

A History of Ba‘thist Politics and the Revival of Sufism in Iraq

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all the interviewees might fully agree with my interpretation of Iraq's recent history, the dictatorship of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, and the relationship between the state and Sufis. As a stranger to the country, my aim was to conduct my research, as far as possible, from an impartial and objective perspective.

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Notes on Language and Transliteration

The transliteration system for Arabic, Persian, and Kurdish language in this thesis largely follows the rules of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) with certain exceptions. The nisba ending, for instance, is not rendered -iyya, as in the IJMES style, but -īya throughout the text. Many words found in Merriam-Webster's – for instance *ulama*, *mufti*, *jihad*, *sharia* – are spelled according to the IJMES transliteration system and appear italicised (*'ulamā'*, *muftī*, *jihād*, and *sharī'a*), whereas more frequently occurring words like “Quran”, “shaykh”, “Sufi”, and “Salafi” are simply used without diacritics and appear not italicised. Arabic names of persons, places, cities, provinces, and regions are mostly spelled according to the IJMES transliteration system with diacritics. Only in single cases, I use the ‘accepted English spelling’ which is more widespread in the secondary literature: I use, for instance, Michel ‘Aflaq instead of Mīshīl ‘Aflaq, Iraq instead of ‘Irāq, Mosul instead of Mawṣil, and Baghdad instead of Baghdād. Shortening Arabic names of persons, I did mostly not choose the surname as is usually done in a Western context, but the first name of a person together with the name of that person's father as is common in Iraq. Thus, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī is shortened ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm and not al-Dūrī. In the case of the former Iraqi president Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, I used the abbreviation al-Bakr since this form usually appears in the secondary literature. For persons with a tribal or regional surname, such as Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, I only resorted to the surname (Sāmarrā'ī without the al-) when there occurs no confusion with other Sāmarrā'īs within the same section. The word *ibn* or *bin* in names such as ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib is always abbreviated with “b.”. In the case of the Sufi saint ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, I follow the tradition of the research literature which refers to him as Jīlānī. In Iraqi vernacular, this saint is also referred to as Gailānī and the Iraqi literature spells his surname mostly Kīlānī. All three forms appear in this thesis, the first referring to the shaykh himself, the second for the family who holds the administration of his shrine, and the third (Kīlānīya) for the mosque complex housing his shrine. Sometimes, the letter *qāf* is pronounced *gāf* in Iraqi vernacular such as in the name G[Q]umar. Arabic quotations are italicised throughout the text, but references to Arabic literature in the footnotes and the bibliography are not. Authors whose name begins with ‘ayn, such as ‘Āmirī or ‘Ubaydī appear in the alphabetical order of the bibliography at the end, after the letter Z. Translations are my own, except where noted.

List of Abbreviations and Further General Notes

Faith Campaign	The “Great National Faith Campaign” inaugurated by the Ba‘th Party in 1993
IMK	Islamic Movement in Kurdistan
JRTN	<i>Jaysh rijāl al-ṭarīqa al-naqshbandīya</i>
Kīlānīya	<i>al-Ḥaḍra al-kīlānīya</i> , i.e. the mosque complexe with the shrine of shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Baghdad
RCC	The Regional Command Council of the Iraqi Ba‘th regime (highest institution of the state)
RL	The Regional Leadership of the Ba‘th Party in Iraq (second highest institution of the state)

For dates of events, only the Gregorian solar calendar is used.

For quotations from the Quran, the translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali is used. Otherwise, references to alternative translations are given.

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1. Introduction

The history of Sufism and its relationship to Iraqi politics during the twentieth century in general, and under the Ba‘th Party in particular, is still a major gap in contemporary Iraq studies. The few existing works on Sufism in Iraq generally assume a decline of its influence and popularity with the emergence of the modern nation state during the twentieth century.¹ Recent scholarship points, in turn, to a revival of Sufism in the 1990s.² However, neither the decline nor the revival have yet received closer scholarly scrutiny. Moreover, the aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq revealed a closely interwoven relationship between Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s secular Ba‘th regime and Iraq’s Sufis – an entanglement which, until now, has largely been neglected by research. The most remarkable expression of these close Ba‘th-Sufi relations was the rise of a Sufi militia as the military spearhead of the Ba‘thist resistance in 2006, namely the ‘Army of the Men of the Naqshbandī Path’ (*jaysh rijāl al-ṭarīqa al-naqshbandīya*: JRTN).³ The rise of this militia, in turn, drew attention to the Sufi identity of Iraq’s former Vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council,⁴ ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, apparently the central link between the former regime and the Sufis.⁵ But what does a leading politician of the secular Ba‘th Party have to do with Sufism and the Sufis, and why would a Ba‘thist insurgency group chose a Naqshbandī Sufi label? For answers to these questions, we need to look to the history and politics of the Ba‘th regime, and Sufism up to 2003. It is precisely this puzzle of the link between the Ba‘th regime and Sufism, against the background of the latter’s decline in the first half of the twentieth century and its revival during the 1990s, that this study wants to explore.

This thesis will, first of all, evaluate the state of Sufism in Iraq before the rise of the Ba‘th Party in 1968 in order to identify the central markers of a Sufi decline which can be observed between the late Ottoman era under ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II and the late 1960s.

¹ ‘Azzāwī, *‘Ashā’ir al-‘Irāq*, 1947, 2:225, 228; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 252–57; Bruinessen, ‘The Qadiriyya’; Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 39; DeJong, ‘Les confréries mystiques’, 228–30; Luizard, ‘Les confréries soufies’, 292–308. A discussion of all the literature given in this general introduction will follow in the review of the literature.

² Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 112; Ḥaydarī, *Trājīdīyā Karbalā’*, 301.

³ Knights, ‘The JRTN Movement’. For the sake of brevity, this movement will be referred to as the Naqshbandī Army or its abbreviation JRTN from now on.

⁴ The highest political body in Ba‘thist Iraq (see Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 350–53).

⁵ Pelham, ‘Siege of Falluja Ignites Wrath of Iraq’s Mystical Sufi Masters’; Shahzad, ‘Al-Qaeda’. He has successfully escaped capture by the coalition authorities ever since and has organised an umbrella resistance organization, the Highest Command for Jihād and Liberation (*al-qiyyāda al-‘alīyā li-l-jihād wa-l-tahrīr*), against the coalition forces and the newly established, Shī‘ī-dominated Iraqi government.

The main section of this study will then scrutinise how Ba‘thist religious policies influenced Sufism in Iraq between 1968 and 2003 in order to discover what kind of relationship existed between the regime and the Sufis and how the Ba‘th contributed to a revival of Sufism in Iraq. While in other geographical contexts state-Sufi relations and the politicisation of Sufism in the twentieth century has received increasing scholarly attention,⁶ Iraq’s long and distinct Sufi tradition remains, in this regard, almost completely absent from academic publications and debates. Research about religious politics in Iraq paints a rather general picture of the increasing employment of Islam in Ba‘thist politics, particularly during the 1990s, and the Ba‘th regime’s own moulding and propagation of a specific Ba‘thist Islam.⁷ However, the nature of this Ba‘thist Islam, as portrayed in previous studies, remains rather vague and undefined, seemingly detached from local Iraqi traditions.

Previous scholarship about Ba‘thist religious politics has focused more on politics than on Iraqi Islam. These studies analyse the regime’s structural mechanisms of control, repression, terror and enticement, Ba‘thist ideology, and its abstract understanding of Islam. They focus mainly on the regime’s conflict with Iraq’s Shī‘ī scholarly circles and its aim of moulding a quasi-ecumenical Sunnī-Shī‘ī Arab national Islam. Moreover, researchers have focused almost entirely on the figure of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn as the single dictator and mastermind of Ba‘thist politics and his promotion of a Ḥusaynī Ba‘thist Islam; most other leading Ba‘thists remain largely absent from scholarly debates. Since no authoritarian state can be run entirely by a single dictator, they certainly influenced Ba‘thist politics as well. These previous approaches have brought valuable structural insights into how the authoritarian system of the Ba‘th regime worked, but local Iraqi Islamic culture is equally important for an understanding of Ba‘thist religious politics or a Ba‘thist Islam. Iraq’s Sunnī and Sufi Islam has been especially neglected in this regard, even though it formed part of most leading Ba‘thists’ religious and national identities, since they grew up in its traditions. In order to better understand the impact of Ba‘thist religious politics on state and society and its later consequences, I therefore propose that we need to look much more closely at the core of the brand of Islam which the regime and its members promoted

⁶ Instances are DeJong, ‘Les confréries mystiques’, 205–11; Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*, 70–99; Werenfels, ‘Beyond Authoritarian Upgrading’; Sedgwick, ‘Sufi Religious Leaders’, 223–26.

⁷ See for instance Bengio, *Saddam’s Word*; Long, *Saddam’s War of Words*; Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party*, 259–68; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*; Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq*, 129–41; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*.

as well as at the local religious representatives whom it incorporated into these politics. The fact that the Ba‘th moulded its own brand of Islam does not mean that it could, out of thin air, invent an entirely new Ba‘thist Islam which would have been widely accepted among the people – not even by force.

On the contrary, we need to take seriously a piece of advice from Fanar Haddad that “the state is not a completely autonomous actor, nor is it composed of people with alien values”.⁸ Leading secular Ba‘thist politicians are Iraqi individuals who reflect their local societal, tribal, and also religious background in their political actions. The example of ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī (as above) and his Sufi background will illustrate this well, and this study will furthermore show that he was not an exception. Therefore, I argue that the regime relied on a given popular Islamic culture in Iraq for its aforementioned ecumenical Sunnī-Shī‘ī aspirations. Sufism was a central part of this culture. It predominated Iraq’s Sunnī religious landscape for centuries and was still, throughout the twentieth century, represented much more strongly than Wahhābism, Salafism, or other extreme Sunnī Islamist trends.⁹ In order to solve the puzzle of politics and religion under the Ba‘th, an in-depth investigation of the history of Sufism in Ba‘thist Iraq is needed. This is what this thesis aims to achieve, thereby helping to close the existing research gap on Sufism in Iraq and likewise contributing to the understanding of Ba‘thist religious politics. It will become evident throughout this dissertation that the Ba‘th Party and Sufism were, in fact, much more intertwined than previously thought.

1.1. Research Questions and Objectives

This study probes into the relationship between the state and Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) in Iraq under the Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party from 1968 to 2003. It investigates the gradual evolution of secular Ba‘thist politics, from a stricter separation of religion and politics towards the increasing political incorporation of Islam with a strong and direct patronage of Sufism and Sufis in Iraq. The main objective is to discover how the Ba‘th regime incorporated Sufism and the Sufis into its policies and how, in this way, it

⁸ Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 7.

⁹ Luizard, ‘Les confréries soufies’, 303–7; Kubaysī, ‘al-Salafīya fī l-‘Irāq’.

contributed to a revival of Sufism in the country. My starting point is three general aspects which have not yet been linked in a scholarly framework. These are:

- i) The Sufi identity of Iraq's second man, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, his patronage of Sufi orders, and the emergence of a Sufi militia as military spearhead of the Ba'ṯhist insurgency after 2003.¹⁰
- ii) The oft-observed, increasing use of Islam in the Ba'ṯh regime's political rhetoric, propaganda and policies between 1968 until 2003.¹¹
- iii) The alleged revival of Sufism in Iraq after the Gulf War in 1991, ending the period of its gradual decline since the end of the Second World War.¹²

Aspect i) suggests a much closer relationship between the Ba'ṯh regime and Iraq's Sufi orders than has previously been assumed and raises, in relation to ii), the question of what role Sufi identity and Sufi patronage were given in the Ba'ṯh's political instrumentalisation of Islam. With regard to i), ii), and iii), it has, furthermore, not yet been considered to what extent Ba'ṯhist religious policies influenced an alleged revival of Sufism in Iraq.

The investigation of the relationship between the Iraqi Ba'ṯh regime and Sufism (and the Sufis) from 1968 to 2003 will follow two major strands, namely: a) a closer, diachronic focus on Ba'ṯh religious politics; and b) the changing nature of Sufism itself with regard to its suggested revival during the 1990s.

a) The diachronic investigation of Ba'ṯh politics with regard to the Sufis will focus on the regime's gradual use of Islam and Sufism in its religious policies throughout the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s, up to 2003. This will take into account certain political strategies which have already been discussed elsewhere¹³ yet without due attention to their Sufi dimension, as well as others which have so far received no analysis. The study will primarily investigate state coercion of Islamists, Ba'ṯhist policies towards Sunnī religious scholars, the president's religious legitimisation through his sharīfian genealogy (*nasab*), the development of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*awqāf*) under the Ba'ṯh and its impact on the religious landscape, the

¹⁰ Knights, 'The JRTN Movement'.

¹¹ Bengio, *Saddam's Word*, 176; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 339–42; Faust, *The Ba'ṯhification of Iraq*, 131. A discussion of these authors' different interpretations of this turn will follow in (1.2).

¹² Ḥaydarī, *Trāḡīdīyā Karbalā'*, 301.

¹³ The most comprehensive overview to date is offered by Amatzia Baram, Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*.

Ba‘thisation of religious education, and, to a certain extent, the state recruitment of Kurdish Sufis in paramilitary forces. Among the main objectives concerning these policies, this study will investigate what impact they had on Sufism and the Sufis in Iraq in the course of Ba‘th rule. Central subquestions of this section will be: When, how, and why did the Ba‘th regime begin to incorporate Sufis and Sufism into its religious and other policies? How did the situation for Sunnī religious scholars and shaykhs evolve under the Ba‘th and which representatives from among them did the regime recruit for its religious policies? How did the Ba‘th regime aim to legitimise its rule in religious terms and did Sufism play a role here? How did Ba‘thist policies affect religious institutions such as religious schools, Sunnī mosques, shrines of saints, and Sufi *takāyā*?¹⁴

Another important aspect will be the Sufi religiosity and Sufi background of leading Ba‘thist politicians other than Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, along with their influence on Ba‘thist politics concerning the Sufis. Aspect i) about ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s Sufi identity and his patronage of the Sufi orders suggests his strong personal influence on a Ba‘thist approach to the Sufis. The nature and extent of his Sufism within the Ba‘th and his personal influence still need to be investigated and the question as to whether his case was an exception in the Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party still needs answering. How widespread were Sufi affiliations among Ba‘thists and how close were their personal relationships to Sunnī religious scholars and Sufi shaykhs? This perspective will take seriously Fanar Haddad’s advice that the state is not composed of people with alien values¹⁵ and will complement previous perceptions of Ba‘thists as purely secular or even atheist politicians¹⁶ by taking their regional and religious backgrounds into account. This approach will, moreover, add to the clarification of our application of the category “secular” to the Ba‘th Party and its members.

Up to now, the Ba‘th’s patronage of Sufism has been almost completely overlooked by Iraq researchers. Due to the overemphasis of the party’s secularism, which some even labeled as atheism,¹⁷ the exclusive focus on Ṣaddām Ḥusayn as the ruthless dictator and single mastermind of the regime, and the regime’s conflict with the Shī‘a community, most studies have turned a blind eye to Sunnī Islam, and particularly

¹⁴ A *takāya* (plural *takāyā*) is a Sufi establishment where Sufis gather around a shaykh and perform their rituals and devotions (Clayer, ‘Tekke’).

¹⁵ Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 7.

¹⁶ See in (1.2).

¹⁷ See for instance Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 70–73, 340.

Sufism, in Iraq. Several studies have discussed the regional and tribal background, again, mainly of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and his family, in order to analyse the regime's tribal recruitment practices and the resurgence of tribalism in the country.¹⁸ Yet, the influence of many Ba'athists' regional and tribal origins on the regime's religious policies towards the Sunnī community has not been considered thus far. The fact that Sufism was still the prevailing religious culture in the rural homelands of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, and many other leading Ba'athists, and that this Sufi culture was also part of their tribal culture, has also been neglected.

The Iraqi Ba'ath regime's support of Sufism and the Sufis needs, furthermore, to be put into context as part of a larger phenomenon in the whole Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). The phenomenon of state support for Sufism and Sufis is unique neither in Iraq nor in that particular period of time. Muslim rulers have always patronised Sufis as long as Sufism has existed. Sufis, in turn, can be seen to have had political involvement throughout history, even though neither Sufi teachings nor most Sufis themselves are fundamentally political.¹⁹ State support of Sufi orders is well-documented in many modern Muslim republics and monarchies in the MENA regions during the second half of the twentieth century. The general pattern that emerges from these policies towards Sufis seems to show a primary aim of strengthening Sufi orders as an alternative to and counterforce against political Islam and radical Islamism. These Sufis were not per se apolitical, but, in contrast to Islamists, most of them were not offering a political alternative which threatened the rule of those regimes. In accordance with this pattern, Egyptian President Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir promoted certain Sufi orders as a counterbalance to the Muslim Brotherhood as early as the 1950s.²⁰ Since the 1980s and particularly during the 1990s, a growing top-down promotion of Sufism has been similarly documented for Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia,²¹ Syria,²² and

¹⁸ See Baram, 'Neo-Tribalism'; Baram, 'La « maison »'; Abdul-Jabar, 'Sheikhs and Ideologues'.

¹⁹ Instances of such a political involvement are abundant throughout history. As early as the eighth century, early Muslim ascetics combined their asceticism with voluntary military service on the borders of Islam (Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 18–19). The 'Abbāsid caliph al-Nāṣir (d. 1225) and later the Ottoman Sultans politically instrumentalised Sufism and the latter even recruited Sufi orders into their armies (Clayer, *Mystiques, État et Société*, chap. II.2; Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'iyya and Shiism'; Abu-Manneh, 'The Khālidiyya and the Salafiyya'). Sufis came to be instrumentalised by colonial powers throughout the Islamic world (Luizard, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Geylānī'). Many also actively fought these (Kemper, *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam in Daghestan*; Kemper, 'The Changing Images of Jihad Leaders'). Some Sufis even founded their own states (see Sedgwick, 'Sufi Religious Leaders', 219).

²⁰ DeJong, 'Les confréries mystiques', 205–11; Sedgwick, 'Sufi Religious Leaders', 223–26.

²¹ Werenfels, 'Beyond Authoritarian Upgrading'.

²² After the suppression of the Islamist uprising in the early 1980s, the Asad regime formed an alliance with certain loyal Sufis such as Aḥmad al-Kuṭfārū or Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī. Interestingly,

even Saudi Arabia.²³ Alongside the Islamist threat, Isabelle Werenfels summarised the main reasons for the growing state patronage of Sufis as voter mobilisation, legitimisation of policies, demobilisation of oppositional actors, identity politics, national unity, reconciliation, provision of state services, and foreign policy goals. Close personal relationships between leading politicians and certain Sufi orders influenced this development, too, as in, for instance, Morocco, Algeria, or Tunisia.²⁴ Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, this political pattern has been slightly adapted as states have tended to mobilise Sufis in a growing international coalition against the newly perceived threat of a growing Salafism.²⁵

Finally, the observed growth in salience of Islam in Iraqi politics and the revival of Sufism fit with and reflect the generally recognised resurgence of religion since the 1970s, both in the MENA regions and worldwide. In the Middle East, the resurgence of religion has often been explained as a result of the growing disillusionment with Arab nationalism following the Arab defeat during the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, and as a reaction to globalisation and “the dominant monologue of secular modernity”.²⁶ Similarly, Fanar Haddad explains the Islamic resurgence in Iraq – the prominence of cultural religion and public piety during the 1990s – as a reaction to the failure of the revolutionary Ba‘th regime as a consequence of the collapse of the state and rising poverty due to international sanctions.²⁷ Complementing previous explanations, the diachronic analysis of the Ba‘th’s own political use of Islam and Sufism in this study will identify the cyclical nature and reciprocal effect of state politics and the Islamic resurgence in society.²⁸ During its thirty-five years of rule, the Ba‘th struggled first of all against early signs of an Islamic resurgence in the form of a homegrown Islamist threat to its rule, and later on additionally against an external Islamist threat from its enemy Iran. With the incorporation of Islam and particularly Sufism into its politics, however, the Ba‘th itself further contributed to the ongoing Islamic resurgence. To what extent the Ba‘th itself fuelled this development with regard to Sufism and to what

the regime’s repression of Salafism during the 1990s resulted more from the pressure by the established Sufi scholars than from the regime itself. The official promotion of Sufism against radical Salafism commenced only after 2001 (Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*, 70–99).

²³ The Saudi regime permitted a gradual Sufi revival in the Hijāz in competition to the growing Islamist *ṣaḥwa* movement during the 1990s (Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*, 221–22).

²⁴ Werenfels, ‘Beyond Authoritarian Upgrading’, 278.

²⁵ See for instance Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*, 126–29; Sedgwick, ‘Sufis as “Good Muslims”’.

²⁶ Sedgwick, ‘Salafism’, 61–64.

²⁷ He understands cultural religion as the primary reservoir of a sect’s symbolism (Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 4, 106).

²⁸ Compare Fanar Haddad’s observations in Haddad, 7–8.

extent it was due to other factors still needs to be clarified. Moreover, did the Ba‘th regime in this way become Islamist as is assumed elsewhere?²⁹

b) The second major strand of this study will scrutinise the history of Sufism in the light of the aforementioned Ba‘thist policies, both in the Arab and the Kurdish regions. For the purposes of analysis, the umbrella term Sufism in this context comprises: the phenomena of Sufi orders and their leading shaykh clans; Sufi institutions such as mosques, shrines, and *takāyā*; Sufis among the religious scholars (‘*ulamā*’) and their teachings; Sufi genealogies (*ansāb*); and Sufi approaches to the Shī‘a in teachings and rituals. The history of Sufism in Iraq in the twentieth century is still a blind spot in the research literature; I am not aware of any study that engages with this topic comprehensively. Existing research has focused mostly on Sufi orders in the Kurdish regions (the Naqshbandīya and Qādirīya in particular) but has not considered their situation and development in the Arab-dominated regions of central and southern Iraq. The other manifestations of Sufism have been largely neglected. According to the prevalent assumption, stated at the beginning of this chapter, the societal influence of Sufism declined with growing modernisation and the political secularisation of Iraq’s society through the twentieth century. Such an assumption is not unproblematic, since identifying decline always depends on our perspective, which period of time we investigate, and on what we focus. In order to evaluate this assumed decline, we need to clarify to what extent Sufism was affected by it and by which indicators we can measure it. Just recently, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaydarī (2015) pointed to an alleged revival of Sufism during the 1990s. This observation, too, still awaits closer analysis as it is not clear to what extent Iraqi society experienced such a revival of Sufism at that time. Moreover, what indicators of such a Sufi revival can be found and how did it relate to the state?

The thesis will try to answer these questions with an investigation of the aforementioned phenomena of Sufism and their development throughout the period from 1876 to 2003. This will include the history of the most important shaykh clans of the three most popular orders, namely the Rifā‘īya (so far largely ignored), the Qādirīya, and the Naqshbandīya. How were these and the Sufism they practised affected by the political and social transformations over time and what were their strategies to cope with these? What does the spread of their mosques, shrines, *takāyā*,

²⁹ See my discussion of Amatzia Baram’s work in Section 1.3.2.

or religious schools – their prosperity or decay – tell us about this development? Another important aspect is the Sufism among Sunnī religious scholars, their societal influence, and their literary output. A focus on them and their teachings will highlight their emphasis on the Islamic legal (*sharʿī*) dimension in Sufism – what I term a *sharīʿa*-minded Sufism – as well as their adaptations and reactions to widespread anti-Sufi polemics. The role of genealogies (*ansāb*, sing. *nasab*) in Sufism and the scholarly discipline of Arabic genealogy (*ʿilm al-ansāb*), increasingly popular from the 1980s onwards, will be given special attention here. The role of Sufi genealogies will appear throughout the thesis, which will reveal their salience in a religious context. It will trace the historical development from the strong Sufi representation in the former institution of the Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants (*niqābat al-ashrāf*), which lapsed in the early 1960s, to the later Sufi contribution and its links with the revival of genealogy in a national context under the Baʿth. The *nasab*, in particular, constituted an important link between the Rifāʿīya and the Baʿth leadership. Finally, this study will probe into Sufi rapprochements to the Shīʿa in the specific Iraqi context, since this dimension gained particular prominence in the Baʿthist support of certain Sufi orders. The main focus will be the Sufi transgression of sectarian – and even ethnic – boundaries on the basis of the Sufi-Shīʿī's shared veneration of the descendants of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), particularly the Twelve Imams. This will take into account Shīʿī membership in Sunnī Sufi orders, the ritual closeness of certain orders to the Shīʿa, the Sufi emphasis on sharīfian genealogies (*ansāb*), and spiritual lineages (*salāsīl*) which include the *ahl al-bayt*, and the general status of the Twelve Imams in Sufi literature. To sum up, the main research questions of this thesis, according to their chronological order, concern:

- 1) The Decline of Sufism in Iraq between the Ottoman Period (under ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II) and the 1960s;
- 2) The Baʿth Regime's Incorporation of Sufism and the Sufis into Politics and its Official Revival of Sufism;
- 3) Reasons for the Baʿth Regime's Promotion of Sufis and the Ultimate Revival of Sufism;
- 4) Did the Baʿth regime become Islamist?;
- 5) The Baʿthist Revival of Sufism and the New Opportunities for Sufis.

1.2. A Brief Overview of Iraq's Political History, 1876-2003

In order to better understand the outline and argumentation of this study, a brief overview of the historical and political background of modern Iraq is necessary. The period under investigation covers the period from Ottoman rule at the end of the nineteenth century to the fall of the Ba'ṯh regime in 2003 and is one of enormous political and social transformations, in the course of which a modern nation state emerged in Iraq.

1876-1909: Ottoman Rule under 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II

Between 1876 and 1909, the region of Iraq was still divided into the three administrative provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Baṣra, under the centralised government of the Ottoman state ruled by sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II. This period was marked by the sultan's political promotion of a Pan-Islam, which included the cultivation of strong, direct ties to local tribal leaders, Prophetic descendants, and Sufi orders in Iraq.³⁰ Central challenges to the Ottoman state at that time included the massive expansion of Shī'ism in southern Iraq, as well as the maintenance of centralised state control in Kurdistan, where semi-autonomous rulers had always opted for independence and separatism.³¹ Lavish Ottoman state support for Sufi orders and, related to them, a centralised system of the Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants (*niqābat al-ashrāf*) were important means with which to come to terms with both challenges. Sunnī Sufīs could function as a counterbalance against the spread of Shī'ism and as a way to better integrate the existing Shī'īs into the state.³² State patronage of influential Sufīs, Prophetic descendants, and tribal shaykhs guaranteed their loyalty, particularly in Kurdistan where tribes and Sufi orders were even integrated into the Ottoman army as combat units, i.e. the Ḥamīdīya regiments.³³ The Ottoman state was, at that time, already in a period of decline but in this way cultivated a loyal elite of religious and tribal leaders.

³⁰ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*.

³¹ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, chap. 3.

³² Deringel, 'The Struggle Against Shiism'; Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'īya and Shiism'.

³³ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 185–86.

1920-1958: The British Mandate over Iraq and the Iraqi Monarchy

The British occupation of Iraq during the First World War ended the declining Ottoman rule once and for all. The year 1920 saw the consolidation of a new nation state of Iraq under a British mandate and one year later the installation of the Mecca-born Faiṣal b. Ḥusayn as king of Iraq.³⁴ The establishment of British colonial rule in 1920 met immediately with fierce resistance during a joint Sunnī-Shī'ī tribal revolt which was violently suppressed by the new rulers in central and southern Iraq.³⁵ The monarchy under British administration, just like all its political successors in Iraq, had to struggle to keep this multi-ethnic (Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, Armenians, Assyrians, Circassians, Persians) and multi-sectarian (Sunnīs, Shī'īs, Christians, Jews, Yazīdīs, Sabians, Mandeans) country united as one nation. The discontent and resistance of influential tribal shaykhs, particularly in the Kurdish north, flared up regularly.³⁶ Over the following decades, a centralised, modern state emerged as a new centre of gravity in which old religious elites such as Sufi shaykhs, religious scholars, or Prophetic descendants lost much of their former status. Most of them were gradually replaced at the political level by a new secular elite from the middle class with a military background.³⁷ This new state fostered the modernisation of Iraqi society, the spread of a modern secular education system, as well as the dissemination of a new nationalist ideology. After Iraq's formal independence from Britain in 1932, the country faced two turbulent decades with numerous army conspiracies and coups, the spread of new socialist and Pan-Arabist ideologies, and the foundation of new parties which gradually began to dominate the political discourse.³⁸ One of them was the Arab Socialist Ba'ṯh Party which emerged on Iraq's political landscape in 1949. Originally founded by the orthodox Christian Michel 'Aflaq and others in Syria, it united a Pan-Arabist ideology with a secular idealisation of the Prophet Muḥammad as a founding figure of a united Arab nation.³⁹ Its rise to political power did not come until later in the 1960s.

³⁴ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, chap. 2.

³⁵ Kadhim, 'Efforts at Cross-Ethic Cooperation'; Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq*; Eich, 'Patterns of the 1920 Rising'.

³⁶ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 23–30.

³⁷ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, chap. 7.

³⁸ Eppel, 'The Elite, the Effendiya, and the Growth of Nationalism'.

³⁹ 'Aflaq, *Fī sabīl al-Ba'ṯh*, 50–61; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, chaps 3, 4.

1958-1968: The Early Republics of Iraq

In 1958, a military coup by a faction of Pan-Arab army officers, under the leadership of Brigadier ‘Abd al-Karīm Qāsim, overthrew the monarchy and established a republic under Qāsim’s eventual dictatorship. His socialist-inspired regime brought enormous social and political transformations which dealt a blow to many traditional and religious elites in Iraq. Soon after the revolution, he implemented a new land reform law which aimed at the expropriation of Iraq’s wealthy landlords, many of whom were tribal chiefs or even Sufi shaykhs.⁴⁰ He inaugurated the partial dissolution of certain religious Sufi endowments (*awqāf*).⁴¹ The beginning of his rule saw a temporary alliance with Iraq’s communists whose Popular Resistance Forces mobilised local peasants to attack landlords and Sufi shaykhs in the Kurdish north. All this resulted in extreme political turmoil in Kurdistan and a mass flight of Kurdish shaykhs to Iran and Turkey. This period also saw the re-emergence of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī and its campaign for an independent Kurdistan.⁴² Qāsim was overthrown in 1963 by a coalition of his former allies from the military, ‘Abd al-Salām and ‘Abd al-Raḥman ‘Ārif, and the Ba‘th Party. This was the Ba‘th’s first but shortlived experience in political power: it was ousted a few months later by the ‘Ārif brothers who had more Nasserist ambitions, and who ruled Iraq successively from 1963 until 1966 and from 1966 until 1968. The rule of the ‘Ārif brothers was marked by an intensive use of tribal kinship in the military to secure power, renewed clashes with Bārzanī’s Kurdish separatists in the north, a rapprochement with Nasserist Egypt, and, inspired by the latter, socialist nationalisation in the economic sector. The ‘Ārif brothers’ socialist measures triggered a growing resistance against the regime, particularly among Iraq’s Sunnī and Shī‘ī religious circles. The ‘Ārif brothers promoted themselves as pious Sunnī Muslims and granted the religious circles, in turn, certain concessions such as ordinances that enforced a stricter observance of Islam in public.⁴³

⁴⁰ Hashimi and Edwards, ‘Land Reform’; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, chaps 2, 3.

⁴¹ Luizard, ‘Les confréries soufies’, 307.

⁴² Rubin, ‘Abd Al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds’.

⁴³ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, chap. 5.

1968-2003: The Republic under the Ba‘th Party

In 1968, another military coup brought the Ba‘th Party back into power with general Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr as its first president, prime minister, and chairman of the highest political level of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC).⁴⁴ The party ruled Iraq until the US-led invasion in 2003. Al-Bakr, and to an even greater extent his successor in 1979, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, relied heavily on their common al-Bū Nāṣir tribe in the military and security services to secure their stay in power.⁴⁵ Al-Bakr’s rule in the 1970s was largely characterised by the party’s consolidation of power through the elimination of political enemies, a transformation of society according to its secular and socialist outlook, and the securing of financial backing by the nationalisation of the oil sector.⁴⁶ In 1979, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn ousted al-Bakr and consolidated his dictatorship for more than two decades in the course of which he aimed to Ba‘thise Iraq’s society completely through the continuing expansion of a security system of control, repression, and often extreme violence.⁴⁷ Under his rule, Iraq experienced major political crises such as the Iran-Iraq War against the regime of Ayatollah Khomeynī from 1980 to 1988 – a war in which the regime cultivated close relations with Saudi Arabia as a financial donor and adopted increasingly Islamic rhetoric and propaganda.⁴⁸ In 1990, Iraq invaded neighbouring Kuwait and was defeated by US-led coalition forces during the Gulf War which destroyed large parts of the country’s infrastructure.⁴⁹ During a subsequent uprising against the regime in the Shī‘ī south and the Kurdish north in 1991, the Ba‘th temporarily lost control of fourteen out of eighteen provinces. It brought the south under control again but, with international support, the Kurdish north eventually gained its autonomy from the central government. An additional international embargo against Iraq by the United Nations Security Council from 1990 until 2003 failed to bring down the regime but caused extreme hardships in Iraqi society.⁵⁰ Despite contrary assumptions by politicians and academics alike, even at that point the regime remained strong and was able to successfully infiltrate Iraq’s religious landscape which allowed it to fall back more

⁴⁴ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*; Makiya, *Republic of Fear*; Davis, *Memories of State*, chap. 6.

⁴⁵ Baram, ‘The Ruling Political Elite’; Baram, ‘La « maison »’; Baram, ‘Saddam’s Power Structure’.

⁴⁶ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, chaps 3–6.

⁴⁷ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party*; Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq*; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*.

⁴⁸ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, chap. 4; Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*.

⁴⁹ Long, *Saddam’s War of Words*.

⁵⁰ Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, chaps 4, 5.

than ever on religious forces to govern Iraqi society.⁵¹ The secular Ba‘th regime itself commenced a National Faith Campaign from 1993 until 2003 to impose the study of the Quran and the Prophetic *sunna* on all layers of society and even the Ba‘th Party itself. However, the promotion of religion and an oft-observed growth of public piety in Iraq at that time came also with new dangers. Since the invasion of Kuwait, the regime’s relationship with Saudi Arabia had deteriorated and it now perceived the import of a radical Wahhābism from its neighbour as a major threat. Since coming to power, the Ba‘th had always fiercely repressed all such Islamist currents and movements in Iraq, whether Sunnī or Shī‘ī.⁵²

1.3. Review of the Literature on Sufism and the Ba‘th Party

In the following section, I will present a chronological overview of previous research on the history of Sufism as well as on the Ba‘th Party in Iraq.

1.3.1. *Sufism in Iraq*

The modern history of Sufism in Iraq over the twentieth century and particularly in the Ba‘th era (1968-2003) has not yet been written. Only a few academic studies have taken expressions of Sufism in this country during this period into consideration.⁵³ As stated above, most of them focus entirely on Sufi orders and their shaykhs in Kurdistan but neglect other expressions of Sufism and consider developments in the Arab regions of central and southern Iraq only marginally. Aside from the Kurdish Naqshbandīya and Qādirīya, other orders, such as the Rifā‘īya, have not yet received due scholarly attention. Research has mainly discussed the successful expansion of the Naqshbandīya at the expense of the rival Qādirīya in the Kurdish regions and assumes a general decline of all orders during the twentieth century. This decline is associated with corruption by virtue of the shaykhs’ political aspirations and their eventual loss of political power and societal influence. In order to give my analysis context and to point to existing research gaps, the following literature review will concentrate on the

⁵¹ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, pt. III.

⁵² Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, chap. 6.

⁵³ The following studies from the 1940s onwards take up merely rudimentary aspects of Kurdish mysticism and Sufism (Barth, *The Principles of Social Organization*; Nikitin, *Les Kurdes*; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*; Bois, *Les Kurdes*).

key points of a) an alleged decline of Sufi orders in Iraq during the twentieth century, b) the revival of Sufism during the 1990s, c) Sufism among Sunnī religious scholars, and d) the close traditional and ritual relationship between Sufism and the Shī‘a in Iraq.

a) The Gradual Decline of Sufism in Iraq during the Twentieth Century

Scholarship supports the view of an enormous decline of Sufism and the Sufi orders and their loss of societal influence, popularity, and political power in Iraq through the twentieth century. This is usually explained by means of political and economic factors. However, the continuing presence and spread of Sufism in spite of tremendous transformations of social structures in modern Iraq challenges this view. It calls for a re-evaluation of the thesis of a decline in order to more clearly ascertain its historical indicators.

The view that Sufism and Sufi orders, particularly the Naqshbandīya and Qādirīya, are far more widespread and influential in Iraqi Kurdistan than in the rest of Iraq, is nowadays widely recognised. As early as 1947, the Iraqi author ‘Abbās al-‘Azzāwī emphasised, in his volume *‘Ashā’ir al-‘Irāq* (Tribes of Iraq), the great influence of the Sufi orders among the Kurdish tribes of the north. According to ‘Azzāwī, they became corrupt over the course of time, entered politics and turned their shaykhdoms into emirates to utilise the obedience and submissiveness of their followers. He states that the Qādirīya was firmly established among the Kurds only until the 1940s when their influence started to wane, whereas the Naqshbandīya extended its influence and grew stronger. The Qādirīya, ‘Azzāwī reports, began to vanish and its shaykhs lost much of their power and influence in the Kurdish areas, and only a few people still knew of their status and position.⁵⁴

The anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen was the first to provide detailed studies about the Sufi orders of the Naqshbandīya and Qādirīya in Kurdistan in his *Agha, Shaykh and State* from 1978⁵⁵ as well as in later essays (published in 2000). He

⁵⁴ ‘Azzāwī, *‘Ashā’ir al-‘Irāq*, 1947, 2:225, 228. While ‘Azzāwī certainly provides important information about the development of Sufi life in Kurdistan, his account should also be treated with some caution. As he was, during his youth, a religious student of Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī – a reformist Salafī scholar with a Naqshbandī background – he could have adopted anti-Sufi leanings which might have influenced his view (see Sāmarrā’ī, *Majālis Baghdād*, 168).

⁵⁵ This PhD thesis was revised and published in 1992 and has been translated into several languages (Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*).

explains the success of the Naqshbandīya at the expense of the Qādirīya, starting in the nineteenth century, through the two orders' differing organisational structures. While the deputies of the central Naqshbandī shaykh Mawlānā Khālīd al-Shahrazūrī (1779-1827) successfully established autonomous centres of growth for the order, the Qādirīya remained largely centralised and monopolised by two famous tribal clans, namely the Barzinjīs and the Ṭālabānīs.⁵⁶ The European imperial encroachment in the nineteenth century, the destruction of the semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates by the Ottoman state, and Ottoman land reforms eventually helped the Sufi shaykhs of both orders to establish themselves in a political power vacuum as religious leaders and mediators between the tribes and wealthy landlords.⁵⁷

Over the first half of the twentieth century, however, the influence and political status of Sufi shaykhs began to decline. As factors influencing this decline, Bruinessen highlights the end of Ottoman rule and state support, the emergence of secular nationalist movements and party politics, the spread of Marxist ideology, the modernisation and socio-economic development of education and society at large, and, finally, the expansion of a centralised state. Facing such drastic changes, the shaykhs gradually lost their former role and significance, and hence much of their influence in Kurdish society.⁵⁸ Despite this social and political decline, Bruinessen also demonstrates how certain traditional shaykh families of both orders successfully mastered the transition from Sufism into party politics, producing some of Iraq's most influential leading political figures to date. Most famous among these are: shaykh Maḥmūd al-Ḥafīd of the Barzinjī tribe (Qādirīya), who declared himself king of Kurdistan in 1922; the founder of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Jalāl Ṭālabānī (Qādirīya), president of Iraq from 2005 until 2014;⁵⁹ and the leader of the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) Mullā Muṣṭafā Bārzānī (Naqshbandīya), whose son Mas'ūd became the president of the autonomous Kurdish region in 2004.⁶⁰ Other clans have retained their Sufi traditions to this day. They still have a considerable number of followers but have lost most of

⁵⁶ Bruinessen, 224–34; Bruinessen, 'The Qadiriyya'.

⁵⁷ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 228–34. Bruinessen also gives accounts of Sufi rituals, social relationships between the shaykhs and with their followers, as well as millenarian ideas which were widespread among the Kurdish Sufis of the nineteenth century (Bruinessen, 234–52).

⁵⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 252–57; Bruinessen, 'The Qadiriyya'.

⁵⁹ Bruinessen, 'The Qadiriyya'.

⁶⁰ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 333–34.

their political influence.⁶¹ Later studies of Sufism in Iraqi Kurdistan provide merely an overview of the most important Sufi clans, or historical case studies of single families.⁶²

Information about the Sufi orders in Iraq's Arab regions in this period is rather scant. The Marxist historian Hanna Batatu dedicated a section to Sufi religiosity in his major work *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (1978), where he supports the thesis of a general decline. Initially referring to the Kurdish region, he states that

it was in the period of the monarchy strongly permeated by mysticism and by its practitioners, the *Ṣūfīs*. This is not to say that there were no traces of *Ṣūfism* among the Arabs. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, *Baghdādīs* made their demonstrations or rebellions under the banner of the *Ṣūfī* Shaikh 'Abd-ul-Qādir al-Gailānī. However, in monarchic days Arab *Ṣūfism*, though still showing signs of life, had – except in a few places, such as *Sāmarrā* – none of the outward vigor that marked the mysticism of the Kurds.⁶³

He adds that the order with the largest number of *takāyā* in the *Sunnī* Arab areas between Baghdad and Mosul⁶⁴ appears to have been the *Rifā'īya*, followed by some *Qādirīya* and *Naqshbandīya takāyā*. However, Batatu admits that he did not know whether Sufism really had a stronger influence among the Kurds and whether this was a result of its resemblance to their pre-Islamic beliefs. Reflecting his Marxist approach, he concludes that the *Naqshbandīya* and the *Qādirīya* “dominated to an overwhelming degree Kurdish religious life in the time of the monarchy, but since the thirties, if not earlier, they have been waning due to the decline of religion and the men of religion generally”.⁶⁵ In another chapter, he demonstrates that Prophetic descendants (*al-sāda al-ashrāf*) and Sufi shaykhs were gradually replaced at the political level by a new elite of rather secular nationalist army officers from the middle class during the 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁶ Finally, Fred DeJong (1985) and Pierre Jean Luizard (1999) summarise this gradual decline with an exclusive focus on Sufis in the Arab regions. Both

⁶¹ Bruinessen's fundamental observations were merely reproduced in a few later essays such as in DeJong, 'Les confréries mystiques'; Shourush, 'The Religious Composition'; Hakim, 'The Origins of the Naqshabandiyya'.

⁶² Iranian author Muḥammad Ra'ūf Tavakkulī produced, along with his *Tā'rikh taṣavvuf dar Kurdestān* (History of Sufism in Kurdistan) in 1980, a detailed compilation of the most important Sufi orders and their representatives among the Kurdish clans in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan with valuable biographical accounts (Tavakkulī, *Tā'rikh-i taṣavvuf*). Ferhad Shakely (1999) provided an account of the family history and Sufi traditions of the most influential Naqshbandī-Qādirī shaykh during the second half of the twentieth century, shaykh Muḥammad 'Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī from Biyāra (Shakely, 'The Naqshbandī Sheikhs').

⁶³ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 39.

⁶⁴ The southeastern part of what is known as the *jazīra*, i.e. today parts of Anbār, Nīnawā, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn provinces.

⁶⁵ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 43, 165.

