqbānī. Among his notable students are al-Māzūnī, b. Zikrī, b. Sa’d al-Tunsi, b. Marzūq al-Kafif, al-Sanūsī, and al-Wansharisī.

6.1.12. Abū Ḥassan ‘alī b. Muḥammad al-Tālūtī al-Anṣārī al-Tilimsānī

Al-Tālūtī is the half-brother of al-Sanūsī from his mother’s side. He taught him at young age the *risālah* of Abu Zayd al-Qayrawānī and was known to have memorised b. Hājib’s seminal work in Maliki *fiqh*. He was a close companion and disciple (*murīd*) of Abarkān. These two facts describe best the anecdotes around his figure which all centre around his knowledge of fiqh and his pious character.

¹⁷⁸ Bustān, 237

¹⁷⁹ Sakhāwī, M. A.-R. (1966). *al-Ḍaw’ al-lāmi’ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi’*. Bayrūt: Dār Maktabat al-hayāt vol 7. 276

6.2. Students of al-Sanūsī¹⁸⁰

6.2.1. Abū al-‘Abbās b. Aḥmad al-Fāsī al-Burunsī; Zarrūq (d. 899/1494)

Perhaps the most famous or most studied student of al-Sanūsī. Originally from Fez he came to study with al-Sanūsī and other spiritual giants in 15th century Tlemcen. Although he does not have a –known– commentary on any of al-Sanūsī’s works the influence of al-Sanūsī can be seen in his usage of the tripartite categorization of judgements and the condensation of all necessary creedal matters into this categorization; as well as in a his commentary on Waransharīsī’s textbook which resembles al-Sanūsī’s commentary on it. Yet his focus is more on the synthesis of the three core sciences via the methods displayed in al-Ghazālī’s works¹⁸¹; and the subsequent development of learned Sufism in the region.¹⁸²

6.2.2. ‘Umar al-Mallāli (fl. 899/1494)

Considered the closest student to al-Sanūsī. Known mostly for his travels to West-Africa, the hagiography of al-Sanūsī and a commentary on the *Sughrā* that was studied actively.¹⁸³ Throughout his biography on al-Sanūsī he mentions to have personally received several handwritten works and letters from al-Sanūsī.

6.2.3. b. Ṣa’d al-Tilimsānī (d. 901/1496)¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Nayl 324, Bustān 139

¹⁸¹ See Karimullah, Karimullah, ‘Aḥmad Zarrūq and the Ash’arite School’, 107–13.

¹⁸² For the understanding of Sufism developing into the genre of learned sufism see: Belhaj, ‘Legal Knowledge by Application: Sufism as Islamic Legal Hermeneutics in the 10th/12th Centuries’.

¹⁸³ It was for example the standard text in the curriculum for beginners for the Nāsiriyya see Matthew Conaway Schumann, A path of Reverent Love: The Nāṣiriyya brotherhood across Muslim Africa, 2020, 161

¹⁸⁴ Bustān, 247

Known particularly for his book *al-najm al-thāqib fīmā l-awliyā Allah min Manāqib* and *Rawḍa al-nasriyīn fī manāqib al-Arbaʿa al-mutaʿkhirīn*¹⁸⁵, a hagiographical work where he describes the pious and scholarly lives of the foundational saints of the 14-15th century. Which are respectively Muhammad b. ʿUmar al-Huwārī al-Wahrānī, Ibrāhīm al-Ṭāzī, Abarkān and Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Ghumārī. All, except al-Ghumārī, are part of al-Sanūsī's core teachers. Bin Saʿd emigrated to Egypt where he is buried; and can be considered the earliest student, along with Zarrūq, to reside in Egypt; although his focus was predominantly on the dissemination of the spiritual learnings of his teacher, according to the *Shādhilī ṭarīqah*.

6.2.4. Muḥammad b. Abī Madyan al-Tilimsānī (d. 915/1509).

The biographers mention him as extremely talented in the *maʿqūlāt* and especially Kalam. Supposed to have commentaries on Al-Sanūsī's theological works but so far have not been traced.

6.2.5. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Fajjī (d. 920/1514)

Known for his extensive travels and student of Wansharīsi and al-Sanūsī. Has a gloss on al-Sanūsī's *Kubrā* (unpublished), as well as a work the *Sughrā* that covers the basic tenets of *fiqh*, learned sufism and creed.¹⁸⁶

6.2.6. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥāj al-Warnīdī al-Manāwī (918/1511)

¹⁸⁵ See Yaḥyā bū Aziz, ANEP, 2004, Algeria

¹⁸⁶ Tarif al-khalaf, vol. 1, 8-9

A prominent student of al-Sanūsī's contemporary b. Zikri with whom he studied most of the sciences. He has a commentary on Sanusi's *Sughrā*. According to b. Maryam– who was a student of al-Warnīdī – he was referred to by his contemporaries as Aḥmad al-Jiblī.¹⁸⁷

6.2.7. Abū ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad b. al-‘Abbās al-Tilimsānī (d. 915/1509)

Originally from Oran but emigrated at a young age to Tlemcen where he studied with al-Sanūsī and b. Zikri. Travelled to Fez where he studied with b. Ghāzī and was known for the large gatherings at his creedal classes. Al-Manjūr is one of students to whom he taught the *Sughrā*. He returned to Tlemcen where he was buried.¹⁸⁸

6.2.8. Mohammed b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥawḍī al-Tilimsānī (d. 910/1504)

Authors a creedal poem as a commentary on the *Murshida* creed by Ibn Tumart (d. 524/1130) with a focus on the spiritual aspects and benefits of creedal knowledge. On request of his student al-Sanūsī writes a commentary on the poem.

6.2.9. Muḥammad al-Qal‘ī (fl. 1510)

Considered one of the strongest students of al-Sanūsī. Of particular interest are the students al-Madyūnī al-Waharānī (b. 951) and Musā al-Magrāwī al-Tilimsānī al-Rāshidī, and Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf al-‘Aṭāfi. They reportedly brought al-Sanūsī's creedal works to banī Rāshid and ignited the Amazīghī translations of

¹⁸⁷ Bustān, 23

¹⁸⁸ Tarīf al-khalaf, 2/42

these creedal works.¹⁸⁹ An anecdote worth mentioning in terms of the spiritual and scholarly legacy al-Sanūsī had and his impact on his student. It's mentioned that a young student Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Madyūnī, together with his teacher al-Qalī, accompanied al-Sanūsī for several years, and studied the inward and outward sciences with them. After the death of his teacher he was known to have 'camped' for several years at the grave of al-Sanūsī selling his household items in order to sustain himself.

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¹⁸⁹ Al-Bustān 276; the *banu rashid* tribe is notorious for their (sporadic) alliance with the Spanish military forces in order to expel and counter the Ottoman expansion over the lands.

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