⁶⁶ Batatu, chap. 7.

researchers give a brief overview of the most famous shaykhs of all orders and state a decline especially with reference to the Rifāʿīya, which developed, according to Luizard, into a mere “confrérie fantôme”.⁶⁷

Recent research on Sufism in modern Muslim societies revises and questions the paradigm of a general decline as described above. Scholars now stress a change of social structures within Sufi communities themselves around the Muslim world rather than a tremendous decline of their social importance. They show that Sufi orders are far from being socially marginal in modern and contemporary Muslim societies but still attract a large following among lower and educated middle classes.⁶⁸ The aforementioned Sufi revival in Iraq during the 1990s and a look at contemporary Iraqi society affirm this view. Thus, we should not simply understand Sufism as a stagnant, anti-progressive, and traditional religious phenomenon in opposition to secularisation, rationalisation, and modernisation of societies.⁶⁹ The thesis of Sufism’s decline needs to be re-evaluated, its indicators established, and the strategies of Sufis to cope with social and political change identified.

b) Traces of a Sufi Revival

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, De Jong and Luizard briefly mentioned the increasing literary activity of the Rifāʿīya with the publication of a new book series including old and new text collections of the order.⁷⁰ The introductions of these books and others reveal that they aimed at a revival of the Sufi traditions of the Rifāʿīya and Qādirīya, but their content has, up to now, not received any scholarly attention.⁷¹ More explicit indications of increasing Sufi activity in Iraq are mostly found in the 1990s. In a short section of his book about the Shīʿī narrative of Imam al-Ḥusayn’s tragedy in Karbalāʾ, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaydarī summarises the historical development of Sufism in Iraq since the Ottoman Empire. According to Ḥaydarī, Sufism lost much of its influence in society from the end of the Second World War onwards but became influential again in the early 1990s after the Gulf War. At that time, *dhikr* performances to

⁶⁷ DeJong, ‘Les confréries mystiques’, 228–30; Luizard, ‘Les confréries soufies’, 292–308. See also Luizard’s essay about ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Kīlānī (Luizard, ‘‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Geylānī’’).

⁶⁸ Bruinessen and Howell, *Sufism and the ‘Modern’*, 9; compare also Sedgwick, *Saints and Sons*.

⁶⁹ Bruinessen and Howell, *Sufism and the ‘Modern’*, chap. 1.

⁷⁰ DeJong, ‘Les confréries mystiques’, 229; Luizard, ‘Les confréries soufies’, 308.

⁷¹ See for instance Rāwī, *Mukhtaṣar al-qawāʾid*; Ṣayyādī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifāʿīya*; Rifāʿī, *al-Majālis*; Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī*; Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*.

commemorate God and other Sufi practices reportedly spread again in central Iraq.⁷² Jean-Claude Chabrier attended one such *dhikr* performance of the Qādirīya-Kasnazānīya in Baghdad as part of a Babylon Festival in 1997. In his eye-witness account, he describes a huge *dhikr* gathering of Kasnazānī Sufis, acoustically supported by the rhythm of drums, performing the famous *dirbāsha*⁷³ ritual (i.e. the perforation of the body with swords and skewers), eating glass, and swallowing fire in the presence of an Italian film team. Chabrier concluded that this order was obviously tolerated and the whole event approved by the authorities. He even notes the unusual intermingling of officials in this environment.⁷⁴

The 1990s are commonly associated with a religious revival in Iraq. Many similar reports and anecdotes by visitors to the country between 1990 and 2003 frequently mention a growing religiosity, increasing numbers of veiled women and long-bearded men in the streets of Baghdad or claims of rising mosque attendance.⁷⁵ According to Khalil Osman, external and internal wars, regime repression and the hardships of international sanctions “heightened the Iraqis’ need for spiritual comfort and their preoccupation with death, salvation and the afterlife.” They sought to be purged from their sins, “their sorrows, pains, despondency through prayers, rituals, and other forms of religious observance”.⁷⁶ Yet, Fanar Haddad in his study of sectarianism in Iraq correctly points to the difficulty in empirically assessing this commonly held perception of a religious revival. While a wealth of anecdotal evidence can help to estimate the Iraqi religious sentiment during the sanction era, hard evidence such as official mosque attendance statistics, for example, are not available. Haddad concentrates instead on state policy and propaganda as indicators, which can reflect not only the state’s idealised aims but also existing trends in society that the state may wish to utilise or strengthen. Due to such empirical difficulties, Haddad posits an interpretation of a rising salience of religious identity as a marker of group identity rather than belief in a metaphysical afterlife.⁷⁷ He argues that the way the Ba‘thist state sponsored religion in Iraq inevitably increased sectarian tensions in society since it emphasised the teaching of one sect at the expense of another. In his account about the

⁷² Haydarī, *Trājīdīyā Karbalā’*, 301.

⁷³ The ritual is also known throughout the Islamic world as *darb al-shīsh* or *darb al-saif* and is intended to prove, as a form of miracle, the spiritual power of a shaykh. For a study of this phenomenon in the Syrian context see Pinto, ‘The Sufi Ritual of the Darb Al-Shish’.

⁷⁴ Chabrier, ‘Une séance de dhikr de la Qādirīyya-Kasnazāniyya à Bagdad en 1997’.

⁷⁵ For instance, Wiley, ‘The Position of the Iraqi Clergy’, 62.

⁷⁶ Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 84.

⁷⁷ Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 103, 107.

Ba‘th’s launching of the Faith Campaign in 1993, the state seemingly favoured Sufi rituals. He quotes from an interview with an Iraqi under the pseudonym Mahmud Hazim:

The [state’s] faith campaign and public piety in general strengthened sectarian identity. Firstly you have general piety feeding into your sectarian identity. More importantly, Sunni or Sufi rituals were allowed and were expressed more visibly in the 1990s whereas Shi’a rituals and expressions were still tightly controlled. This will create resentment: why do you support one group’s rituals and suppress the other’s? After all what is the difference between the [Sufi] *dirbash* and the [Shi’a] chain?⁷⁸

Mahmud Hazim contrasts the *dirbāsha* here with the officially suppressed practice of self-flagellation among the Shī‘a in commemoration of the community’s guilt for having abandoned Imam al-Ḥusayn during his martyrdom at Karbala in 680. His observation of the toleration of more visibly expressed Sufi rituals during the 1990s comes close to the account of Ḥaydarī about an alleged revival of Sufism in the 1990s and, like Chabrier, links it implicitly to the Ba‘th regime’s toleration. Both the expressions of such a revival of Sufism in Iraq as well as its links to the Ba‘th regime’s policies await closer scrutiny.

c) Sufism among Sunnī Religious Scholars

Sufism among Iraq’s Sunnī religious scholars (‘*ulamā*’) and jurists (*fuqahā*) over the twentieth century is yet another completely neglected realm in the research literature. Of particular interest is these scholars’ Islamic legal perspective and position between a Shī‘a majority community in Iraq and a growing discourse of Wahhābī and Salafī-inspired anti-Sufi polemics.⁷⁹ While such polemics are almost as old as Sufism itself, research indicates that they gained considerable strength within Iraqi scholarly Naqshbandīya circles from the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the most notable representatives of this trend, the literature presents Baghdadī scholars such as Nu‘mān Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (1836-1899), Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī (1857-1924)⁸⁰ as well as Muḥammad Fayḍī al-Zahāwī. However, Luizard remarks that, due

⁷⁸ Haddad, 112.

⁷⁹ A short overview of the history of such polemics is provided in Radtke, ‘Anti-Şūfī Polemics’.

⁸⁰ The history and influence of the Ālūsīs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have received increasing scholarly attention in recent years (Nafī, ‘Abu Al-Thana’ Al-Alusi’; Abu-Manneh, ‘Salafiyya’; Eich, ‘The Forgotten Salafī’; Abu-Manneh, ‘The Khālidiyya and the Salafiyya’; Weismann, ‘The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya’; Weismann, ‘Abū l-Hudā l-Şayyādī’; Eich, ‘Abū l-Hudā l-Sayyādī—Still such a Polarizing Figure’; Weismann, ‘Genealogies of Fundamentalism’; Eich, ‘Abū l-Hudā and the Ālūsīs in Scholarship on Salafism’; Nafī, ‘Salafism Revived’; Weismann, ‘Modernity from Within’; Masarwa, *Bildung, Macht, Kultur*).

to the Sunnī community's awareness of its minority status versus the Shī'a and fear of internal divisions, the reformist Salafiyya movement in Iraq remained limited to a small minority among the religious scholars. This again does not mean that it had no influence at all, as Luizard states, for those Sufi orders which accentuated their Sunnī identity adopted a reformist touch and an emphasis on the *sharī'a*.⁸¹ Certain adaptations to Wahhābī and Salafi ideas and teachings have already been observed among other Naqshbandī shaykhs in the nineteenth century and became prevalent during the twentieth century.⁸² This suggests that we should not rush to perceive Salafism and Sufism as two contrasting movements and schools of thought per se, but leave room for the possibility of overlapping attitudes.⁸³ How the negotiation between Sufi, Wahhābī, and Salafi teachings among religious Sufi scholars in Iraq progressed through the twentieth century still needs closer academic analysis. In particular, the milieus of scholars from other orders such as the Rifā'iyya and Qādirīyya deserve more attention here as their rituals and traditions were often the main targets of the reformist critique.⁸⁴ My findings in this regard suggest an important role of Sufi-inclined religious jurists (*fuqahā'*) from the religious school in Sāmarrā'.

d) The Relationship Between Sufism and the Shī'a in Iraq

In his historical overviews covering the seventeenth century to the 1970s, Luizard analyses Sufism in Iraq in terms of its position in the context of Shī'ism, Wahhābism, and politics.⁸⁵ He points to certain similarities between Sufism and the Shī'a with respect to traditions and rituals: for instance, the shared veneration of the Prophetic descendants, particularly the Twelve Imams (*ahl al-bayt*). Despite the fact that the doctrinal schism between Sunnī Sufism and Twelver Shī'ism has deepened since the sixteenth century, the near absence of Sufism among Shī'īs in southern Iraq, and the

⁸¹ Luizard, 'Le Moyen-Orient arabe'; Luizard, 'Les confréries soufies', 303–6.

⁸² Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire*, 172–73; Nafi, 'Abu Al-Thana' Al-Alusi'; Abu-Manneh, 'Salafiyya'; Weismann, 'The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya'; Nafi, 'Salafism Revived'; Weismann, 'Genealogies of Fundamentalism'. As shown by Weismann, many Muslim reformists from Muḥammad 'Abdūh, Rashīd Riḍā, to the Indian *Ahl-i ḥadīth*, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood or the Pakistani *Jamā'at-i islāmī* had a Sufi background (Weismann, 'Modernity from Within'). For the 1970s and 1980s, see Gailani, 'The Shrine of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī', 406.

⁸³ This was similarly emphasised by Mun'im Sirry in a comparable study about the leading Damascene Salafi Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (died 1914) and his Salafi approach to Sufism. He argues for a more sensitive interpretation and concludes that the Salafi-Sufi relationship should not always be viewed as hostile or antagonistic as is often supposed (Sirry, 'Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī and the Salafi Approach to Sufism', 105).

⁸⁴ See for instance Dimashqīya, *Munāzarat Ibn Taymīya*.

⁸⁵ Luizard, 'Le Moyen-Orient arabe'; Luizard, 'Les confréries soufies'.

additional antagonism of many Shī'ī scholars towards Sufism, the basic similarities never ceased to exist.⁸⁶ For the 1980s and 1990s, Valerie Hoffman provides a detailed account of the central role of the mutual veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* and the similarities to Shī'a teachings in Egypt, a country with no significant Shī'a population.⁸⁷ In Iraq, with its Shī'a majority and home to the most important shrines of the *ahl al-bayt*, the role of rapprochements between Sufis and the Shī'a has not yet been investigated. Here especially, the tradition of Prophetic genealogies (*ansāb*) and the institutions of the Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants (*niqābat al-ashrāf*) among Iraqi Sufis will play a central role.

Sufi rapprochements with the Shī'a have hitherto only been hinted at in a historical-political context. As argued by Selim Deringel and Thomas Eich, Sufis in Iraq received lavish state support under the last Ottoman sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II as a means of handling the large-scale conversion of Iraqi tribes to Shī'ism that had begun in the mid-eighteenth century. Part of this support went to religious missionaries of the Naqshbandīya in order to pursue Sunnī counter-propaganda in Iraq.⁸⁸ The Naqshbandīya-Mujaddidiya, which had arrived in Iraqi Kurdistan from India in the eighteenth century, has generally come to be recognised as expressly anti-Shī'a.⁸⁹ However, these anti-Shī'a tendencies had mainly arisen from the historical and political context of the order's conflict with the Shī'ī authorities and its persecution in Iran and later in India, but seemed to be toned down in Kurdistan with no direct confrontation of this sort.⁹⁰ With regard to the Rifā'iya, Eich has argued that it served as a religious means for the Ottoman sedentarisation policies regarding the tribes and particularly to better integrate Shī'īs into the Ottoman Empire. He explains the central role of the Rifā'iya in these policies primarily as a result of its traditional and ritual closeness to the Shī'a. He also highlights the salience of this closeness in the later context of the Sunnī-Shī'ī cooperation during the 1920 revolt against the British.⁹¹ These historical observations beg the question as to what such a closeness meant for the further development of Sufi-Shī'ī relations in twentieth-century Iraq, especially

⁸⁶ Sections of the Shī'ī clergy considered Sufism as "heretical" with arguments similar to those of Ibn Taymīya in the thirteenth/fourteenth century (Luizard, 'Les confréries soufies', 284–91).

⁸⁷ Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints*, chap. 3.

⁸⁸ Deringel, 'The Struggle Against Shiism'; Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'iya and Shiism'; Eich, 'Patterns of the 1920 Rising', 115.

⁸⁹ Algar, 'A Brief History', 16–17, 23, 30.

⁹⁰ Shakely, 'The Naqshbandī Sheikhs', 90; Algar, 'A Brief History', 16–17, 23, 30.

⁹¹ Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī*, 219–25; Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'iya and Shiism'; Eich, 'Patterns of the 1920 Rising'.

under the Ba‘th regime which is known for its continuing confrontations with the Shī‘ī clergy but also for its attempts to promote a quasi-ecumenical Islam.

The literature review on Sufism in Iraq has shown that there are several research gaps with regard to Sufism’s decline during the twentieth century, its late revival in the 1990s, the role of Sufism among religious scholars and jurists, and Sufi approaches to the Shī‘a through the twentieth century. These are all specific markers of Sufism in Iraq and the following study will contribute to closing these gaps, since they are essential in understanding the Ba‘th regime’s relationship with Sufis, its religious policies regarding them, and these policies’ impact on the late Sufi revival in Iraq.

1.3.2. The Iraqi Ba‘th Party and Islam

Previous scholarship has scrutinised the relationship of the Iraqi Ba‘th regime and the Ba‘th Party to religion, particularly to Islam, with a focus on four main questions. It has concentrated on how Ba‘thist ideology was related to Islam, beginning with the writings of party founder Michel ‘Aflaq. Researchers investigated how the Ba‘th has increasingly employed Islam in its political rhetoric and propaganda since the 1980s, as well as its attempt to mould its own Ba‘thist Islam in the 1990s. Several political scientists have analysed the Ba‘th as an authoritarian regime according to its structures and mechanisms of state control over Iraq’s religious landscape. Some researchers even tried, to a certain extent, to interpret the individual devoutness of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in order to show whether Ba‘thist religious policies followed a change in his religious identity. The current most prominent discussion revolves around contradictory interpretations of the Ba‘th regime’s promotion of its own specific Ba‘thist Islam, in particular whether Ṣaddām Ḥusayn Islamised the Ba‘th Party and Iraqi society during the 1990s, or whether he Ba‘thised Islam. Ultimately, neither side explains the nature of this Ba‘thist Islam on anything other than a very abstract ideological level and without considering the local Iraqi context or the background of religious representatives who were tasked to propagate this kind of Islam. The Ba‘th’s relationship to Sufism is absent in most of the previous approaches. Here, I propose that a closer look at Iraq’s local Sufi culture and its representatives among the Sunnī community helps to reveal one important part of the Islamic forces the Ba‘th aimed to mobilise for its religious policies. Previous studies have always neglected the central role of Sufism in this context.

The Role of Sufism in Ba‘th Politics according to Previous Studies

A few studies touch aspects of the relationship between the Ba‘th regime, Sufism, and the Sufis in Iraq. The information is very sparse and still lacks in-depth examination but nonetheless suggests links between the regime and certain Sufi orders in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. Fred De Jong (1985) and Pierre-Jean Luizard (1999) observed that soon after the Ba‘th Party’s ascendancy to political power in 1968, its first president Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr used his family connections to the Rifā‘īya sayyids of Tikrīt to bolster his religious legitimacy in the growing conflict with the Shī‘ī clergy.⁹² Yet neither the background of this family connection – and its impact on the regime’s religious policies – nor its effects on Sufi life in Iraq were investigated in later research. In one passage of his essay on the religious composition of Kurdish society, Sami Shourush (2002) mentions the Ba‘th regime’s strenuous efforts to win over Kurdish Sufi *takāyā* to its side for the fight against Kurdish separatists in the 1970s as well as during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.⁹³ The role of Kurdish Sufis in these political conflicts, as well as their militancy, has not yet received closer scholarly attention.

Two other studies by Amatzia Baram (2014) and Noorah al-Gailani (2016) provide further indicators of Ba‘thist policies regarding the Sufis during the 1990s. Baram touches on the Ba‘th’s infiltration and exertion of control over Sufi networks for a mere two pages of his recent study about Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and Islam. There, he argues that the Ba‘th’s support of Sufi Islam as an apolitical counterweight to Salafis and Wahhābīs was one part of its official Faith Campaign during the 1990s. He found that, from time to time, certain Sufi orders received favourable mentions and academic attention in the regime’s media and mentions ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s role in overseeing the “rejuvenation of Sufi life” due to his membership in the Qādirīya and Rifā‘īya orders.⁹⁴

Noorah al-Gailani highlights, in one chapter of her recent PhD thesis, the material dimension of Ba‘thist policies regarding the Sufi shrine complex of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī⁹⁵ (Kīlānīya) in Baghdad. She demonstrates how Sufis used ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-

⁹² DeJong, ‘Les confréries mystiques’, 229; Luizard, ‘Les confréries soufies’, 308.

⁹³ Unfortunately, Shourush makes no reference to the sources for this information (Shourush, ‘The Religious Composition’, 119).

⁹⁴ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 311–13.

⁹⁵ The last name of this saint (1077-1166) has different spellings, the most common of which is Jīlānī. In Iraq, however, people address him also as Gailānī or Kīlānī. The latter form is usually used in the literature. In this study, I will use the most common forms according to the relevant context. The saint

Dūrī's patronage in internal power struggles between different clans, for instance over the custodianship of the Kīlānīya. Gailani has also shown the detrimental effects of renovation projects ordered by Ṣaddām Ḥusayn. These resulted, in the case of the Kīlānīya, in the loss of a whole section of its historical architecture. Gailani assumes that regime policies regarding Sufis had far-reaching effects in shaping and reshaping the Sufi community in the country, similar to the effects on tribes that have already been observed elsewhere.⁹⁶ Gailani's excellent study is one of the very first to directly investigate Sufi life under the Ba'ṯh Party, presenting invaluable material and information, and posing important questions. Yet, the focus on her family's shrine offers only a glimpse of Iraq's Sufi landscape that became influenced by the Ba'ṯh government and remains limited to the period of the 1990s.

The Islamisation of the Ba'ṯh or the Ba'ṯhisation of Islam?

Up to this point, research on the relationship between the authoritarian Ba'ṯh regime and Islam has mainly focused on abstract references to Islam in Ba'ṯhist ideology or on the regime's mechanisms of control, and the structural and formal dimensions of Ba'ṯhist religious policies. This has included: the regime's tactics of co-optation, coercion, and repression aimed at religious institutions, religious scholars and activists; its confrontation with Shī'ī and Sunnī Islamists in Iraq; and its manipulation of Islamic symbols and rhetoric for political ends.⁹⁷ Many studies have been particularly preoccupied with the sectarian dimension of these policies, i.e. the dichotomy between Sunna and Shī'a, and many wrongly perceived the Ba'ṯh regime

will be spelled Jīlānī as it appears in most of the Western research literature. His shrine in Baghdad, however, is known as the Kīlānīya. Finally, the saint's descendants in Baghdad are the Gailānīs.

⁹⁶ Gailani, 'The Shrine of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī', 364–69, 371–85.

⁹⁷ With an emphasis on the conflict with the Shī'a: Batatu, 'Shi'ī Organisations in Iraq'; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 190–200; Mallat, 'Religious Militancy in Contemporary Iraq'; Baram, 'The Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements'; Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology*, 18–22, 123–28; Soeterik, 'The Islamic Movement of Iraq'; Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*; Aziz, 'The Role of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr in Shii Political Activism in Iraq from 1958 to 1980'; Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law*; Bengio, *Saddam's Word*, 176–202; Wiley, 'The Position of the Iraqi Clergy'; Babakhan, 'The Deportation'; Luizard, 'The Nature of the Confrontation Between the State and Marja'ism'; Abdul-Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement*; Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 100–105; Marcinkowski, *Religion and Politics in Iraq*; Shanahan, 'The Islamic Da'wa Party'; Terrill, 'The United States and Iraq's Shi'ite Clergy'; Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 202–3; Fürtig, "Die Geister, die ich rief..." who also considers Sunnī groups; Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ṯh Party*, 259–68; Bernhardt, *Ḥizb ad-Da'wa al-Islāmīya*; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*; Faust, *The Ba'ṯhification of Iraq*, 129–41. On the Sunna: A'zami, 'The Muslim Brotherhood'; Shourush, 'The Religious Composition'; Shourush, 'Islamist Fundamentalist Movements'; Davis, 'Iraqi Sunni Clergy Enter the Fray'.

as a sectarian Sunnī ruling elite in opposition to the Shīʿa majority population in Iraq.⁹⁸ So far, researchers largely agree that Islam gained enormous salience in Baʿthist policies, propaganda, and rhetoric between 1968 and 2003, but interpretations vary as to whether the Baʿth regime was Islamised or whether the regime successfully Baʿthised Islam.

Since the work of Ofra Bengio (1998), scholars traditionally divide Baʿthist rule roughly into three periods, namely the 1970s as a secular decade without many political signs of religiosity, the 1980s as a period of “toeing the Islamic line”, and finally the 1990s as “one of deliberate Islamic flag-waving.” Primarily analysing the change in the regime’s political language, Bengio sees the Baʿth’s employment of Islamic themes as tactical. In her view, “Islamic themes stepped up and toned down as circumstances seemed to require” but there was still no major change in Baʿthist thinking.⁹⁹ A number of the most recent studies on this topic differ over their interpretations of the increasing role of Islam in Baʿthist politics and essentially form two opposite camps. The first camp is represented by Amatzia Baram (2014), who goes one step further than Bengio in his recent comprehensive analysis of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s and the Baʿth regime’s relationship to Islam between 1968 and 2003. Largely based on open-source material which he collected throughout his 33 years of research on Iraq, Baram detects in the Baʿth’s turn to Islam an ideological “U-turn from secularism to Islamism” in the course of which Ṣaddām Ḥusayn Islamised the Iraqi public and the Baʿth Party itself during the Faith Campaign in the 1990s.¹⁰⁰ He characterises this Islamism as a unique form of a quasi-ecumenical Arab Sunnī-Shīʿī Islam and clearly distinguishes it from the Islamism of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ṭālibān, al-Qāʿida, or the regimes in Riyāḍ and Teheran.¹⁰¹

The second camp, in opposition to Baram’s Islamisation thesis, is represented by the works of the historian Joseph Sassoon (2011) and the political scientists Aaron Faust (2015) and Samuel Helfont (2018). These three scholars base their research largely on the analysis of internal Baʿth Party files which became available after the fall of the

⁹⁸ For more information about the background of this now obsolete view see Bozarslan, ‘Rethinking the Baʿthist Period’, 146.

⁹⁹ Bengio, *Saddam’s Word*, 176.

¹⁰⁰ Baram uses mainly open-source-material, such as party publications, newspapers, or interviews but also internal Baʿth Party files provided by the Conflict Records Research Center at the National Defense University (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*).

¹⁰¹ Baram, chap. 7.

regime in 2003.¹⁰² Their results come much closer to Bengio's original thesis. Sassoon, for instance, states:

Much has been written about Saddam Hussein's radical policy shifts from anti-tribalism to pro-tribalism and from secularism to religiosity, but the files clearly indicate that the regime remained to the end suspicious of all religions and all religious activities. [...] Saddam Hussein was always wary of any religious movement.¹⁰³

Faust, too, relativizes Baram's position in his recent study *The Ba'thification of Iraq* and concludes from the evidence he found in the files that the "regime did not so much 'Islamize' in the 1990s as expand its ongoing policy to Ba'thize religion." In his view, the regime only expanded its mechanisms of control, which back in the 1980s had principally focused on the Shī'a, to Sunnī Islamists in order to steer the rising religious feeling in the Arab and Islamic world.¹⁰⁴ Finally, Samuel Helfont proposes a more nuanced argument in his latest book *Compulsion in Religion*. There, he argues convincingly that the increasing role of Islam in Ba'thist politics in fact reflects the regime's gradual and successful establishment of control over Iraq's religious landscape. The high level of control during the 1990s, Helfont argues, enabled the Ba'th to implement its own Faith Campaign to accelerate the spread of the original Ba'thist interpretation of an Arab Islam without any ideological deviation or shift.¹⁰⁵

These different interpretations have important implications for scholarly and public debates about the political turmoil in contemporary Iraq with regard to the rise of the terrorist organisation, the so-called Islamic state (IS, formerly ISIS) since 2014. This topicality is illustrated in a recent public debate between Samuel Helfont, Michael Brill, and Amatzia Baram in the magazine *Foreign Affairs*, where the latter even advocates the view that Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's Faith Campaign "was in essence an Islamization campaign, and it contributed to ISIS' radical Islamism." Baram holds Ṣaddām Ḥusayn partially responsible for the rise of IS:

By linking Islam with barbarity, by imposing extensive Islamic education (with a Sunni tilt), which was without precedent in Iraq, and by de-facto eliminating his party's secular foundations, he set Sunni Iraqis up to be susceptible to al Qaeda after the 2003 U.S. invasion, and, eventually, ISIS.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² The authors studied these files in the Ba'th Regional Command Collection and the Northern Iraqi Data Set in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, and the now defunct Conflict Records Research Center at the National Defense University in Washington (Blaydes, 'Ba'ath Party Records'; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 269). Most of these files from the party headquarters in Baghdad were confiscated by US authorities with the help of the Iraqi Memory Foundation after the fall of the regime.

¹⁰³ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party*, 260.

¹⁰⁴ Faust, *The Ba'thification of Iraq*, 131.

¹⁰⁵ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 136–37.

¹⁰⁶ Baram, 'Saddam's ISIS'.

Rejecting Baram's view, Samuel Helfont rightly denies the existence of such an Islamisation by the Ba'ṯh. He refutes Baram's interpretation and replies that the regime always "held true to the standard Arab nationalist interpretation of Islam that was meant to oppose Islamist arguments". According to Helfont, open-source material and internal files have shown that Ṣaddām "introduced" Islam into Iraqi culture, education and politics, "but teaching about Islam is not the same as promoting Islamism".¹⁰⁷ This distinction is important, but one wonders if Islam has ever been absent from Iraqi culture, education, and politics. Certainly, the Ba'ṯh intended to strengthen Islam in these spheres during the 1990s. Eventually, after the collapse of the Iraqi state following the 2003 invasion, Islamists were no longer repressed by the Ba'ṯhist regime, and Helfont argues that it was this vacuum which bred IS rather than "Saddam's non-existent promotion of Islamism prior to 2003".¹⁰⁸

Despite the fact that the approaches above derive contradictory conclusions from their research about the role of Islam in Ba'ṯhist politics, they have also something in common. Both focus more on politics than on Islam – particularly Sunnī Islam – in Iraq. That means that these studies concentrate mainly on the figure of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and his policies of co-optation, coercion, and repression of Islamists and his calculated promotion of a specific Ba'ṯhist Islam. But what is this Ba'ṯhist Islam?

Islam has, from the outset, played an essential role in the Ba'ṯhist thinking of the party's founding figure, the Syrian Orthodox Christian Michel 'Aflaq, and continued to do so until 2003. However, 'Aflaq embraced Islam and the Prophet Muḥammad merely as an ideal historical role model for the Ba'ṯh's own revolutionary awakening. As a Christian, he considered Islam not as a religion in its "form and letter" or its practices but rather abstractly as the foundational spirit of Arabism.¹⁰⁹ Here, too, interpretations of the development of Ba'ṯhist ideology in relation to Islam differ. In his latest book, Baram highlights 'Aflaq's ambiguous terminology, which oscillates between secularism and Islam, and argues that this ambiguity eventually facilitated the party's ideological turn to Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's own quasi-ecumenical Arab Islamism without any alterations to Ba'ṯhism's basic concepts.¹¹⁰ Helfont and others object that

¹⁰⁷ Helfont and Brill, 'Saddam Did Not Create ISIS'.

¹⁰⁸ Helfont and Brill.

¹⁰⁹ See early references in Abu-Jabir, *The Arab Ba'ṯh Socialist Party*, 129–30; Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 209–11.

¹¹⁰ We find this ambiguity in the Ba'ṯhist slogan "one Arab nation with an eternal message" (*umma 'arabīya wāḥida dhāt risāla khālida*). Here "*umma*" has the connotations of nation, as well as Muslim community as mentioned in the Quran and "*risāla khālida*" refers to the Ba'ṯh's eternal message and at

‘Aflaq’s secular Ba‘thist interpretation of an Arab Islam remained, despite slight alterations, the official religion of the state until 2003.¹¹¹

It is true that Ba‘thism was the regime’s dominant ideology until 2003 and so was the Ba‘thist understanding of Islam but this understanding consisted largely of ideal guidelines that defined the place and limits of religion and particularly Islam in society. From the Ba‘thist understanding of Islam, we learn, for instance, that Islam was the official religion of the state, and that it was, as a religion, always subordinated to Arabism and Arab unity. We learn that the Ba‘th was “always on the side of faith” and against atheism, but also that Islam was supposed to be kept separate from politics, or that it was not supposed to be sectarian.¹¹² Hence, this understanding merely defines Islam’s limits: what it was *not* supposed to be. It neither says anything about what this Islam could possibly be, nor what it in fact was as a religion.

Baram, for instance, discusses references to “Islam” in early Ba‘thist ideology, in the constitution, in school curricula and textbooks, in the celebration of religious holidays, during the regime’s confrontation with the Shī‘ī community, in official war rhetoric and propaganda, and in the role of religious institutions. Equally, he deals with the nationwide Quran study courses during the Faith Campaign, the treatment of religious scholars, the building of mosques, and the regime’s implementation of certain Islamic rules in society. Eventually, he contrasts all these policies with extreme cases of Islamism in entirely different contexts such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Wahhābīs in Saudi Arabia, the Shī‘ī regime in Iran, the Ṭālibān in Afghanistan, and the terror organisation al-Qā‘ida.¹¹³ With this comparative approach he provides valuable insights for an international mapping of the regime’s religious policies. Aside from that, however, this approach tells us more about what the Ba‘thist Islam was *not* rather than providing examples of the Islamic teachings which were promoted under the Ba‘th. The latter question as to what kind of Islamic teachings the Ba‘th promoted still remains unanswered and will be taken up in this study.

In order to explore precisely this puzzle of Ba‘th politics and religion, a focus on the central role of Iraq’s Sufi Islam will identify that the regime could not merely invent its own abstract brand of Islam. On the contrary, this thesis will show that it had to

the same time the Prophet Muḥammad’s message, i.e. Islam (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 15–43).

¹¹¹ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 28; Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq*.

¹¹² Compare for instance Ḥusayn, *Naḥra fī l-dīn*; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 21, 192, 198.

¹¹³ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*.

rely on a given popular Islamic culture in Iraq for its aforementioned ecumenical Sunnī-Shīʿī aspirations. This can be gleaned from a closer look at state support of religious institutions, state recruitment of religious scholars, Baʿthist religious legitimisation of its rule, and also the religious background of Baʿthist politicians themselves. Previous scholarship has expounded not only the Baʿth regime's repressive attempts to control religious institutions such as mosques, shrines, and religious schools, but also their lavish funding in the 1980s and 1990s.¹¹⁴ With regard to the latter, a sectarian imbalance has been observed in favour of Sunnī mosques, even though expenditure on the Shīʿī holy shrines was consistently very high too.¹¹⁵ While the reasons for the control and funding of Shīʿī establishments are quite clear, regime support for specific Sunnī establishments still needs to be investigated. As in most Muslim countries, the control and administration of all material and financial affairs of religious institutions in Baʿthist Iraq was under the authority of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*awqāf*). While studies are available on the development of such ministries in many Middle Eastern, North African, and South East Asian countries of the twentieth century, there is no comparable study for Iraq.¹¹⁶

Many investigations of the situation of religious scholars under the Baʿth have concentrated on the regime's violent crackdown on Shīʿī and Sunnī Islamists during the early 1970s and during the Islamist insurgency between 1979 and the late 1980s.¹¹⁷ The latest studies focus more on the tactics and mechanisms to co-opt and recruit trusted religious scholars and show that the regime resumed only in the utmost cases of resistance to blunt violence, including arrests, deportations, torture, executions, or assassinations.¹¹⁸ One important aspect which has been observed is the Baʿth regime's

¹¹⁴ See for instance Hiro, *Desert Shield*, 496, Fn. 11; Wiley, 'The Position of the Iraqi Clergy', 58; Luizard, 'The Nature of the Confrontation Between the State and Marja'ism', 98; Abdul-Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement*, 204–5; Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 178–79; Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 244–50; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 91; Faust, *The Baʿthification of Iraq*, 129–41.

¹¹⁵ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 94–96, 187–90, 262–63, 270.

¹¹⁶ For available literature on Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey see Layish and Hooker, 'Waqf', 78–81, 97–99. Comparable studies about *awqāf* and politics under the Syrian Baʿth Party are Böttcher, 'Le ministère des Waqfs'; Böttcher, *Syrische Religionspolitik*.

¹¹⁷ See for instance Batatu, 'Shi'i Organisations in Iraq'; Mallat, 'Religious Militancy in Contemporary Iraq'; Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*; Luizard, 'The Nature of the Confrontation Between the State and Marja'ism'; Ruhaimi, 'The Da'wa Islamic Party'; A'zami, 'The Muslim Brotherhood'; Shourush, 'Islamist Fundamentalist Movements'; Abdul-Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement*; Shanahan, 'The Islamic Da'wa Party'; Corboz, 'Between Action and Symbols'; Bernhardt, *Hizb ad-Da'wa al-Islāmiya*; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 268–69; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, chap. 4.

¹¹⁸ Babakhan, 'The Deportation'; Luizard, 'The Nature of the Confrontation Between the State and Marja'ism'; Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Baʿth Party*, 259–67; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 267–68; Faust, *The Baʿthification of Iraq*, 129–41; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, chap. 3.

foundation of its own institutes for higher religious education from the mid-1980s on to prepare a new generation of imams for the state service. Designed to counteract Sunnī and Shīʿī extremist trends, these institutions were meant to indoctrinate the students with a new Baʿthist Islam.¹¹⁹ However, clarification is still needed as to what kind of Islam they taught in these institutions, which religious scholars they recruited as staff, and which background the teachers and students had. Previous investigations have largely neglected the active role of Sunnī religious scholars up to now.¹²⁰

As part of the regime's strategy to gain religious legitimacy, researchers have often noted Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's claim to descend from the Shīʿī Imams ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Ḥusayn. Most scholars have explained it as a tactical move to speak to Iraq's Shīʿa population, which venerates highly the Imams and their descendants, and have dismissed it collectively as a clear forgery that no Iraqi really believed.¹²¹ However, the background of Ṣaddām's genealogy (*nasab*), the circumstances of its invention, and the constant and excessive use of it over thirty-five years has not been scrutinised. As mentioned above, Fred De Jong's and Pierre-Jean Luizard's observation of a family connection between the presidential Āl Nāṣir clan of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn to the *sayyids* of the Rifāʿīya in Tikrīt was not taken up in later studies.¹²²

Finally, possible religious backgrounds of Baʿthist politicians which might have influenced their religious policies have been largely left aside in research.¹²³ Because of his violent political ascension, which Marion-Farouk and Peter Sluglett called a "highly personalized politics", and his personal tribal and family patronage system, researchers have concentrated their attention almost entirely on Ṣaddām Ḥusayn as the single dictator and decision maker in Iraq.¹²⁴ Some studies have so far only taken

¹¹⁹ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 264–65; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, chaps 5, 8.

¹²⁰ Sunnī religious scholars have been mainly considered as traditionally being in a privileged political and economic position during the twentieth century. Being paid by the state since the days of the monarchy, and having family relatives in the successive governments, Sunnī religious scholars have been largely considered as either avoiding any political involvement or as helping legitimate the state (Davis, 'Iraqi Sunni Clergy Enter the Fray'; Wiley, 'The Position of the Iraqi Clergy', 56, 58).

¹²¹ Aburish, *Saddam Hussein*, 127; Abdul-Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement*, 214; Baram, 'La « maison »', 302; Bengio, *Saddam's Word*, 80–81; Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 107; Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, 115; Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, 183, Fn. 57.

¹²² DeJong, 'Les confréries mystiques', 229; Luizard, 'Les confréries soufies', 308.

¹²³ In one essay, Baram gives a detailed account of the regime's ruling elites but focuses largely on rudimentary personal data such as local origin, sectarian and ethnic identity or political positions. He does not touch upon the personal background of those elites (Baram, 'The Ruling Political Elite').

¹²⁴ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 1088; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 134–35; Karsh and Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein*; Baram, 'Neo-Tribalism'; Baram, *Building Toward Crisis*; Baram, 'La « maison »'; Baram, 'Saddam Husayn'; Abdul-Jabar, 'Sheikhs and Ideologues', 85–88; Baram, 'Saddam's Power Structure'; Marashi, 'The Family, Clan, and Tribal Dynamics of Saddam's Security and Intelligence Network'; Balaghi, *Saddam Hussein*.

aspects of his individual devoutness into account.¹²⁵ For other party and leadership members, the literature has constructed a rather generalised image as staunchly secular, non-religious, and has even denied their being true Muslim believers.¹²⁶ This is why the Sufi background of ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī surfaced only after 2003 and took most observers of Iraq by surprise. The influence of other figures and their backgrounds should be taken more seriously.

Whether the increasing incorporation of Islam in Ba‘thist politics is interpreted rather problematically as an Islamisation of the Ba‘th or as a successful Ba‘thisation of Islam, most previous studies have concentrated on the party’s abstract ideological understandings of an Arab Islam, its authoritarian structures, and the singular role of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn. They largely ignored the local Islamic traditions and teachings, and the religious scholars and shaykhs who played a central role under the ideological umbrella of the Ba‘th’s quasi-ecumenical Sunnī-Shī‘ī Arab Islam. This holds particularly true for the mystic current of Islam, which predominated Iraq’s Sunnī religious landscape for centuries and will now receive closer attention.

1.4. Methodology and Sources

The research for this study was conducted between October 2013 and October 2017. A project as outlined above would certainly have benefited from fieldwork in Iraq. Due to the political instability, especially in central Iraq during the specified period of time, this was unfortunately impossible. Circumstances such as the ongoing – but largely unnoticed – Ba‘thist resistance, the \$10 million bounty on ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s head, and the rise of the so-called Islamic State (IS) and its terror campaigns would have made it difficult to research Sufi-Ba‘th relations on the ground. Instead, this study is largely based on 1) literature and printed sources which were available outside Iraq. Aware of the limits and gaps with regard to the completeness of information in these printed materials, I also used 2) open-source material from the internet, as well as 3) qualitative interviews with expatriate Iraqis, Ba‘thists and Sufis,

¹²⁵ Long, *Saddam’s War of Words*, 56–59; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 328–38. However, Long completely disregarded, for example, the influence of Ṣaddām’s uncle Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ in whose house he grew up for a long time and who published numerous books on the Quran and Islam (see for instance Ṭilfāḥ, *al-Īmān bi-llāh*; Ṭilfāḥ, *‘Ilm al-Qur’ān wa- ‘ulūm al-insān*).

¹²⁶ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 327, 340.

as complementary sources for my analysis. Thus, this study is based on a classic historical approach which was supplemented considerably by cultural anthropology methods.

1) The literature and printed sources include, especially on the Sufi side, *ansāb* literature, i.e. lexica-like works about the genealogical descent of Iraq's tribes, historical biographical lexica, and Sufi writings. This material was mainly collected from libraries and archives at the universities of Hamburg, Berlin, Kiel, Marburg, Halle, Tübingen, the Bavarian State Library in Munich, the British Library in London, the universities of Haifa and Jerusalem, the University of Jordan in Amman, and finally Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat. The chapters on the Ba'ṯh are mainly based on recently published biographies of former Ba'ṯh Party and regime members which were collected from the book markets in Amman or during interviews with the respective authors, as well as on official party publications and law enactments. In addition to this, Iraqi daily newspapers from 1968 to 2003 – mainly *al-Jumhūrīya*, *al-Thawra*, and *al-Qādisīya*¹²⁷ – provided the most extensive and rich source material for this study. In October 2013, I spent time cross-reading and searching Iraqi newspapers from 1991 to 2003 for references to the Ba'ṯh regime's religious policies and topics related to religion at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) in Marburg.¹²⁸ The major part of this Sisyphean work was continued in spring 2014 in the press archive of the Moshe Dayan Centre at Tel Aviv University.¹²⁹ There, I read through the vast collection of newspaper issues from the period 1968 to 1990.

¹²⁷ The use of these sources was inspired by the work of Achim Rohde (Rohde, *State-Society Relations*).

¹²⁸ This small but valuable database of Iraqi newspapers exists thanks to the personal efforts of Prof. Walter Sommerfeld.

¹²⁹ For a critical annotation of the original use of the Arab newspaper collections at the Moshe Dayan Centre for intelligence reasons, see Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, 18, Fn. 90. As a further archive with invaluable sources about Ba'ṯhist Iraq, the Ba'ṯh Party Records housed in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University should be mentioned. Originally collected by Kanan Makiya and the Iraq Memory Foundation after the fall of the regime in 2003, this collection now encompasses more than ten million digitised pages of written official and internal state and Ba'ṯh Party files as well as fifteen hundred video files (Blaydes, 'Ba'ṯh Party Records'; Iraq Memory Foundation, 'Ba'ṯh Arab Socialist Party Regional Command Collection'). Rohde notes the critique against Makiya for his refusal to transfer these official Iraqi state documents to the Iraqi National Library and archive in Baghdad (Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, 170, Fn. 90). For purely practical reasons, such as the huge amount of material, the as yet unfinished process of cataloguing, and the limited time for my research, I refrained from using this institution. Searching these files for Sufi-Ba'ṯh relations would certainly require a separate study. As already hinted at by Sassoon, the files do indeed contain indeed information about the Ba'ṯh's observation and patronage of Sufi *takāyā* (Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ṯh Party*, 263). In those cases, however, one should reconsider how much of this information can really be published at all for the sake of ethical considerations and the protection of the Iraqis concerned.

Before detailing the other methods used, the three most consulted categories of written sources will be discussed briefly, namely genealogies (*ansāb*), biographies, and Iraqi newspapers. How should we critically evaluate these sources and what can we gain from them?

Ansāb

The modern concept “*nasab*” (plural *ansāb*) has a range of different connotations and can literally mean “descent”, “origin”, “lineage”, “genealogy” or “kinship”.¹³⁰ The term designates mainly descent and kinship relations which have attracted enormous interest in Arabic tribal societies over centuries in the form of poetry, as genealogical family heritage, special literature, and even as a methodological expression of historiography.¹³¹ *Nasab* in the sense of tribal kinship also served in countless historical pre-Islamic and Islamic examples as an expression of political organisation, alliances, tribal hierarchies, or legitimacy.¹³² This study, by contrast, concentrates particularly on the sharīfian *nasab* as genealogy and as a genealogical system or charter, made up of apparently seamless chains of supposed ancestors, reaching back over centuries to saintly figures, with the Prophet Muḥammad as the ultimate fountainhead. Over the course of history, these Prophetic genealogies and the whole genealogical system around them have come to be used in political contexts, too, and the present case of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s Prophetic genealogy is a further example of this. However, this study will primarily focus on the religious foundations of this political practice, i.e. the religious dimension of a *nasab* in a Sunnī Sufī and Shī‘ī context for the creation of religious legitimacy.

In his recent studies, Zoltán Szombathy tackles the phenomenon of genealogy as an ordered, systematised and bookish discipline, *‘ilm al-ansāb*, in a revisionist and constructivist light. He traces the systematic compilation and ordering of *ansāb* into a genealogical system, including *sharīfian* genealogies, back to the end of the Umayyad

¹³⁰ The pre- and early Islamic terminology is discussed in Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy*, chap. 2.

¹³¹ Wüstenfeld, *Genealogische Tabellen*; Rosenthal, ‘Nasab’; Kalbī, *Ġamharat an-nasab*; Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*; Dūrī, *Baḥṭ fī naṣ‘at ‘ilm at-tārīḥ*; examples of recent studies about the modern role of *ansāb*: Ferchiou, *Hasab wa nasab*; Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy*.

¹³² See for instance Smith, *Kinship & Marriage*; Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi*; Cunnison, *Baggara Arabs*; Puin, ‘Der Dīwān von ‘Umar Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb’; Asad, *The Kababish Arabs*; Meeker, *Literature and Violence*; Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, 16, 33; Arendonk, ‘Sharīf’; Varisco, ‘Metaphors and Sacred History’; Havemann, ‘Naḳīb al-ashrāf’.

and the beginning of the ‘Abbāsid periods, particularly to urban scholarly circles in Iraq. Szombathy considers this scholarly activity similar to an invention of traditions à la Hobsbawm¹³³ and argues strictly against a perception of genealogies exclusively as a natural tradition, a *Weltanschauung* which has been immanent in tribal societies since pre-Islamic times.¹³⁴ According to his view, such genealogies constitute identity-related and oftentimes ideological constructs and are more a reflection of political intentions rather than actual tribal history.

[D]escent arrangements (such as the Arabic *nasab* system is) have been clearly shown to be ideological constructs, *doctrines* as it were, and certainly not an expression of actual group composition. In other words, the actual composition of a group practically never corresponds exactly to its descent doctrine, and the same group composition may give rise to very different descent ideologies. Therefore, should such a descent doctrine not exist in the minds of the people concerned, it does not exist at all (if not in an anthropological monograph!).¹³⁵

Among the various functions which a *nasab* can assume in different regional and historical contexts, Szombathy also investigates its legitimising function in a political context of dynastic genealogies without taking its religious dimension into account. Here, he emphasises that a *nasab* only symbolises power and rights, i.e. it is an expression of an already existing reputation and status but does not generate these by itself.¹³⁶

A dynasty does not owe its accession of power to its actual noble descent and the carefully cultivated memory of it; it rather sanctifies its reign by claims of an august *nasab* subsequently; and whether those claims happen to correspond to its real descent is practically irrelevant.¹³⁷

Nasab will [...] be adapted to symbolize very different power relations in very different local forms, yet it will always remain a symbol of how rights are distributed in any given community. *Nasab* is never an independent social factor capable of significantly affecting or reshaping relationships among people, an ‘organizing principle’ as it were; it is *nasab* that will be adjusted to demonstrate and symbolize, in an easily comprehensible way, social relationships that are already there.¹³⁸

Here Szombathy certainly highlights important aspects of *ansāb* and their social and political roles which, to a certain degree, also apply to sharīfian genealogies reaching back to the Prophet. However, his apodictic formulations tend to ignore and underestimate the meaning and historical foundation of status groups, such as Prophetic descendants (*al-sāda al-ashrāf*), which could encompass members of quite

¹³³ That means these early scholars did not document an already long established tradition but invented a new one with a highly symbolic character and certain practices which imply a continuity with the past (see Szombathy, ‘The Nassābah’, 104; Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*).

¹³⁴ For this and further points of Szombathy’s critique see Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy*, 14, 74–88.

¹³⁵ Szombathy, 27.

¹³⁶ Szombathy, 180, 192.

¹³⁷ Szombathy, 193.

¹³⁸ Szombathy, ‘Genealogy in Medieval Muslim Societies’, 35.

different wealth and influence, as well as the weight of a collectively acknowledged genealogical system itself. History bears witness to countless genealogical manipulations to obtain sharīfian status by fraud, as genealogical systems are, through their own “gateways”, prone to that, but the general acknowledgment of Sharīfism and the validity of its genealogical framework precede all such attempts. The continuing societal relevance of a *nasab* until today is in fact reflected in these countless cases of genealogical manipulations or adaptations within a lineage or community, oftentimes in the context of social processes of transformation.¹³⁹

Genealogies, like any other historical source, must be scrutinised with regard to their historical value and their primary interest in a given local and historical context. Moreover, they should not merely be reduced to late constructions but can reveal important historical information¹⁴⁰ as the focus on their religious meaning in this study will indicate. Particularly this religious meaning of a *nasab*, which is rooted in the Quran and the Tradition of the Prophet (*sunna*), will illustrate that it is much more than mere pride in noble ancestors and a way to subsequently legitimise power. In the Sufi context, a sharīfian *nasab* via the *ahl al-bayt* to the Prophet constitutes a central pillar of a shaykh’s spiritual authority and is highly present to his or her believing novices (*murīdūn*). In this context, it certainly does exist socially in the minds of the believers.

Here, too, Sufi *ansāb* are to a certain extent constructed but nevertheless they reflect an order’s organisation, its traditions like the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*, or its relations to other orders and sects. A Sufi *nasab* symbolises to a large degree a shaykh’s authority, but it is at the same time an important social factor that contributes to his emergence as a spiritual leader among the believers and to the further dissemination of his order.¹⁴¹ In practice, he has to follow the already established “rules” of the genealogical system and it is not irrelevant whether his claim corresponds to his actual descent. Such a claim cannot purely be invented out of nowhere.

¹³⁹ Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy*, 177–80, 194.

¹⁴⁰ Apart from the historical overview of the use of sharīfian genealogies, they can include information about political alliances, marriage alliances, tribal migration, rights of pasturage and of the use of wells (see for instance Kister, ‘Mecca and Tamīm’; Kister, ‘Some Reports Concerning Mecca’; Orthmann, *Stamm und Macht*).

¹⁴¹ A telling example is Evans-Pritchard’s argument that „Beduin attachment to the Sanusiya springs from their personal devotion to the Grand Sanusi and his family, and not the other way round, and the Grand Sanusi derived his sanctity, and thereby his power, from the fact that he was a Marabout [meaning descendant of saints]“ (Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi*, 65).

With Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's own use of such a Sufi genealogy, we witness a clear legitimisation and sanctification after he ascended to political power. Yet, as this study will reveal, he did not completely invent his genealogy either. Even though it met with criticism, it also fitted perfectly into the well-established genealogical system of the Rifā'īya order from where it actually originated. What is more, Ṣaddām did not use this Sufi genealogy to legitimise his political power in retrospect, but to boost his religious standing, which as a secular Ba'ṯist was rather poor. Before dismissing his claim as a mere forgery that no one ever believed, we can gain far more insight and understanding of this phenomenon if we consider, first of all, *that* the Ba'ṯist elites in fact used this particular symbolism for decades in Iraq. Hence, we should concentrate on the questions of why and in which specific way they did this. What are the societal, religious, and political meanings behind the *nasab* and its usage?

Particularly in nationalist discourses, one can observe the tendency of a historiography of continuity, which usually locates the roots of a relatively young nation deep in history and equates its emergence mystically with an awakening from a long slumber.¹⁴² A *nasab* corresponds to the needs of such a nationalist historiography in the sense that it enables its bearer to claim the historical continuity and inheritance of a nation's political leadership through his/her genealogical lineage over centuries.

Biographies

The sources labelled here as 'biographies' include both biographical dictionaries and individual biographies or autobiographies. Both are indispensable sources for the modern history of Iraq. Biographical dictionaries have been in existence at least since the ninth century as an important genre of literature and historiography all throughout the Islamic world and enjoyed increasing popularity in twentieth-century Iraq.¹⁴³ The authors of the biographical works¹⁴⁴ I consulted for this study still draw a lot of

¹⁴² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 195–206; Gellner, *Nations*, 46–48.

¹⁴³ On the early Islamic biographical literature, the *ṭabaqāt* (which means classes, strata or generations), and its further development see for instance Gibb, 'Islamic Biographical Literature'; Khalidi, 'Islamic Biographical Dictionaries'; Sharkey, 'Ṭabaqāt of the Twentieth-Century Sudan'.

¹⁴⁴ Among the purely biographical dictionaries are Durrūbī, *al-Baghdādiyūn*; Ḥasan, *Hukūmat al-qariya*; Khānī al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Kawākib al-durrīya*; Mudarris, 'Ulamā'unā; Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*; al-Baghdādī, *Tā'rīkh al-usar*; Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*; Sāmarrā'ī, *Majālis Baghdād*; Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933; Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933. Other works contain large sections with biographical information such as A'ṣamī, *Tārīkh jāmi' al-Imām al-A'ṣam*, 1964; A'ṣamī, *Tārīkh jāmi' al-Imām al-A'ṣam*, 1964; A'ṣamī, *Tārīkh jāmi' al-shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*.

inspiration in their books from the early genres of genealogical literature and the *ṭabaqāt* books. These works offer collected biographies of famous or noteworthy personalities of one specific family, tribal clan, a Sufi order, or of religious scholars and prominent figures of a city. The biographical dictionaries of families and tribes are usually ordered genealogically according to successive generations (*ṭabaqāt*); the others, for instance on religious scholars in a particular city, are oftentimes organised alphabetically.

A major work of the latter category is Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī's *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād fī l-qarn al-rābi' ashār al-hijrī* (*History of Baghdad's Religious Scholars in the Fourteenth Century after the Hijra*).¹⁴⁵ Sāmarrā'ī lists 490 short biographies of only Sunnī (sic!) male religious scholars who worked, studied or taught in Baghdad over the fourteenth Islamic century, i.e. between 1883 and 1980. In his foreword, he assures the reader that he collected the material himself from available literature and manuscripts, from the Ministry of Defence in the case of preachers in the army, from the Ministry of Justice regarding religious judges (*quḍā'*), and finally through personal interviews with the scholars themselves or their families. Sāmarrā'ī acknowledges that his collected information is necessarily incomplete as he could not receive biographies from all the families he consulted. In other cases, there were no records available at all after the death of a scholar. The biographies which he presents always indicate the same structure of basic data beginning with a portrait of the person, genealogical descent (*nasab*) and tribal origin, birth dates, place of origin, education, religious career including the mosques and religious schools in which a scholar served, the names of famous teachers, sometimes special religious inclinations like Sufism or Salafism, date and place of death, as well as a list of a scholar's books and essays. All in all, the content is oftentimes of a rather anecdotal nature and the structure of the entries is not always consistent as their size varies between several pages and one single sentence.

A critical treatment of such sources should always consider several factors. Firstly, Sāmarrā'ī indicates, in this case, a Sunnī sectarian bias since he writes in the title about '*ulamā'*' of Baghdad but actually means Sunnī '*ulamā'*'. Secondly, he does not mention one single critical or negative account of a scholar in the book and presents all the information in a rather praising manner, avoiding all kinds of fissures or tensions in an

¹⁴⁵ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*.

image. This is certainly also owed to the genre of the book which serves with its panegyric style to confirm and praise the rank of Baghdad's whole Sunnī clergy. Third, published by the Ministry of Religious Endowments, books like Sāmarrā'ī's were usually subjected to the censorship of the Ba'ṯist authorities. This is perfectly illustrated by the glaring example of shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Badrī (1930-1969). At the end of this shaykh's short biographical entry, Sāmarrā'ī only mentions that al-Badrī died on the 25 of June 1969 and was buried at the A'zamīya cemetery in Baghdad.¹⁴⁶ From this source, we cannot learn about al-Badrī's connections to the Muslim Brotherhood and the fact that he was murdered by the Ba'ṯh regime in detention as the first victim in the early confrontation between the Ba'ṯh and the Sunnī and Shī'ī clergy.¹⁴⁷ Dictionaries like this should, therefore, always be analysed in combination with and comparison to further sources in order to achieve a more differentiated historical image.

The individual biographies and autobiographies used in this study are largely political ones by former members of the Ba'ṯh Party, the government, and the Iraqi army. The last fourteen years after the fall of the regime in 2003 have seen the publication of an increasing number of memoirs by former regime members now living in the diaspora.¹⁴⁸ It is rumoured that this was also part of an official order by the new secretary general of the now underground Ba'ṯh Party, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, who allegedly deemed it the right time to keep record of their revolutionary history. These biographies offer on the one hand an immense wealth of individual perspectives and memories of the Ba'ṯh Party and the regime's inner working. On the other hand, they are similarly susceptible to a political agenda, a transfiguration of the past, and even personal reckonings. As most authors of biographies, the former Ba'ṯhists purport to transmit with their memories a historical truth and to communicate a reality. In order to buttress this communicative reality,¹⁴⁹ all of them weave authentic documents (photos, letters, official documents) into their work, thus providing possibilities for an intersubjective verification of the content. It goes without saying that this is incredibly helpful for a historical analysis. Nevertheless, the authors' communicated statements

¹⁴⁶ Sāmarrā'ī, 394. al-Badrī's confrontational stance towards the Ba'ṯh regime can only be guessed from his publication named by Sāmarrā'ī such as his Islam is war against Socialism and Capitalism (*al-Islām ḥarb 'alā al-ishtirākīya wa-l-rā'smālīya*).

¹⁴⁷ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 195.

¹⁴⁸ Qaddūrī, *Hākadhā 'arāftu al-Bakr*; Dūrī, *Awraq*, 2014; Dūrī, *Awraq*, 2015; 'Ānī, *Inhiyār al-'Irāq*.

¹⁴⁹ For the use of this concept, see Günther, '„And now for something completely different“', 32.

should, of course, not be confused with a direct reflection of reality, i.e. the ‘true’ occurrence of a historical event.

Such sources ought neither to be reduced to their bare content, nor to the author’s intention or to their referential dimension alone. Instead, self-presentation, the relation of the narrator to the narrative, mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, and contradictions etc. should always be considered as well. Reading Ba‘thist biographies against this background, *the fact that* they tell us something about relations with Sufism and Sufi orders turned out to be particularly striking. Therefore, *the fact that* they tell us something about these relations and *how* they do this in particular shall henceforth be emphasised in this analysis.¹⁵⁰

Newspapers

A critical use of Iraqi newspapers as source material should always reflect their sponsorship by the government (*al-Thawra* was the Ba‘th Party’s own newspaper), their subjection to severe censorship, and their misuse as a modern means of mass propaganda. Nevertheless, they cannot simply be dismissed as mere means of top-down indoctrination and propaganda. As Achim Rohde noted the reflection of a more dynamic interaction between the state and society in these print media, they also turned out in my research to be a valuable source. Therefore, I follow Rohde in disagreeing with Pierre Darle’s assessment that reading Iraqi press under Ṣaddām Ḥusayn would be a futile effort.¹⁵¹ Admittedly, the articles which I collected reflect mainly the perspective of the regime and that of a limited section of the urban middle classes. Always following the same textual pattern and structure – even the very same wording – for years, almost without exception they offer scant and cursory information about the topic or event they dealt with. Simple and uncritical reproductions of official statements and countless superfluous reiterations made the content of even the longest articles appear meagre, but not irrelevant. The newspapers’ size and quality also suffered a general reduction due to extreme material and financial shortages during the 1990s. Despite these restrictions and limitations, over an extended period of time (about thirty-five years) they became an especially indispensable source for

¹⁵⁰ I drew my inspiration for this approach from a detailed discussion about autobiographies as sources for a historian in Günther, ‘„And now for something completely different“’.

¹⁵¹ Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, 18–19. He refers to Darle, *Saddam Hussein maître des mots*, 41, 53; as well as Baran, *Vivre la tyrannie et lui survivre*, 50–53.

uncovering changing patterns and trends in the regime's religious policies and the general salience of religion in Iraqi society. These patterns and trends are principally related to official shrine visitations, the celebration of religious feasts and occasions, financial support for religious institutions, law enactments, religious education programmes, public activities of Ba'thist politicians and loyal religious scholars, as well as their ideological and religious discourse.

2) Open-source material from the internet turned out to be a rich complementary source for this study. This material included historical film records which were available on YouTube, official websites and Facebook accounts and blogs of Sufi orders, religious scholars or tribal shaykhs, official Iraqi government websites, as well as online news agencies. Due to the potential for film material to be manipulated, the anonymity of authors, and the lack of authentication, such sources should be treated carefully. Aware of such analytical traps, I always assessed the historical film material in combination with other sources and often found in it a unique complementary source and window to the past for gaining a visual impression of events, or at least of their visual portrayal on Iraqi television. This film material included valuable scenes from the Ba'th Party's Ninth Regional Congress in 1982, official shrine visitations by leading politicians, official speeches and interviews, celebrations of the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid al-nabī*), *dhikr* performances by Sufis, and religious sermons. Official websites of Sufi orders and shaykhs were only used after I personally ascertained the authorship. During my time in the central office of the Kasnazānīya order in Amman, I learned how they worked meticulously to use their website as a platform of presentation but also to preserve their version of historical Sufi heritage.¹⁵² In the case of the Rāwī family, one of my interviewees introduced me to one family member who happens to be the author of a blog where he collects scans of historical documents and manuscripts to preserve the history and heritage of his family.¹⁵³ Without the opportunity to conduct a field study on the ground, such material should not be ignored as an additional and otherwise rare source of an order's or family's own opinions and self-presentation.

¹⁵² 'al-Ṭarīqa al-'alīya al-qādirīya al-kasnazānīya - jadīd'.

¹⁵³ Rāwī, 'Mawqī' al-'allāma al-shaykh Aḥmad al-Rāwī'.

3) A further complementary source adding an oral history¹⁵⁴ perspective to this study were qualitative expert interviews. Between 2013 and 2018, I had the opportunity to enter the transnational networks of former leading members of the Ba‘th Party as well as those of Iraq’s Sufi orders. During research trips in Germany, Great Britain, Oman and two two-month field trips to Amman, I was able to conduct qualitative interviews with twenty-one Iraqis from various backgrounds (eighteen used in the analysis). Among them were high-ranking Ba‘th Party members, former ministers, scientists, university professors, religious scholars, middle class teachers, lawyers, as well as a former member of the military. Thirteen from among these interviewees were themselves practising Sufis, and/or related to Sufi clans, and/or associated with Iraq’s Sufi landscape.

Except for two cases, where the interviewees were fluent in German or English, I conducted all the interviews myself in Arabic. Contact with all my interviewees developed slowly and gradually over the years through the tireless efforts of many supporters of this study and solely on the basis of personal trust. Since all interviewees had reservations about being recorded – out of general suspicions and for self-protection – I took notes by hand during our conversations. Most of the interviews took place in the interviewees’ private homes and lasted between two and six hours. In many cases, I was able to visit them several times for long and intensive discussions. Similar to Noorah al-Gailani’s study,¹⁵⁵ I neither used interview-consent forms nor requested an interviewee’s signature since this was, from a cultural perspective, considered inappropriate and also seen with suspicion. All information taken from interviews is used here with the verbal agreement of the interviewees. In cases where the interviewees did not want to be named or where I deemed the content of the information too sensitive, names have been anonymised in order to protect their identities.

In addition to the interviews, during my first field trip to Amman I regularly visited the central *takīya* of shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī in his house. There, I spent the days participating in the normal life of the *takīya* together with the staff and followers of the shaykh as well as regular guests. I had long conversations, discussions, and exchanges with Kasnazānī Sufis from Jordan, Syria, and all over Iraq

¹⁵⁴ Oral history has gained increasing importance in recent research and particularly in the study of Iraq’s history and its now huge international diaspora communities (see for instance Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*; Taminian, ‘The Iraqi Oral History Project’; Iraq Memory Foundation, ‘Oral History’).

¹⁵⁵ Gailani, ‘The Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’, 17–18.

from all social strata. To complete my experience of life in a *takīya*, we agreed that I could actively participate in the main *dhikr* sessions on Monday and Thursday nights. During these highly emotional events, I had the opportunity personally to witness some of the Kasnazānīya's "miracle performances".

Finally, a note about gender in this study is necessary. The attentive reader will notice that this study presents a history of Sufism in Iraq chiefly from a male perspective. It is certainly a weakness of this study that, throughout the text, women are almost entirely absent save for a few exceptions. Of course, this was not my intention, as women definitely play a role within Iraq's Sufi communities, for instance in the Kasnazānīya where there are separate *takāyā* for women. Yet, the majority of the aforementioned sources reflect a gender segregation in Iraqi society that is still widespread, and they mention the roles of women rarely, if at all. I experienced this even more during my field trips to Amman where I, as a male researcher, had no opportunity to gain closer contact with Iraqi women, neither in the Sufi environment of the *takīya* nor in Iraqi households. Only during some meetings with former Ba'athists, did I also meet female family members, perhaps by pure chance.

1.5. Thesis Structure

The following study will investigate, in four main chapters, how the Ba'ath regime gradually incorporated Sufis and eventually Sufism into its religious policies throughout the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s, until its demise in 2003. It will show that this incorporation ranged from a rather loose relationship with the Sufis in the 1970s – with the president's legitimisation of his rule through a Sufi *nasab* and the patronage of Sufis in Kurdistan as loyal supporters against separatists – to the official promotion of Sufism as the 'true Islam' during the 1990s. With the gradual turn of leading Ba'athists to Sufism in the course of the regime's religious policies, the Ba'ath heavily contributed to a revival and proliferation of Sufism in Iraq during the 1980s and particularly the 1990s.

Chapter Two will, first of all, scrutinise to what extent Sufism in fact experienced a decline during the establishment of the modern nation state in Iraq during the first half of the twentieth century. After a basic mapping of Sunna and Shī'a in Iraq (2.1), this chapter will introduce the central manifestations of Sufism which experienced such a

decline until the 1960s, but indeed also indicate a later revival as they played an important role in Ba‘thist politics during the 1980s and 1990s. These manifestations are the Sufi orders themselves (2.2), the history of three leading shaykh clans and the challenges they faced in modern Iraq (2.3), the role of *ansāb* among Sufis and the demise of the Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants (*niqābat al-ashrāf*) (2.4), Sufi scholars at the religious school in Sāmarrā’ and its nationalisation (2.5), and finally Sufi rapprochements with the Shī‘a in Iraq (2.6). The latter are not an indicator of decline but became one important reason for the Ba‘th’s support of Sufi orders.

The next three chapters analyse Ba‘thist politics towards the Sufis chronologically from 1968 to 2003. In each of these chapters, the first section is dedicated to the regime’s religious policies and the second section to how these policies affected Sufism and the Sufis. Chapter Three will portray a secular Ba‘th regime which aimed to consolidate its power and to form a modern Iraqi society in line with its revolutionary socialist principles from 1968 to 1979. During this decade, the regime was not interested in Sufism and the Sufis as such, but the first tactical links to Iraq’s Sufi communities were already starting to appear. The Ba‘th aimed, from the very beginning, to Ba‘thise and control Iraq’s religious landscape (3.1). The regime soon clashed with the country’s Islamist circles and its mechanisms of repression and violence significantly affected non-Sufis and Sufis alike among the regime’s religious enemies (3.1.1). Over the following years, the regime marginalised religious scholars and shaykhs within the public media (3.1.2) and showed their first attempts to legitimise the president with a Prophetic descent via his genealogical relation to the Rifā‘ī *sāda* in Tikrīt (3.1.3). It began to take control of the religious sector with a complete restructuring of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*dīwān al-awqāf*) and removed religious representatives of Sufi clans from the Government (3.1.4). Several new laws were introduced, aimed at the nationalisation of religion in Iraq with regard to the administration of endowments and donations (3.1.5), the status of employees in religious establishments (3.1.6), and the Ba‘thisation of religious education (3.1.7).

Sufism in Iraq still showed signs of life during the 1970s but generally lacked its former popularity and state support of late Ottoman times (3.2). In the early 1970s, we find literary attempts by scholarly circles of the Rifā‘īya and Qādirīya which aimed to revive a *sharī‘a*-oriented and reformed Sufism devoid of unlawful practices (3.2.1). These literary attempts were, in turn, related to Ba‘th politics through the parallel publication of a *nasab* book which linked the presidential family directly to the

genealogical history of the Rifā'īya order in Iraq (3.2.2). The aforementioned scholars of the Rifā'īya and Qādirīya even took up this presidential Sufi link in their books and verified its authenticity (3.2.3). Apart from this early Ba'ṯh-Sufi link, Sufism in the Arab regions continued to indicate signs of stagnation rather than revival with regard to the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī (1106/18-1182), the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque, and certain religious Sufi schools. Only Baghdad's most important Sufi mosque of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī fared better due to its general importance (3.2.4). In the Kurdish regions, the situation was different due to the growth of a Kurdish separatist movement. There, the regime patronised loyal supporters among the Kurdish tribal leaders, many of whom happened to be Sufi shaykhs, and recruited them into combat units. Partially due to such state patronage, Sufism fared much better in the Kurdish than the Arab regions in the first two decades of Ba'ṯhist rule (3.2.5).

Chapter Four deals with Ba'ṯhist religious war propaganda and the Sufis between Wahhābism and Shī'ism from 1979 to 1989. In this decade, the Ba'ṯh still did not favour Sufism as such, but its policies did benefit certain Sufis and Sufi establishments all over Iraq. This chapter will show how the Ba'ṯh regime fully incorporated Islam and religious scholars into its propaganda during the war against Shī'ī Iran, in the course of which it cultivated its closest relations with Saudi Arabia as an important financial donor. Sufis came to play prominent roles in the regime's war propaganda and thus gained more prominence and privileges, which also resulted in the successful proliferation of certain Sufi orders in Iraq. The first section (4.1) deals with the Ba'ṯhist instrumentalisation of Islam during the war. Even though the regime fully employed Islam in its public discourse, the Ninth Regional Party Congress in 1982 makes clear that the party consolidated its secularism internally and even dismissed several leading party members allegedly because of their stern religious attitudes and their close contacts to the Sufi milieu (4.1.1). These dismissals, however, did not mean the end of Sufi links within the party and the regime. On the contrary, the reshuffling of the Ministry of *Awqāf* continued in the early 1980s, its state budget almost tripled, and its minister became one of the dismissed Ba'ṯhists, a follower of the Qādirīya (4.1.2). This reshuffling of the ministry accompanied large-scale building and restoration campaigns for mosques, shrines, and *takāyā* all over Iraq and meant an unprecedented renewal of the country's religious architecture. Many Sufi shrines all over Iraq benefitted from these campaigns, including the derelict shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī in the south (4.1.3). Religious Sufi scholars and shaykhs made prominent appearances in

the press in support of the regime (4.1.4), Ṣaddām Ḥusayn openly propagated his Prophetic Rifāʿī descent from the Shīʿī Imams (4.1.5), and the Sufi ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī successfully established himself as the Baʿth's religious representative in public discourse (4.1.6). Despite this political use of religion, the state further expanded its mechanisms of control and repression over the religious landscape (4.1.7).

Section 4.2 analyses the position of Sufism during the war years. Sufis who did not oppose the regime could draw considerable advantages from the political situation during the war and, as early as the 1980s, began to contribute to the growth of certain Sufi orders in Iraq. The political climate in Baghdad was, in this regard, considerably Sufi-friendly and offered a safe haven for three of the most prominent Sufi shaykhs in the region. Two of them were Naqshbandī shaykhs and fled political persecution in Syria or Iran (4.2.1), and the third was the shaykh of the Qādirīya-Kasnazānīya who relocated from Kirkūk to the capital to successfully expand his order all over Iraq (4.2.2). From 1985 onwards, the Baʿth regime founded its own institutes for higher religious education and recruited many religious Sufi scholars from the school in Sāmarrāʾ as staff. Thenceforward, Sufis came to play leading roles in Baʿthist religious education in Iraq (4.2.3). In this climate, one young Sufi scholar, Fayḍī al-Fayḍī, who forged a successful career under the Baʿth, could develop his ideas of a Salafī Sufism following the thirteenth-century Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymīya at Baghdad University (4.2.4). Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī, an already well-established imam and Qādirī author who aimed to revive Sufism in the 1970s, began in 1985 with the promotion of Prophetic descendancy among Iraq's tribes and particularly among the Sufi clans. In support of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's claim of a Prophetic Rifāʿī descent, he articulated the idea of a sharīfian unity among Iraq's Prophetic descendants which could overcome ethnic and sectarian differences, by implication for the sake of national unity (4.2.5). This fourth chapter shows how the regime's policies in the 1980s created a climate in which the conditions of Sufi establishments, Sufi scholars and shaykhs, as well as certain orders improved considerably compared to their stagnation and marginalisation in the previous decade.

Finally, Chapter Five will turn to the Baʿth regime's revival of Sufism as a measure against moral decay, Wahhābism, and sectarianism in a period of extreme hardships for Iraqi society between 1989 and 2003. This is the final stage in the course of Baʿth officials deliberately turning to Sufism as a religious force in Iraq. The first section will concentrate on the Baʿth's tactical embracing and promotion of Sufism on the

political level (5.1). It will outline the political background of this decade, the regime, and Iraqi society under severe international sanctions, the perceived threat of a growing Wahhābism in the country, and the state's own implementation of a National Faith Campaign from 1993 to 2003 (5.1.1). During the Faith Campaign, we find 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, for the first time, embracing and promoting Sufism during official national and international occasions, even in front of a Shī'ī audience in Najaf (5.1.2). Sunnī Sufi scholars continued to play leading roles in Ba'ṡhist religious education and now even educated senior party members in the Quran and *sunna* (5.1.3). At the Şaddām University for Islamic Studies, these scholars, together with leading Ba'ṡhists, commenced annual seminars to promote Sufism as the true form of Islam. These seminars were organised on the Prophet's birthday and broadcast on television (5.1.4). At the same time the regime continued with large-scale restorations of many important Sufi shrines and *takāyā* in Iraq (5.1.5) and even aimed in 2001 to revive the Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants (*niqābat al-ashrāf*) in which certain old Sufi families and former *nuqabā'* became involved (5.1.6). These restoration campaigns and the institutionalisation of Prophetic descendancy clearly resemble the former Ottoman state patronage for Sufism in the country.

The second section (5.2) investigates further consequences of this official revival of Sufism for the Sufi communities themselves. Here, we find that the Sufi orders had cultivated even closer relations to the presidential family and extended clan between 1989 and 2003. Video evidence of several occasions shows the presidential family and clan, many of whom served in the military and security services, together with Rifā'ī and Kasnazānī Sufis during the *dhikr* and miracle performances (5.2.1). Similarly, many orders held a patronage-stye relationship with 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī who visited them regularly. His longtime affiliation with the Kasnazānīya and his kinship relation to the Abū Khumra Rifā'ī shaykhs gave rise to the myth that he became a Sufi shaykh too (5.2.2). These close relationships between the Ba'ṡh leaders and the Sufis were even publicly promoted in new genealogical encyclopaedias which portrayed the genealogical links between Şaddām Ḥusayn's and 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's clans and the Rifā'īya orders. Similarly to Sāmarrā'ī in the mid-1980s, they advertised many other Prophetic descendants among Iraq's Sufi clans and implied the idea of a sharīfian unity which the regime officially used in its revival of a new *niqāba* in 2001 (5.2.3). Other Sufis from the Kasnazānīya even found the opportunity to publicly advertise the political role of their Sufism in the service of Arab nationalism. This would simply

have been impossible a decade earlier (5.2.4). Several Sufi scholars appeared publicly during the 1990s in defence of Sufism and Sufi practices from a legal point of view. This suggests once more their role as a counterbalance to the perceived growth of Wahhābism at that time, an Islamic current which is known for its harsh criticism of many Sufi practices to which these scholars referred (5.2.5). A new series published by the Kasnazānīya during the 1990s shows, finally, that this order in particular, apart from the Rifāʿīya, tried to transgress sectarian boundaries between Sunna and Shīʿa in Iraq and successfully managed to attract Shīʿī members. Alongside their role as a counterbalance against Wahhābism, Sufis could also be mobilised as representatives of a Sunnī-Shīʿī ecumenical Islam. The Kasnazānīya, Iraq's most successful order, seems to have played a considerable role in this regard (5.2.6).

The conclusion (6) will summarise and discuss the results of this study more broadly against the background of the latest discussions on the Baʿth regime and Islam as well as in comparison with other MENA states. It will show that Sufism and certain Sufis came to enjoy a much more privileged status under the Baʿth during the 1990s compared to the situation in the 1960s and even the 1970s. Many Sufis received a state patronage that closely resembles that of late Ottoman times with respect to restorations of shrines, the leading role of Sufis in religious education, the attempted revival of the *niqābat al-ashrāf*, or the proliferation of certain orders and their close personal relationships to the state elites.

2. Politics, Islam, and the Decline of Sufism before Ba‘thist Rule

Throughout its rule, the Ba‘th regime gradually incorporated Sufism into its religious policies and eventually aimed at a nationwide Sufi revival during the 1990s. In order to understand this process and its impact on the country’s Sufi communities, I will introduce here those manifestations of Sufism which played a central role in Ba‘thist politics. Their historical development since the late nineteenth century as well as their state and popularity in Iraqi society before Ba‘thist rule will help to estimate the regime’s contribution to an actual Sufi revival in the country. Previous research has assumed a general decline of Sufism in Iraq over the twentieth century and a stronger presence of Sufism in Kurdistan than in the Arab provinces. Yet, specific evidence and an adequate explanation for both assumptions are still missing. This chapter aims to evaluate this Sufi decline and the mentioned regional imbalance from the turn of the nineteenth century until the 1960s. It will also shed more light on the approaches of certain Sunnī Sufis to the Shī‘a in Iraq. Such approaches have been mentioned in previous studies but still await closer scrutiny.

The first section (2.1) will provide a rough overview of Iraq’s political history from the late Ottoman Empire until the 1960s. The political and social transformations in this period challenged Sufi life in Iraq tremendously and form the historic political framework for the decline of Sufism in Iraq. Section 2.2 will introduce a basic mapping of Sunnī and Shī‘ī communities and the role of Sufism among them in Iraq. Section 2.3 will outline the basic features of the three most popular Sufi orders – the Rifā‘īya, Qādirīya, and Naqshbandīya – their organisation and dissemination in order to show that still by the 1960s, numerous Sufi centres were active all over Iraq. The next three sections will indeed show several markers of a decline among Iraq’s Sufi communities that accompanied the establishment and expansion of the modern and secular Iraqi nation state. Three case studies of leading shaykh clans in Section 2.4, the Rāwīs of the Rifā‘īya, the Kasnazānīs of the Qādirīya, and the Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs of the Naqshbandīya, will illustrate major challenges to Sufis in the first half of the twentieth century, including the loss of the former Ottoman state support, the decay and demolition of mosques, and the transformation of the important Rāwī family from a Sufi elite into a secular state elite with the abandonment of *ṭarīqa*-Sufism in its earlier form. The cases of the Kurdish Kasnazānīs and Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs will suggest a rather different situation for Sufis in Kurdistan, where Ottoman rulers and the successive Iraqi governments tended to patronise certain Sufi shaykhs in order to gain

security and assure their loyalty towards the central state which included their recruitment as Sufi combat units. The Kurdish shaykhs, too, faced severe existential challenges which meant their temporary exile, but the state patronage relations helped them to keep their status as Sufis. Section 2.5 will highlight the important role of genealogies (*ansāb*) among Iraqi Sufis and their role in the Syndicate of the Prophetic Descendant (*niqābat al-ashrāf*) which vanished after the establishment of a socialist republic in 1958. Markers of decline can also be observed among Sunnī religious Sufi scholars in Section 2.6 with the subordination of an important religious school in Sāmarrā' to a modern and secular education system of the state. The last section (2.7) will, finally, evaluate Sufi approaches to the Shī'a by the Rifā'iya in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century on the basis of new sources. This part will show that the closeness of certain Sufis to the Shī'a with regard to the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* indeed played an important role for the cohabitation of certain Sunnī Sufis and Shī'īs in Iraq.

2.1. Mapping Sunna and Shī'a in Iraq

During the twentieth century, Iraq's Muslim majority population consisted of about one third Sunnīs mainly among the Arabs and Kurds of central and northern Iraq as well as two thirds Twelver Shī'īs mainly among the Arabs and also (Faili-) Kurds in central and southern Iraq. As shown by Yitzhak Nakash, the forming of the Shī'a as the majority population began only from the nineteenth century on with the conversion of formerly Sunnī tribes in the south due to an increasing proselytism activity by Shī'ī scholars.¹⁵⁶ One important factor for the establishment of Shī'ī scholarly circles in Iraq and the success of this conversion effort is the presence of the most important sanctuaries for Twelver Shī'ism in the country. These are the holy shrines or thresholds (*'atabāt*) of seven from among the Twelve Imams and Prophetic descendants who are highly venerated by Shī'īs as the true successors of the Prophet Muḥammad in the leadership of the Muslim community. Their locations are in southern Najaf and Karbalā', in Baghdad's suburb Kāẓimīya, and in Sāmarrā' north of Baghdad.¹⁵⁷ In

¹⁵⁶ Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, chap. 1.

¹⁵⁷ These sanctuaries are the shrines of the first Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Najaf, of the second Imam al-Ḥusayn and his half-brother al-'Abbās in Karbalā', of the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim and the ninth Imam Muḥammad al-Jawād in Baghdad's suburb Kāẓimīya or Kāẓimayn, and of the tenth Imam 'Alī

addition, there are also numerous shrines of those Imams' descendants, relatives, and companions scattered across Iraq. There is, for instance, the shrine of sayyid Muḥammad, the son of the tenth Imam, in Balad south of Sāmarrā' or the shrine of Salmān al-Fārisī, companion of the Prophet and supporter of the Shī'ī cause, in Salmān Pāk south of Baghdad.¹⁵⁸ These and numerous other shrines annually attract large numbers of Shī'ī pilgrims. Shī'īs settled in their surroundings and established institutionalised scholarly centres (singular *hawza 'ilmīya*) in the main shrine cities of Najaf, Karbalā', Kāẓimīya, and Sāmarrā'.¹⁵⁹ Some of these shrine cities and their surroundings developed into Shī'ī/Sunnī islands surrounded by a Sunnī/Shī'ī majority but with a largely mixed population. Sāmarrā' and Balad, for instance, are located in the Sunnī dominated province of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn but developed a strong Shī'ī presence. Similarly, mixed Sunnī-Shī'ī areas are at the northern edge of Baghdad as well as the regions of Ba'qūba and Muqḍādiyya in eastern Diyālā province. Salmān Pāk, by contrast, is a Sunnī island surrounded by a Shī'ī majority south of Baghdad. Further Sunnī settlements in the south can be found in Nāṣiriya and Baṣra.

Sunnīs have the strongest presence in the provinces Anbār, Baghdad, northern Diyālā, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, former Ta'mīm (now Kirkūk), Nīnawā, and in the Kurdish regions of Sulaymāniya, Arbīl, and Dohūk. Sunnism in Iraq was over centuries permeated by currents of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) with their shaykhs and spiritual masters, their orders, their particular ritual practices and veneration of saints, and finally, their emphasis not only of the observation of the divine law (*sharī'a*) but also of an inner spiritual and moral training. Similar to the Shī'a, we find architectural manifestations of this Sunnī Sufi religiosity and culture in countless shrines of late Sufi saints in almost all the major towns and cities of Iraq. There are shrines of the great Sufi masters of the Middle Ages such as 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Baghdad but also numerous others by their descendants such as his son 'Abd al-'Azīz in 'Aqra or minor local Sufi saints of various orders.¹⁶⁰ While Sufism generally exists also in Shī'ism, the Sufi currents among Iraqi Shī'īs became largely extinct with the rise of the leading Shī'ī scholars (*marja'īya*) as rivals in religious authority to the Sufi shaykhs since the sixteenth century.¹⁶¹

al-Hādī and the eleventh Imam al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī in Sāmarrā'. Sāmarrā' houses also the site where the twelfth Imam Muḥammad al-Mahdī is said to have went into occultation (Nakash, 285).

¹⁵⁸ Nakash, 285.

¹⁵⁹ Studies about the Iraqi Shī'a, its scholarly circles, traditions, and rituals include, for example, Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*; Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*; and Corboz, *Guardians of Shi'ism*.

¹⁶⁰ Thāmir al-'Āmirī provides an overview of Iraq's shrine landscape in 'Āmirī, *Mu'jam al-marāqid*.

¹⁶¹ Luizard, 'Les confréries soufies', 284–91.

2.2. The Sufi Orders, their Organisation, and Dissemination

One of the most prominent appearances of Sufism in Iraq is the Sufi orders, in Arabic *ṭuruq* (sing. *ṭarīqa*). The term *ṭarīqa* denotes simultaneously the social organisation of an order as a group of members and the spiritual path of an order with its specific teachings, methods, and ritual practices which were coined by and named after a great Sufi master. This distinction is important for an approach to the orders, their organisation, and dissemination in Iraq. The three most prominent Sufi *ṭuruq* in Iraq are the Rifāʿīya, the Qādirīya, and the Naqshbandīya.¹⁶² The first two are homegrown as they are believed to go back to two Sufi masters who had their spiritual centres in Iraq during the twelfth century: Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī (1106/18-1182) who lived close to the marshlands in southern Iraq¹⁶³ and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (1077-1166) who taught in a religious school in Baghdad.¹⁶⁴ The Naqshbandīya, by contrast, emerged in Central Asia during the early fourteenth century and reached Ottoman lands at least by the fifteenth century. A second reformist Indian branch of the order, which is today the most prominent, was introduced to Iraqi Kurdistan by Mawlānā Khālīd al-Shahrazūrī (1779-1827).¹⁶⁵ Stating that the Rifāʿīya, Qādirīya, and Naqshbandīya currently prevail in Iraq initially means that their respective spiritual paths, methods, teachings, and ritual practices are the most widespread. Regarding organisation, however, there is not a single centralised order for each of them, but rather many smaller orders of varying sizes which adhere to the *ṭarīqa* of the Rifāʿīya, Qādirīya, or Naqshbandīya. Yet, many of them differ from each other even in their specific teachings, methods, and ritual practices and many also combine two or more spiritual paths. Several branches of the Rifāʿīya, for instance, combine their path with the path of the Qādirīya such as shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Abū Khumra in Baghdad.¹⁶⁶ Other branches of the Naqshbandīya, which is known for its practice of a silent commemoration of God (*dhikr*), combine this path with the Qādirīya and practice also an audible *dhikr* such as the order of shaykh Muḥammad ʿUthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī.¹⁶⁷ This is, finally, also true for more extraordinary miracle performances for which the Rifāʿīya

¹⁶² There are many other orders as well such as the Badawīya, the Mawlawīya or the Suhrawardīya but those are less widespread in Iraq and will not be dealt with in this study (DeJong, 'Les confréries mystiques', 230).

¹⁶³ Margoliouth, 'al-Rifāʿī'; Bosworth, 'Rifāʿīyya'.

¹⁶⁴ Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 179–92.

¹⁶⁵ Abu-Manneh, 'The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya'; Abu-Manneh, 'Salafiyya'; Abu-Manneh, 'Transformations of the Naqshbandiyya'.

¹⁶⁶ Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī*, 97–99; Nāṭūr, 'Man hum al-Bū Khumra?'

¹⁶⁷ Shakely, 'The Naqshbandī Sheikhs', 94.

is historically known, such as the perforation of the body with swords and skewers (*ḍarb al-shīsh* or *dirbāsha*). We find these practices in Iraq also among more *sharīʿa*-oriented Qādirīs and Naqshbandīs who are generally not known for such actions.¹⁶⁸

The very basic organisational feature of most Sufi orders in Iraq is a charismatic shaykh who gathers around him varying numbers of followers who venerate him as a spiritual guide (*murshid*) and a source of God's blessing (*baraka*). A shaykh founds his spiritual authority and his role as transmitter of blessing usually on a spiritual lineage (*silsila*) with the spiritual masters who preceded him in the order and who are traced back over generations to the Prophet Muḥammad himself. Sometimes the shaykh is an outstanding religious scholar, mostly a descendant of the Prophet and of the founding figure of the order, but he can also just be very pious or an uneducated but very charismatic person who stands out due to his miracles. Often, shaykhs can be simultaneously spiritual guides of an order as well as tribal chiefs and wealthy landlords in the Arab and Kurdish regions.¹⁶⁹ Other shaykhs' reputations seem largely to have been built on the prestige of their forefathers and spiritual predecessors on the path than on actively engaging in spiritual guidance of their followers.¹⁷⁰ In most cases of Iraqi Sufi shaykhs which I came across, the leadership of an order was often a hereditary family business and was passed on from father to son or relative to relative. As a consequence, the most prominent orders of the Rifāʿīya, Qādirīya, and Naqshbandīya are associated with and run by certain tribal clans who lead them for two hundred years and more.¹⁷¹

Formal organisation varies from order to order but most have a certain hierarchy among their followers. Most followers are initiated into an order by a ritualised oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) to the shaykh and become in this way novices (*murīdūn*) who follow the shaykh's instructions in spiritual training and beyond. Aside from them, there are also other followers who loosely attend Sufi gatherings for spiritual gains but without the *bayʿa*. Among the *murīdūn*, there are more advanced novices on the spiritual path who represent the shaykh, i.e. his deputies (*khulafāʾ*, sing. *khalīfa*).

¹⁶⁸ Husayn and Fattūhī, *Al-Bārāsikūlūjīyā*.

¹⁶⁹ Many instances of Sufi tribal chiefs will be mentioned in this study. Here, an example for the Arab regions would be shaykh ʿAlī al-ʿĀbid (1875-1941) from Sāmarrāʾ, shaykh of the Qādirīya and of the al-Bū Darrāj tribe (Sāmarrāʾī, *Tāʾrīkh ʿulamāʾ Sāmarrāʾ*, 74). A Kurdish example would be the Ṭālabānī Qādirī shaykhs of Sulaymānīya (Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 221).

¹⁷⁰ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 241.

¹⁷¹ A case in point is the Gailānī or Kīlānī clan, the custodians and shaykhs of the shrine of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Baghdad (Gailani, 'The Shrine of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī', 64–73).

These individuals have the authority to act themselves as spiritual guides, as leaders of the prayer and other ritual practices such as the *dhikr*, they look for new followers, and run oftentimes their own spiritual centres. Such centres, in Arabic *takāyā* (sing. *takīya*) or *khānaqāt* (sing. *khānaqa*) in the Kurdish regions, are establishments that can be found among most Sufi orders across Iraq. Shaykhs and deputies offer their spiritual training, Quran lessons, and the followers of an order gather there regularly for the prayer, *dhikr*, and other ritual and spiritual exercises. The more influential shaykhs have several *takāyā* in different cities and regions under their authority but the independence of a *takīya* generally depends on the degree of centralisation in an order. In the Naqshbandīya of Mawlānā Khālīd, for instance, the shaykh's deputies established with their own *takāyā* autonomous growth centres of the order and eventually many different Naqshbandī orders throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century.¹⁷²

In general, there are only very few and incomplete information available about the spread of the Sufi orders in twentieth-century Iraq. As the only field studies have been conducted in Iraqi Kurdistan between the 1950s and 1980s,¹⁷³ one has to rely on information from the Iraqi literature to get at least a rudimentary impression. The imam and Sufi Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī provides information about the spread of Rifā'īya and Qādirīya *takāyā* during the 1960s and early 1970s in his books. His list is far from complete since he only records the *takāyā* and shrines which he had himself visited but provides at least a good impression of the most popular *takāyā* of these orders in Iraq. Sāmarrā'ī names seventy-nine *takāyā* of the Rifā'īya, listed in the table below, which were still active during his investigation. They cover an area from 'Āna near the Syrian border along the upper Euphrates to Khānaqayn in the East close to the Iranian border and from Dohūk and Mosul in the Kurdish north via Kirkūk and Baghdad even to Baṣra in the south. Additionally, he provides information about the leading shaykhs in the institutions which allows a rudimentary ethnic categorisation.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 228.

¹⁷³ Examples of such field studies are the aforementioned Barth, *The Principles of Social Organization*; and Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*.

¹⁷⁴ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 101–4; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh masājīd*, 298–304; Mu'āḍidī, *A'ālī al-rāfidayn*, 1990, 3:273.

Location	Province	Number of <i>takāyā</i>	Arab	Kurdish
Baghdad	Baghdad	16	16	-
Salmān Bāk ¹⁷⁵	Baghdad	2	2	-
Sāmarrā'	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	18	18	-
Tikrīt	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	2	2	-
Sarḥa	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	5	5	-
Balad	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	1	1	-
Bayjī	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	1	1	-
Dūr	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	2	2	-
Ṭūblis/Ḥawīja	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	1	1	-
ʿĀna	Anbār	1	1	-
Kirkūk	Tā' mīm	4	4	-
Arbīl	Arbīl	1	-	1
Mosul	Nīnawā	2	2	-
al-Muqdaḍīya ¹⁷⁶	Diyālā	5	5	-
Jalawlā'	Diyālā	4	4	-
al-Sa' dīya	Diyālā	2	2	-
Khānaqayn	Diyālā	1	1	-
Khālīş	Diyālā	6	6	-
Dalī 'Abbās	Diyālā	1	1	-
Mandalī	Diyālā	2	2	-
Umm 'Abīda	Maysān	1	1	-
Başra	Başra	1	1	-

Table 1: *Takāyā of the Rifā'īya*

With the exception of one shaykh in Arbīl, the *takāyā* of the Rifā'īya seem clearly dominated by Arabs. The provinces with the highest Rifā'īya concentration are in central Iraq, namely Şalāḥ al-Dīn, notably in Sāmarrā', Baghdad, and the major cities in Diyālā. From among all these seventy-nine *takāyā*, a tribal belonging could be clearly identified for sixty-eight centres. As the following table shows, these sixty-eight *takāyā* are run by eighteen different tribal clans. With regard to mere numbers of *takāyā* in Sāmarrā'ī's list, the 'Azzāwī clan clearly dominates the Rifā'īya in Baghdad and eastern Diyālā province whereas the al-Bū Mullīs are the strongest Rifā'ī clan in Sāmarrā'. Other strong Sufī clans in central Iraq are the Abū Khumra in Baghdad and Şalāḥ al-Dīn, the Āl Gumar in Baghdad, and the Şumayda', and Nu'aym.

¹⁷⁵ Today's al-Mada'in.

¹⁷⁶ Formerly Shahrabān.

Tribal Clan	Number of <i>takāyā</i>	Locations
al-Bū Mullīs ¹⁷⁷	12	Sāmarrā'
Al-Bū Bāz	2	Sāmarrā'
Āl Gumar	5	Baghdad
Āl Khalaf al-Rifā'ī	1	Tikrīt
Āl al-Mashāyikh	4	Kirkūk
Al-Bū al-Shāmān	1	Sāmarrā'
Al-Bū Mawāshīṭ	1	Sāmarrā'
Āl Khuzzām (from al-Bū Nīsān)	1	Salmān Bāk 1
Al-Bū Judū'	1	Baghdad
Āl al-Rawī	1	Baghdad
'Azzāwī	15	Baghdad 4, Khālīṣ 5, Sāmarrā' 1, Dalī 'Abbās 1, Muqdādīya 3, Balad 1
Abū Khumra	9	Sāmarrā' 1, Ṣarḥa 5, Jalawlā' 1, Baghdad 2
Ṣumayda'	4	Sa'dīya 1, Jalawlā' 1
Āl Nu'aym	4	Khānaqayn 1, Khālīṣ 1, Tikrīt 1, Jalawlā' 1
Āl Nāmis	3	Muqdādīya 2, Bayjī 1
Āl al-Naqīb al-Rifā'ī	2	Mandalī
'Abd al-Razzāq al-sayyid Salmān al-Sāmarrā'ī	1	Salmān Bāk
Al-shaykh Jalāl shaykh Kākā	1	Arbīl

Table 2: Tribal Affiliations among the *Takāyā* of the Rifā'īya

Sāmarrā'ī's record of the Qādirīya follows a similar pattern with forty-eight *takāyā*.¹⁷⁸ In contrast to the Rifā'īya, the Qādirīya is clearly dominated by Kurdish shaykhs, as noted in the table which follows, and is more widespread throughout Kurdish villages in the north, especially in Dohūk and Arbīl provinces. The number of Arab shaykhs is higher only in Baghdad. Here, twenty-nine of the forty-eight *takāyā* show a clear tribal belonging. These *takāyā* are run by nineteen different clans yet without one clan being clearly dominant except the one of the Kurdish shaykh Kāk Muṣṭafā b. Kāk 'Abd Allāh from Shaqlāwa. The incompleteness of Sāmarrā'ī's list becomes most obvious since later research has shown that the Barzinjī and Ṭālabānī clans clearly dominated the Qādirīya in Kurdistan over the nineteenth and large parts of the twentieth century. Sāmarrā'ī himself was a Qādirī Sufi and knew the Sufi and tribal milieus of Iraq well. The reasons why he does not mention further *takāyā* of these clans remains obscure. Their demise by the late 1960s seems rather unlikely but not impossible after all.

¹⁷⁷ Four *takāyā* are run by the Āl Ghulām from the al-Bū Mullīs, five by the Āl al-shaykh 'Abbās, and three by the Āl al-shaykh Kāzīm (Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 101–4).

¹⁷⁸ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, 71–74; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh masājīd*, 298–304.

Location	Province	Number of <i>takāyā</i>	Arab	Kurdish
Baghdad	Baghdad	11	9	2
Barwārī Zīr	Dohūk	1	-	1
Between Zākhū and Fīshkhābūr	Dohūk	1	1	-
Jūsaq	Dohūk	1	-	1
‘Amādīya	Dohūk	2	-	2
Atrūsh	Dohūk	1	-	1
Dohūk	Dohūk	2	-	2
Mandalī	Diyālā	2	-	2
Kan‘ān	Diyālā	1	1	-
Arbīl	Arbīl	6	-	6
Hīrān/Shaqḷāwa	Arbīl	1	-	1
Rāwandūz	Arbīl	1	-	1
Dāyīnah	Arbīl	1	-	1
Kūyi Sandjaq	Arbīl	2	-	2
Şābilāq	Arbīl	1	-	1
‘Aqra	Nīnawā	2	2	-
Brīfkān	Nīnawā	1	-	1
Mosul	Nīnawā	2	2	-
Şūlah	?	1	-	1
Balad	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	1	1	-
Sāmarrā’	Şalāḥ al-Dīn	2	2	-
Sulaymānīya	Sulaymānīya	1	-	1
Kirkūk	Tā’ mīm	3	-	3
Rūfīya	Kurdistan?	1	-	1

Table 3: *Takāyā of the Qādirīya*

Tribal Clan	Number of <i>takāyā</i>	Locations
Āl Kīlānī	1	‘Aqra
Bahdīnān	1	?
Āl al-Brīfkānī	4	‘Amādīya 2, Dohūk 1, Brīfkān 1
‘Abbāsī	2	‘Amādīya 2
al-Galī Rumānī	1	?
Bandanījī	2	Baghdad 1, Mandalī 1
Āl al-‘Ābid	1	Sāmarrā’
al-Bū ‘Abbās	1	Sāmarrā’
Kākā Aḥmad	1	Sulaymānīa
Ṭālabānī	2	Kirkūk 1, Kuyī Sanjaq 1
Barzinjī	2	Arbīl, Kirkūk
Kāk Muṣṭafā b. Kāk ‘Abd Allāh	6	Shaqīlāwa 1, Rāwandūz 1, Arbīl 1, Dāyana 1, Kuyī Sanjaq 1, Šābilāq 1
Tal‘afarī	1	Arbīl
Dārah Khurmā	1	Arbīl
Atrūshī	1	Atrūsh
Dūzakī	1	Māmān (Dohūk)
shaykh Ṭāhir al-Šūl	1	al-Šūlah
‘Alwānī	1	Baghdad

Table 4: Tribal Affiliations among the *Takāyā* of the *Qādirīya*

For the Naqshbandīya, no comparable information was available in the Iraqi literature that I consulted. The most prominent shaykhs and their centres in Kurdistan have already received attention by Bruinessen and others, notably the Sādāte Nehrī in ‘Amādīya, ‘Aqra, and Mosul, shaykh Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Bāmarnī (1855-1952) in Bāmarnī and Mosul, and the Bārzānī shaykhs from the village Bārzān. The Naqshbandī shaykhs of Sargelu are from the Barzinjī clan of shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm¹⁷⁹ whose followers are known as the Ḥaqqā sect with certain unorthodox practices and traditions and who constitute a special case in the Naqshbandīya tradition.¹⁸⁰ Finally, shaykh Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn in Ṭawīla and Biyāra enjoyed an exalted position within the Naqshbandīya. There was generally no supreme authority in the order after shaykh Khālīd’s death, but many consider the lineage of the Ṭawīla shaykhs as true successors. They were famous and influential shaykhs in Iraq with a large following in Sulaymānīya, Arbīl, Kirkūk and the Arab parts of Iraq.¹⁸¹

The Naqshbandī networks in the Arab parts of Iraq are not yet well investigated. In the appendix to this study, I provide a glimpse of their networks which are more

¹⁷⁹ This is not the clan of ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī.

¹⁸⁰ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 326.

¹⁸¹ For more information, see Bruinessen, 255–57, 326–36; Bruinessen, ‘The Sadate Nehri’; DeJong, ‘Les confréries mystiques’, 225–28.

widespread among religious scholarly circles. Since a field study was not possible in this area, the information about Arab Naqshbandī centres is rather meagre. The sources provide little information about Naqshbandī *takāyā* in Baghdad save for the Khālidiya *takīya* where shaykh Khālīd al-Shahrazūrī once taught and the *takīya* of Muḥammad Faraj.¹⁸²

The Sufi life in the Khālidiya seems to have suffered a decline in the 1940s and 1950s. Ibrāhīm al-Durrūbī wrote in 1958 that the *takīya* had already become a desolate ruin (*khirba khāwīya*) due to long ongoing neglect.¹⁸³ Iraq's Naqshbandī Sufi circles generally met less in their own *takāyā* like the Rifā'īya and Qādirīya, but in regular mosques. Important venues for the Naqshbandī *dhikr* and teaching sessions were for instance Baghdad's two most important mosques, the Kīlānīya and the Imam al-A'ẓam mosque (Abū Ḥanīfa).¹⁸⁴ Throughout my research, the available Iraqi literature on tribes and religious scholars as well as my interviewees mentioned further Naqshbandī Sufi centres in Tikrīt, Dūr, Sāmarrā', Fallūja, and Kirkūk. It is noteworthy, that there is also an important Naqshbandī centre in Dayr al-Zūr at the Syrian-Iraqi border, whose shaykhs have also considerable influence in Iraq's Anbār province.¹⁸⁵

The overview of this section offers introductory basics about Iraq's three most prominent Sufi orders, their forms of organisation, and rudimentary information about their dissemination. Based on Sāmarrā'ī's and other information about the number of *takāyā*, it seems that the Rifā'īya still dominated in the Arab tribal society of central Iraq in the late 1960s whereas the Qādirīya and Naqshbandīya were indeed much stronger represented among the Kurds in the north. On the basis of this information, however, their gradual decline can hardly be verified or refuted. The disrepair of the Khālidiya constitutes certainly one example of the presumed decline and could either mean that the place lost its meaning for the Naqshbandīya or that the order suffered a retreat from this quarter or the city of Baghdad in general. Sāmarrā'ī's information, if correct, suggests that Sufism was still practiced in at least twenty-eight *takāyā* in Baghdad during the late 1960s. The highest *takāyā* density outside the capital can be found in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn province with thirty-three, Diyālā with twenty-four, Arbīl with

¹⁸² Unfortunately, my sources did not include more information about Muḥammad Faraj and his *takīya* (Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā' rīkh masājīd*, 303).

¹⁸³ Durrūbī, *al-Baghdādīyūn*, 168.

¹⁸⁴ Ḥammūd, 'al-Ṭuruq', 115.

¹⁸⁵ Interviews with Dāwūd 'Abd al-Razzāq, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Fallūja, 13.11.2015, 30.11.2015 and with Ḥalīm Thāmir, former Ba'thist, 04.05.2016. Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā' rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 497.

thirteen, Dohūk with eight, and the city of Kirkūk with seven *takāyā*. It is likely that Sāmarrā'ī only mentioned the most popular *takāyā* in Iraq and left out many minor ones, and how much all these *takāyā* were still frequented by Sufi followers in the 1960s and 1970s could not be established.

The following three sections will highlight more explicit markers of a decline of Sufism in Iraq in the course of the grave social and political transformations throughout the twentieth century. These transformations are primarily related to the emergence of secular and socialist ideologies and the expansion of the centralised state which threatened the independence of several traditional Sufi institutions. These institutions were the Sunnī Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants, the cases of three Sufi clans from the Rifā'īya, Qādirīya, and Naqshbandīya, as well as the religious Sufi scholars at the Sāmarrā' School.

2.3. The Struggle of Three Shaykh Clans against Political Transformations

This section introduces three exemplary cases of Sufi clans who had to cope with tremendous political and social transformations from the beginning of the twentieth century until the late 1960s. This period was marked by the demise of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, the establishment of the Iraqi nation state under a British mandate and a monarchy from 1921 until 1958, and the foundation of successive socialist republics following the revolutionary overthrow of the monarchy after 1958. The Sufi clans under investigation are the Āl al-Rāwī of the Rifā'īya, the Āl al-Kasnazānī of the Qādirīya, and the Āl Sirāj al-Dīn of the Naqshbandīya, all of whom suffered considerable setbacks due to the expansion of the modern state and the rise of secular and socialist movements. These challenges did indeed usher in a decline of their Sufism in its previous form and led to its adaptation and transformation according to modern circumstances rather than its complete eclipse. In the case of the Rāwīs, the adaptation to a new political and social setting resulted in the ending of their spiritual lineage and their *ṭarīqa*-Sufism as it was under Ottoman rule. However, they retained a rather scholarly Sufi approach. The other two cases will illustrate how the emergence of communist forces in Iraq culminated in the Kurdish regions in open attacks against Sufi shaykhs and forced them into temporary exile in Iran. In those two

cases, the Sufis maintained their orders and began to enter beneficial alliances with the successive regimes in Iraq as well as in Iran.

The Āl al-Rāwī of the Rifā'īya

One of the most prominent and important clans which has played a central role in the spread of the Rifā'īya order in central Iraq is the Āl al-Rāwī. This clan traces its origin back to a shaykh of the Rifā'īya and Qādirīya called Rajab al-Rāwī al-Rifā'ī, who lived in the seventeenth century in the small town of Rāwa at the upper Euphrates in today's Anbār province.¹⁸⁶ The history of the Rāwīs from the seventeenth century onwards reveals a constant expansion of their Sufi activities that culminated in the late Ottoman period with shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī who rose to imperial prominence. With the foundation of the Iraqi nation state in the twentieth century, however, Sufi activities among the Rāwīs gradually began to decline until the death of shaykh Ibrāhīm as the last Sufi shaykh in the lineage of this family. After him, Sufism among the Rāwīs became a mere heritage and shifted to the preservation of a Rifā'ī lineage with a rather scholarly approach to Sufism.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Rāwīs successfully expanded their order with new *takāyā* in the towns of Rāwa and 'Āna, Baghdad, Mosul and even Dayr al-Zūr in Syria. As illustrated in the following graph, their spiritual leadership remained hereditary among the descendants of shaykh Rajab. After shaykh 'Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad, authority to spread the Rifā'īya was split among his three sons Ṭaha, Yās (d. 1859), and Muḥammad (1830-1872). Ṭaha remained the leading shaykh of the clan until his death. Muḥammad, in turn, bestowed a spiritual authorisation (*ijāza*) to his second cousin Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Qādir who emerged after Ṭaha's passing as the highest ranking Rifā'ī shaykh among the Rāwīs in the Syrian town Dayr al-Zūr.¹⁸⁷ In Iraq, Muḥammad's son Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī (1859-1946) emerged eventually as

¹⁸⁶ The Rifā'īya tradition in this family begins with Rajab's father Ḥasan and even more with himself as his grandfather Ḥisān was more known as shaykh of the Qādirīya. Yet, the Rifā'īya became their main order (Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*, 14).

¹⁸⁷ Shaykh Aḥmad al-Rāwī was appointed *naqīb al-ashraf* in the Syrian town Dayr al-Zūr close to the Iraqi border and established a *takīya* of the Rifā'īya there in 1886 as well as a religious school for jurisprudence. His descendants successfully run the *takīya* and the religious school only until recently. Following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, both establishments in Dayr al-Zūr became damaged during the bombing of the city by the Syrian army in 2012. Insurgents of the so-called Islamic State destroyed it completely in 2015 after they had taken control of the city (see Hāshim, 'Takīyat al-Rāwī'). During our interviews, 'Iṣām and Nadīm al-Rāwī told me that the current shaykh Wā'il al-Rāwī and his family had taken refuge before in the Turkish city of Urfa, (Interviews with Nadīm al-Rāwī, 11.11.2015 and 'Iṣām al-Rāwī, 11.05.2016).

the leading shaykh with three spiritual authorisations: that of his father, shaykh Ṭaha, and shaykh Aḥmad in Syria.¹⁸⁸

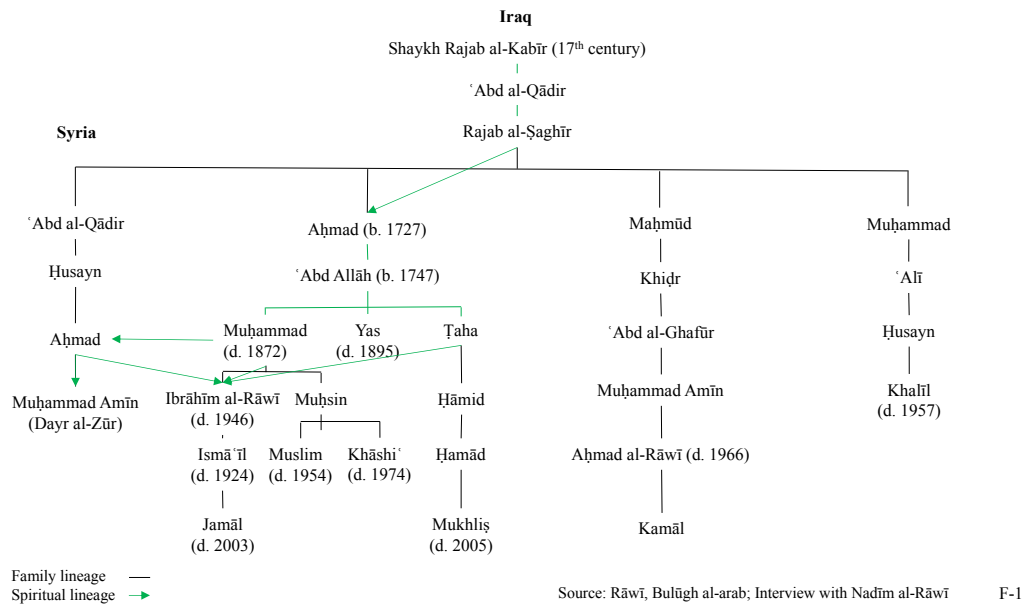


Figure 1: Genealogy of the Āl al-Rāwī

In the late nineteenth century, Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī rose to imperial prominence due to his close contacts to the leading Rifā'ī shaykh of the Ottoman Empire, Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī in Istanbul. In 1887, Ibrāhīm also received a Rifā'ī *ijāza* from Abū l-Hudā and subsequently became appointed by the Ottoman authorities as custodian (*jalīs al-sajjāda al-rifā'iya*) of the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque as well as teacher (*mudarris*) in its Sufi lodge (*zāwiya*) in Baghdad.¹⁸⁹ This mosque became in those years the second most important sanctuary of the Rifā'īya in Iraq as it allegedly housed the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī's father sayyid Sulṭān 'Alī.¹⁹⁰ Beside the regular religious services there, Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī organised regular *dhikr* performances in the evening after the Friday prayer. The biggest Sufi gatherings, however, took place annually from the beginning of the fasting month *Ramaḍān* until the night of the Quranic revelation (*lailat al-qadr*). At these gatherings Sufis and followers of the Rifā'īya from all over Iraq met to perform the *dhikr* and recite passages of the Quran.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*, 157, 100, 181. He received a fourth *ijāza* from a *khalīfa* of his grandfather, Ḥusayn Jāmī (Rāwī, 206).

¹⁸⁹ Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī*, 103; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā' rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 20–21. There he taught next to the Quran, the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), jurisprudence, and *ḥadīth* also Sufism.

¹⁹⁰ A critic of this view is the Iraqi Salafī Muḥammad Bahjat al-Atharī, who claims in his biographical book about the Ālūsī family, *A'lām al-'Irāq* (Luminaries of Iraq), that Sulṭān 'Alī in fact was 'Alī b. Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and not Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī's father. He even brands people claiming the latter as liars (*kadhhabīn*) (see Atharī, *A'lām al-'Irāq*, 11). For other interpretations, see 'Āmirī, *Mu'jam al-marāqīd*, 269.

¹⁹¹ Durrūbī, *al-Baghdādiyūn*, 48.

Coinciding with Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's official promotion, the Ottoman authorities commenced an enormous building campaign for the Rifā'īya in today's Syria and Iraq which prompted the Orientalist Louis Massignon to describe this period even as a spiritual conquest of Baghdad by this order.¹⁹² In 1886, the Ottoman authorities financed the construction of Aḥmad al-Rāwī's *takīya* and *madrassa* in Dayr al-Zūr. Between 1887 and 1889, they renovated a Rifā'ī shrine and a mosque in Mosul and Rāwa, the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī in southern Umm 'Abīda, and the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque in Baghdad. Between 1892 and 1896, Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī supervised, furthermore, the building of the Rawwās mosque in Baghdad which contained the shrine of the Rifā'ī shaykh Muḥammad Bahā' al-Dīn Maḥdī al-Rawwās (b. 1805).¹⁹³ Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's eldest son, Ismā'īl (1886-1924) became the shaykh of the *dhikr* circle there and received upon the intervention of his father and Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī in Istanbul the post as *naqīb al-ashrāf* of Kāẓimayn with its Shī'ī sanctuaries in 1907.¹⁹⁴

With the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Iraqi nation state under the monarchy of Prince Faiṣal, Iraq entered a period of massive social and political transformations. In the 1920s, Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī showed increasing political engagement and resistance against the establishment of a British mandate in Iraq. During the 1920 tribal revolt against the British occupation, the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque became a centre for the organisation of protests through joint Sunnī-Shī'ī religious gatherings.¹⁹⁵ By the late 1920s, Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī appeared among middleclass Sunni religious scholars (*'ulamā'*), who discussed the desirability of a republic. Until then, they had been standing rather for political restraint.¹⁹⁶ Throughout the following decades, the Rāwīs, like others from among the old religious elites, became affected by the new political and social developments and established themselves successfully

¹⁹² Massignon, 'Saints Musulmans', 337.

¹⁹³ The Rawwās mosque was located in Jumhūrīya street in Baghdad's Qāhira quarter (Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā' rīkh masājīd*, 271 f.). The mentioned shaykh Rawwās was a *khalīfa* of Ibrāhīm's grandfather, shaykh 'Abd Allāh.

¹⁹⁴ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā' rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 89–90; Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī*, 195. These restorations have to be seen in the context of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's general support and strengthening of the Sufi orders throughout the Ottoman Empire, such as the Rifā'īya, the Qādirīya, Naqshbandīya as well as the Shādhilīya. This policy aimed in the first place at the religious legitimacy of the sultan and was a measure to counter Shī'ī proselytisation efforts among the tribes in the regional context of the Shī'a-dominated south of Iraq (Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*, 226; Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 77–78; Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'īya and Shiism').

¹⁹⁵ Wardī, *Lamaḥāt ijtimā'īya*, 5:174, 189. The historical context is described in Kadhim, 'Efforts at Cross-Ethic Cooperation'; Eich, 'Patterns of the 1920 Rising'.

¹⁹⁶ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 328.

as a new state elite. This led to a gradual decline of their former Sufi activities and a shift to a more scholarly approach to Sufism.

In 1924, Ibrāhīm's son Ismā'īl suddenly died and left behind his father as the last Rifā'ī shaykh of the family without a spiritual successor. Ismā'īl's younger brothers, too, could not replace him in this position as they all took up successful secular careers in state and military. Najīb, the most famous of them, became minister of education (*wazīr al-ma'ārif*) and of justice (*al-'adlīya*); Aḥmad Bāshā, a lieutenant general (*farīq*); and Jamīl, a major general (*liwā'*).¹⁹⁷ Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī remained, therewith, the last Sufi shaykh in the spiritual lineage (*silsila*) of his family in Iraq until his death in 1946. There are no traces that he appointed a successor in the Rifā'īya. State support for the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque had already ceased by then. Whereas the Ottoman authorities had still subsidised the *takīya*'s kitchen with grants to feed the poor, the Iraqi monarchy did not continue with such regular payments.¹⁹⁸ Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī remained *jalīs al-sajjāda* and first teacher in the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque until 1943. After his retirement, religious education continued there, but the teaching of Sufism ended until the late 1990s.¹⁹⁹

Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's successors as *jalīs al-sajjāda* and teacher became two of his relatives. The first was his student Khalīl b. Ḥusayn al-Rāwī (d. 1957), who served as "shaykh of the Rifā'īan prayer rug" from 1943 until 1946. The use of this title means here merely *jalīs al-sajjāda* which is the title for the custodian of the Sulṭān 'Alī and officially bestowed by the state. Khalīl al-Rāwī had a Sufi inclination and an advanced spiritual position within the family, but he was not a shaykh.²⁰⁰ In 1946, he was eventually replaced by Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's nephew Muslim b. Muḥsin²⁰¹ al-Rāwī (d. 1954) who had served many years as an imam in the army. Both of them worked in the mid-1940s also in the Rawwās mosque, Khalīl as teacher and leader of the *dhikr* circle and Muslim as imam.²⁰² The Rawwās mosque was eventually demolished due to

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Ḍiyā' al-Rāwī, 19.05.2016.

¹⁹⁸ Durrūbī, *al-Baghdādiyūn*, 48.

¹⁹⁹ At least since 2003, probably already earlier in the late nineties, 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Muḥsin al-Rāwī began to organise regular *dhikr* sessions, major annual occasions like the Prophet's birthday as well monthly lectures about Sufism in the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque ('Āmirī, *Mu'jam al-marāqīd*, 272). Lately, he established the Iraqi Centre for Sufi Guidance (*markaz al-irshād al-ṣūfī al-'irāqī*) and the Highest Organisation for Sufism (*al-hay'a al-'alīyā li-l-taṣawwuf*) in the mosque. Unfortunately, 'Abd Allāh passed away in October 2017.

²⁰⁰ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 182–83.

²⁰¹ Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's brother Muḥsin was the head of the *takīya* in Rāwa (Interview with Nadīm al-Rāwī, 17.11.2015).

²⁰² Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 182–83, 659.

a modernisation project to enlarge the adjoining street, but the shrine of Muḥammad Bahā' al-Dīn al-Rawwās was moved to the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque before its complete destruction.²⁰³

The shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī in the south indicates a similar decay. Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī had initiated a minor renovation of it in 1927.²⁰⁴ A final restoration followed in 1964 by a committee consisting of several Rifā'ī shaykhs and the leading imam from Sāmarrā', Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb.²⁰⁵ Whereas in Ḥamīdian times the state had generously provided funding for the renovation, it lay with the shaykhs themselves to keep up the shrine in the Iraqi nation state. Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī took photos of the shrine in the late 1960s and reveals, that it was then in a rather desolate condition, even though the last renovation dates back only to 1964. Located in a remote desert area, the shrine is from all sides half buried under sand dunes. The outer walls surrounding the shrine building, its dome and the minaret look damaged and dilapidated. The wooden cage surrounding Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī's grave is rather simple and dusty as if the place was abandoned a many years ago.²⁰⁶ It does not make the impression of a place that is frequented or even cared about by many pilgrims save the local population. The remote location surely plays a role here, yet, it is still the order's most important sanctuary.

The Sufi history of the Rāwīs from the late Ottoman period to the 1960s exhibits clear markers of decline from an Ottoman heyday with building campaigns and the successful expansion of the order until the end of their spiritual lineage with Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's death, the end of Sufi teaching in the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque, the loss of the Rawwās mosque, and eventually the decay of the Rifā'ī shrine in the south. With the successful secular careers of Ibrāhīm's sons, the *ṭarīqa*-Sufism shifted to a more scholarly preservation of their Sufi heritage.

²⁰³ After its destruction in 1956, the mosque was rebuilt in the same quarter in 1965 (Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā' rīkh masājīd*, 271 f.).

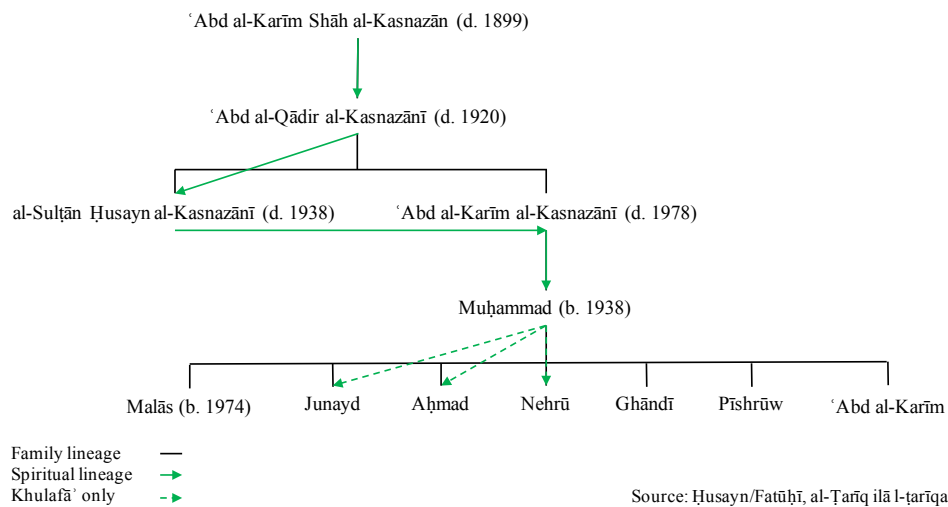
²⁰⁴ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā' rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 21.

²⁰⁵ The initiators of this restoration project all came from the Mullīs tribe which is famous for his Rifā'ī shaykhs and runs the majority of Rifā'īya *takāyā* in Sāmarrā'. They organised a committee with six representatives to collect donations from the Rifā'ī *sāda*, followers of the order and others all over Iraq. It included Maḥmūd Kāzīm al-Rifā'ī, Shākir Maḥmūd al-Ghulām al-Rifā'ī, 'Abd al-Ghafūr Maḥmūd al-Ghulām al-Rifā'ī, Shāmil al-shaykh 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Rifā'ī, the imam Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb, and finally 'Abd Allāh al-shaykh Amīn al-Sāmarrā'ī (Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 79).

²⁰⁶ Sāmarrā'ī, 6, 10, 13, 17, 24, 76.

The Āl al-Kasnazānī of the Qādirīya

One of the most successful branches of the Qādirīya order in Iraq is run by the Kurdish Āl al-Kasnazānī. The full name which this clan uses for their order is “the ‘alid path of the Qādirīya Kasnazānīya” (*al-ṭarīqa al-‘alīya al-qādirīya al-ksnazānīya*) which implies that its spiritual lineage goes back via the Kasnazānī shaykhs to ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.²⁰⁷ The Āl al-Kasnazānī is part of the Kurdish Barzinja tribe in the region of Sulaymānīya and its leading shaykh in the 1960s, ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī had his spiritual centre in Qādir Karam south of Kirkūk. This order, too, met with certain setbacks due to the First World War and the later rise of communist forces in the middle of the twentieth century which forced their shaykhs temporarily into exile. In contrast to the Rāwīs and probably most other Sufī clans in Iraq, the Kasnazānīya experienced an exceptional success story from the late 1960s onward. The following graph illustrates the spiritual lineage among the most prominent members of this family:



F-2

Figure 2: Genealogy of the Āl al-Kasnazānī

The Kasnazānīya was originally founded by shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm’s forefather, shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm Shāh al-Kasnazān (1815-1899) who established the first

²⁰⁷ According to the family’s own account, the name Kasnazān goes back to the order’s founding figure ‘Abd al-Karīm Shāh al-Kasnazān in the early nineteenth century. After his spiritual initiation into the order, he went into seclusion (*khalwa*) to worship God in the mountains. As his isolation took up to two years, the people of his village already deemed him dead and no one knew anything about his whereabouts. In this context, he earned the name al-Kasnazān meaning in Kurdish “no one knows” or more spiritually interpreted by Kasnazānī Sufis “the secret that no one knows (Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 167; Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 80).

spiritual centre with *takāyā* and a religious school (*madrassa dīnīya*) in the village Karbajna (Kirpchina) in northern Iraq. Already under ‘Abd al-Karīm Shāh al-Kasnazān and furthermore under his successors, the order successfully spread in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan. His son and successor, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kasnazānī (1867-1920) earned fame for his sermons in which he incited his followers to holy war (*jihād*) against the British occupiers following the First World War. He and his son Sulṭān Ḥusayn reportedly themselves fought against the British troops and were eventually forced into exile in Iran where ‘Abd al-Qādir died in 1920. Before his participation in several battles against British forces in Iraq under occupation, Sulṭān Ḥusayn had already gathered fighting experience in the First World War in the *jihād* against Russian troops on Iranian territory. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir is also said to have supported the cause of the famous Kurdish shaykh Maḥmūd Ḥafīd al-Barzinjī who tried to establish himself against the British as king of Kurdistan between 1920 and 1922.²⁰⁸

Sulṭān Ḥusayn al-Kasnazānī (1883-1939) followed in the spiritual footsteps of his father and succeeded him as shaykh of the order. He was the first to introduce a special private worship (*awrād*) with the prayer (*du‘ā*) for all the so-called four spiritual poles (*al-aqṭāb al-arba‘a*), i.e. the great Sufī masters ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī, Aḥmad al-Badawī, and Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī.²⁰⁹ All Sufī orders have their private worship in which they pray for their central Sufī master but not all of them include these four poles which are otherwise central to the Rifā‘īya.²¹⁰ This is an early expression of the orders inclusive and ecumenical character in relation to other orders and denominations, for which it is still known in Iraq today. Sulṭān Ḥusayn also founded another religious school in Karbajna with two teachers for the tradition of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*), Arabic grammar, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and other religious sciences. This school had reportedly slightly more than twenty students who annually graduated as religious scholars (*‘ulamā’*).²¹¹

Sulṭān Ḥusayn passed the spiritual leadership on to his brother, shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm (1915-1978), who was mentioned above. Under him, the order experienced an expansion in Iraq that became only surpassed by his son and successor. Shaykh ‘Abd

²⁰⁸ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 166–75; Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 84–87. The British commissioner at that time, Cecil Edmonds described shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir in this context as a “turbulent and dangerous agitator” (Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, 356).

²⁰⁹ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 176.

²¹⁰ Ṣayyādī, *Qilādat al-jawāhir*, 5.

²¹¹ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 179.

al-Karīm was especially outstanding in his spiritual guidance (*irshād*) during his journeys. According to members of the order, their concept of *irshād* has a very strong component of religious propaganda and advertisement aiming at its spread. Every member is urged to find and introduce new members to the order. A central part of this attempt to win new members are miracle performances for which the Kasnazānīya has gained particular fame in Iraq. Intending to prove the shaykh's spiritual power, members of the order perforate parts of their bodies with skewers and swords, eat glass and razor blades, swallow fire, or let themselves be bitten by poisonous snakes and scorpions without showing signs of injury.²¹²

In this spirit, shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm travelled through Iran to the village Mīrkhāw and cities like Sanandaj and Mashhad establishing *takāyā* of the order and gathering "thousands of dervishes" as his followers. According to the order's own narrative, the shaykh was so successful, most probably among Kurdish Sunnīs, that the Iranian government tried to expel him several times in vain. In the end, he reportedly even met the Shah of Iran who acknowledged his standing and approved of his presence in the country.²¹³ After the establishment of further mosques and *takāyā* on Iranian soil, he reached Teheran where he organised major religious occasions and received further oaths of allegiance from the people. From Teheran, he returned via Mīrkhāw to Panjwīn in Iraq and settled down in the village Būbān building himself a house and a *takīya*. For several years, he established his spiritual centre there and received "millions of followers" (*malāyīn al-murīdīn*) from the region and beyond. He managed to build a wide network of deputies (*khulafā'*) with *takāyā* of the order in Iran, and Iraq, but also other countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and even Zambia. After several trips throughout Iraq, he founded several *takāyā* in the provinces of Baghdad, Nīnawā, Bābil, Najaf, Anbār, as well as in Tikrīt, Arbīl, and Sulaymānīya. He spent the last period of his life in Karbajna and finally settled in Kirkūk.²¹⁴

The anthropologist Fredrik Barth already observed during his field work in the 1950s, that shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī had a large following among the poor peasants and mentioned suspicions that his order "was being used as a vehicle of socio-economic disaffection".²¹⁵ In the wake of the revolution led by 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim

²¹² Rifā'ī, other Qādirī and even Naqshbandī Sufis also practice such performances in Iraq. Particularly the Rifā'īya became famous as well as criticised for such rituals throughout history. Nowadays, the Kasnazānīya gained much popularity and fame for it in Iraq (Ḥusayn and Fattūhī, *Al-Bārāsīkūlūjīyā*).

²¹³ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 183.

²¹⁴ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, 184.

²¹⁵ Barth, *The Principles of Social Organization*, 83; Bruinessen, 'The Qadiriyya', 8.

in 1958, shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm had to leave Iraq once more for Iran. Because of Qāsim’s temporary alliance with the Iraqi Communist Party, the latter’s Popular Resistance Forces (*al-muqāwama al-sha‘bīya*) gained strength at that time and began to threaten Kurdistan’s landlords including many Sufi shaykhs as a remnant of an old feudal system of exploitation. This context and Qāsim’s land redistribution through a new agrarian reform triggered a real exodus of Kurdish *āghās* and Sufi shaykhs from Iraq. According to Sami Shourush, shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm was more fortunate than others as he managed to return to Iraq after a few months and rebuilt his *takīya* in Kirkūk.²¹⁶ Bruinessen adds that in the 1960s and 1970s the shaykh cultivated the Iraqi government which supported him in gaining even more followers. He reportedly led a Kurdish pro-government militia in the late 1960s against the Kurdish rebels of Mullā Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī. This militia was part of a larger phenomenon of pro-government irregular forces from among the Kurdish tribes which were also called the Knights of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (*fursān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*).²¹⁷

The political turmoil of the First World War, the resulting demise of the Ottoman state with the following British occupation of Iraq, and the emergence of a socialist republic since 1958 affected the Kasnazānīs even more than the Rāwīs. The Kasnazānī shaykhs and their followers actively fought in combat against the Russians and resisted afterwards the British occupiers which meant their temporary exile in Iran. After their return to Iraq with shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm, they successfully expanded the order in several Iraqi provinces. Only the revolution of 1958 and the attacks of the rising communist Popular Resistance Forces pressured them into a renewed exile in Iran for a few months. In contrast to the Rāwīs, the Kasnazānīs successfully maintained their spiritual lineage and their *ṭarīqa*-Sufism in spite of all these political challenges.

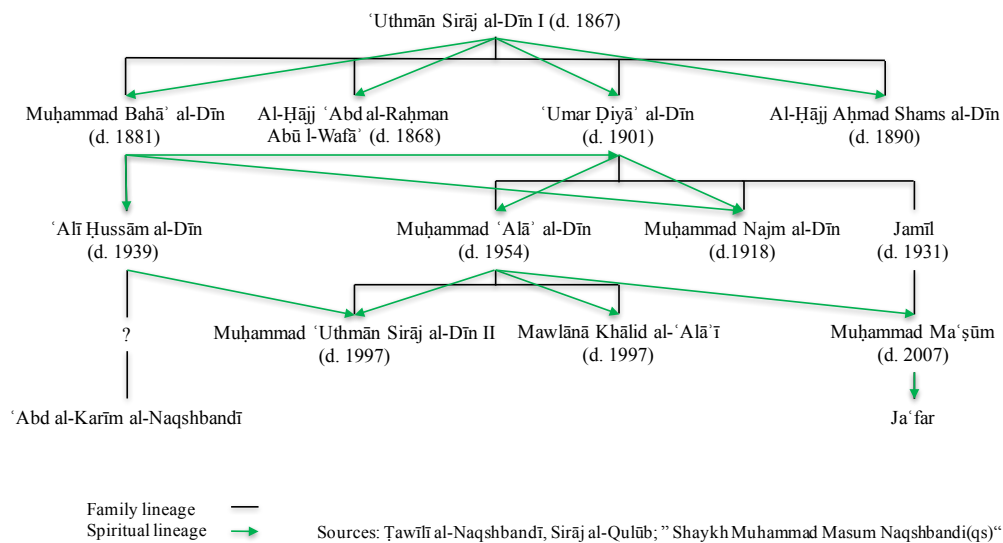
²¹⁶ Shourush, ‘The Religious Composition’, 117. More about the Popular Resistance Forces is presented in Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 212, 336; McDowall, *A Modern History*, 305. The land reforms and the exodus are analysed in Rubin, ‘Abd Al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds’, 361–64.

²¹⁷ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 327. Already established under the monarchy, the *fursān* included mainly tribal chiefs, landlords (*āghās*) and their followers as well as masses of unemployed Kurds. According to McDowall, these forces amounted in the 1960s to about 10,000 fighters. The Kurdish rebels of Bārzānī or Tālabānī named them derogatively *jash* or *juhūsh* (little donkeys or mules) (McDowall, *A Modern History*, 312, 327). This obvious split of the Kurdish national movement can be attributed to prevailing old tribal rivalries, too. The clan of the Kurdish rebel leader Mullā Muṣṭafā Bārzānī, for example, was only a small clan (formerly of Naqshbandī Sufi shaykhs) and not accepted as leaders among all the Kurdish tribes. Already under the monarchy and later under Qāsim, inner-tribal feuds prompted many tribal leaders to side with the government (Rubin, ‘Abd Al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds’, 362).

The Āl Sirāj al-Dīn of the Naqshbandīya

The highest authority of the Naqshbandīya in the eyes of many Iraqi Sufis during the twentieth century was represented by the Āl Sirāj al-Dīn from the village Biyāra near to the Iranian border. The fate of this Sufi clan resembles that of the Kasnazānīs as the attacks by communist Popular Resistance Forces in 1958 forced also the Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs into exile in Iran, though for a much longer period. However, Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn successfully established himself as a Sufi shaykh in Iranian Kurdistan and cultivated even useful relations to the Pahlawī court.

The Āl Sirāj al-Dīn, just like the Kasnazānīs, are a Kurdish clan which claims Prophetic descent. This is a widespread phenomenon in Kurdistan and is often explained with the intermingling of Arabs with the Kurdish population and their adoption of Kurdish language and culture. According to the genealogical literature about Iraq’s tribes, the Āl Sirāj al-Dīn originated from the Arab Nu‘aym tribe which claims Rifā‘ī descent from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.²¹⁸ The following graph illustrates the clan’s central family and spiritual lineages (*salāsīl*):



F-3

Figure 3: Genealogy of the Āl Sirāj al-Dīn

Ferhad Shakely provides an overview of the clan’s history from the eighteenth until the late twentieth century. The founding figure, shaykh ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn I (1781-1867) was initiated into the Sufi path by Mawlānā Khālīd al-Shahrazūrī al-Naqshbandī as a student of religious sciences in Baghdad’s ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī mosque in

²¹⁸ Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il al-‘irāqīya*, 2:668–69; Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 2004.

1811. After two years of spiritual training, he became a full deputy (*khalīfa*) of the shaykh and in 1820 established one of the most important Naqshbandīya-Khālidiya centres in his home villages of Ṭawīla and Biyāra situated in the Kurdish region of Hawrāmān. Centred in Biyāra, he and his successors cultivated a large following in Iraqī and Iranian Kurdistan until the 1950s.²¹⁹

In 1838, he was appointed as representative of shaykh Khālīd in the Khālidi *khānaqāh*²²⁰ of Sulaymānīya but continued his spiritual efforts in Ṭawīla and Biyāra eventually excelling as the most influential deputy in this region. Shakely shows how already ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn I adjusted the strict central Asian and Indian characteristics of the Naqshbandīya-Khālidiya to the reality of the Kurdish society, especially with regard to practical aspects such as the attitude towards other sects and communities like the Shī‘a or the other Sufī orders. He cultivated close relations to the Kurdish Qādirī shaykhs of the region with whom shaykh Khālīd had initially come into conflict and reminded his Naqshbandī novices in one of his letters, that theirs was a combination of five orders, i.e. the Naqshbandīya, Qādirīya, Kubrawīya, Suhrawardīya, and the Chishtīya.²²¹

Such relations and combinations of spiritual traditions were still kept under the shaykh’s successors. It should be noted that over the following century many other members of this family had been spiritual guides of the Naqshbandīya with their own *khānaqāt* and followers. Yet, Shakely identifies five notable shaykhs within ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn I’s most important lineage of spiritual successors.²²² Before his death, he had appointed his two sons shaykh Muḥammad Bahā’ al-Dīn (1837-1881) and ‘Abd al-Raḥman Abū l-Wafā’ (1837-1868)²²³ but only the first became shaykh while the latter declined such a role. The third in the initiating chain was his third son shaykh ‘Umar Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn (1839-1901), under whom the merging of the Naqshbandī-Khālidi tradition with the Qādirīya took on a more explicit form. ‘Umar Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn was sent by his father to study in the Qādirī *takīya* of shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Ṭālabānī (d. 1858) in Kirkūk where he lived with the shaykh’s family and was initiated into the

²¹⁹ For their influence in Iran, see Algar, ‘The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya in Talish’.

²²⁰ The equivalent of a *takīya* in the Kurdish regions (see Chabbi, ‘*Khānqāh*’).

²²¹ Shakely, ‘The Naqshbandī Sheikhs’, 95–96; Mudarris, *Yādī mardān. 1. Mawlānā Khālidi Naqshbandī*, 49–50. Still shaykh Khālīd and local Qādirī shaykhs such as Ma‘rūf al-Barzinjī had been rivals, yet more over social influence than doctrinal differences (Abu-Manneh, ‘The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya’, 6–7; Abu-Manneh, ‘Salafiyya’, 365).

²²² Shakely, ‘The Naqshbandī Sheikhs’, 93–94.

²²³ After the death of his father, ‘Abd al-Raḥman Abū l-Wafā’ moved to the Kīlānīya in Baghdad, where he died and was buried one year later (Ṭawīlī al-Naqshbandī, *Kitāb sirāj al-qulūb*, 40).

Qādirīya by him. Later on, he married a niece of another Qādirī shaykh, namely of Ḥasan al-Qāra Jīwār in Kirkūk. With such close Qādirī relations, shaykh ‘Umar Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn was the first to introduce the Qādirīya’s vocal *dhikr* (*dhikr jahri*) in addition to his family’s silent Naqshbandī *dhikr* (*dhikr khafi*) and still the generations following him initiated their novices equally into both orders. During his lifetime, he managed to extend his Sufi network widely through new *khānaqāt* in Khānaqīn, Kifri, Qizrābāt, Biyacra, Ṭawīla, and Sardasht.²²⁴

‘Umar Ḍiyā al-Dīn was succeeded by his two sons, Najm al-Dīn (1863-1918) and Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn (1863-1954). Najm al-Dīn took the *ṭarīqa* first from his uncle Muḥammad Bahā’ al-Dīn and afterwards from his father whom he succeeded as spiritual head of the *khānqāh* in Biyāra. He was known for his scholarly interest and his renunciation and rejection of Ottoman state support for his *khānqāh*.²²⁵ His brother Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn had received his spiritual education and training as well from Muḥammad Bahā’ al-Dīn and his father and became a well-known physician. In contrast to his brother, he left their home village for a mission as preacher and spiritual guide to Iranian Sanandaj and Jawānrūd only to return later on to Biyāra for the founding of a *khānqāh* there. Afterwards, he again relocated to the Iranian village Durūd on the other side of the border in order to establish his own spiritual centre with a further *khānqāh* as well as a religious school for the “dissemination of knowledge and wisdom”. He returned to Biyāra only following the death of his Najm al-Dīn in 1918 and ascended, therewith, as the leading spiritual guide (*murshīd*) of the order.

Upon his return, he built another religious school for about sixty students from the family’s own funds and summoned the later famous Sufi scholar Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris²²⁶ as its new teacher (*mudarris*). Muḥammad Bahā’ al-Dīn spread the deputy (*khalīfa*) networks of the order even beyond Kurdistan via Sulaymāniya, Kirkūk and Baghdad to Dayr al-Zūr and Aleppo, in Syria.²²⁷ He was the first to use the title “servant of the path of the Naqshbandīya and the Qādirīya” (*khādim al-ṭarīqa al-naqshbandīya wa-l-qādirīya*)²²⁸ and continued the family’s traditionally close relations with the Qādirī shaykhs of the Barzinjī and the Ṭālabānī tribes.²²⁹ He and his cousin, shaykh Ḥusām al-Dīn from Ṭawīla were, according to Cecil Edmonds, a British

²²⁴ Shakely, ‘The Naqshbandī Sheikhs’, 97.

²²⁵ Ṭawīlī al-Naqshbandī, *Kitāb sirāj al-qulūb*, 46–47.

²²⁶ see for this shaykh Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 442–45.

²²⁷ Ṭawīlī al-Naqshbandī, *Kitāb sirāj al-qulūb*, 48–50.

²²⁸ Shakely, ‘The Naqshbandī Sheikhs’, 92–94.

²²⁹ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 335 f.; Shakely, ‘The Naqshbandī Sheikhs’, 95–97.

commissioner in Iraq, not as politically influential as the dominating Jāf tribe in the Hawrāmān region but “they did nevertheless play a not entirely minor role in local politics”²³⁰ under the monarchy. Edmonds mentions his great respect for the moral authority of shaykh Ḥusām al-Dīn, but describes his cousin, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn as

a restless and grasping old man who, while careful to maintain an appearance of co-operation, lost no opportunity of using his pull with the administration in attempts to establish formal title to lands which had been in the possession of unsophisticated villagers for generations; he received a small salary and was quite shameless in his persistent demands to get a rise.²³¹

At that time, their spiritual networks were also strong in the eastern side and reached into Iranian Kurdistan as well as to Tālīsh in northwest Iran.²³² In Iraq, McDowall reports that the shaykhs of Biyāra were among the few who could retain their privileged status under the monarchy due to the combination of their economic power and their “odor of sanctity”. Some of their cousins in Ṭawīla, by contrast, had already been reduced to penury by 1949 after the newly ascendant tribal elites of the Jāf had taken control of the village.²³³ Another incident illustrates the shaykhs’ flexibility to change sides in order to guarantee their survival, yet to no avail in this case. In 1941, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn signed a legal opinion (*fatwā*, pl. *fatāwā*, from now on simply *fatwa*) in which he approved of the nationalist rebellion by Rashīd ‘Ālī al-Gailānī who toppled the monarchy for a few months.²³⁴

With the end of the monarchy and the growth of communist forces in Iraq, the tide of the Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs in Biyāra was turning. The last shaykh of their lineage was Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn’s son, Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī II (1896-1997) – from here on referred to as shaykh ‘Uthmān II for the sake of brevity. When the communist Popular Resistance Forces started to threaten Kurdish landlords and shaykhs after ‘Abd al-Karīm Qāsim’s coup against the monarchy, shaykh ‘Uthmān II left Iraq for Iranian Kurdistan in 1958. The shaykh relocated his residence to his father’s former centre in Durūd and successfully re-established himself there for more than twenty years. Developing excellent relations to the Pahlawī regime, he even managed to secure positions for his sons at the royal court and in other state

²³⁰ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, 156.

²³¹ Edmonds, 156; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 335.

²³² Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, 168.

²³³ McDowall, *A Modern History*, 295.

²³⁴ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, 156.

institutions. Under new state patronage, he toured around in Iran, gathered more followers, and officially supported the Shah with public prayers until 1979.²³⁵

The Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs have always been successful as Sufis and landlords in both Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan and cultivated good relations to the Iraqi monarchy and the British colonial administration. They successfully adapted themselves in this way to the changing political circumstances until the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of a socialist republic. With the growing attacks against landlords and Sufis, they, too, had to leave Iraq for Iranian Kurdistan. Iraq lost thereby the presence of one of the most important Naqshbandī shaykhs but ‘Uthmān II himself could move to the spiritual centre of his father and established himself there once more through the cultivation of good relations with the Pahlawī monarchy.

To sum up, all three cases of Sufi clans show how the growth of the Iraqi nation state and the rise of new secular and socialist ideologies challenged their status in the twentieth century. This development indeed brought a decline of their Sufism, yet it did not mean its end but rather its adaptation and transformation. The loss of Ottoman state support, the demolition and decay of Sufi centres, and the lack of a spiritual successor turned the Sufism of the Rāwīs into the mere honouring of the spiritual family heritage and a scholarly approach to Sufism. Ibrāhīm’s sons adapted themselves in turn to the new political circumstances and made successful secular careers in the state. The Kasnazānīs had fought for the Ottomans against the Russians during the First World War, resisted the British after the occupation, and faced attacks by the rising communists in 1958. These challenges forced them twice into exile, but they could always return to Iraq at a later stage and, contrary to the Rāwīs, they kept their *ṭarīqa*-Sufism successfully alive. After all, their Sufi order and their tribal kinship constituted an important basis of survival as they led their followers successfully into combat. The Sirāj al-Dīn shaykh had a similar fate but could establish himself as a Sufi shaykh in Iran for more than twenty years. The latter two cases illustrate, furthermore, that these Kurdish shaykhs tactically changed their alliances with the successive governments in Iraq and even Iran.

²³⁵ Shakely, ‘The Naqshbandī Sheikhs’, 94–95; Algar, ‘The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya in Talish’, 189.

2.4. Sufis, *Ansāb*, and Demise of the Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants

One important institution which was traditionally dominated by Sufis in Iraqi society and which vanished completely in the early 1960s was the Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants (*niqābat al-sāda al-ashrāf*). The demise of this institution was caused by the expansion of a secular and socialist-inspired central state, first under the British supported monarchy from 1921 until 1958 and afterwards in a socialist republic under ‘Abd al-Karīm Qāsim. It meant for many Sufis the loss of a formerly important office as well as a considerable decline of its representatives’ social and religious prestige. Despite the demise of this institution, however, Prophetic descendancy continued to play a considerable role in Iraqi society, among Sufis and non-Sufis alike, and experienced even a certain revival during the 1990s as this study will show.

Descendance from the Prophet Muḥammad, particularly from the Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his offspring whose burial places are in Iraq, became over the centuries a prominent marker of Iraq’s tribal society. By the beginning of the twentieth century, whole tribes claimed such a sharīfian descent among Sunnīs and Shī‘īs all over Iraq, i.e. hundreds of thousands of Iraqis claim to be so-called *sāda* (sing. *sayyid*) and *ashrāf* (sing. *sharīf*).²³⁶ This massive growth of alleged Prophetic descendants is not exclusive to Iraq but can be observed in the entire Middle East, partially as a result of Ottoman imperial policies since the sixteenth century²³⁷ and partially due to the widespread Sufi culture in this region. In Iraq, the prestigious role of the *sāda* has always been emphasised for the Shī‘ī community and mainly because of the special status of the *ahl al-bayt* among Shī‘īs or the *sādas*’ share in the fifth (*khums*) of a Shī‘ī’s annual income which is traditionally paid to the jurists (*fuqahā*) for distribution.²³⁸ The *sāda* enjoy indeed a different status among Shī‘īs, but Prophetic descendants were no less prominent among Iraq’s Sunnīs as is exemplified by the sheer number of Sunnī *sāda*, particularly among the Sufis.

²³⁶ For an overview, see Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt*; Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986. Both titles, *sayyid* and *sharīf*, already had in pre-Islamic times the connotation of a purity of origin and noble virtues through descendancy from the prime fathers of the old Arab tribes, ‘Adnān and Qaḥṭān. This connotation retained its meaning particularly on the Arabian Peninsula. *Sayyid* generally designates descendants of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī and *sharīf* descendants of al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī, but in Iraq *sayyid* applies to both (Arendonk, ‘Sharīf’).

²³⁷ The Ottoman administration granted certain legal privileges to Prophetic descendants and oftentimes granted this noble title to tribes in the border regions with its Shī‘ī enemy in Safavid Iran in order to bind those tribes to the Ottoman cause. An overview of these policies in Anatolia and the Balkans is given by Canbakal, ‘The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet’. The development in Iraq has not yet been duly investigated.

²³⁸ Gleave and Zysow, ‘Khums’; see also Nakash, *The Shi’is of Iraq*, chaps 1, 2; Nakash, ‘The Conversion of Iraq’s Tribes’; Abdul-Jabar, ‘Clerics, Tribes, Ideologues’, 171.

Most Sufi shaykhs in Iraq do not only claim a spiritual lineage (*silsila*) which reaches back to the Prophet, but also a family genealogy (*nasab*) that leads to him. The fact that so many orders of the Rifāʿīya, Qādirīya, and Naqshbandīya were over centuries headed by the same tribal clans certainly contributed to the growing salience of the *nasab* next to the *silsila* as a basis of spiritual authority and blessing.²³⁹ This influenced the formation of a special caste of Prophetic descendants within the genealogical landscape of Iraq's tribes. Many Sufis, particularly among the Rifāʿīya and the Qādirīya, claimed not only descent from the Prophet and the Twelve Imams but also from the founding figures of their orders, namely Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. Thus, the shaykh clans of these two orders form one group who claims a genealogical relation to Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī, the so-called *al-sāda al-rifāʿīya*, and one group who claims a common origin in ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, the so-called *al-sāda al-kīlānīya*.²⁴⁰ Today, not all members of these genealogical groups still have a connection to Sufism nor did all earlier claimants of Rifāʿī and Kīlānī descent. However, the fact that we now differentiate these groups in Iraq's genealogical landscape could have hardly been developed without the influential role of the Rifāʿīya and the Qādirīya in the first place.

The most prominent shaykh clans particularly of the Rifāʿīya all belong to *al-sāda al-rifāʿīya*. These are the Āl Rajab al-Rāwī, the Ḥadīdīyīn, and Ṣumaydaʿ in Anbār province, the Āl Mullīs in Sāmarrāʾ, the Āl Khalaf al-Rifāʿī, Āl Nāmis, and Āl Nāṣir in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the Āl al-Ṭabaqjalī and Āl Qumar or Gumar in Baghdad, the Āl Rudaynī and Āl Naqīb in Baṣra and Mandalī, the Āl Mashāyikh in Kirkūk, as well as the Nuʿaym tribe all across Iraq.²⁴¹ Among the shaykhs of the Qādirīya, the situation is similar with Qādirī descendants such as the Āl al-Gailānī and Āl al-Kalīdār in Baghdad, the al-Bū Jumʿa in Sāmarrāʾ, or the Ḥayyālīyīn in Mosul.²⁴² In the course of history, some shaykhs changed the order but retained their *nasab* such as the Sādate Nehrī, Kīlānī descendants in Kurdistan, who renounced the Qādirīya order in favour of the Naqshbandīya-Khālīdīya during the nineteenth century.²⁴³ Other Naqshbandīs such as the famous Muḥammad ʿUthmān Sirāj al-Dīn from Biyāra claim Rifāʿī descent

²³⁹ Most Sufi shaykhs in this study do not only emphasise their *silsila* but also their *nasab* (see for instance Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*; Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 231).

²⁴⁰ Genealogical encyclopaedias which clearly distinguish between both groups of *sāda* are Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Qabāʾil wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986; Muʿāḍidī, *Aʿālī al-rāfiḍayn*, 1990.

²⁴¹ Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Qabāʾil wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 28–45, 57–58.

²⁴² Sāmarrāʾī, 13–14, 46, 56.

²⁴³ Bruinessen, 'The Sadate Nehri'.

from the Nu‘aym.²⁴⁴ We find eventually even multiple descendancies among Iraq’s Sufis as in the case of the Rāwīs who claim Rifā‘ī descent via the usually prioritised patrilineal *nasab* as well as Kīlānī descent via the additional matrilineal *nasab*.²⁴⁵ Thus, genealogy, particularly Prophetic and Sufi genealogy, has played a central role in Iraq’s Sunnī Sufi communities and influenced the formation of today’s tribal genealogical landscape tremendously.

The institution which facilitated this development was the aforementioned Syndicate of Prophetic Descendants (*niqābat al-sāda al-ashrāf*) and traditionally dominated by Sufis. This syndicate emerged most probably in the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate of the ninth century and evolved under Ottoman rule into a vast administrative system to control and represent Prophetic descendants all over the Ottoman Empire.²⁴⁶ Building upon the noble status of *al-sāda al-ashrāf* and their widespread veneration among the Sunnī and Shī‘ī population, the Ottoman state used the *niqāba* extensively as a political means for the distribution of noble titles, certain privileges, and hence power. The *niqāba* was a state-controlled administrative system of formally appointed marshals or heads of the Prophetic descendants, so called *nuqabā’ al-ashrāf*. Their task was the official, legal administration and representation of *al-sāda al-ashrāf*, the verification and documentation of their pedigrees, as well as the approval of marriages to ‘secure’ the nobility of their blood lineage. Every administrative unit or greater city in the empire had its own *naqīb*, sometimes one for each category of different lineages.²⁴⁷ During the Ottoman era, a *naqīb* enjoyed much religious prestige and political influence, as he granted sharīfian social status as well as legal advantages such as exemption from taxation and military service. Theoretically, the sultan appointed the *naqīb* for life upon the recommendation of the Prophetic descendants in a respective administrative unit and the post remained oftentimes hereditary within one family. In practice, however, appointments became oftentimes dependent on a candidate’s servility to the sultan.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Ṭawīlī al-Naqshbandī, *Kitāb sirāj al-qulūb*, 30.

²⁴⁵ Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*, 3–4; Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 14.

²⁴⁶ Havemann, ‘Naqīb al-ashrāf’; Winter, ‘The Ashrāf and Niqābat Al-Ashrāf in Egypt in Ottoman and Modern Times’.

²⁴⁷ Genealogists (*nasāba*) differentiate between lineages that go back to al-Ḥasan as ḥasanī, to al-Ḥusayn as ḥusaynī, to Mūsā al-Kāẓim as mūsawī, to Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī as rifā‘ī etc.

²⁴⁸ Havemann, ‘Naqīb al-ashrāf’; Arendonk, ‘Sharīf’; Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 153–210; Nakash, ‘The Conversion of Iraq’s Tribes’, 452–53; Abu-Manneh, ‘The Khālidiyya and the Salafiyya’, 33–36.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, we still find predominantly Sufis in the most important offices as *naqīb al-ashrāf* in Ottoman Iraq. The most influential Sufi *nuqabā'* and the highest authority in this matter were the Gailānīs in Baghdad with Salmān al-Gailānī al-Naqīb who held the office from 1834 till 1897 and was succeeded by his brother 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Naqīb (d. 1926). Both combined the custodianship of the Kīlānīya, the leadership of the Qādirīya, and the *niqāba*.²⁴⁹ The leading *naqīb* in the Kurdish Sulaymānīya, too, was a Qādirī, namely shaykh Sa'īd al-Barzinjī.²⁵⁰ From the 1880s onwards, Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II commenced an increasing patronage of the Rifā'īya order in the Arab regions and appointed also several Rifā'īs as *nuqabā'* in Iraq. This was part of a tactic to appoint Sunnīs as *nuqabā'* in regions with a Shī'ī majority population in order to better integrate the latter into the Ottoman Empire. The preference of the Rifā'īya might not least have been due to the influence of the highest Rifā'ī shaykh and leading *naqīb al-ashrāf* in Istanbul at that time, namely Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī.²⁵¹ Many Sufis from among *al-sāda al-rifā'īya* gained in this period an imperial verification²⁵² of their descent and advanced to positions as *nuqabā'*. Aḥmad Ḥamdī b. 'Alī Āl Nāṣir al-Rifā'ī became *naqīb* in Sāmarrā' and Tikrīt, Jamīl al-Ṭabaqjalī in Ḥilla, Aḥmad b. Hāshim al-Rifā'ī in 'Amāra, Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī in Kāzimīya, and another Rifā'ī follower, 'Abd Allāh Sālīm al-Ḥaydarī in Karbalā'.²⁵³ The *niqāba* in Baṣra, finally, had already before this wave of appointments been in the hands of the Āl al-Naqīb al-Rifā'ī under Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Naqīb and his sons Rajab and Ṭālib Bāshā.²⁵⁴

With the end of the Ottoman state patronage after the First World War and the emergence of the Iraqi nation state, the institution of the *niqābat al-ashrāf* began gradually to vanish. The Marxist historian Hanna Batatu observed a general decline of prestige and influence among Iraq's *al-sāda al-ashrāf* during the first half of the twentieth century. In his materialist interpretation, he attributed this decline in the first place to the loss of their former social status due to the modernisation of state and society and eventually to the replacement of most *sāda* in politics through a newly

²⁴⁹ Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 2:128–59; A'zamī, *Tārīkh jāmi' al-shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, 98; Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 19–20.

²⁵⁰ Nikitin, *Les Kurdes*, 215.

²⁵¹ Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī*.

²⁵² The Āl Gumar, for instance, gained their sharīfian status from Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī and were exempted from the military service (Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 2:448).

²⁵³ Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'īya and Shiism', 144–45.

²⁵⁴ Anṣārī, *al-Nuṣra*, 74–75; Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 20–22; Tauber, 'Sayyid Talib and the Young Turks'; Tauber, 'Sayyid Talib'.

emerging elite of educated military officers from the middle class.²⁵⁵ In the course of this development, more and more offices of *nuqabā' al-ashrāf* throughout Iraq remained vacant after the death of a *naqīb*. When the last *naqīb* of Baghdad, Ibrāhīm Saif al-Dīn b. Muṣṭafā b. Salmān al-Gailānī passed away, the president of the republic, 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim refused to appoint a new one and the office lapsed altogether in 1962.²⁵⁶ For the new, socialist-inspired regime, Prophetic descendancy and the *niqāba* were mere remnants and expressions of an old feudalism that had no place anymore in a modern and egalitarian Iraqi society.²⁵⁷ To the Gailānīs, the demise of this office carried even more weight as a marker of decline since the spiritual head of their Qādirīya order, Ṭāhir b. Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Naqīb had additionally gone abroad in 1954, a few years before the fall of the monarchy. He moved the spiritual centre to Quetta in Pakistan where he established a *takīya* of the Qādirīya and became a renowned renewer (*mujaddid*) of the order.²⁵⁸

This demise meant the loss of a very influential and powerful office which the Gailānīs and other Sufi clans had held for over a century or even longer. The loss of this office certainly reflected a general decline of their social prestige among the population with the newly emerging socialist ideas or at least a growing scepticism towards their previous status due to the spread and improvement of modern education in Iraq. However, the interest in genealogies and particularly in Prophetic descent never ceased completely. On the contrary, many Sufi clans of former *nuqabā'* continued to preserve the pedigrees of *al-sāda al-ashrāf* without a formal office as genealogists (*nassāba*).²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 195–210.

²⁵⁶ A'zamī, *Tārīkh jāmi' al-shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, 98; Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 153; Luizard, 'Les confréries soufies', 307.

²⁵⁷ Compare Hashimi and Edwards, 'Land Reform', 76.

²⁵⁸ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā' rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 309. He and his father Maḥmūd were the last members of the Gailānīs who are introduced as shaykhs of the order. All later *nuqabā'*, Aḥmad 'Āṣim b. 'Abd al-Raḥman and Ibrāhīm Saif al-Dīn b. Muṣṭafā, and the custodians of the Kīlānīya were not Sufi shaykhs anymore ('Abd Allāh, *Dalīl al-ḥaḍra al-qādirīya*, 88–96).

²⁵⁹ Examples of such genealogists are Maḥmūd Fāḍil 'Awīd al-Sāmarrā'ī from the Āl Mullīs (Rifā'ī, *al-Majālīs*, 156–78). Nizār 'Abd al-Ghufār al-Nāṣirī (Mu'āḍidī, *A'ālī al-rāfīdayn*, 1990, 2:210). Finally, Jamāl Ismā'īl Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī (Interview with Nadīm al-Rāwī, 11.11.2015).

2.5. Religious Sufi Scholars and the Nationalisation of the Sāmarrā' School

Aside from the Sufi orders and the shaykh clans, Sufism was also widespread among Sunnī religious scholars in Iraq during the twentieth century. These were scholars and jurists who taught a more scholarly oriented Sufism in their religious schools (*madāris dīniya*) with an emphasis on its scriptural basis and a strong orientation towards Islamic law according to the *sharī'a*. This Sufism cannot be completely separated from the orders as also many shaykhs of orders had studied law under these scholars. Some of these religious scholars themselves were Sufi shaykhs of orders whereas many others were not but nevertheless taught and practiced Sufism. One interesting case of a religious Sufi school can be found in Sāmarrā'. Its history over the twentieth century has not yet been studied at all. This Sufi school of jurisprudence is of particular interest since it was originally founded as a Sunnī counterbalance against the spread of Shī'ism in this shrine city. With the growing modernisation, secularisation, and nationalisation of education in Iraq, the school in Sāmarrā' was almost closed, gradually lost its independence and its curricula became determined by the secular state. This development marks yet another challenge for the Sufi scholars at this school and their subordination to a modern education system in Iraq. Notwithstanding, most of the Sufi scholars retained their positions at this secularised and nationalised school and combined the modern education system with their traditional learning in scholarly master-disciple networks. They even founded offshoots of the school in the neighbouring Anbār province.

In his essay (2012) on the *takāyā* and Sufi orders in Sāmarrā' and Diyālā, the *ḥadīth* scholar Yāsir Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Badrī points to the late Ottoman period as a new stage for Sufism in Iraq. At that time, the Ottoman government heavily invested in and supported the spread of various Sufi *takāyā* and their orders in the region. Next to their social services and their role in the moral education of novices (*murīdīn*) and other followers (*attibā'*), he emphasises their development into centres for the study of jurisprudence (*marākiz al-tafaqquh*). For al-Badrī, the beginnings of “modern Sufism”²⁶⁰ date back to the end of the nineteenth century when the Ottoman government sent out shaykhs and *mufīīs* who were associated with the Sufi school (*al-madrasa al-ṣūfīya*) and religious school (*al-madrasa al-ilmīya al-dīniya*) in Sāmarrā'.

²⁶⁰ The author understands modern Sufism in a scripturalist sense with his stress of an adherence to the Quran and *sunna* as well as the studying of the principles of religion and its *sharī'a* (Badrī al-Ḥusaynī, 'al-Takāyā wa-l-ṭuruq', 131–32).

This school – from now on referred to as the “Sāmarrā’ School” – had been established under Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II in the city.²⁶¹ What do we know about the Sufi influence at this school since its establishment and how became the study of jurisprudence (*tafaqquh*) there related to Sufism in an environment with a considerable local Shī‘a community?

The Sāmarrā’ School was founded in 1896. At that time, it was an Ottoman state project to counteract the spread and influence of the Shī‘ī scholar Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī and his study circle in the city. The primary intention behind the project was the teaching of Sunnī jurisprudence against the spread of unlawful innovations (*bida’*); a category which derogatorily conceptualised the spreading Shī‘ism at that time.²⁶² Unfortunately, no curricula or teaching materials of the Sāmarrā’ School were available for this study. One of its most famous teachers, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Amīn al-Rāwī al-Rifā‘ī,²⁶³ provides only a rough description about the teaching there. According to him, it focused on Islamic and Arabic studies (*al-‘ulūm al-dīnīya wa-l-‘arabīya*) with their theoretical principles (*uṣūl*) and specific positive rulings (*furū’*).²⁶⁴ Another teacher and former graduate of this school, Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb reports that mainly Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanafī law were studied as well as standard works like *al-Mughnī* of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Qudāma.²⁶⁵

The school exhibits a permanent Sufi influence among its staff and its students during the twentieth century and it was popular for weekly *dhikr* sessions in the mosque attached to it.²⁶⁶ Aḥmad al-Rāwī lists among the first generation of students the sons of the city’s notables and tribal as well as Sufi shaykhs such as the servant (*sādin*) of the ‘Askarī shrine, shaykh ‘Abbās of the Rifā‘īya *takīya*, and shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Ābid of the Qādirīya *takīya*. Thus, the school was from the beginning the central institution for religious education among the city’s Sufi communities. From the time of its foundation until after the First World War, the school graduated 146 students.²⁶⁷

The biographies of the school’s successive teachers provide even more information about their respective Sufi inclinations. The Sāmarrā’ School’s founder and first teacher (*mudarris*) was the Sunnī jurist and Sufi shaykh Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-

²⁶¹ Badrī al-Ḥusaynī, 128, 132.

²⁶² Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 17.

²⁶³ He is a member of the Āl al-Rāwī from the branch of Maḥmūd b. Rajab al-Ṣaghīr in the graph above.

²⁶⁴ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 35.

²⁶⁵ ‘Abd al-Karīm, ‘Liqa’ ma‘a al-shaykh Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb’, pts 9:20-10:40.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Dāwūd ‘Abd al-Razzāq, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Fallūja, 08.10.2016.

²⁶⁷ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 24–27.

Naqshbandī (1860-1920). Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿīd stood in the Naqshbandī tradition of three shaykhs, namely Aḥmad al-Siyāḥ, Dāwūd al-Naqshbandī, and ʿUmar ʿUmayyār al-Dīn from Biyāra, who gave him a full permission for spiritual guidance.²⁶⁸ He had studied Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* during a stay in Mecca under an Indian shaykh with the name Mullā Tawāb²⁶⁹ and himself wrote about Sufī education, for instance in his *The Holy Odour in the Education of the Sufis (al-Nafaḥāt al-qudsīya fī tarbiyat al-ṣūfiya)*.²⁷⁰ Parallel to his Sufī inclination, there appears a Salafī influence in his scholarly biography, too, as he had studied under the Indian Salafī-inspired *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* scholar Ghulām Rasūl al-Hindī (d. 1912) in Baghdad.²⁷¹ Muḥammad Saʿīd taught in Sāmarrāʾ until 1898, relocated then to Baghdad for a teaching post at the Imam al-Aʿẓam Faculty and became shaykh of the Naqshbandī Khālidiya *takīya*.²⁷²

After his departure, the teaching post went to Dāwūd Affandī al-Nāṣirī (d. 1941) from Tikrīt, a former disciple of Muḥammad Saʿīd's brother ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nāʾib in Baghdad and the Qādiri shaykh Muḥammad Nūrī al-Brīfkānī in Mosul. Shaykh Dāwūd himself published his *The Steps of Guidance in Sufism and the Tenets of Faith (Sharḥ sullam al-hadāya fī l-taṣawwuf wa-l-ʿaqāʾid)* but stayed only very shortly in Sāmarrāʾ due to a new appointment in Baṣra in the same year.²⁷³ After him, two religious scholars competed for the vacant post and eventually achieved the establishment of two full teaching positions at the Sāmarrāʾ School. The first teacher was ʿAbbās Ḥilmī b. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Rāwī al-Qaṣāb (d. 1916), a disciple of Dāwūd al-Naqshbandī as well as Ghulām Rasūl al-Hindī, who had worked before as secretary of Baghdad's *mufīṭ* Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Zahāwī. Among his publications is a critique of the Shīʿa practices of mourning and *ʿāshūrāʾ* processions, *al-ʿAzāʾ wa-l-tashbīḥ*, as well as a book on the truth of Sufism and the Sufis.²⁷⁴ Later biographers clearly praise him as a Sufi. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Suhrawardī portrays him as a great jurist (*faqīh*) and an “ascetic Sufi shaykh” (*shaykh ṣūfī mutaqaṣshif*)²⁷⁵ while Ibrāhīm al-Durrūbī even draws an analogy between him and the great Sufi masters al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, and Imam al-Ghazzālī. Having the piety of the ascetic Imams and the pious forefathers (*salaf*), he was “a Sufi in his inclination, a Ḥanafī in his legal

²⁶⁸ Sāmarrāʾ I, 46–47.

²⁶⁹ Sāmarrāʾ I, 21–22.

²⁷⁰ Sāmarrāʾ I, 47.

²⁷¹ Durrūbī, *al-Baghdādiyyūn*, 137; Sāmarrāʾ I, *Tāʾrīkh ʿulamāʾ Baghdād*, 533–34.

²⁷² Sāmarrāʾ I, *Tāʾrīkh ʿulamāʾ Baghdād*, 211.

²⁷³ Nāṣirī, *Tahqīq tuḥfāt al-aḥbāb*, 9.

²⁷⁴ Sāmarrāʾ I, *Tāʾrīkh ʿulamāʾ Sāmarrāʾ*, 54–56.

²⁷⁵ Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 2:266.

orientation, and a Salafī in his belief who did not favour interpretation (*ta'wīl*)”.²⁷⁶ His *ṭarīqa* affiliation was not mentioned, but his father ‘Abd al-Laṭīf was a Rifā’ī Sufi.²⁷⁷

The second teacher was Qāsim al-Ghawāṣ (d. 1899), a disciple of the Qādirī-Naqshbandī shaykh ‘Īsā al-Bandanījī with an expertise in the Quran, *ḥadīth* and the sayings of the pious forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*).²⁷⁸ He died soon after taking up his post and was succeeded in 1900 by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Badrī (d. 1954). Al-Badrī was the first graduate of the Sāmarrā’ School who took up to a position as a teacher there. According to Aḥmad al-Rāwī, he emerged as one of the most outstanding teachers in Iraq during his time.²⁷⁹

Following the death of ‘Abbās Ḥilmī al-Qaṣāb in 1910, Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Jubbūrī (1854-1932) succeeded the former as first teacher. Aḥmad al-Rāwī writes that ‘Abbās Ḥilmī al-Qaṣāb’s son ‘Abd Allāh could have succeeded his father but he was still too young and worked already in the Ministry of the Interior. Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Jubbūrī received a preliminary appointment as ‘Abd Allāh’s deputy and taught in Sāmarrā’ until 1926. He, too, had studied *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* under Dāwūd al-Naqshbandī, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nā’ib, the *muftī* of Baghdad Muḥammad Fayḍī al-Zahāwī as well as under the Salafī Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī. Among his books are the Salafī-inspired *The Right Guidance of the Noble Wise Man to what the Forefathers Took as a Criterion of Dependence without an Interpretation* (*Irshād al-‘arīf al-nabīl ilā mā jarā ‘alayhī al-salaf min al-tawaqquf dūna al-ta’wīl*) but also his *Refutation of the Wahhābīya* (*Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābīya*).²⁸⁰

In 1926, the minister of *awqāf* closed the Sāmarrā’ School down for six months in reaction to a demand by the students to appoint a new director. The number of students had already declined to twenty-five by then. It was ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Badrī who could convince the authorities to reopen the school but only he returned to his former post as second teacher and with only fifteen students left.²⁸¹ The first teaching post remained vacant for a period of time and was eventually filled by Aḥmad al-Rāwī. Parallel to these events, the government had commenced a campaign to replace

²⁷⁶ “*Ṣūfī fī mashrabīhi ḥanaḥī fī madhhabīhi salafī fī mu’taqadihi lā yamīl ilā l-tā’wīl*” (Durrūbī, *al-Baghdādiyyūn*, 52–53).

²⁷⁷ Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*, 158.

²⁷⁸ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 57–58; Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 1:112–13.

²⁷⁹ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 59–62; Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 474–75.

²⁸⁰ Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 2:261–62; Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 63; Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 215–16.

²⁸¹ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 31.

religious judges all over Iraq by secular staff from the state's law faculties. Aḥmad al-Rāwī was one among those replaced judges in southern Kūt.²⁸² Having complained against his dismissal, Aḥmad received the appointment as first teacher in Sāmarrā' as compensation, though at half of his former salary. Against his initial opposition and reservations, the religious judge of Baghdad Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Ḥadīthī, Baghdad's *mufī* Yūsuf Affandī 'Aṭṭā and his uncle Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī had convinced him to accept the position in 1928.²⁸³

The school experienced a further setback in 1929 with a governmental order to merge all religious schools previously under the Ministry of *Awqāf* with regular state schools under the Ministry of Education (*wizārat al-ma'ārif*). As a consequence, the school was merged with the local elementary school (*madrassa ibtidā'iya*) where Aḥmad al-Rāwī initially received a new teaching post while 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Badrī remained at the former institution. It took Aḥmad al-Rāwī until 1930 to convince the authorities of the Sāmarrā' School's restoration to its former independent status with the help of Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī and local notables from Sāmarrā'. Since then, Aḥmad and 'Abd al-Wahhāb kept on teaching there for the rest of their lives, the former until 1966 and the latter until 1954. During Aḥmad's tenure, the school was renovated and offered religious education in jurisprudence, preaching (*wa'z*), guidance (*irshād*), and the deliverance of formal legal opinions (*iftā'*). They performed the five daily prayers, every Friday and Monday night collective *dhikr* sessions of *al-tawḥīd al-sharīf*,²⁸⁴ and sermons were given daily in the afternoon.²⁸⁵

After the revolution in 1958, Aḥmad al-Rāwī did not shy away from defending his religious principles against the new secular military leadership. When the newly established republic was about to formulate a new constitution, he reportedly addressed a letter to the leadership of 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim in which he reminded the secular nationalist army officers to stick to Islamic principles in their future plans for Iraq.²⁸⁶ He is also said to have met Qāsim in person for a discussion, but the results of this meeting are unknown.

²⁸² His Sufi background has already been mentioned in Section 2.1.

²⁸³ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, 31–36.

²⁸⁴ At these occasions, the formula *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no God but Allāh) is collectively recited.

²⁸⁵ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, 33–35.

²⁸⁶ Mukhlis al-Rāwī's son Mawlūd provides a copy of the original letter on his website in memory of shaykh Aḥmad al-Rāwī (Rāwī, 'Risāla min al-shaykh').

Most available biographic information describes Aḥmad al-Rāwī foremost as a scholar of jurisprudence and does not mention a Sufi inclination. A Sufi shaykh like Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī, he was certainly not. Yet, he did become a representative of a more scholarly *sharīʿa*-minded Sufism. The funeral speech in his honour by his son Kamāl in the magazine *Ṣawt al-Islām* (Voice of Islam) bears evidence of this.

You in the *takīya* of knowledge and action: you preached to the people, taught the students of knowledge and religion, you delivered the sermon to Muslims with your well-known clarity, like a flood in the rulings (*ḥikam*) and *aḥādīth* with the abundance of your knowledge about the legal opinions. A teacher (*mudarris*) and imam: fatwa secretary and head of the circle (*ḥalaqa*) [where] you remembered (*tadhkur*) God in every moment, by day and by night. You gave all that bountifully to your novices (*murīdika*), to those present in your study circle (*majlis*), to the students of your Rifāʿī path (*ṭarīqatak al-rifāʿīya*), to the students in your glorious school, to the poor and beggars.²⁸⁷

In a recent Iraqi study about one of his disciples and great-grandson of shaykh Ṭaha, Mukhlis al-Rāwī, Aḥmad and the latter are presented as wayfarers on a Sufi path that is strongly oriented toward the tradition of the Prophet Muḥammad (*al-ṭarīqa al-muḥammadiyya*)²⁸⁸ and eventually coincides with their Rifāʿīya tradition. The author mentions that Mukhlis studied under Aḥmad al-Rāwī at the Sāmarrāʾ School subjects like Quran recitation (*tajwīd*), *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Quran interpretation (*tafsīr*), dogma (*ʿaqīda*), grammar and also Sufism (*taṣawwuf*). As examples which constituted the Sufi method (*manhaj*) of Aḥmad al-Rāwī, the author names two books which the former taught to Mukhlis. Both were written by the Moroccan Darqāwīya shaykh Aḥmad Ibn ʿAjība in the eighteenth century, one about a Sufi approach to grammar (*Ishāra fī ʿilm al-naḥū*) and the other his commentary (*Īqāz al-himam sharḥ al-ḥikam*) on the *Ḥikam* (wisdoms) of the thirteenth-century Egyptian Shādhilī Sufi Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī.²⁸⁹ In addition to these written sources, the Rāwīs whom I interviewed for this study assured as well that he was known for his scholarly Sufi approach and his Sufi morals which were inspired by the family's long-standing Rifāʿīya tradition.²⁹⁰

From the 1960s onwards, the successive teachers at the Sāmarrāʾ School had been graduates of the school itself. In 1952, Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb (1917-1999) replaced ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Badrī as second teacher. Already like his father, Khaṭīb had studied in the school under Aḥmad al-Rāwī and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Badrī and had

²⁸⁷ The speech was printed in *Ṣawt al-Islām* number one from the 24.08.1966, 12-13.

²⁸⁸ He defines his understanding of the Muḥammadan path in Sāmarrāʾī, *Irshād al-Rāwī*, 28-37.

²⁸⁹ Sāmarrāʾī, 11-12.

²⁹⁰ Interview with Nadīm al-Rāwī, 11.11.2015.

become a follower of the Qādirīya order.²⁹¹ He also inherited his father's former post as imam and preacher (*khaṭīb*) in the grand mosque of Sāmarrā' in 1964.²⁹² Another former graduate took up Aḥmad al-Rāwī's teaching post for a short term in 1963, namely Ṭaha 'Alwān al-Sāmarrā'ī. He had left Sāmarrā' in 1949 to teach at the religious school in Hīt until his return. Only one year later, the government turned all religious schools in Iraq, including the Sāmarrā' School, into Islamic Colleges (*ma'āhid islāmīya*) and made Ṭaha 'Alwān al-Sāmarrā'ī its director (*mudīr*). While there are no clear hints of a Sufī inclination, Ṭaha is said to have followed a moderate course on the "path of the pious forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*)."²⁹³ He was very shortly succeeded by Mājid Aḥmad 'Abd Rabbihi al-Sāmarrā'ī²⁹⁴ before Mukhlis Ḥamād al-Rāwī (1925-2005) took over the first teaching position in 1963. He taught there officially until 1971 but continued his work until 1975 and left Sāmarrā' afterwards for a new position as imam in Baghdad.²⁹⁵

From the mid-forties on, the scholarly Sufi networks of the Sāmarrā' School spread further into today's Anbār province with two offshoots of the school which were founded by Sāmarrā' graduates in Fallūja and Ramādī. One of those graduates, shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz Sālim al-Sāmarrā'ī (1917-1973) relocated in 1946 to Fallūja continuing the school's teaching and Sufi tradition in the city's grand mosque (the former Kāẓim Bāshā mosque).²⁹⁶ This mosque stood in the Sufi tradition of its only imam and preacher (*khaṭīb*), the Syrian-born Naqshbandī and Qādirī shaykh Ḥāmid al-Mullā Ḥuwaysh (1898-1963). Yūnus al-Sāmarrā'ī describes him as a major authority in jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as well as one of the most outstanding Sufi shaykhs in Iraq with a strong influence in Fallūja, the surrounding villages and among the tribes of Anbār province for over sixteen years. In 1946, he relocated to Baghdad to take up a post as teacher in the Nu'mānī mosque.²⁹⁷

'Abd al-'Azīz Sālim al-Sāmarrā'ī emerged as one of the most outstanding teachers in Fallūja under whom most religious scholars in Anbār province graduated. His teaching efforts reportedly led in 1963 to the foundation of the Āṣifiya school in the

²⁹¹ See the interview with him in the final section of this chapter as well as his efforts to refurbish the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī in 1964 (Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 79).

²⁹² Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 108–9.

²⁹³ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, 87–88; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 310.

²⁹⁴ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, 95–96.

²⁹⁵ Sāmarrā'ī, 85–86; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 657–58.

²⁹⁶ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 389–92.

²⁹⁷ Sāmarrā'ī, 140–41.

aforementioned mosque.²⁹⁸ Just like the Sāmarrā' School, the Āṣifiya was not related to one specific Sufi order or shaykh. Staff and students followed different spiritual paths related to Rifā'iya, Qādirīya, Naqshbandīya and other orders.²⁹⁹ Since 1962, 'Abd al-'Azīz Sālīm himself was a member of the scholarly Sufi network of the Allepian Naqshbandī-Shādhilī shaykh Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Nabhān (1900-1974).³⁰⁰ He was eventually succeeded as teacher in Fallūja by his disciple, the Naqshbandī shaykh Khalīl Muḥammad al-Fayāḍ al-Kubaysī, a deputy of shaykh Muṣṭafā b. Abū Bakr al-Naqshbandī from Arbīl.³⁰¹ Khalīl, too, was a member of the Nabhānī network.³⁰²

The second religious school in Ramādī is related to disciples of 'Abd al-'Azīz Sālīm, namely the scholarly Sa'dī family with 'Abd al-Malik 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Sa'dī as their most recognisable member. Originally hailing from the al-Bū 'Abbās tribe in Sāmarrā', 'Abd al-Malik was born 1937 in Hīt where he studied under Ṭaha 'Alwān al-Sāmarrā'ī in 1948. In 1954, he moved to the Āṣifiya school in Fallūja to study under 'Abd al-'Azīz Sālīm until 1962. He continued his education in Baghdad's Imam al-A'zam Faculty until 1971, graduated with a master's degree from the department of religion at Baghdad University in 1974, and relocated to the Umm al-Qurā University in Mecca for his doctoral thesis until 1984.³⁰³ 'Abd al-Malik worked already from 1958 on as teacher in the Āṣifiya school. In 1965, he relocated to the city of Ramādī to open his own religious law school in the the local grand mosque together with his brothers 'Abd al-'Alīm, 'Abd al-Ḥakīm, 'Abd al-Razzāq,³⁰⁴ 'Abd al-Qādir, and 'Abd Allāh, all of whom had also studied under 'Abd al-'Azīz Sālīm al-Sāmarrā'ī. 'Abd al-Malik administered this school and taught in it until 1975 when the state closed most of these facilities and attached them to the state-controlled elementary school level.³⁰⁵ All Sa'dī brothers were members of the Nabhānī network.³⁰⁶

²⁹⁸ Sāmarrā'ī, 389–92.

²⁹⁹ Interview with Dāwūd 'Abd al-Razzāq, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Fallūja, 08.10.2016.

³⁰⁰ 'al-Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Sālīm'; 'Tawārīkh min ḥayyāt sayyidinā'.

³⁰¹ For Khalīl's teaching post, see Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rikh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 397. See also in the appendix.

³⁰² 'al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Fayāḍ'; 'al-Ra'īl al-awwal'.

³⁰³ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rikh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 461.

³⁰⁴ Bearing late evidence of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa'dī's Sufi inclination, he opened the festivities of the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid al-nabī*) in shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī's house and *takīya* in Amman in 2015. He praised the shaykh of the Kasnazānīya as descendant of the Prophet (al-Ṭarīqa al-'alīya al-qādirīya al-kasnazānīya, 'Kalimat al-'allāma al-duktūr 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa'dī').

³⁰⁵ Sa'dī, 'al-Sīra al-dhātīya'.

³⁰⁶ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rikh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 397; 'al-Ra'īl al-awwal'; Sa'dī, 'al-Shaykh al-ustādh al-duktūr 'Abd al-Malik al-Sa'dī'; 'al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Sitār'.

In his later fatwas, ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa‘dī elaborated on his view on Sufism. In one fatwa from 2011, he defined true Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf al-ṣaḥīḥ*) as to be molded by the morals of the Prophet (*takhalluq bi-akhlāq al-nabī*). It is, furthermore, the adherence to the morals (*akhlāq*) of the people of true Sufism, rejection of superstitions (*khurāfāt*) as well as shameful spiritual states, deeds and sayings which contradict the *sharī‘a* but entered Sufism through ignorance. As books of true Sufism, he recommended *The Strong Proof* (*al-Burhān al-mu‘ayyad*) by Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī, or the books of the Imams al-Ghazzālī and al-Qushayrī.³⁰⁷ In other fatwas, he explained and defended the role of *takāyā* and the correct *dhikr* in accordance with the *sharī‘a* and the tradition of the Prophet,³⁰⁸ or the need and correct way for a Muslim to follow a shaykh.³⁰⁹

The overview of scholarly master-disciple networks within the religious schools for jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in Sāmarrā’, Fallūja, and Ramādī indicate a constant Sufi influence among staff and students in the course of the twentieth century. This influence varied in Sāmarrā’ between the Naqshbandīya, Rifā‘īya, and Qādirīya, while the schools in Fallūja and Ramādī seem to have stood in closer contact with the Allepian Nabhānī network and its Naqshbandī-Shādhilī tradition. Since the foundation of the Sāmarrā’ School in 1896, most teachers there had studied under scholars with a clear Sufi background as well as under jurists and *ḥadīth* scholars with moderate Salafi tendencies; in at least Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Jubbūrī’s case with a clear refutation of Wahhābism. All of them combined a Sufi affiliation and inclination with the study of jurisprudence and a strong orientation towards the Quran and the *sunna* of the Prophet. Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Naqshbandī, Dāwūd al-Nāṣirī, and Aḥmad al-Rāwī published themselves about Sufism as well as jurisprudence.

The modernisation and nationalisation of education threatened the Sufi environment at the Sāmarrā’ School considerably. The state closed the school, as stated above, and then merged it also temporarily with the local secular state schools in 1928. It regained

³⁰⁷ Sa‘dī, ‘Mā huwa al-taṣawwuf al-ḥaqīqī’.

³⁰⁸ The *dhikr* leader must be a pious person and learned in the *sharī‘a*; it must not be used to earn one’s living; the *dhikr* must be derived from the *sunna* of the Prophet; it must be free from anything forbidden like images (*taṣāwīr*) and the likes, customs which contradict the *sharī‘a*, music and instruments save the tambourine (*daff*), exaggerated dancing and swaying like in the Mawlawīya; the hairs of the participant must not be longer than to the mid of his back; the *dhikr* must be articulated in a clear and understandable voice; no alleged miracle performances are allowed such as perforating the body with swords, eating snakes or glass; and the respect for the shaykh should not be exaggerated (Sa‘dī, ‘Ḥukam al-takāyā’; see also Sa‘dī, ‘Raf‘ al-ṣawt’).

³⁰⁹ Sa‘dī, ‘Hal lā budd li-l-muslim min ittikhādh shaykh lahu’.

its former status only through the efforts of the new teacher Aḥmad al-Rāwī under whom it seems to have experienced another heyday until the state nationalised all religious schools in the 1970s. Despite these challenges, the scholarly Sufi networks remained largely intact and even expanded the school's Sufi tradition with new offshoots in Fallūja and Ramādī from the 1940s onward.

2.6. Sufi Approaches to the Shī'a

Apart from the aforementioned markers of decline that Sufis experienced in the twentieth century, another characteristic of Sufi Islam in Iraq needs mentioning here, namely Sufi approaches to the Shī'a. There are clear theological, doctrinal, and ritual differences between Sunna and Shī'a. In contrast to Sunnīs, Shī'īs consider the Twelve Imams as rightful successors of Prophet Muḥammad's leadership over the Muslim community and attribute impeccability (*iṣma*) to them. Some Shī'īs invented the tradition to curse the first three rightly guided caliphs of the Sunnīs. Shī'īs believe in the occultation of the twelfth Imam Muḥammad al-Mahdī and in his return as eschatological redeemer on judgment day. They commemorate the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn at the hands of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd on the plain of Karbalā' in 680 more than Sunnīs do. Even their form of prayer differs in certain aspects from the prayer of Sunnīs. Yet, there are also several similarities and overlapping attitudes particularly between certain Sunnī Sufis and Shī'īs regarding a common veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* and certain ritual practices. These similarities seem to have played important roles for ecumenical approaches between Sunnīs and Shī'īs throughout Iraqi history and still await evaluation for twentieth-century Iraq. From the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Sufi rapprochements between Sunna and Shī'a in Iraq became evident on the levels of 1) ritual practices such as visitations of shrines (*ziyārāt al-marāqīd*), 2) ritual practices during major religious occasions like Imam al-Ḥusayn's death on 'āshūrā', 3) the political level, and 4) finally in the teachings with regard to the belief in the Twelve Imams as outlined in the books of the Rifā'īya in particular. Based on the Sufi teachings of orders such as the Rifā'īya, particularly the similarities in ritual practices gained significance for cross-sectarian cooperation in Iraq during the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

1) Previous research has shown for nineteenth and early twentieth-century Iraq, that members of the Rifā'īya paid visitation (*ziyāra*) to the shrines of Shī'ī Imams. Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī, for instance, describes in his *Bulūgh al-arab* how his father Muḥammad visited the shrines of Mūsā al-Kāẓim and al-Ḥusayn to praise them in poems, to seek their intercession, and to cry for them as Shī'īs do during the ritual of *bukā'*.³¹⁰ Other Rifā'īs made the pilgrimage to Karbalā' during Ramaḍān also in order to commemorate the death of Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib on the twenty-first of that month.³¹¹ The poem collections of Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī are full of poems praising the Shī'ī Imams and commemorating, for instance, al-Ḥusayn's fate at Karbalā' in Shī'ī terms.³¹² These collections were still in wide circulation and use among the Rifā'īya during the twentieth century.

Such visitations are not a particularity of the Rifā'īya alone and continue to be a normal activity of other Sufīs as well, throughout the twentieth century until the present day. This Sufi-inspired shrine veneration has over the centuries indeed so deeply influenced popular Islam in Iraq and the regions surrounding it that even non-Sufīs often practice it. The Sunnī imam and Sufī Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī reports for Sāmarrā' in the 1960s visitations to the shrines of the Imams and other pious saints (*ṣāliḥīn*) as a common tradition among Sunnīs and Shī'īs alike. This city is, notably, still a spiritual centre of the Shī'a with the shrines of the Imams 'Alī al-Hādī and al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī as well as of the Rifā'īya and Qādirīya. According to Sāmarrā'ī, every man and every woman vow to perform visitations (*ziyārāt*) to these shrines in order to seek intercession and protection from God. Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī mentions mainly visitations to the shrines of 'Alī al-Hādī, al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, sayyid Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Hādī, shaykh Muḥammad Jākir, shaykh Jamīl (al-Rifā'ī), 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, 'Abbās b. 'Alī, and sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī.³¹³ We also find similar reports of shrine visitations at Imam 'Alī's shrine in Najaf including visions of the Imam himself in Muḥammad 'Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī's *Sirāj al-qulūb*.³¹⁴

2) A further common feature in the ritual life of the Shī'a and many Sunnī Sufīs in Iraq is related to major annual occasions (*munāsabāt*). While there is a certain tendency among Sunnīs to emphasise more the birthdays (*mawālīd*, sing. *mawlid*, Iraqi:

³¹⁰ Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*, 133–34.

³¹¹ Eich, 'Patterns of the 1920 Rising', 116–17.

³¹² See for instance Ṣayyādī, *Dīwān rawḍat al-'irfān*, 1904, 25–27, 47–49, 53–54, 58, 66–67.

³¹³ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-'Ādāt*, 55.

³¹⁴ Ṭawīlī al-Naqshbandī, *Kitāb sirāj al-qulūb*, 121.

mawlūd) of the Prophet and other saints, Shī'īs celebrate especially the anniversaries of the Imams' martyrdoms. The commemoration of Imam al-Ḥusayn's death as martyr against the superior forces of the Umayyad Yazīd at the plain of Karbalā' in the famous 'āshūrā' processions is here the most significant Shī'ī occasion.³¹⁵ As noted by Laura Veccia Vaglieri, it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between the Shī'ī and Sunnī attitude towards al-Ḥusayn except for certain privileges and attributes such as impeccability which only Shī'īs ascribe to him. Sunnīs, too, highly venerate him as a descendant of the Prophet as well as for his ideal sacrifice for Islam at Karbalā' against the Umayyads who are commonly perceived as corrupt. This veneration is also highlighted in the poems and books of the Rifā'īya.³¹⁶ The order, in fact, had organised annual celebrations of 'āshūrā', often in a mixed Sunnī-Shī'ī environment. The central ritual and fundamental duty for every *murīd* is the annual seclusion for seven days (*khalwa usbū'īya*), which is explicitly linked to the Shī'ī celebrations of 'āshūrā' in Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī's writings. The latter regularly explained that "one enters the *khalwa* on the second day of 'āshūrā', that is the eleventh of *Muḥarram*".³¹⁷

3) Thomas Eich has argued, moreover, that particularly the Rifā'īya's ritual closeness to the Shī'a played a considerable political role for the better integration of Iraq's Shī'a into the Ottoman Empire³¹⁸ as well as for confessional unity in the early twentieth century. For the latter period, he pointed to the Rifā'īya affiliation of leading revolutionaries in the 1920 revolt, in the course of which Sunnī and Shī'ī Iraqis united against British colonial power. Exemplary of this Sufi influence in the organisation of the revolt is the close cooperation between the Sunnī jurist and Rifā'ī affiliate Yūsuf al-Suwaydī and the Shī'ī scholar Muḥammad al-Ṣadr.³¹⁹ Central for the mobilisation of the masses in the 1920 revolt were, furthermore, joint Sunnī-Shī'ī religious gatherings to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet (*mawlid al-nabī*) and the martyrdoms of Imam al-Ḥusayn and Imam 'Alī in so-called mourning assemblies (*majālis al-'azā*). The Iraqi social historian 'Alī al-Wardī even coined the term *al-mawlid al-ta'zīya* for these gatherings.³²⁰ The most important mosques for such

³¹⁵ For further details about this event and the annual processions, see Momen, *Shi'ī Islam*, 28–32, 238–43; Halm, *Die Schia*, 53–100; Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, chap. 5; Nakash, 'The Muharram Rituals'.

³¹⁶ Ṣayyādī, *Dīwān rawḍat al-'irfān*, 1904, 47–49; Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-'alīya*, 66–68.

³¹⁷ Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'īya and Shiism', 146; Ṣayyādī, *al-Qawā'id al-mar'īya*, 15–16; Ṣayyādī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifā'īya*, 115.

³¹⁸ Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'īya and Shiism'.

³¹⁹ Eich, 'Patterns of the 1920 Rising'.

³²⁰ Wardī, *Lamaḥāt ijtīmā'īya*, 5:173–96. The latter, *ta'zīya*, refers to the Shī'ī mourning processions in memory of al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom at Karbalā' to express the community's condolence and atonement.

assemblies in Baghdad were next to the Shī'ī Kāzimīya mosque, the Sunnī Ḥaydarkhāna, Abū Ḥanīfa, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, Sulṭān Alī (al-Rifā'ī), al-Aḥmadī, and Khulānī mosques all of whom were heavily influenced by Sufism.³²¹ Wardī describes Sunnī processions marching from the mosques in A'zamīya to participate in the mourning for Imam 'Alī in Kāzimīya. He even mentions that the Sunnīs practiced the ritual of breast beating (*laṭm*) usually performed by Shī'ī flagellants.³²² While Iraqi unity against the foreign British intruder was certainly the trigger for these events, the ritual closeness of Sufism to the Shī'a, particularly of the Rifā'īya formed the traditional religious basis for such a cooperation.

4) Beyond ritual practice, we find such approaches to the Shī'a also in the teachings of Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī. He can be considered as the architect of the Rifā'īya during the late nineteenth century and his huge oeuvre is still widely circulated among Rifā'ī Sufis in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey today.³²³ These approaches in Abū l-Hudā's books are also mainly related to the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*. The central role of the *ahl al-bayt* in Sufism generally and for the Rifā'īya in particular is already reflected in the presence of at least seven of them, from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭima to Mūsā al-Kāzim, in both Sufi *ansāb* and *salāsil*.³²⁴ In one of Abū l-Hudā's poem collections, the *Collection of the Garden of Knowledge (Dīwān rawḍat al-'irfān)* from 1904, he elaborates on the status of the Twelve Imams. Abū l-Hudā introduces them as Imams of the people of the house of the messenger and differentiates several meanings of their imamate (*imāma*) among the Muslim sects (*firaq*):

Their imamate among the Twelver Shī'a (*al-ithnā 'asharīya min al-Shī'a*) is an imamate of infallibility (*imāmat 'iṣma*) and they are for them [i.e. the Shī'īs] the successors for the command over religion and the earth. They consider the prayer only behind the infallible (*al-ma 'ṣūm*) as proper. As if it was the fulfillment, his rule became interrupted because of the loss of this infallible since the last from among their infallible (*ma 'ṣūmīn*) was the friend of God (*walī Allāh*), Imam al-Mahdī the awaited (*al-Mahdī al-muntaẓar*), may God be pleased with him. Among another faction, their imamate is one of guardianship (*imāmat wiṣāya*) and the word "*al-wiṣāya*" is confined to the awaited, His entire favour upon him. The most noble belief (*madhhab*) about them, may God the Sublime be pleased with them, is the belief of the people of truth (*ahl al-ḥaqq*) from the wise men of God, be their secrets sanctified [i.e. the Sufis]. For, they say that the Twelve Imams, the favour of God the Sublime upon them, are Imams of the [Prophet's] offspring. Every one of them is the Imam of the people (*āl*) in his time and the lord of the rank of succour (*ghawthīya*) which is designated as the great pole (*al-quṭbīya al-kubrā*)

³²¹ Wardī, 5:189.

³²² Wardī, 5:192. For more on the cross-ethnic cooperation during the revolt, see Kadhim, 'Efforts at Cross-Ethnic Cooperation'; Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq*.

³²³ For his central role as architect of the Rifā'īya in the late Ottoman Empire, see Eich, *Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī*. Some of his central books were republished by Rifā'ī circles in Iraq during the late 1960s (Ṣayyādī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifā'īya*; Rifā'ī and Ṣayyādī, *al-Hikam ar-rifā'īya*). These books still reflect the Shī'a approach which will be discussed in the following. I received most of Abū l-Hudā's books online via Rifā'ī Facebook websites.

³²⁴ See for instance Ṣayyādī, *Salāsil al-qawm*.

among the people. The authority (*ḥukm*) of their rank is an esoteric authority (*ḥukm bāṭinī*) and every one of them is the authority (or source: *maṣṭab*) for the categories of the people of God in his time and the successor (*maṭḥa*) on the path of the Prophetic spiritual state (*al-ḥāl al-nabawī*). The imamate among the Muslim religious scholars from the jurists (*fuqahā*), theologians (*mutakallimīn*), and the wise Sufis (*al-ṣūfīya al-ʿarīfīn*) is divided into the parts of: i) *the imamate of revelation (imāmat waḥī)* and this one is for the prophets and messengers, peace and prayer be upon them; ii) *the imamate of inheritance (imāmat warātha)* and this one is for the religious scholars (*ʿulamā*) as it is mentioned in the sentence: the religious scholars are the heirs of the prophets (*al-ʿulamā warathat al-anbīyā*); iii) *the imamate of worship (imāmat al-ibāda)* and this one is for the imams of prayer; iv) *the imamate of spiritual guidance and purification (imāmat irshād wa-tahdhīb)* and this one is for the knowing shaykhs, great scholars (*jahābidha*) and spiritual guides (*murshidīn*); and v) *the imamate of governmental authority (imāmat maṣlaḥa)* and this is the one which is designated as the great imamate and it is for the Muslim imams, the commanders of the faithful, the great caliphs who are responsible for the governmental affairs (*maṣāliḥ*) of the *umma*, the guardians of the *sharīʿa* system.³²⁵

The term *ʿiṣma* with which Abū l-Hudā characterises the Shīʿī belief in the imamate is a major point of contention between Sunna and Shīʿa. Most Sunnī theological schools do not even agree on the impeccability or immunity from errors and sins of the prophets, i.e. their infallibility. Sunnīs of the Ashʿarī school, for instance, tended to limit their infallibility temporarily to the period of their receiving of the divine message and afterwards. Representatives of the Sunnī Ḥanbalī school such as Ibn Taymīya or his disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya confined infallibility only to the prophets with respect to their transmission of the revelation and refuted immunity from sins and errors altogether. Shīʿīs of the Twelver Shīʿa, by contrast, also consider the Twelve Imams as necessarily infallible (*maṣūm*) as well as immune from sin and error. However, just like Sunnīs, they regard infallibility as a kindness (*lutf*) bestowed upon them by God, not as a natural quality.³²⁶ Abū l-Hudā, too, rejects the infallibility of the Imams and clearly prefers the Sufi belief in the imamate which he calls “the belief of the people of truth”. In his belief, the Imams stand out, first of all, as descendants of the Prophet and as sources for spiritual wisdom with their ranks as leading Imams of their time, succour (*ghawth*) and great poles (*aqṭāb*). Being aware of the conflicting views between Sunna and Shīʿa, he, nevertheless, defends his veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* as Imams in the following way:

Some venerable men have not been proponents of these Imams’ imamate being wary of an agreement with the Shīʿa. One of them saw the messenger of God, God bless him and grant him salvation, in a dream. He asked him about Imam sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī, may God be pleased with him, and he [the messenger], prayer and peace be upon him, said to him: He is the thirteenth of the Imams of guidance from the people of my house. He awoke astonished and became a proponent of the imamate of the Imams saying that it does not break the fence

³²⁵ Sayyādī, *Dīwān rawḍat al-irfān*, 1904, 57.

³²⁶ Madelung, ‘*ʿiṣma*’; Momen, *Shīʿi Islam*, 155.

of the canonical law of Islam (*sharʿ*) which the religious scholars from the people of the *sunna* and the community (*ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*) acknowledged.³²⁷

The same story is mentioned elsewhere with relation to an unidentified man called ‘Abd al-Samīʿ al-Hāshimī al-‘Abbāsī as the one who saw the Prophet in his dream. According to this version, the Prophet emphasises that his “son” Aḥmad is the thirteenth Imam and ‘Abd al-Samīʿ becomes henceforward a proponent of the imamate but affirms that “it does not destroy the boundaries of the consensus (*ijmāʿ*)”.

The wise (‘*arif*’) does not deny the imamate of the Twelve Imams, peace be upon them, and it is nothing more than that every one of them is the Imam of the Prophet’s pure offspring (*al-ʿitra al-tāhira*) in his time, lord of the people of hearts (*sayyid ahl al-qulūb*), shaykh of the owners of good qualities and the ones who are acquainted with God the Sublime. This is not the same as the claim of someone who advocates their infallibility (*ʿismatīhim*) and ascribes to them all the qualities of prophethood (*nubuwwa*). This is the position which destroys the boundaries of consensus (*ijmāʿ*).³²⁸

Abū l-Hudā’s transmitted statements make clear that he certainly did not intend to transgress the confines of Sunnism with his veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*. Peculiar in the passages above is only the notion of Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī as being the thirteenth Imam, a quasi-successor to the twelfth Imam in the lineage of the *ahl al-bayt*. We find this notion in many of Abū l-Hudā’s books, yet, without much further elaboration except Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī’s elevation as highest saint (*walī*) and pole (*quṭb*) of his time in succession to the Prophet’s companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and the Twelve Imams.³²⁹ It also appears in *al-Majālis al-rifāʿīya* (*The Rifāʿīan Study Sessions*) from 1971³³⁰ and was mentioned during my fieldwork in Amman in a conversation between representatives of the Rāwīs and Shīʿī guests in order to explain to the latter the Rifāʿīya’s reverence of the *ahl al-bayt*.³³¹ In Shīʿī doctrine, there is certainly no room for a thirteenth Imam after the Mahdī who is expected to introduce the end of times and I am unaware of any written Shīʿī reaction to this idea. Yet again, there is from a Shīʿī perspective also no need to fully accept the belief in a thirteenth Imam in order to acknowledge and respect this expression of the Rifāʿīya’s veneration for the Imams. It is more the common love for the Imams itself which matters here, and which served as an ecumenical bridge between both communities in the examples of ritual practices above. This is what

³²⁷ Ṣayyādī, *Dīwān rawḍat al-ʿirfān*, 1904, 58.

³²⁸ Fārūqī, *Irshād al-muslimīn*, 45.

³²⁹ Ṣayyādī, *Kitāb al-tārīkh al-awḥad*, 109; Ṣayyādī, *al-Qawāʿid al-marʿīya*, 7; al-Ṣayyādī, *al-Kanz al-muṭalsam*, 26; Ṣayyādī, *Tiryāq al-muḥibbīn*, 8; Ṣayyādī, *Qilādat al-jawāhir*, 439. See also Eich, ‘Abū l-Hudā, the Rifāʿīya and Shiism’, 146.

³³⁰ Rifāʿī, *al-Majālis*, 6.

³³¹ Interview with Nadīm al-Rāwī and ʿIṣām al-Rāwī, 05.05.2016.

successfully happened during the conversation between the Rāwīs and the Shī'ī guests which was just mentioned, and it was not an exception.

With reference to the historian al-Dhahabī (1274-1348), Abū l-Hudā furthermore makes an important distinction in order to elaborate to which extent Shī'ism might be acceptable to him:

The Shī'ī, who venerates the two shaykhs [i.e. the first two caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar],³³² is the one who desists from the companions (*ṣaḥāba*) of the Prophet and gives preference to Imam 'Alī, may God honour him completely, and the apostate (*rāfiḍī*)³³³ is one who defames the companions. The memorizer of the Quran al-Dhahabī said in the biography of Ibn Ṭāhir: 'Ibn Ṭāhir said that al-Ḥākim [al-Nīsābūrī (933–1014)]³³⁴, secretly (*fī al-bāṭin*), had an ardent zeal for the Shī'a and he showed a Sunnism³³⁵ in his preference and the succession [question after the Prophet Muḥammad]. He turned away from Mu'āwīya and his people and showed that outwardly but did not apologize for it.' I [Abū l-Hudā] and al-Dhahabī say the same after that and it is the following: As to his turning away from the opponents of 'Alī, it is obvious. As to the two shaykhs, he venerates both of them in any case, for he is a Shī'ī, not an apostate (*rāfiḍī*). Here end his [al-Dhahabī's] words and this true fundament in order to understand. There is no finer saying of some of the greatest Shāfi'ī scholars, may God the Sublime have mercy upon them:

I am Shī'ī from the people of the chosen one [Muḥammad] – Yet, I deem the cursing of the forefathers (*salaf*) not as appropriate.

I aim at the consensus (*ijmā'*) in my religion and who – aims at the consensus does not fear ruin.

It turned me personally away, for the sake of love, – from everyone who severs the people (*qawm*) or defames [them].³³⁶

The main point of contention between Sunna and Shī'a to which this passage refers is the practice of the public cursing of the Prophet's companions (*ṣaḥāba*), especially the first two caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar (*sabb al-shaykhayn*). Shī'īs consider them as usurpers of the post which should have been occupied, according to their view, by Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his descendants after the death of the Prophet. The cursing of them dates back to the earliest times of the Shī'a and became even institutionalised during the Friday prayer under Ṣafawīd rule in Iran and Iraq from the sixteenth until the eighteenth century. Later on, the practice largely vanished but can still be occasionally observed in Shī'ī communities.³³⁷ The mentioned attitude to praise Imam

³³² For the meaning of "two shaykhs" in the context of the Sunnī-Shī'ī conference under Nādir Shāh in Najaf around 1743, see Litvak, 'Encounters between Shi'i and Sunni 'Ulama'', 72.

³³³ For the history of this term, see Kohlberg, 'al-Rāfiḍa'.

³³⁴ Al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī was a Sunnī and Persian *ḥadīth* scholar who was accused by others of having been a Shī'ī, Dhahabī, *Tā'rikh al-Islām*, 28:131.

³³⁵ In the *Dīwān*, "*tasannun*" is wrongly spelled "*tasattur*", see Dhahabī, 28:131.

³³⁶ Ṣayyādī, *Dīwān rawḍat al-irfān*, 1904, 60.

³³⁷ Momen, *Shi'i Islam*, 110; Halm, *Die Schia*, 84; Buchta, *Schiiten*, 60. The larger religious concept under which this phenomenon is subsumed is *barā'a* or *tabarru'* meaning in this context disassociation or repudiation. It became an article of faith in Shī'ism already under the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765) (Calmard, 'Tabarru').

‘Alī while condemning his adversaries Mu‘āwīya and his son Yazīd without the cursing of the first two or three caliphs is a remnant within Sufism of a general rapprochement between Shī‘ism and Sunnism which dates back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Especially from the Sunnī perspective, such a tendency came to be termed *tashayyu‘ ḥasan* which Moojan Momen translates into “good or moderate leaning towards Shi‘ism”.³³⁸ Abū l-Hudā obviously joined in and embraced such a moderate leaning towards the Shī‘a as well. While rejecting the belief in the infallibility (*iṣma*) of the Imams, he nevertheless showed respect to Shī‘īs as long as they desisted from the defamation of the first two caliphs.

Another, yet vague, similarity between the Rifā‘īya and the Shī‘a is the belief in the Mahdī (the rightly guided). In contrast to Sunnism, belief in the Mahdī became a central pillar of Twelver Shī‘ī Islam. According to this belief, the alleged son of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (d. 874), Muḥammad al-Mahdī (b. 868) went first into a small and afterwards into a full occultation (*al-ghayba al-ṣuḡhrā* and *al-ghayba al-kubrā*) after the death of his father in Sāmarrā’. From his greater occultation, which lasts until the present day, the Mahdī is believed to still control men’s affairs on earth as the lord of the age (*ṣāhib al-zamān*) but without direct communication with his community. Yet, according to Momen, popular belief still holds that the Mahdī does still “occasionally manifest himself to the pious either when awake or more commonly in dreams and visions”.³³⁹ At the end of time, on judgement day, he is expected to return from the occultation to restore the *sharī‘a* and to force all Muslims to accept Shī‘ī belief. In Shī‘ī Islam, he is infallible (*ma‘ṣūm*) just as the previous Imams and exceeds all previous prophets except the Prophet Muḥammad in religious rank.³⁴⁰

Sunnīs generally reject such a position nowadays. Indeed, various notions about the coming of a Mahdī emerged within the Sunnī community from the Umayyad period of the eighth century on and certain Sufis developed their own doctrine of the Mahdīship of the twelfth Imam,³⁴¹ but they did not gain the same importance as in Shī‘ism. A positive attitude towards the Shī‘ī notion of the Mahdī is also present in Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī’s writings for the Rifā‘īya, where he uses explicitly Shī‘ī terms to refer to the twelfth Imam. Initially, he does not seem to support the Mahdīship of

³³⁸ Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 96.

³³⁹ Momen, 161–65.

³⁴⁰ Madelung, ‘al-Mahdī’, 1236.

³⁴¹ Wilferd Madelung mentions references to the Mahdī by Ibn ‘Arabī (1165-1240) and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī (1492-1565) (Madelung, 1237).

the twelfth Imam when he writes about the interruption of his rule due to the loss of the last *ma'ṣūm* in the *Dīwān rawḍat al-irfān*.³⁴² Nevertheless, the figure of the Mahdī appears several times in the literature of the Rifā'īya as manifesting himself to leading shaykhs. In *Twinkles of Truths (Bawāriq al-ḥaqā'iq)*, Abū l-Hudā's own shaykh, Bahā' al-Dīn Mahdī al-Rawwās sees the Prophet during a visitation at the shrine of the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. The Prophet tells him that Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī occupies the position as highest saint since the last three thousand years someone like him will not come until judgement day (*yawm al-qiyāma*) except the twelfth Imam "al-Mahdī b. al-ʿAskarī".³⁴³ In another episode at the shrine of ʿAlī al-Riḍā in today's Iran, the "imam and proof al-Mahdī" (*al-imām al-ḥujja al-Mahdī*) appears to him "from the inside of absence" (*min buṭūn al-ghiyāb*). The Mahdī breathes into his mouth (*nafakh fī fammihi*), which is an initiation rite in Sufism, and tells him to read the Quran as "that book, there is no doubt about it, is the right guidance for the pious who believe in the hidden (*ghayb*)".³⁴⁴ In *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifā'īya*, Abū l-Hudā mentions again, that al-Rawwās took the third of his initiations (*ijāzāt*) to the spiritual path from "the proof of God (*ḥujjat Allāh*) Imam al-Mahdī b. Imam al-ʿAksarī".³⁴⁵

The term *ghayb* is of Quranic origin and denotes the hidden worlds of God which are inaccessible for human senses and reason. In Sufism, it usually refers to the hidden reality of the world beyond the senses of the divine essence which only spiritual wisdom or gnosis (*ma'rifa*) experiences.³⁴⁶ These are also the meanings which were intended in the passages above. The authors avoided the use of the Shī'ī term of *ghayba*, preferring "*ghiyāb*" or "*ghayb*". Yet, particularly with reference to the twelfth Imam, the similarity to the Shī'ī belief is obvious.³⁴⁷ The idea of a Rifā'ī shaykh who received a spiritual initiation to the mystical path by the Mahdī in a vision certainly corresponds to the popular belief of occasional manifestations to the pious mentioned above and may have been also intended as a further element to keep the order attractive to Shī'īs.

³⁴² He already referred to the twelfth Imam as "*al-mahdī al-muntaẓar*" in Ṣayyādī, *Dīwān rawḍat al-irfān*, 1904, 57.

³⁴³ Rawwās, *Kitāb bawāriq al-ḥaqā'iq*, 212. Interestingly, the mentioned paragraph was deleted in a new edition of the book by Ibrāhīm al-Rifā'ī in Cairo 2002 (Rawwās, *Bawāriq al-ḥaqā'iq*, 141–42).

³⁴⁴ Rawwās, *Kitāb bawāriq al-ḥaqā'iq*, 318–19.

³⁴⁵ Ṣayyādī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifā'īya*, 126.

³⁴⁶ Macdonald and Gardet, 'al-Ghayb'; Macdonald and Hodgson, 'al-Ghayba'.

³⁴⁷ Compare this to the general similarity of the concept of hiddenness or occultation in Shī'ī and Sufi thinking in Rebecca Masterton's analysis. The whole Shī'ī tradition is characterised by hiddenness, for instance, of the twelfth Imam, the Shī'ī identity, the identity of the Imam's agents etc. Similarly, the status of saints (*awliyā'*) in Sufism is also hidden from the majority of the Muslim community (Masterton, 'A Comparative Exploration', 58–60).

In the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, we find several instances of similarities in the ritual practices of Sufis, particularly the Rifā'īya, and those of Shī'īs which form a common Sunnī-Shī'ī basis for the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*. These similarities relate to the visitation of shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* as well as the celebration of major annual occasions in their memory such as 'āshūrā'. They were even instrumentalised in a political context such as in the late Ottoman promotion of the Rifā'īya for a better integration of Iraq's Shī'īs into the empire or during the 1920 revolt against the British in Iraq. During the latter revolt, the Rifā'īya's ritual closeness to the Shī'a formed the religious framework for the organisation of joint Sunnī-Shī'ī mass protests. A literary expression of the Rifā'ī approach to the Shī'a can, eventually, be found in the works of the highest-ranking Rifā'ī shaykh in the late nineteenth century, Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī whose ideas are still widely circulated among Rifā'īya circles today. He does not transgress Sunnī boundaries of faith but venerates the *ahl al-bayt* as Prophetic descendants and bearers of spiritual wisdom. Abū l-Hudā accepts their imamate and respects even Shī'ism as long as Shī'īs refrain from cursing the first two or three rightly guided caliphs. He even constructs Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī as the thirteenth Imam and integrates the figure of the Mahdī as a transmitter of the *ṭarīqa* into his teachings. Some of these similarities might not be acceptable to all Shī'īs, particularly the idea of the thirteenth Imam, but they also do not have to fully accept them for an acknowledgment of the Sufi veneration of the Imams. The most important aspect for an ecumenical transgression of sectarian boundaries is rather the emphasis of the shared veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* themselves and this seems to have worked well on the level of ritual practices.

2.7. Conclusion

Previous research has always assumed a decline of Sufism in Iraq as well as a much stronger representation of Sufism in the Kurdish rather than in the Arab regions over the twentieth century without providing an adequate explanation for this. The first four sections of this chapter have demonstrated that we indeed find several markers of a Sufi decline beginning with the demise of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War and the emergence and expansion of the modern Iraqi nation state. The social and political transformations in the first half of the twentieth century went along with a

considerable decline of many Sufi shaykhs' former privileged status; a substantial reduction of the former Ottoman state subsidies; severe existential threats in the cases of the aforementioned Kurdish shaykhs; and the loss of independent religious education in the *madāris*. By the 1960s, numerous *takāyā* all over Iraq still actively practiced Sufism but several prestigious Sufi establishments of the leading orders and shaykh clans were already in decay such as the Khālidiya *takīya* and the Rifā'ī shrine or they were demolished such as the Rawwās mosque. The establishment of a socialist republic in 1958 and the new regime's egalitarian outlook led also to the complete lapse of the *niqābat al-ashraf* in Iraq; a very influential and prestigious office for many Sufi shaykhs over centuries. The case of the Rāwīs showed how the early death of shaykh Ibrāhīm's first son and the choices of his other sons to pursue secular careers resulted in the end of their former *ṭarīqa*-Sufism.

The cases of the Kasnazānīs and the Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs have demonstrated a special situation in Kurdistan. The continuity of shifting patronage relations between the central state and certain Sufis against the background of the special political situation in Kurdistan turned out as one important factor among others why Sufism was so often perceived as much stronger represented in the Kurdish regions. This region has always been hard to control for rulers and with the growing separatist movement among the Kurds over the twentieth century, the Ottomans and all successive Iraqi or Iranian regimes had to cultivate and patronise loyal supporters among the Kurdish tribal leaders in order to guarantee security and the unity of the nation. Kurdish Sufi clans such as the Kasnazānīs had already been recruited as combat units by the Ottoman state during the First World War and they actively fought against the British occupation of Iraq. These circumstances and the later rise of militant communist groups forced them and the Sirāj al-Dīn clan temporarily into exile. However, these Sufi shaykhs offered their loyal support to the successive regimes and could in this way maintain their material well-being and their positions as Sufi shaykhs and mediators between the people and the state. The shifting relations of the Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs first to the Iraqi monarchy, the British colonial administration and afterwards to the Iranian Pahlawī monarchy illustrate this quite well. Thus, certain Kurdish Sufi shaykhs have always received much more political support by the central state than in the Arab regions.

Finally, the closeness of certain Sufi orders such as the Rifā'īya to the Shī'a, which previous research has mentioned, could be further affirmed in the last section on the

basis of new sources. It could be shown that these similarities in the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* including shrine visitations and the common celebration of major religious occasions constituted an important feature of the ritual practice and cohabitation between certain Sunnī Sufis and Shī'īs in Iraq. In the still widely circulated books of Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī, this shaykh clearly addressed the Shī'a and even accepted the imamate of the Twelve Imams, yet only within the boundaries of Sunnism.

The background and state of Sufism as outlined in the five sections of this chapter are central for an understanding of how the Ba'th regime gradually incorporated Sufism into its religious policies between 1968 and 2003. The Sufi orders and their shaykh clans, their *ansāb* and the *niqābat al-ashrāf*, the religious Sufi scholars, and eventually Sufi approaches to the Shī'a all came to play an important role in Ba'thist politics which eventually ushered in a revival of Sufism in Iraq during the 1990s. This development and its ramifications for Iraq's Sufis will be analysed in the following chapters.

3. Early Ba‘thist Secularism and the Sufis, 1968-1979

The previous chapter has shown how the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of a modern and secular state in Iraq ushered in a substantial decline of Sufism in the country. By the 1960s, there were still many active Sufi *takāyā* in Iraq, but compared to the Ottoman period, Sufis had lost much of their former state support, status, privileges, influence, and institutions until the 1960s. After the political ascendancy of the Ba‘th Party, this development largely continued in the Arab regions of central and southern Iraq, whereas many Sufis in Kurdistan fared much better due to greater state patronage.

The first decade of Ba‘thist rule in Iraq was dominated by the party’s staunch secularism with rather few public expressions of piety or references to Islam. The regime struggled fiercely to consolidate its power through political repression and the development of an authoritarian welfare state. After the nationalisation of Iraq’s oil industry in 1972, the state built its financial autonomy primarily on the total control of the country’s vast oil revenues.³⁴⁸ Bolstered by these revenues, the Ba‘th envisioned a progressive, secular, and socialist future for the country. It tried to realise unprecedented welfare and development programs, however, in an unmistakably repressive and authoritarian way that soon met with open resistance from Islamists but also Kurdish nationalists. Sunnī and Shī‘ī religious and particularly Islamist circles despised the Ba‘th’s socialism and secularism, or as they saw it, atheism, and took to the streets. The growing Kurdish nationalist movement, in turn, saw itself not represented in the Ba‘th’s Arabism and strove for political autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan. As will be outlined in this chapter, both confrontations with the Islamists and Kurdish nationalists heavily influenced the Ba‘th regime’s religious policies throughout the 1970s. The Ba‘th’s secularism and its attempts to gain control over Iraq’s religious landscape appeared to many as anti-religious but both laid the institutional foundations for the regime’s later Islamic propaganda and policies in the 1980s.

In the 1970s, the Ba‘th regime was not interested in Sufism as such but first links of the regime to the Sufi communities in the Arab as well as in the Kurdish regions already appear. These links ought to be seen rather as tactical moves in the light of the aforementioned confrontations with the Islamists and Kurdish separatists but they

³⁴⁸ Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, chap. 1.

were to shape the Ba‘th’s relationship to the Sufis until its final hour in 2003. In the early years, these links were meant to bring, first of all, religious legitimacy to the presidential family as a gesture towards Iraq’s Islamic circles as well as, secondly, military support for the regime from loyal Kurdish tribal and Sufi militias against the Kurdish nationalists. The first link was limited to the Arab regions and appears in the context of a growing Sufi literary activity in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the aim to revive a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism of the Rifā‘īya and Qādirīya orders. Related to this literary activity became a surprising book, here abbreviated as *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*,³⁴⁹ which described the genealogical descent of the presidential clan from the Prophet Muḥammad via the genealogical network of the Rifā‘īya order in Iraq. The second link was prevalent in the Kurdish regions and shows a similarity to the Ottoman recruitment of Kurds into the Ḥamīdīya regiments. The Ba‘th tactically patronised Kurdish tribes and Sufi orders in order to recruit them as paramilitary forces in the fight against the nationalists. In exchange for state services, many Sufi shaykhs formed armed detachments to secure state buildings and support the Iraqi army. The political and religious contexts of these early Ba‘thist links to the Sufi orders in Iraq will be scrutinised in the following Sections 3.1 and 3.2.

The first section (3.1) will show how the Ba‘thist state expanded its mechanisms of control to Iraq’s religious sphere in order to mould it in accordance with its political needs. Previous research tended to portray this expansion of control as a particular characteristic of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s rule since 1979.³⁵⁰ However, it is important to note that many of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s policies and measures of control commenced already in the early 1970s. For instance, the regime suppressed any Islamist opposition with full force and counted also Sufis among its early victims (3.1.1). It systematically marginalised Sunnī and Shī‘ī shaykhs and religious scholars in the press and the media in order to deprive them of a public platform (3.1.2). At the same time, it began to realise the need to instrumentalise a Shī‘ī religious symbolism to valorise its religious legitimacy in the conflict with particularly this religious community. The Ba‘th leaders began to patronise and visit the Shī‘ī holy shrines and the president’s second cousin, Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ began with first steps to emphasise an alleged Prophetic descendancy of their clan via the Shī‘ī Imams, i.e. the *ahl al-bayt*. On the political level, however, the Prophetic descent played yet only a marginal role until Ṣaddām

³⁴⁹ For more details, see Section 3.2.

³⁵⁰ See for instance Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, chap. 2.

Ḥusayn's takeover in 1979 (3.1.3). The Ba'ṯh commenced also the restructuring of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (then still called *dīwān al-awqāf*) during the 1970s and turned it into a vast administrative body under presidential control with collective authority of both Sunnī and Shī'ī affairs. This ministry emerged as a central means to control religious life in Iraq (3.1.4). Related to this ministry, the Ba'ṯh introduced a new system for administrators of endowments and their donations (3.1.5) and turned religious employees into civil servants (3.1.6). It, finally, deprived the Ministry of Religious Endowments of its previous authority over religious schools and colleges thereby nationalising religious education in Iraq (3.1.7). On the whole, all these measures suggest that the Ba'ṯh aimed to restrain and reduce rather than support and encourage the influence and independence of religious forces on society.

On the Sufi side (3.2), we find two different conditions in the Arab and Kurdish regions of Iraq. Sufism still showed signs of life in the predominantly Arab regions. However, the ongoing decay of important shrines and *takāyā*, for instance the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī in the south or the Khālidiya *taykīya* of the Naqshbandīya in Baghdad, as well as a growing ignorance of the saints and their heritage in society rather suggest a stagnation. The Sufis in the Kurdish regions had experienced similar setbacks in the late 1950s due to threats by the rising communist forces there, but by the late 1960s and early 1970s their *takāyā* already proliferated again. The ongoing neglect and ignorance of the great Sufi saints in the Arab regions was also accompanied by a modernist discourse which denounced the Sufis and some of the extravagant practices as un-Islamic charlatanism.³⁵¹ This, in turn, prompted scholarly circles of the Rifā'īya and Qādirīya to revive an Islam-conform and *sharī'a*-minded Sufism with several publications in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The most prominent among them was the imam Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, a graduate of the Sāmarrā' School who made later on a successful career in the Ministry of Religious Endowments under the Ba'ṯh. His works make clear that reformist ideas, which had previously always been associated with orders like the Naqshbandīya, Qādirīya, and others, came also to be formulated in Rifā'īya circles. Particularly this order had for a long time been the target of reformist criticism since Ibn Taymīya (3.2.1).

Moreover, some of these Sufi publications present a surprising link to the ascending Ba'ṯh leaders and their Prophetic descendancy in the aforementioned book *al-Nujūm*

³⁵¹ 'Abbās al-'Azzāwī's account of the Sufis in Kurdistan provides one instance of this discourse ('Azzāwī, *Ashā'ir al-'Irāq*, 1947, 2:224).

al-zawāhir which appeared concurrently. The latter book described in detail the presidential clan's genealogical link to various shaykh clans of the Rifā'īya in Iraq, to their founding figure Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī, the Twelve Shī'ī Imams, and finally the Prophet Muḥammad (3.2.2). Sāmarrā'ī and other Sufi authors authenticated this claim and contributed in this way to its literary dissemination in Iraq (3.2.3). Despite this unusual link of the leaders of a secular and socialist party to the Rifā'īya, the order seems not to have benefitted from a special state support. The example of the Rāwī clan and the most important Rifā'ī mosque of Baghdad, the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque, indicates that Sufi life stagnated almost completely in the 1970s without any spiritual guidance or regular *dhikr* gatherings. Other places such as the Kīlānīya fared better and indicate more signs of Sufi life but this seems mainly due to the fact that it is also Baghdad's second most important mosque with international fame. The Sufi scholars in the religious schools and colleges became restricted by Ba'ṯist nationalisation efforts but largely kept their positions or made otherwise successful careers in other state institutions (3.2.4).

In the Kurdish regions, by contrast, the Ba'ṯh actively supported and patronised Sufi orders and their *takāyā*, yet less out of an interest in Sufism per se than rather to assure their loyalty and to harness their fighting strength against the Kurdish nationalists. As Kurdish Sufi shaykhs happened very often to be tribal shaykhs with political influence, they traditionally commanded fairly large militias from among their followers and tribesmen. Since Ottoman times, tribal rivalries and battles between Sufi and tribal shaykhs had continuously divided Kurdish society. Realising the chance of such internal divisions, the Ba'ṯh successfully recruited Sufi clans as paramilitary part of its National Defence Battalions and contributed in this way *en passant* to the proliferation of Sufi institutions in this region. With this tactic, the regime not only benefitted from internal rivalries and power struggles among the Kurds, it also played off the Kurdish nationalist movement against traditional religious elites of Sufi shaykhs.

3.1. The Ba'ṯhisation of the Religious Landscape and the Islamist Opposition

In the first decade of its rule in Iraq, the Arab Socialist Ba'ṯh Party largely stuck to its revolutionary secular and socialist program to alter society and openly challenged traditional Islamic circles. Apart from certain attempts by the party to appear in a more religious light, its policies clearly show the aim to reduce the influence of religious

forces in society. Soon after the takeover, the new rulers came into an open confrontation with a growing Islamist opposition, partially from among the Sunnī but mainly the Shī'ī religious circles, both of which considered the Ba'ṯh an infidel regime. Since its foundation in the 1940s, the Ba'ṯh Party had struggled against allegations of being atheist and anti-religious on the national as well as international level. It was well aware that this posed a major threat to its stay in power in a country in which religion still played such a central role as in Iraq. Particularly the strong Shī'ī Islamist opposition against the strongly Sunnī dominated Ba'ṯh regime had the additional smack of political sectarianism. In order to cope with these problems, the regime resorted throughout the 1970s and the following decades to a tactic of marginalization, coercion, violence, but also co-optation and the active use of religious symbolism to control Iraq's religious landscape.

3.1.1. *Early Ba'ṯhist Coercion against an Islamist Opposition*

Similar to other socialist republican regimes in the region like Egypt or Syria in the 1950s and 1960s,³⁵² the new regime in Iraq had to confront a growing Islamist opposition directly after the successful Ba'ṯhist revolution in 1968. Having learned from its first forceful ouster in 1963 by the military, the Ba'ṯh was more than alert about any new opposition in Iraq. The fact that it now faced Islamist opponents was even more problematic because particularly the question of religion has been a sensitive issue since the party's foundation by a Syrian Orthodox Christian in the 1940s. Later in 1963, Egyptian President Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir had considered the Ba'ṯh a rival for regional leadership and had accused it of being anti-religious.³⁵³ From 1968 onwards, similar accusations emerged also inside Iraq with a growing Sunnī and Shī'ī Islamist opposition, then headed by the Shī'ī Ayatollah Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm. The whole confrontation had, furthermore, a sectarian dimension which can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire. Iraq's Shī'ī majority population had experienced a systematic political marginalisation which had pervaded the Ottoman administration and afterwards the successive governments of the Iraqi nation state until 1968. To a certain

³⁵² For Egyptian President Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir's confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood and the modernisation of the religious sector see Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, chap. 5; Zeghal, *Gardiens de l'Islam*; Zeghal, 'Religion and Politics in Egypt'. For the violent conflict of the Syrian Ba'ṯh with the Muslim Brotherhood and attempts of modernisation of the religious sector since the 1960s, see Böttcher, *Syrische Religionspolitik*, 94; Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*, chaps 1, 2; Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama*.

³⁵³ Abu-Jabir, *The Arab Ba'ṯh Socialist Party*, 77–85.

extent, the Ba‘th Party’s takeover could be perceived as a continuation of this historical trend since Ba‘thist cabinets were still Sunnī-dominated.³⁵⁴ Thus, the whole confrontation with the Shī‘a-dominated Islamist opposition could have easily given the impression of a sectarian one between Sunna and Shī‘a.

Challenges like these made the new Ba‘th leadership under the presidency of Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr more than sensitive to the issue of religion and sectarianism in particular. In the early 1970s, Iraq’s religious circles despised the Ba‘th’s secular and socialist rhetoric, its modernist and progressive outlook, its close relations with the Soviet Union, and the emergence of leftist forces within the government. In addition, new land reforms heavily struck especially the Shī‘ī religious institutions with their endowments in the south. The whole issue turned eventually into an open conflict when the regime attempted to recruit Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm as a mediator in an old political border dispute with Iran.³⁵⁵ Between 1968 and 1970, joint Sunnī and Shī‘ī mass demonstrations against the regime occurred in Baghdad and the Shī‘ī centres in Najaf and Karbalā’. The demonstrations, which were led by Ayatollah Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm and further supported by the Sunnī Muslim Brotherhood and the Shī‘ī Da‘wa Party, resulted in violent clashes with the security forces. Further confrontations with the Da‘wa Party followed in 1974, 1975, and 1977.³⁵⁶ In the course of these confrontations, the regime set the standard for its treatment of oppositional movements for decades to come with mass arrests, torture, and executions. The first prominent victim among the Sunnī religious scholars was the imam, Muslim Brotherhood-affiliate, and Sufi ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Badrī who had founded an Iraqi branch of the Islamist party *Ḥizb al-Tahrīr* (The Party of Liberation). The imam was reportedly murdered in prison for his public support of the demonstrations in 1969.³⁵⁷

As shown in Joseph Sassoon’s study, the Ba‘th developed in reaction to such confrontations over its thirty-five years of rule a security apparatus which kept all religious scholars, *mufīīs*, imams, preachers and other men of religion under constant surveillance. They regularly recorded their activities, the content of their Friday sermons, their loyalty, party membership, personal contacts to extremist circles, or

³⁵⁴ Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, chap. 3.

³⁵⁵ Abdul-Jabar, *The Shi‘ite Movement*, 201–2; Luizard, ‘The Nature of the Confrontation Between the State and Marja‘ism’.

³⁵⁶ Abdul-Jabar, *The Shi‘ite Movement*, 185–99.

³⁵⁷ A‘zami, ‘The Muslim Brotherhood’, 172–73; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 71. He had studied under the MB’s founding figure in Iraq, Amjad al-Zahāwī and had cultivated a close relationship with the Syrian Sufi shaykh Muḥammad al-Nabhānī (‘al-shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Badrī’).

how often they prayed for the president. In case an imam did not tow the official line or showed extremist tendencies, he was replaced or imprisoned or, as shown above, executed.³⁵⁸ By far the biggest threat in the eyes of the regime constituted the spread of Islamist tendencies and movements with political ambitions such as the aforementioned Shī'ī Da'wa Party, the Sunnī Muslim Brotherhood,³⁵⁹ and a few Wahhābī-inspired groups. From the 1970s on, numerous assassinations, arrests, and deportations of opposition scholars with relations to the Da'wa Party are well documented. The most famous from among the Shī'ī *marja'īya* came from the Ṣadr and Ḥakīm families.³⁶⁰ Few studies such as Basim al-'Azami's describe also the regime's violent crack-down on the Muslim Brotherhood as well as many of its leaders' forced retreat into exile during the early 1970s.³⁶¹ Due to the lack of research on the spread of Salafism and Sunnī Islamism in Ba'thist Iraq, the information we have on this level is still meagre. In a report by the Iraqi scholar Yaḥyā al-Kubaysī which is based on interviews with members of Iraq's Salafī movement, shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Nādir recalls the formation of a Salafī group in 1977 by some religious scholars as well as soldiers. In 1979, cells of the group were reportedly uncovered in Baghdad and Mosul and its members arrested.³⁶² At that time, however, Wahhābī or Salafī groups were still a rather marginal phenomenon in Iraq.

Until 2003, the state surveillance, coercion, and repression just outlined gradually expanded over all spheres of Iraqi society and remained the standard procedure against any suspicious opposition to the regime which could not be won over. The next section will turn from repression to the control of the public discourse in Ba'thist Iraq and will show how the regime increasingly marginalised religious voices from the state media in the 1970s.

³⁵⁸ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party*, 259–62. Similar observations were already made by Wiley, 'The Position of the Iraqi Clergy', 60.

³⁵⁹ However, the inner Iraqi conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) did not prevent the regime from forming a strategic alliance with the MB abroad such as in Syria in order to weaken the Ba'thist regime over there (Helfont, 'Saddam and the Islamists').

³⁶⁰ See for instance Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*; Wiley, 'The Position of the Iraqi Clergy'; Abdul-Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement*.

³⁶¹ A'zami, 'The Muslim Brotherhood'.

³⁶² The group was called *jamā'at al-muwahḥidīn* (Community of professors of God's unity) and headed by Ibrāhīm Khalīl al-Mashhadānī (Kubaysī, 'al-Salafīya fī l-'Irāq', 5–6).

3.1.2. *The Marginalisation of “Men of Religion”³⁶³ from the Public*

Discourse

Another tactic of the Ba‘th Party to cope with Islamist and any other religious opposition in Iraq was the growing marginalisation of religious scholars and shaykhs from the public discourse of the press. In this way, the party deprived both Sunnī and Shī‘ī religious scholars and shaykhs of an important voice and public platform in order to weaken their influence and popularity in society. In her short overview about the position of the Iraqi clergy, Joyce Wiley summarises the role and influence of Sunnī and Shī‘ī religious scholars as highly limited. As in so many other Muslim states in the twentieth century, they were confined to strictly religious duties such as “advising individual believers on Islamic law and comforting them with hope for life in the next world” or “pedestrian decisions such as declaring when Ramadan begins.” The scholars were bereft of their traditional role of advising the government according to Islamic principles, i.e. *shūrā* or adjudicating family law due to the absence of *sharī‘a* courts.³⁶⁴ Researchers often refer to those religious scholars who appeared in the Iraqi media as loyal pro-government scholars who merely evaluated religious servants for the regime or decided the curriculum in the state-controlled religious colleges.³⁶⁵

In accordance with its political programme against sectarianism, Ba‘thist officials avoided at all costs any terminological distinction between Sunna and Shī‘a in public discourse. If they addressed religious scholars and shaykhs of either sect, then only with the neutral form “men of religion”. Therefore, all official announcements, addresses, and laws refer at a first glance to all representatives of Iraq’s religious communities without a distinction. Particular references to Sunnī or Shī‘ī “men of religion” need to be established with additional background information about the respective context of a statement. Soon after the revolution, for instance, the regime addressed more the country’s Shī‘a community in the newspapers. The new Ba‘th leadership was well aware of the *marja‘īya*’s strong influence among the Shī‘a and immediately began to reach out to them in order to assure their support. In August 1968, President Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr received a delegation of Shī‘ī scholars in Baghdad and praised in his speech the future role all men of religion should play in

³⁶³ The Ba‘th Party and the Iraqi media only used this neutral term to refer to religious scholars, shaykhs, custodians of shrines, priests and all other representatives of Iraq’s religious communities, be they Muslim, Christian, Yazīdī, Sunnī or Shī‘ī etc. References to sources where this term was explicitly used will follow throughout the text.

³⁶⁴ Wiley, ‘The Position of the Iraqi Clergy’, 55, 58, 60.

³⁶⁵ Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1986, 469.

reforming the individual and Iraqi society at large through the spread of an Islamic spirit among the citizens.³⁶⁶ Amatzia Baram describes in his study the Ba‘th’s media campaign in the early 1970s which prominently covered Shī‘ī religious scholars and regime donations for the holy shrines (‘*atabāt*) in order to win over Shī‘ī hearts and minds.³⁶⁷

As stated above and documented elsewhere, these attempts failed miserably, and the regime pursued rather restrictive policies to undermine the role of Iraq’s religious representatives, to co-opt them or to force them into compliance.³⁶⁸ The coverage of Sunnī men of religion in Iraqi newspapers during this decade reveals that they appeared rather rarely in individual articles and mainly if they had to support the regime publicly. In one instance of compliance early in 1969, the grand *mufī* Najm al-Dīn al-Wā‘iz publicly endorsed the regime’s execution of traitors against the *umma*, religion and the fatherland as a religious obligation.³⁶⁹ The regime sanctioned with such statements its cruel punishments religiously by showing that even the highest Sunnī religious authority approved of them. More than two weeks later, *al-Jumhūrīya* presented a large picture series of fourteen alleged spies for Israel, among them Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Iraqi citizens, hanging from gallows in Baghdad’s public space.³⁷⁰

Apart from such statements for a religious legitimisation of Ba‘th politics, either won through co-option or coercion, religious scholars appeared rather rarely in the press with reference to their regular duties, sometimes when foreign scholars visited the country.³⁷¹ The Ba‘thist press always covered the most important official religious occasions which were supported by the regime such as the Prophet’s birthday (*mawlid al-nabī*), the fast breaking (‘*īd al-fīṭr*), the sacrifice celebration (‘*īd al-aḍḥā*), the Prophet’s night journey (*laylat al-isrā’ wa-l-mi‘rāj*), the revelation of the Quran (*laylat al-qadar*), and even the Muslims’ victory over the pagans of Mecca (*Badr day*).

³⁶⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 25.08.1968, 1.

³⁶⁷ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 94–95.

³⁶⁸ Wiley, ‘The Position of the Iraqi Clergy’, 58–63; Luizard, ‘The Nature of the Confrontation Between the State and Marja’ism’; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, chaps 2, 3; Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq*, 129–30. In her study about the Asad regime in Syria, Lisa Wedeen argues that the Ba‘thist discourse, propaganda, and cult were strategies of domination based on compliance rather than legitimacy (Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*, 6).

³⁶⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 03.02.1969, 4. There also appeared pro-regime statements from Shī‘ī scholars such as a fatwa of Ayatollah Muḥammad al-Baghdādī who urged all Muslims to close their ranks against the Zionist and imperialist enemies (*al-Jumhūrīya* 11.06.1969, 4, 11).

³⁷⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 21.02.1969, 8.

³⁷¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 12.02.1969, 3.

Religious scholars attended these official occasions, but they and their voices were almost never mentioned. The articles mainly covered speeches of ministers, regime figures, and academics other than religious scholars. If the articles included photos, they usually portrayed the event focusing on the speakers and regime figures dressed in Western suits rather than attending religious scholars.³⁷² Attempting to marginalise the latter in public, the Ba‘th obviously avoided granting them a platform for publicity in the press. Parallel to such restrictions which surely fuelled allegations against the Ba‘th as anti-religious, the leadership saw the need to polish up its own religious image as will be seen in the following part.

3.1.3. *The Emergence of the Presidential Sharīfian Nasab as a Political Tool*

In the context of the Ba‘th’s early conflict with Islamist opposition, the regime cautiously began to use a religious symbolism with the intention to religiously legitimise its rule. The Ba‘th leadership aimed to engender and maintain the belief that their existing political leadership was also from a religious perspective the most appropriate one for Iraq.³⁷³ Since the greatest danger could arise from the Shī‘ī scholarly circles, this political use of a religious symbolism was mainly addressed towards the Shī‘a community. Parallel to the coercion against Islamist circles and the marginalisation of men of religion in general, the regime itself began to use Shī‘ī religious symbols and financially supported the major Shī‘ī shrines. Ba‘th politicians publicly visited these holy sites in order to show their care for the Islamic heritage of the country and a cousin of the president even commenced to promulgate their clan and tribe’s alleged descent from the Prophet Muḥammad. The noble descent of the presidential clan gained political currency only under Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s rule in the 1980s and 1990s, but its foundation was laid in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This section will reveal how this alleged sharīfian descent slowly entered the public discourse out of a political calculus in order to strengthen religious legitimacy towards

³⁷² See for example *al-Jumhūrīya* 17.12.1968, 25.09.1969, 5; 17.11.1969, 5; 24.11.1969, 5; 26.11.1969, 1, 15; 27.11.1969, 3; 19.05.1970, 3,5; 21.05.1970, 4; 22.05.1970, 4; 25.11.1970, 1, 11; 15.04.1973, 1; 05.04.1974, 5; 13.03.1976, 1; 26.06.1976, 1; 02.05.1977, 5; 10.02.1978, 4; 20.02.1978, 7; 04.07.1978, 4; 10.02.1979, 1.

³⁷³ This definition of legitimacy is inspired by Schaar, *Legitimacy in the Modern State*, 20. It is not intended to say that the Ba‘th succeeded with this endeavour, that it actually created such a belief among the population. From the sources, we can at least say that it certainly intended to do so and successfully enforced a compliance to its narrative among the population.

the Shī'a. The Section 3.2.2 will then elaborate more on the surprising Sufi background of the Ba'th leaders' alleged Prophetic descent and its relation to an increasing Sufi literary activity at that time. On the political level, however, this Sufi background did not yet play a direct role.

President Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr himself never mentioned his sharīfian descent or genealogy (*nasab*) on the political stage during the 1970s. It was rather his second cousin Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ who devised this claim during his tenure as governor of Baghdad. His use of the presidential tribal genealogy was intended to convey the message that the offspring of the Prophet and more importantly of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Ḥusayn, the central saintly figures in Shī'ī Islam, now ruled Iraq. This claim came quite surprising and clearly contradicted the party's official ideological line at that time since tribalism was on two levels a thorn in the flesh of the young Ba'th regime. According to its ideological programme, the Ba'th Party envisioned, first of all, an egalitarian Iraqi society without any old feudal shackles. Powerful tribal shaykhs and tribal factionalism contradicted this vision. Second, tribalism could threaten national unity and the regime's hold on power through tribal factionalism within the government and military.³⁷⁴ Addressing the masses in the spirit of national unity in July 1969, the Ba'th officially declared war on tribalism (*'ashā'irīya*), sectarianism (*tā'ifīya*), racism (*unṣurīya*), reactionism (*raja'īya*), and regionalism (*iqlīmīya*).³⁷⁵ In the Ba'thist view, these dividing dangers needed to be curbed since they obstructed societal progress.

Despite the official struggle against tribalism, the new leadership, too, began to secure its position with its own tribal patronage network from Tikrīt. Baram notes here particularly the influence of Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ, who reportedly proposed the promotion of loyal kinsmen from the presidential Āl Nāṣir and other tribes into key positions within the security services and finally also the military.³⁷⁶ In 1976, the Ba'th enacted a law which has often been interpreted as a measure to disguise this practice

³⁷⁴ The Ba'th was still a minority movement in Iraq's political landscape and especially its civilian wing around Ṣaddām Ḥusayn feared the tribal and regional factionalism within the party's military wing. Back in 1963, the Ba'th had been ousted from power through a military coup by 'Abd al-Salām 'Ārif backed by his Jumaylī tribal networks in the army. Faleh Abdul Jabar has shown in this context that the military aristocracy and the military tribalism of the previous 'Ārif regime were still central topics at the Ba'th's eighth congress in 1974 (Abdul-Jabar, 'Sheikhs and Ideologues', 81).

³⁷⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.06.1969, 4. See also: Sakai, 'Tribalization', 141.

³⁷⁶ Khayr Allāh reportedly approached the president, his friend and relative, with the demand of more reliance on family ties to stay in power. With the help of his nephew Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, a protective ring of loyal tribesmen around the president was formed, the presidential protection force (*ḥimāya*) (Baram, 'Saddam's Power Structure', 95).

since it prohibited the use of tribal and regional names (*alqāb*) altogether. Party comrades including Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and his fellow ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm dropped henceforward their regional names “al-Tikrītī” and “al-Dūrī.”³⁷⁷ This strategic political promotion of tribal bonds together with the sharīfian descent eventually peaked later in the 1980s and 1990s and came to be classified by researchers as a form of *etatist tribalism*. Faleh Abdul Jabar defined it as “a process in which tribal lineages, symbolic and fictive primordial systems and cultures are integrated into the state so as to enhance the political power of a certain fragile and vulnerable state elite.”³⁷⁸ In spite of the mentioned ideological discrepancy, Khayr Allāh was not only willing to resort to their tribal network to secure the leadership but also to promote their noble tribal genealogy in order to improve their religious image. The latter became part of the regime’s strategic use of Shī‘ī symbolism, the support of Shī‘ī values, holy places, and clerics throughout the following decades.³⁷⁹

As governor of Baghdad, Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ acted as mediator in tribal affairs between the tribes of Tikrīt and Sāmarrā’,³⁸⁰ a traditional function of Prophetic descendants in Iraqi history.³⁸¹ From 1968 on, Khayr Allāh was the first to spread the sharīfian genealogy (*nasab*) of the president, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, and himself with his books³⁸² and also during public addresses. He gained popularity as an important religious ideologue for the party at that time and was from the beginning involved in the talks with the Shī‘ī scholarly circles.³⁸³ He regularly visited the Shī‘ī holy places on religious occasions, for instance in October 1969 during the official celebration of Imam ‘Alī’s birthday in Karbalā’ and gave a talk about the four rightly guided caliphs.

³⁷⁷ Some interviewees rated their former use of regional names instead of tribal ones as a proof that Ṣaddām and ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm had no considerable tribal connection at all (Interviews with Farḥān Kāzīm, a former Ba‘thist, 20.10.2015 and Nadīm al-Rāwī, 11.11.2015). According to Davis, the law was passed in 1978 (Davis, *Memories of State*, 183, Fn. 29).

³⁷⁸ Abdul-Jabar, ‘Sheikhs and Ideologues’, 71. Baram investigates the same phenomenon under the heading of “Neo-Tribalism” (Baram, ‘Neo-Tribalism’). However, he only focuses on the period of the late 1980s and 1990s and regards the state as the sole actor in this process disregarding therewith the perspective of cultural dynamics among the tribes themselves. Abdul Jabar includes the latter perspective with his category of *cultural* or *social tribalism* in a more comprehensive way.

³⁷⁹ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 94–102.

³⁸⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 15.09.1969, 4.

³⁸¹ See for instance Nakash, *The Shi‘is of Iraq*, 40.

³⁸² Ṭilfāḥ, *al-‘Irāq*, 2:175; Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*.

³⁸³ He regularly published essays on ideological and religious subjects in the Iraqi newspapers throughout the 1970s and 1980s and was the author of the twenty five and eighteen volume books *You are the Best Nation Created for Mankind* (*Kuntum khayr umma ukhrijat li-l-nās*) and *How is the Way to God* (*Kayf al-sabīl ilā Allāh*) as well as many others, see for example *al-Jumhūrīya* 28.10.1969, 3, 11; 19.05.1970, 3; 25.06.1975, 7; 07.01.1983, 3; 10.04.1985, 3; 29.04.1985, 3. Also: Ṭilfāḥ, *al-Īmān bi-llāh*; Ṭilfāḥ, *Ilm al-Qur‘ān wa-‘ulūm al-insān*; Ṭilfāḥ, *al-Islām dīn wa-dawla*; Ṭilfāḥ, *Min ‘ulamā’ al-‘arab*.

Praising ‘Alī as the last one of them, he mentioned also his own descent from the fourth caliph and first Shī‘ī Imam publicly:

His [‘Alī’s] life is about glorious and noble deeds, an overflowing ocean for which the books are too narrow. I hope that I will not be accused of prejudice if a part of it will be announced [just] because I am his descendant (*ḥafīd*) and owe him to mention fragments of his glorious deeds.³⁸⁴

The content of the whole speech is exclusively religious in nature and, considering the fact that he represented the regime, clearly aimed to raise his and the president’s religious credibility. Simultaneously, his noble descent regularly appeared in his publications, one of which mentions the following biographical information about the author on the back:

He was born in the year 1916, in Tikrīt from two Arab ancestors and a family which is deep-rooted in Arabdom as the pedigree of his father ends at Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his mother comes from the clan (*fakhidh*) al-Bū Bakr from the al-‘Izza tribe.³⁸⁵

Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr and Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, too, appeared more and more in a pious light even though without any reference to their pedigree. In a newspaper article from *al-Jumhūrīya* only three weeks after the Ba‘thist coup, the new president al-Bakr was portrayed as a devout Muslim. The article claimed to reproduce two statements about him from the international press. The first one, purportedly from the magazine *Newsweek*, described him as a mixture of a devout Muslim and a socialist fanatic while the second from the *New York Times* pictured him as a moderate conservative, direct in his speech and his deeds, and eager in the fulfilment of his duties as a Muslim. The article continues that “he does not drink wine, adheres strictly to the rituals of the Islamic law, and prays five times each day as it is ordered by the Islamic religion”.³⁸⁶ In addition to that, he was regularly pictured as a devout patron and supporter of Islamic festivities as well as of Islamic institutions in general.

Further bolstering their religious image, al-Bakr and Ṣaddām received publicity during visitations (*ziyārāt*) of holy shrines with a clear emphasis on support and care for Shī‘ī holy places. Many scholars interpreted these visitations as indicators of the regime’s gradual religious turn following Ṣaddām’s takeover in 1979 and the start of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980.³⁸⁷ The practice of shrine visitations massively increased during the

³⁸⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 01.10.1969, 10.

³⁸⁵ Ṭilfāḥ, *Ayyām*.

³⁸⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 06.08.1968, 5. He was generally known to be very religious and joined the party rather late in 1960, apparently more for his Pan-Arab convictions rather than his secularism (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 49).

³⁸⁷ Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology*, 116; Bengio, *Saddam’s Word*, 178; Hiro, *The Longest War*, 34; Saleem Khan, ‘Ba‘thist Iraq’, 119.

war years, but the Iraqi newspapers prove the Ba‘th’s continuous use of it already from 1968 on. Between 1968 and 1979, the media covered al-Bakr and other representatives of the regime regularly visiting the Shī‘ī shrines and participating in various religious occasions such as the Imams’ birthdays (*mawālīd*) or days of martyrdom (*istishhād*). Already in August 1968, the president sent representatives to the holy shrines in Najaf and Karbalā’ to assure his deep interest in the holy places and the revolutionary benefits for all layers of society including the Iraqi Shī‘a.³⁸⁸ The media coverage of his own visitations commenced on 9 August 1968 with a visit at the shrine of Mūsā al-Kāẓim in Baghdad and continued until his death in 1982.³⁸⁹ In 1969 the media presented him attending the birthday (*mawlid*) of Imam al-Ḥusayn in Karbalā’ sitting in the first row among the guests with a rosary (*misbaḥa*) in his hands.³⁹⁰ The majority of these visitations occurred at the shrines of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Najaf, of al-Ḥusayn and his half-brother al-‘Abbās in Karbalā’, as well as of Mūsā al-Kāẓim and Muḥammad al-Taḳī in Baghdad’s suburb Kāẓimīya. The visits were normally covered in the press with small photographs of al-Bakr in front of the shrine buildings with a few lines below explaining the event. The newspaper coverage additionally reflects the president’s special interest in the shrine of Mūsā al-Kāẓim’s son, Imam al-Ḥamza al-Gharbī near Ḥilla, which he visited proportionally more often than all the others.³⁹¹

Şaddām Ḥusayn, at that time secretary general of the Regional Command Council, started visiting the shrines in Karbalā’ “unexpectedly” in November 1969. On this occasion, he assured the party’s care for the holy places and the religious scholars (*‘ulamā’*) and inspected an on-going restoration project of al-Ḥusayn’s shrine.³⁹² Besides that, Şaddām’s activities as a political pilgrim remained not limited to Shī‘ī shrines alone. In April 1976, *al-Jumhūrīya* covered Şaddām on two full pages as leader of a diplomatic mission to Saudi Arabia showing him perform the small pilgrimage

³⁸⁸ *al-Jumhūrīya* 07.08.1968, 4; 08.08.1968, 4.

³⁸⁹ Further visitations at different shrines are documented in *al-Jumhūrīya* of the following dates: 03.12.1968, 19.08.1969, 28.06.1970, 09.10.1970, 24.11.1970, 02.01.1973, 06 and 07.09.1973, 13.04.1974, 03.04.1976, 12.11.1978. In *al-Thawra*: 02 and 12.06.1981.

³⁹⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 25.10.1969, 4. Further examples in *al-Jumhūrīya* are the governor of Karbalā’, Maḥmūd al-Qarrah Ghūlī in Karbalā’ (07.08. 1968), Ḥardān al-Tikrītī performed the *‘umra* in Mecca (05.11.1968), or Ḥammād Shihāb who visited the shrines in Najaf and Karbalā’ (25.03.1970).

³⁹¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* from the 02.01.1973, 03.04.1976, and 12.11.1978. He ordered restorations and enlargements of the shrine on 15.03.1974 and 09.06.1979. The reasons for this special interest remain obscure. According to Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaydarī, al-Bakr’s once had a nightly vision of his future presidency which was related to his restoration of al-Ḥamza’s shrine and his continuous custody of it (Ḥaydarī, *Trāḳīdīyā Karbalā’*, 296–97).

³⁹² *al-Jumhūrīya* 21.11.1969, 1, 11. Further visits were covered in *al-Jumhūrīya* from 28.11.1969 and 24.11.1970.

(*‘umra*) in Mecca and the midday prayer in the Prophet’s mosque in Medina.³⁹³ The newspaper article highlighted the following quotation of him:

We had the great fortune of receiving the utmost felicity to perform the *‘umra* and visit the shrine (*qabr*) of our great messenger Muḥammad (ṣ), our Prophet and guide (*hādīn*) to the path of glory and nobility, [the path] of elevation of the Arab and Islamic *umma*, and our inspiration in the defence of our sacred places and our heritage. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn.³⁹⁴

After almost a decade of such shrine visitations, Ṣaddām drew for the first time in 1977 an explicit symbolic connection between the Ba‘thist leaders and the Imams ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn. Early in that year, the second climax in the conflict with the Shī‘ī Islamist opposition, the so-called *Arba‘īn* uprising, marked a major turning point in the regime’s religious propaganda. At that point, the leadership began to address the question of religion more explicit than before in the public discourse, for instance with Ṣaddām’s famous speech on religion and cultural heritage six months later.³⁹⁵ In December 1977, Ṣaddām and ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī received wide publicity in the press with a tour to the holy shrines of al-Ḥusayn and al-‘Abbās in Karbalā’ as well as of ‘Alī in Najaf. The newspapers highlighted as usually the president’s care and sponsorship for the shrines and the Imams but now due to a “spiritual connection to them”. The newspapers clearly put Ṣaddām and ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī centre stage in this event, picturing them for the first time praying in front of the shrine as well as meeting religious scholars. During a speech at the holy places, Ṣaddām declared:

Our lord ‘Alī, our lord al-Ḥusayn and all the virtuous forefathers (*ṣāliḥīn*) are not only the most prominent Muslim leaders in the missionary activity (*da‘wa*), they are likewise our ancestors (*ajdādīnā*). [...] If anyone of you has one single connection with them, then we have therefore two connections. For every work that Mr. President, the leader, or every individual undertakes, if he undertakes it with inspiration from his faith and not from the field of the external manifestations (i.e. the objective world), then this is the basis that proves our spiritual connection with our lords and our ancestors.³⁹⁶

Baram and Bengio saw in Ṣaddām’s statement about the “two connections” already an explicit reference to his genealogical connection.³⁹⁷ However, the full text of the statement rather suggests a historical connection with the Imams as Muslim leaders

³⁹³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 16.04.1976, 1, 3. On August 7, 1980, *al-Jumhūrīya* covered him again performing the small pilgrimage (*‘umra*) in Mecca.

³⁹⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 16.04.1976, 3.

³⁹⁵ Ḥusayn, *On History*, 21–34.

³⁹⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 14.12.1977, 1, 5, 6. The same report was also published in *al-Thawra* at the same date (Baram, ‘La « maison »’, 302, Fn. 2).

³⁹⁷ Baram presents this passage in a shortened version leaving out the context and adding his own interpretation: “If any of you has one connection with Imams ‘Ali and Husayn, we [read: “I”] have two connections [spiritual and a bloodline]... They are our [read: my] ancestors [ajdaduna].” (Baram, 302, Fn. 2; Bengio, *Saddam’s Word*, 178). The context as presented above shows that this is not yet a clear reference to Ṣaddām’s bloodline. Additionally, Ṣaddām appears here as a spokesman for the president and the government, the “we” should therefore rather be taken literally.

and ancestors of the Iraqi nation (!) as well as a spiritual connection by drawing inspiration from faith like ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn did. Nevertheless, the ambiguous use of the term “ancestors” already hints in a certain direction if we keep in mind Khayr Allāh’s previous efforts to spread their pedigree.

This section made clear that Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ introduced the Prophetic descent of the presidential tribe in the public discourse and he remained the only one who made use of it in the context of the Ba‘th’s religious policies during the 1970s. The president and Ṣaddām Ḥusayn created their pious images rather through visitations at Shī‘ī shrines without mentioning their descent. On the domestic level they had to assuage the Shī‘ī Islamist opposition *inter alia* by showing respect and veneration for the Shī‘ī shrines while on an international level, too, they had to show a general religious commitment against their atheist image without contradicting their secular credo. From an ideological point of view, visitations at ‘Alī’s and al-Ḥusayn’s shrines could still be interpreted as an interest in Iraq’s cultural, religious, and historical heritage. The pilgrimage to the Prophet’s tomb serves this purpose as well, since it can appeal to a religious Muslim as a truly Islamic tradition and at the same time to a secular Ba‘thist as respect for and interest in Muḥammad, the central historical role model of Ba‘thism in the writings of Michel ‘Aflaq. This secular credo became only undermined when the sharīfian identity came to dominate Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s religious image in the following decades. The ground for this image had been laid by his uncle Khayr Allāh in the 1970s.

3.1.4. *The Restructuring of the Ministry of Awqāf*

Parallel to the Ba‘th regime’s conflict with an Islamist opposition, the marginalisation of religious scholars, and its own, still cautious religious propaganda, the state continued its expansion over Iraq’s society. Part of this expansion was the gradual nationalisation and Ba‘thisation of the religious landscape. The process of this Ba‘thisation was also intended to modernise the whole religious sector but it resulted concurrently in a growing state control over religious establishments and their employees. Crucial for this endeavour was the complete restructuring of the Ministry of *Awqāf* and the legislation of new laws for religious establishments and schools. During the 1970s, this ministry underwent several structural rearrangements which coincided with the main clashes between the regime and the Islamist opposition in

1969, 1970, 1976, and 1977. In the course of these rearrangements, the Ba‘th largely dissolved the former administrative division between Sunnī and Shī‘ī affairs within the ministry and continued a Sunnī dominance over them as it appointed only Sunnīs to positions as minister of *awqāf*. In 1976, the ministry received a new task with the creation of new administrative directorates. Before, it had merely been an institution of administration and control but gained in 1976 the explicit task of raising religious awareness in society. This step meant the beginning of the Ba‘th’s own active spread of an Islam in accordance to its party principles. Parallel to these changes, the annual budgets of the ministry throughout the 1970s reveal an enormous increase of state patronage in the same period. In 1976, the budget was two times as high as in 1968 and in 1979, five times.

During the first two years in power the new regime took over the administrative system of the ministry from its political predecessors in 1966. In this system, the ministry controlled and administered Islamic institutions of both Sunna and Shī‘a, yet within two separate directorates which will be introduced in the course of this section.³⁹⁸ Generally, an evaluation of the sectarian balance and representation between Sunna and Shī‘a in the endowment administration on the basis of laws is a rather difficult task. Over the twentieth century, the Iraqī laws³⁹⁹ which define the ministry and the system of religious endowments lack any clear terminological distinctions between Iraq’s various religious communities. Terms such as “Sunnī”, or “ja‘farī”⁴⁰⁰ with reference to Iraq’s Twelver Shī‘a appear only very rarely in the paragraphs which define the tasks of the ministry’s directorates with regard to their responsibility for Muslim religious institutions. This lack of sectarian terms is the result of a general tabooing of sectarianism in the Iraqi nation state which aimed to avoid in this way a

³⁹⁸ Aside from the administrative divisions within the ministry, centralised state control of Sunnī and Shī‘ī religious endowments commenced already with the *tanẓīmāt* reforms in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century (Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, chap. 5).

³⁹⁹ Since 2004, the United Nations Development Programme provides in association with the High Judicial Council of Iraq the Iraqi Legal Data Base with full Arabic transcripts of laws, bylaws, and amendments between 1917 until today. In many cases, even pdf-files of original legal documents are attached. The name of the website is www.iraqlid.iq. Noorah al-Gailani also used this data base for her PhD (Gailani, ‘The Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’, 357). An alternative source with similar transcripts from 1960 to 2011 is the US-based wiki.dorar-aliraq.net. I regularly accessed both data bases between July 2016 and December 2016, and again in September 2017.

⁴⁰⁰ For one rare occurrence, see ‘Ārif, Nizām dīwān al-awqāf, para. 12. “ja‘farī” is originally a designation for the Shī‘ī school of jurisprudence but it is also widely used for the whole community in the Arab world. It refers back to the sixth Imam Ja‘far al-Šādiq, who was known as a great scholar and transmitter of Prophetic traditions (Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 38–39, 125–26).

terminological institutionalisation of prevalent sectarian problems that could tear the Iraqi nation apart.⁴⁰¹ The Ba‘th Party continued with this policy.

In the first years, the ministry was still named *Dīwān al-Awqāf* and composed of eight institutions, (1) the Supreme Council for *Awqāf* (*majlis al-awqāf al-a‘lā*) and seven General Directorates (*mudīrīyāt*). The General Directorates encompassed (2) Building and General Engineering (*al-i‘mār wa-l-handasa al-‘amma*), (3) Administration, Personnel Affairs and Institutions (*al-idāra wa-l-dhātīya wa-l-mu‘assasāt*), (4) Estates (*al-amlāk*), (5) Inspection and Examination (*al-taftīsh wa-l-tadqīq*), (6) Law (*al-ḥuqūq*), (7) Accounting (*al-ḥisābāt*), and (8) the Holy Shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* (*al-‘atabāt al-muqaddasa*) (see Fig 4 below).⁴⁰² The Directorate (3) for Administration, Personnel Affairs and Institutions, headed by a director (*mudīr*) upon appointment by the prime minister, was in charge of all affairs and personnel related to religious and charitable institutions (*mu‘assasāt dīnīya wa-khayrīya*).⁴⁰³ According to law number 55 from 1966, these institutions were mainly Sunnī institutions such as “mosques, *takāyā*, religious schools” but also reformatories (*dawr al-tahdhīb*), libraries, *saqāyā*,⁴⁰⁴ orphanages, nursery schools and others. It is not clear if Shī‘ī mosques are counted among the general category of mosques which the law defines merely as “mosques for the Friday sermon, minor mosques, and *takāyā*”.⁴⁰⁵ Notably, other clearly Shī‘ī institutions such as Ḥusaynīyāt⁴⁰⁶ do not appear here. The most important Shī‘ī institutions, by contrast, had been separately administered by the Directorate (8) for the Holy Shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* established in 1966. This Directorate was tasked with the administration of all affairs and personnel of the shrines of the Shī‘ī Imams in Najaf, Karbalā’, Kāzimīya, and Sāmarrā’ including the shrines of those Imam’s descendants in central and southern Iraq. Paragraph four of law 25 from 1966, for instance, provided the directorate with the authority to appoint a new administrator (*mutawallī*) for a Shī‘ī endowment (*al-waqf al-ja‘farī*) after its dissolution (*tazkīya*) in cooperation with the leading Shī‘ī scholar (*mujtahid*) of the community.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰¹ For an investigation of sectarianism in the Iraqi state over the twentieth century, see Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq*.

⁴⁰² Algar, “‘Atabāt”.

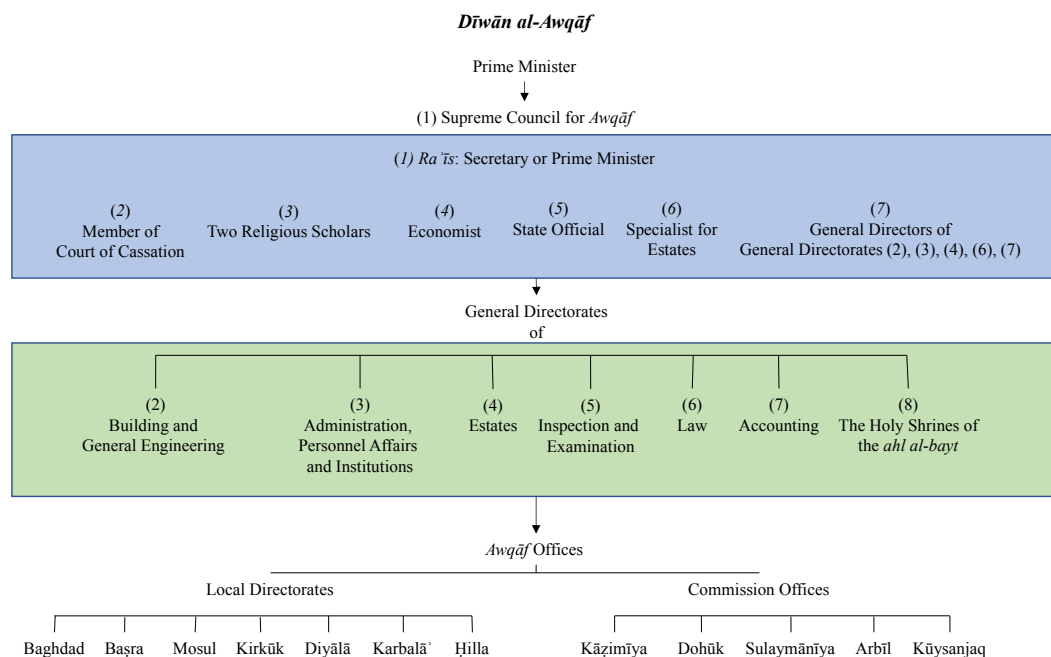
⁴⁰³ ‘Ārif, *Nizām dīwān al-awqāf*, para. 7.

⁴⁰⁴ A *saqāya* is a small public house which traditionally offered water and other refreshments for pilgrims. Prominent *saqāyā* of Baghdad are, for instance, the *Saqāyat Murād Affandī*, *Saqāyat Malik Ghāzī I.*, and *Saqāyāt Āl al-Haydarī* (A‘zamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-Imām al-A‘zam*, 1964, 2:190–92).

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Ārif, *Qānūn al-khidma fī l-mu‘assasāt al-dīnīya wa-l-khayrīya* raqm (55) li-sanat 1966, para. 1.

⁴⁰⁶ These are Shī‘ī gathering halls especially for the commemoration of Imam al-Ḥusayn’s martyrdom in Karbalā’ on ‘*āshūrā*’, i.e. the tenth of Muḥarram (Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 240).

⁴⁰⁷ ‘Ārif, *Qānūn idārat al-‘atabāt al-muqaddasa* raqm (25) li-sanat 1966, para. 4; ‘Ārif, *Nizām dīwān al-awqāf*, para. 12.



F-4

Figure 4: Structure of the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* in 1968

The whole *Dīwān al-Awqāf* was headed by a secretary (*wakīl*) who received his authority from the prime minister. In the latter, the highest authority with full responsibility over all affairs of the *Dīwān* had been vested.⁴⁰⁸ Its highest decision making body was the Supreme Council for *Awqāf* with twelve members, namely: (1) the head (*ra'īs*) of the *Dīwān*; (2) one member of the Court of Cassation (*maḥkamat al-tamyīz*); (3) two from among the great religious scholars (*'ulamā'*) in Iraq without any stipulations of a sectarian background; (4) one economist; (5) one first degree state official (*muwazzaf*) according to the law of civil service; (6) one specialist for estates; finally the respective general directors (*mudīrūn*) of (7) building and general engineering, (8) administration, identification and institutions, (9) accounting, (10) estates, and (11) law. The head of the *Dīwān* also headed this council and appointed with approval of the prime minister its members (2) to (6) for a period of three years with the possibility of a tenure extension.⁴⁰⁹ The Supreme Council for *Awqāf* decided about all affairs and oversaw the work of all the mentioned General Directorates every one of which was headed by a general director (*mudīr 'āmm*). Interestingly, the director of the Holy Shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* is not mentioned as a member of the Supreme Council whereas the director of the Sunnī institutions (8) obviously is. If this

⁴⁰⁸ 'Ārif, Nizām dīwān al-awqāf.

⁴⁰⁹ 'Ārif, sec. 4.

is correct, the representative for the Shī'ī institutions had no say in the highest decision making of this body.

Next in the hierarchy after the General Directorates came the *Awqāf* Offices (*dawā'ir*) in the respective Iraqi provinces. They were again divided into seven Local Directorates (*mudīrīyāt*) and five Commission Offices (*ma'mūrīyāt*). The Local Directorates encompassed the administrative units of Baghdad (including Ramādī and Kūt but excluding Kāzimīya, Sāmarrā' and Tikrīt), Baṣra (including 'Amāra and Nāṣirīya), Mosul (excluding Dohūk, Zākhū, and 'Amādīya), Kirkūk, Diyālā, Karbalā', and Ḥilla (including Dīwānīya). The respective Commission Offices were responsible for Kāzimīya (including Sāmarrā' and Tikrīt), Dohūk (including Zākhū and 'Amādīya), Sulaymānīya, Arbīl (excluding Kūysanjaq), and Kūysanjaq. All Local Directorates and Commission Offices were formed and acted under the supervision of the head of the *Dīwān*. "If required" the latter would order the formation of a Scholarly Council (*al-majlis al-'ilmī*) in every Local Directorate or Commission Office. Chaired by a religious judge (*qāḍī*), the Scholarly Council included a director or commissioner (*ma'mūr*) and three religious scholars who were appointed by the head of the *Dīwān* for a period of three years. Again, the law does not say anything about the balance between Sunna and Shī'a among these religious scholars. The balance depended most probably on the situation in the respective provinces. In areas with a majority Shī'a population like in the south, the regime could certainly not only appoint Sunnī scholars without provoking an outrage among the community. Detailed information was unfortunately not available. The council's main function was, finally, to oversee the work in the directorates and the choice of secretaries for the different offices.⁴¹⁰

The new regime made it unmistakably clear from the beginning that it was not willing to leave the control of Iraq's *awqāf* system to the religious scholars or even Islamists. With Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr's nomination as president and shortly afterwards prime minister, he himself gained direct control of the *Dīwān*.⁴¹¹ In the aftermath of the revolution, al-Bakr's internal rival 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Nāyif had become prime minister and nominated the Sunnī religious scholar and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, 'Abd al-Karīm Zaydān al-'Ānī as minister of state for religious affairs.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ 'Ārif, paras 13, 15.

⁴¹¹ Shākir, *al-Tārīkh al-islāmī*, 387.

⁴¹² *al-Jumhūrīya* 19.07.1968, 1. The nomination came upon a proposal of army officer Ibrāhīm al-Dāwūd and apparently without consultation with 'Abd al-Karīm Zaydān (Shākir, 387; A'zamī, 'The Muslim Brotherhood', 172). For a certain period in his life, 'Abd al-Karīm was influenced by the

Within only three weeks, however, the Ba‘th purged all its internal rivals under the guise of its proclaimed struggle against tribalism, factionalism, sectarianism, and regionalism in the state. Among the purges were, first of all, the faction of al-Nāyif and his fellows⁴¹³ most of whom hailed from Anbār province but also representatives of Iraq’s Sunnī Sufi elite such as ‘Abd al-Karīm Zaydān, the former minister of justice Muṣliḥ al-Naqshbandī,⁴¹⁴ or former minister of economy ‘Abd Allāh al-Naqshbandī.⁴¹⁵ Instead of ‘Abd al-Karīm Zaydān, the Ba‘th appointed Ḥamad Dallī Aḥmad al-Karbūlī as minister of state for *awqāf* affairs. Having been one of the earliest Ba‘thists, al-Karbūlī was a secular Sunnī academic in the field of education who had received a doctoral degree from Indiana University in the 1960s and had worked before as cultural attaché in Britain.⁴¹⁶ Al-Karbūlī was a rather marginal figure and only a titular minister since Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr himself controlled the ministry. The newspapers praised him as the “Believer President” and emphasised his special interest in Iraq’s holy sites and religious institutions. Ḥamad Dallī Aḥmad al-Karbūlī, in turn, spread the news that “the revolution has liberated the work for the endowments”, promised a comprehensive survey about the needs of mosques and other religious institutions in all Iraqi provinces, and regularly presented summaries of building and restoration projects of religious places.⁴¹⁷

One year later in July 1969, al-Bakr further extended his authority over the *Dīwān* with a restructuring of the Supreme Council for *Awqāf*. He excluded the General Directors from the council and split it into two separate bodies, one for religious and one for financial affairs. He created, thereby, a separate religious authority with one member of the Court of Cassation and two religious scholars.⁴¹⁸ Again, details about their sectarian background were not mentioned. Its tasks became the verification,

teachings of Sufism and became a *murīd* of the Abū Khumra branch of the Rifā‘īya (Zaydān, ‘Nubdha ‘an al-shaykh’).

⁴¹³ Regional rivalries became soon apparent in the new government. The new Ba‘th rulers, dominated by Tikrītīs, were careful to get rid of rival networks such as that of al-Nāyif or his fellow Ibrāhīm al-Dāwūd from Anbār province (Baram, ‘The Ruling Political Elite’, 450).

⁴¹⁴ He was the son of the Sufi shaykh Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī from Bāmarnī close to Mosul, himself a Sufi, and had previously worked as minister of justice and minister of *awqāf* (A‘zamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-Imām al-A‘zam*, 1964, 2:384).

⁴¹⁵ Shākir, *al-Tārīkh al-islāmī*, 386–88. ‘Abd Allāh is the son and spiritual successor of the prominent Naqshbandī shaykh Muṣṭafā Kamāl al-Dīn in Arbīl (Sālīh, *al-Duktūr ‘Abdallāh Muṣṭafā*).

⁴¹⁶ Bakr, Niẓām ta‘dīl niẓām dīwān al-awqāf raqm 18 li-sanat 1966; Ḥasan, *Ba‘th al-‘Irāq*, 492; *The London Diplomatic List*, 24.

⁴¹⁷ For instance: *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.08.1968, 5; 28.08.1968, 4; 22.09.1968, 4; 20.10.1968, 4; 03.06.1969, 4; 17.07.1970, 15.

⁴¹⁸ One of them was the Sunnī scholar Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ṭā‘ī who served in the council from 1969 to 1977 (Sāmarrā‘ī, *Tā‘rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 551).

modification, and refutation of decisions by the Scholarly Councils, the preparation of religious curricula, the building of religious and charitable institutions, or the appointment of members to the Scholarly Councils. The second body for financial affairs included one member of the Court of Cassation, two economists and a specialist for estates. Its tasks were budget transfers, the sale of real estate, bank lending, leasing, and the general financial administration of the *Dīwān*. The president presided over both bodies and both together decided on the annual budget of the ministry and laws.⁴¹⁹ The religious scholars gained in this new system more authority in their affairs but only in agreement with the president who appointed them.

Already in August 1970, the president abolished the post of minister of *awqāf* altogether with law number 44 of the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* and defined his own post of president as the highest authority of the *Dīwān*.⁴²⁰ This was also emphasised in the newspaper article that announced the new *awqāf* system with the headline “The President of the Republic is the Highest Authority of the *Dīwān al-Awqāf*.”⁴²¹ Giving the impression that all *awqāf* affairs were now his personal priority, it cannot be considered a fundamental change since Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr already controlled the *Dīwān* as prime minister. He merged the two separate bodies of the Supreme Council for *Awqāf* again into one with the same aforementioned members, but the two religious scholars and one member of the Court of Cassation kept their prerogative of religious affairs. The council received, furthermore, another Sunnī member with the dean (*‘amīd*) of Baghdad’s most important Sunnī religious college, the Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty. He joined the other religious scholars in their religious tasks. All members of the council decided together on the remaining administrative and financial affairs.⁴²²

As a further alteration, the body of the whole *Dīwān* became extended from formerly seven to eleven General Directorates and reflects the regime’s first steps to nationalise Iraq’s religious landscape. Among the newly created directorates appears one especially for religious schools (*al-madāris*) as well as another for mosques and religious institutions (*al-masājid wa-l-mu’assasāt al-dīniya*).⁴²³ The first new directorate controlled the foundation of religious schools, the administration of their affairs, the admission of students, and determined the length of a school year and the

⁴¹⁹ Bakr, *Nizām ta’ dīl nizām dīwān al-awqāf* raqm 18 li-sanat 1966.

⁴²⁰ Bakr, *Nizām dīwān al-awqāf*, sec. 1.

⁴²¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 15.08.1970, 4.

⁴²² Bakr, *Nizām dīwān al-awqāf*, secs 4, 6.

⁴²³ ‘Ārif, *Nizām dīwān al-awqāf*.

final exams. The second one was responsible for all affairs regarding mosques, religious as well as charitable institutions, kept record of all their employees and prepared the administrative basis for their foundation.⁴²⁴ Both directorates implemented in the same year the regime's plans to nationalise religious schools, mosques, and other religious and charitable institutions.⁴²⁵

The Scholarly Council, too, became extended from formerly four to six members, one higher official of the *Dīwān* as its head, two representatives of the Sunnī Imam al-A'ẓam Faculty specialised in Islamic studies and three religious scholars (*'ulamā'*).⁴²⁶ The addition of representatives of the Imam al-A'ẓam Faculty in these central organs of the *Dīwān*, the Supreme Council and the Scholarly Council, suggests a further Sunnī domination in the ministry. In contrast to their addition, the law does not explicitly stipulate a membership from among the Shī'ī religious circles (*al-ḥawza al-'ilmīya*) in Najaf. The responsibilities of the Scholarly Council included the appointment, promotion and disciplinary punishment of all employees of mosques, religious institutions, shrines, and religious schools and faculties as well as the authorisation of imams and preachers to preach the sermon at the Friday prayer, and during the feast of breaking the Ramaḍān fast (*'īd al-fīṭr*) and the feast of immolation (*'īd al-aḍḥā*). The council additionally formed a committee from among the teaching staff of the Islamic colleges and the religious schools which were connected to houses of worship (*ma'ābid*) in each province in order to examine prospective religious employees (*khudum*), muezzins (*mu'adhdhinīn*), and readers of the Quran.⁴²⁷

After the Ba'th's consolidation of political power, the expansion of its control to the *Dīwān* and the ongoing nationalisation of the religious sector, it set the stage for a more intensive state patronage in the second half of the 1970s. This is best reflected in the development of the *Dīwān*'s annual budget which only gradually increased between 1968 and 1975 from 1.1 million (about \$3.08 million) to about 1.5 million Iraqi dinars. With the ministry's restructuring in 1976, however, the budget increased to about 2.2 million (about \$7.5 million) Iraqi dinars and up to 1979 even to about 5

⁴²⁴ Bakr, *Nizām dīwān al-awqāf*, paras 2, 15, 16.

⁴²⁵ A detailed analysis of this nationalisation will follow in the remaining three sections of this chapter, 3.1.5, 3.1.6, and 3.1.7.

⁴²⁶ Membership in this council was limited to three years with the prospect of a tenure extension (Bakr, *Nizām dīwān al-awqāf*).

⁴²⁷ Bakr, para. 20. The regional division of administrative units also changed with the foundation of new provinces throughout the 1970s, such as Anbār, Maysān, or Dhī Qārr.

million Iraqi dinars (around \$16.9 million).⁴²⁸ Two political contexts explain these investments. Between 1974 and 1975, the regime fought a full-scale war against Kurdish separatists in the north of Iraq and needed, on the one hand, to win over Kurdish tribes and religious leaders, particularly Sufi shaykhs, to its side.⁴²⁹ This included also state patronage for their mosques, religious schools, and *takāyā*. On the other hand, the problem with the Shīʿī Islamist opposition in central and southern Iraq, too, reached a climax for the party with the Arbaʿīn uprising in 1977 and prompted Ṣaddām Ḥusayn to reformulate the Baʿth's stance towards religion of being “always on the side of faith”.⁴³⁰ The *Dīwān al-Awqāf* played a central role in both contexts since the Baʿth began once more to restructure and expand it as a medium of control, for more extensive restoration campaigns of religious sites, and even for the spread of religious awareness in accordance to Baʿthism.

In June 1976, the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* became renamed Ministry of *Awqāf* (*wizārat al-awqāf*) with the respective law number 78 and the president appointed, for the first time since 1970, a minister of *awqāf* with full authority over all its affairs. The new minister was the Sunnī Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Sattār al-Jawārī (1924-1988), former dean (ʿamīd) of Baghdad's *Sharīʿa* Faculty and since 1968 minister of education with a high reputation among Baghdad's religious scholars and Sufis.⁴³¹ His appointment seems like a conciliatory step towards the religious circles in contrast to the previous direct control by the president and the aforementioned purges of religious representatives. It was probably also intended to bring a turn in the negative perception of the regime among Iraq's religious communities. Al-Jawārī's tenure and Baʿthist policies had

⁴²⁸ Bakr, Qānūn mīzānīyat dīwān al-awqāf li-sanat 1968 al-mālīya; Bakr, Qānūn mīzānīyat dīwān al-awqāf li-sanat 1974-1975 al-mālīya raqm (59) li-sanat 1974; Bakr, Qānūn mīzānīyat dīwān al-awqāf li-sanat 1976 al-mālīya; Bakr, Qānūn mīzānīyat wizārat al-awqāf li-sanat 1979 raqm (26) li-sanat 1979. Exchange rates from Iraqi Dinar to US Dollar according to the US Treasury Reporting Rates of Exchange: in 1968 one Iraqi Dinar equalled 2.7972 US Dollar; 1974: 3.3990; 1975: 3.3990; 1976: 3.3990; 1979: 3.3990.

⁴²⁹ More on this state patronage will follow in the last part of Section 3.2.5.

⁴³⁰ Ḥusayn, *On History*, 21. An English translation of the speech was published in 1981.

⁴³¹ Reportedly, he was a very devote and religious person and had worked as dean (ʿamīd) of Baghdad's *Sharīʿa* Faculty in the late 1950s. Al-Jawārī had studied the reading of the Quran with Iraqi and Egyptian Quran readers (*qurāʾ*) and published his own study *Grammar of the Quran (Naḥū al-Qurʿān)* in 1974 (Sāmarrāʾī, *Majālis Baghdād*, 68–70; Jawārī, *Naḥū al-Qurʿān*). In addition, he attended the study circles of Sunnī religious luminaries such as Ḥamdī al-Aʿẓamī or the grand *muftī* and Naqshbandī shaykh Qāsim al-Qaysī who strongly influenced him in his studies. According to his brother, he enjoyed close relations with other Sunnī scholars such as Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ṭāʾī, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Mudarris, Najm al-Dīn al-Wāʾiz, Amjad al-Zahāwī, or ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Sāmarrāʾī as well as with representatives of the Shīʿī circles like Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm and Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr. He also cultivated strong relations with the Kurdish religious scholars and Sufi orders which enjoyed his “highest appreciation.” One of his closest friends was the shaykh Dr. ʿAbd Allāh al-Naqshbandī who served in the financial sector under the Baʿth government after a short term as minister of economy in 1968 (Mashhadānī, ʿal-Duktūr Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Sattār’).

indeed some success in this regard as is documented in at least one instance of the imam and Sufi Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī later in 1985. The imam praised the minister with the following words:

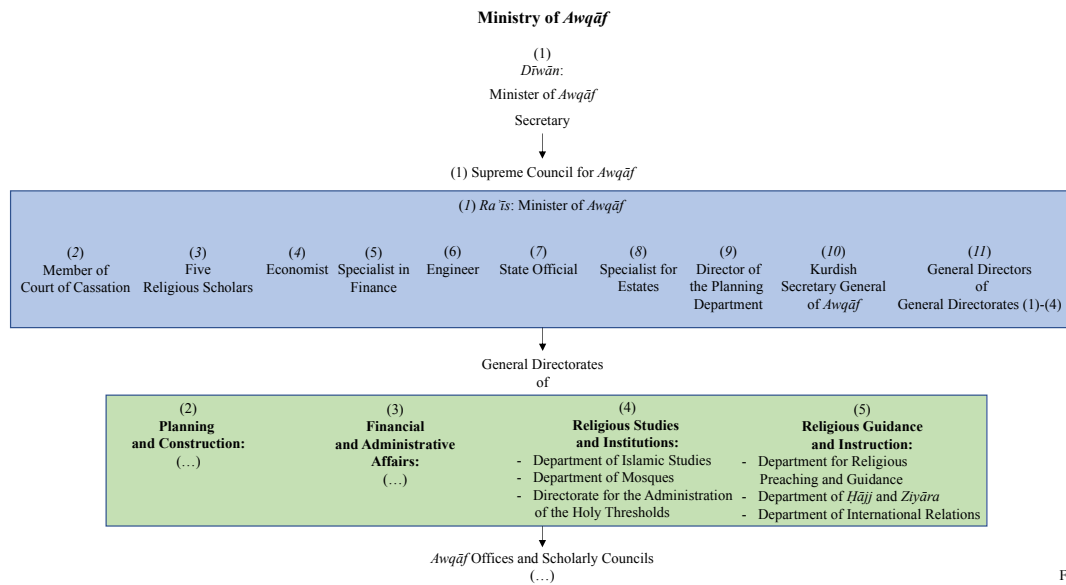
Among his glorious deeds, which will not be forgotten and which history records for him with all the glory and esteem, was the restoration of Iraq's mosques (*masājīd*) as well as the building of numerous Friday mosques (*jawāmi'*) in the cities and villages when he was minister of *awqāf*. He raised the level of income for religious scholars, muezzins, Quran readers, and servants in the mosques. He will not be remembered except with the best impression (*bi-alf khayr*).⁴³²

The new Ministry of *Awqāf* consisted of (1) a *Dīwān* with the two special offices for the minister and his secretary (*wakīl*), (2) the Supreme Council for *Awqāf*, (3) the General Directorates, and (4) the Scholarly Council (see Fig 5 below). The General Directorates were reduced and merged from formerly eleven into four and became directly subordinated to the secretary. These were the Directorates of Planning and Construction (*al-takhṭīṭ wa-l-inshā'*), Financial and Administrative Affairs (*al-shu'ūn al-mālīya wa-l-idārīya*), Religious Studies and Institutions (*al-dirāsāt wa-l-mu'assasāt al-dīnīya*), and, for the first time, Religious Guidance and Instruction (*al-irshād wa-l-tawjīh al-dīnī*).⁴³³ Gailani similarly refers in her PhD to the latter two directorates and highlights their “religious reforming roles” [...] “including explaining the principles of the Islamic faith according to its ‘fundamentals and foundations’”.⁴³⁴ Especially the establishment of the last directorate points to the state's growing intention to also direct religious instruction and to mould its own version of Islam.

⁴³² Sāmarrā'ī, *Majālis Baghdād*, 70.

⁴³³ Bakr, Qānūn wizārat al-awqāf. The law was also published in *al-Jumhūrīya* 06.07.1976, 4.

⁴³⁴ She translates the directorates as „General Directorate for Research and Religious Institutions“ and „General Directorate for Religious Instruction and Guidance“ (Gailani, ‘The Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’, 358).



F-5

Figure 5: The Ministry of *Awqāf* in 1977

Months later in 1977, further structural changes in this direction followed. This time the first paragraph of law number eight defines the goals of the ministry, next to its usual duties, explicitly as the development of an Islamic awareness (*al-wa'ī al-islāmī*) and the dissemination of Islamic culture (*al-thaqāfa al-islāmīya*) in order to develop an Islamic society.⁴³⁵ The Supreme Council for *Awqāf* became extended again from a seven to a sixteen-member body with the addition of the four general directors, five religious scholars, three specialists from the fields of economy, finance, and engineering, as well as the director of the Planning Department (*qism*). The dean of the Imam al-A'zam Faculty ceased to have a seat in the council. The minister now appointed the member of the Court of Cassation, the five religious scholars and the three specialists of economy, finance, and engineering for three years with a prospect of tenure extension.⁴³⁶ At the end of the year, the secretary general (*amīn 'āmm*) of the *awqāf* administration in the formally autonomous Kurdish region, Bashīr b. 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Atrūshī became the seventeenth member through a separate law.⁴³⁷ In the aftermath of the Kurdish war in 1974 and 1975, the Ba'ṯh sought to get a grip on the region through drastic measures like the forced relocation of the Kurdish population to Arabise the region but simultaneously also with large investments in its infrastructure and support for religious institutions. Loyal Kurdish politicians such as Bashīr b. 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Atrūshī became in this context gradually elevated to ministerial positions and acted as important mediators between the regime and the

⁴³⁵ Bakr, Nizām wizārat al-awqāf, para. 1. See also *al-Jumhūrīya* 15.02.1977, 3.

⁴³⁶ Bakr, paras 5, 6.

⁴³⁷ Bakr, Raqm 971 ḍamm 'uḍū ilā 'uḍwīyat al-majlis al-a'lā li-l-awqāf.

Kurdish tribes and Sufi orders.⁴³⁸ Al-Atrūshī was almost predestined for this as he himself was a Qādirī Sufi and offspring of a famous Kurdish family of religious scholars and Sufi shaykhs from Dohūk with close relations to the Kurdish orders.⁴³⁹

In the General Directorates, the previous administrative separation between one directorate for Sunnī religious institutions and one for the Shī'ī *'atabāt* was largely abolished. The merging of the administration of Sunnī and Shī'ī tasks into one General Directorate reflects the regime's steps to mould an ecumenical Islam between Sunna and Shī'a, a project that fully commenced under Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in the 1980s. The General Directorate of Religious Studies and Institutions now included one Department of Islamic Studies, one Department of Mosques, and one Directorate for the Administration of the Holy Shrines (*'atabāt*). All three organs were tasked with the administration of both Sunnī and Shī'ī religious institutions under the authority of one general director (*mudīr 'āmm*). The Department of Mosques, for instance, was tasked with the foundation, enlargement, and administration of mosques and religious institutions all over Iraq. It was also responsible for the appointment of religious employees in all religious and charitable institutions and the holy shrines. The responsibilities of the Directorate for the Administration of the Holy Shrines were not confined anymore to the Shī'ī *'atabāt* but encompassed now the administration, preservation, enlargement, and control of all shrines (*adriḥa*), tombs of prophets (*maqāmāt al-anbiyā'*), saints, Imams and houses of welfare (*dawr al-ri'āiyya al-khayrīyya*). The new General Directorate of Religious Guidance and Instruction consisted of three departments for religious preaching and guidance, the organisation of the *hajj* and pilgrimages (*ziyārāt*) to Sunnī and Shī'ī shrines, and for international relations (*ilāqāt*) to foreign Islamic institutions. The first department organised the curricula and study programs for the organisation of preaching and religious guidance, controlled the financial support of religious servants, the publication of books, magazines, and other religious brochures.⁴⁴⁰ The Scholarly Council, finally, became extended to a body of at least five to up to nine members from among the religious

⁴³⁸ For more details see McDowall, *A Modern History*, 339–41.

⁴³⁹ Bashīr's father shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥman run a *takīya* of the Qādirīya in their village Atrūsh with a large following in Dohūk, Arbīl, and also outside Iraq. His brother, shaykh and scholar 'Abd al-Ḥamīd was a Qādirī Sufi, too, and had worked from 1951 to 1963 as *qāḍī* of Baghdad. This family traces a sharīfian lineage back to the famous Qādirī Sufi shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Brīfkānī (Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Qabā'il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 92–96; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 350–51).

⁴⁴⁰ Bakr, *Nizām wizārat al-awqāf*, paras 2, 13, 14.

scholars without further specifications of their scholarly background. It was directly subordinated to the minister who appointed all of its members.⁴⁴¹

This section has demonstrated how the Ba‘th regime gradually restructured the Ministry of *Awqāf* into a means to control and patronise Iraq’s religious landscape, and to promote a Ba‘th-aligned, Islamic awareness throughout the 1970s. After the revolution, President and Prime Minister Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr assumed direct control over the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* and purged Islamists from it as he purged representatives of Iraq’s Sufi elites from the whole government. Ba‘thist rule continued a Sunnī dominance over all *awqāf* affairs through the addition of representatives from the Sunnī Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty within the *Dīwān* –while excluding of the Shī‘ī *ḥawza* in Najaf– and the appointment of only Sunnī ministers. From 1976 on, the *Dīwān* became a ministry with its own Sunnī Ba‘thist minister who enjoyed close relations to Baghdad’s religious scholars and Sufis. The regime abolished the administrative division between Sunna and Shī‘a within the ministry and began to mould and promote its own ecumenical Islamic awareness in line with Ba‘thist principles through a new General Directorate for Religious Guidance and Instruction.

Along with the restructurings of the Ministry of *Awqāf* during the 1970s, the regime enacted several new laws in order to keep and extend state control of the endowment administration, men of religion, and religious schools and colleges. The following three sections will summarise the most important laws in this regard.

3.1.5. *Legal Measures for Endowment Administrators and Donations*

Parallel to the president’s assumption of control over the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* in 1969 and 1970, the regime enacted two new laws for administrators of religious endowments. Both laws constitute largely a continuation of the previous system for endowment administrators (*mutawallīyūn*) and custodians (*sadana*) and further consolidated state control. In this system, the ministry generally appointed administrators and custodians in both Sunnī and Shī‘ī institutions, but each sect had its separate directorate and its own rules. The Ba‘th stuck to this separation at least until 1977, when Sunnī and Shī‘ī affairs were merged under the authority of one general directorate. The first enactment came in 1969 with a new system for the Shī‘ī holy shrines (*‘atabāt*) and stipulated the appointment of a custodian by a republican decree of the president. The law,

⁴⁴¹ Bakr, paras 5, 9.

furthermore, brought an improvement for the personnel of the Shī'ī institutions with a standardisation of their salaries. Before, it depended upon the choice of the respective local director (*mudīr*) and could vary from shrine to shrine.⁴⁴² The second law 46, *System of Administrators (niẓām al-mutawallīyīn)*, in 1970 stipulated similarly that every administrator (*mutawallī*) of a charitable endowment (*waqf khayrī*) and mixed endowment (*mushtarak*) had to be appointed by a *sharī'a* court and only with approval and following an evaluation by the Scholarly Council of the *Dīwān al-Awqāf*.⁴⁴³ In contrast to the previous law, this one does not mention a standardisation of salaries. In this field, the regime did not tighten state control but merely continued the already existing system.

In other fields, however, the Ba'ṯh moved clearly beyond the measures of its political predecessor and undertook several steps to control the annual yields and profits of charitable endowments through the Ministry of *Awqāf*. From 1969 on, the regime enabled with several legal regulations the possibility to confiscate contributions and donations for religious institutions. Famous shrines of the Imams 'Alī, al-Ḥusayn, and al-'Abbās but also Sufī saints such as 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī receive annually huge sums of donations brought by pilgrims or sent from abroad. Baram mentions in this context Order 835 from 15 November 1972 about the management of donations for the Shī'ī holy shrines (*'atabāt*).⁴⁴⁴ Based on this order, a committee of the ministry was tasked with the collection, keeping, and allocation of donations for the al-'Abbās shrine in Karbalā' in 1973.⁴⁴⁵ Further enquiry reveals that this order was once more abrogated in 1978 through an extension of this practice to all *'atabāt* in Karbalā', Najaf, Kāzīmīya, and Sāmarrā'.⁴⁴⁶ In a final centralising step, the regime regulated in 1980 the collection and administration of donations for all religious institutions under ministerial authority including mosques, religious schools (*madāris*), *takāyā*, and shrines through the ministry itself.⁴⁴⁷ The mentioned laws prescribe in detail the use of donations for the up keeping, servants' wages, and restorations of the respective

⁴⁴² Bakr, *Niẓām al-'atabāt al-muqaddasa*, paras 2, 17, 18; The law in 1969 abrogated the following law: Suwaydī, *Niẓām al-'atabāt al-muqaddasa* raqm (42) li-sanat 1950.

⁴⁴³ Bakr, *Niẓām al-mutawallīyīn* raqm (46) li-sanat 1970 (*mutawallī al-waqf*).

⁴⁴⁴ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 91.

⁴⁴⁵ Head of the *Dīwān al-Awqāf*, Ta'līmāt dīwān al-awqāf raqm (1) li-sanat 1973 ḥawla al-taṣarruf bi-l-nudhūr wa-l-tabarru'āt al-khāṣṣa bi-ḍarīḥ al-rawḍa al-'abbāsīya fī Karbalā'.

⁴⁴⁶ Majlis qiyādat al-thawra, Raqm 227 takhṣīṣ īrādāt al-nudhūr wa-l-tabarru'āt al-naqdīya dākhil aḍriḥāt al-'atabāt al-muqaddasa, 227.

⁴⁴⁷ Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs, Ḥawla tawzī' al-hadāyā.

institutions but these steps meant nevertheless a loss of material independence of religious institutions, including the Sufi shrines and *takāyā*.

3.1.6. *Legal Measures for “Men of Religion”*

Following the examples of the socialist regimes in Egypt and Syria in the 1960s, the Iraqi Ba‘th Party began to modernise and nationalise the country’s religious landscape and its men of religion.⁴⁴⁸ Ba‘thist laws reveal that the nationalisation of religious services began in the early 1970s and it was accomplished within several successive laws for the “Service in Religious and Charitable Institutions”. The first precursor of this law was enacted in 1971 following the initial conflicts with the Islamist opposition. The law subordinated men of religion in religious institutions to the laws of state employees, turning them into government officials with a rise in salaries between 50 and 100 percent including all social benefits. This applied to the categories of teacher (*mudarris*), imam and preacher for the Friday sermon (*imam wa-khaṭīb*), imam, preacher (*wā‘iz*), Quran reader (*qārī*), religious servant and muezzin (*khādim* and *mu’adhdhin*), religious servant (*khādim*), and muezzin (*mu’adhdhin*).⁴⁴⁹ The law did not apply to employees of the Shī‘ī *‘atabāt* whose salaries were regulated in the aforementioned law for the system of the holy shrines in 1969.⁴⁵⁰

In the first amendment of the law for the service in religious institutions in 1976, religious teachers were excluded from the category of religious servants, and Islamic colleges and schools (*ma‘āhid wa-madāris*) became now subordinated to the ministry of education. This amendment brought again a rise in salaries, especially for imams, preachers, and muezzins and granted all employees in religious institutions additionally the same pensions as of state employees.⁴⁵¹ A further increase of the salary of imams and preachers for the Friday sermon came in 1978.⁴⁵² The Ba‘thist press frequently emphasised this social improvement for religious scholars by the state in

⁴⁴⁸ Similar reforms of the religious sector happened in Egypt under Jamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir during the 1960s (Zeghal, *Gardiens de l’Islam*, chap. 2.) and in Ba‘thist Syria under Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad (Böttcher, ‘Le ministère des Waqfs’). For more on the Syrian development (Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*, 4–6, 17–63).

⁴⁴⁹ Bakr, Qānūn al-khidma fī l-mu’assasāt al-dīniya wa-l-khayriya raqm (67) l-sanat 1971, secs 1, 9.

⁴⁵⁰ Bakr, Nizām al-‘atabāt al-muqaddasa.

⁴⁵¹ Bakr, Qānūn al-ta‘dīl al-awwal li-qānūn al-khidma fī l-mu’assasāt al-dīniya wa-l-khayriya raqm (67) li-sanat 1971, secs 1, 9.

⁴⁵² Bakr, Qānūn al-ta‘dīl al-thānī li-qānūn al-khidma fī l-mu’assasāt al-dīniya wa-l-khayriya raqm (67) li-sanat 1971.

the religious propaganda throughout the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s.⁴⁵³ Baram already mentioned one of these enactments as a new “Law of the Service of Men of Religion” in the context of a media campaign after massive anti-regime demonstrations in 1977.⁴⁵⁴ Helfont, too, refers to one later version in 1981 as part of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s new policies of institutionalisation towards Iraq’s religious landscape.⁴⁵⁵ Yet, the findings above illustrate, that all these laws were part of an continuing process that commenced already in 1971.

The Ministry of *Awqāf*’s new task of raising an Islamic awareness in 1976 and 1977 brought additionally new legal instructions to assure the promotion and revival of the mosque, its Islamic message (*al-risāla al-islāmīya*), its role in religious instruction (*tawjīh*), education (*tarbiya*), teaching (*ta’līm*), and missionary activity (*nashr al-da’wa*). Among the ten requirements for all imams and preachers, the law defined a strong connection to the Lord, reliability in what is permitted and what is forbidden (*amran bi-l-ma’rūf wa-nāhiyan ‘an al-munkar*), and a strong orientation towards the Quran and the *sunna* in his studies, considerations, inferences and deeds. They must be capable in the recitation of the Quran, the study the Islamic, Arabic, and human history, possess a great deal of knowledge of this world and life, and must have excellent morals. Religious scholars were officially intended to become the mouthpiece of the state since the law demanded them to be always informed about the situations of their fatherland (*waṭan*), the plans of the revolution as well as its achievements in the service for the people. They were required to put all their potential into the presentation of the face and achievements of “the shining revolution.”⁴⁵⁶ This new task of raising an Islamic awareness resulted in 1981 in the official formation of committees for religious awareness (*taw’īya dīnīya*) from among Iraq’s loyal religious scholars. The laws above indicate that these committees, too, were a result of a policy that began in 1976 and not an innovation of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in the early 1980s as implicated elsewhere.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ See for instance *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.07.1988, 11.

⁴⁵⁴ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 95. The Syrian Ba’th, too, assumed total control of education, appointments, payment, and endowments of religious servants, but, in contrast to Iraq, Syrian religious scholars, imams, preachers and other servants in mosques did not become state employees (Böttcher, *Syrische Religionspolitik*, 91).

⁴⁵⁵ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 38.

⁴⁵⁶ Wazīr al-awqāf, *Ta’līmāt al-khidma fi l-mu’assasāt al-dīnīya wa-l-khayrīya li-sanat 1976*, sec. 2.

⁴⁵⁷ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 38.

The law also defined the aims of Friday and normal sermons during religious occasions. Part of these aims were clearly religious such as to remind the people of God; the coming of the judgment day and of what is permitted and what is forbidden; to teach about the truths of religion according to the Quran and the *sunna*; or to correct wrong ideas about Islam. They should connect to everyday life and the reality of the people and also address the needs of the youth in a modern way. The other aims were, again, influenced by Ba‘thist ideology. The sermons should emphasise the achievements of the 17 July revolution for the benefit of the Iraqi people and the Arabic *umma* such as the agricultural reform, nationalisation (*ta‘mīm*), gratuitousness (*majjānīya*), eradication of illiteracy, obligatory education or the increase of purchasing power. They should strengthen the meaning of brotherhood (*ikhwa*) in Islam, the unity of the *umma*, and the resistance against sectarian (*madhhabī wa-ṭā‘ifī*) and racist (*‘unṣurī*) tendencies. They must aim at the revival of the spirit of holy struggle (*jihād*), the strength of the souls, and ignite the fire of zeal to protect the *umma*’s holy and sacred places. Finally, the people should be urged in the sermons to close ranks against the enemies of Islamic, national, and Arabic unity.⁴⁵⁸

These legal measures to turn men of religion into civil servants illustrate that the regime aimed from 1971 on to modernise, nationalise, and control Iraq’s religious sector. By 1976, the Ba‘th regime had created the legal basis to use Iraq’s mosques for the spread of a moderate Islam that was intended to be conform with and supportive of Ba‘thist ideology, modern, and against sectarianism and fanaticism.

3.1.7. *The Ba‘thisation of Religious Education*

The Ba‘th regime, finally, nationalised and Ba‘thised step by step religious education in Iraq. The religious education system was already in the 1960s organised according to a tripartite hierarchy. The three basic and successive levels of religious schools were the elementary (*ibtidā‘īya*, six years), middle (*mutawassīṭa*, three years), and preparatory (*i‘dādīya*, three years) levels. Middle and preparatory levels were usually offered together in religious secondary schools (*thānawīya*). Graduates of the preparatory level could either start a career in the Ministry of *Awqāf*, as servants in religious institutions, and as teachers on the elementary level or they could enrol in

⁴⁵⁸ Wazīr al-awqāf, Ta‘līmāt al-khidma fī l-mu‘assasāt al-dīnīya wa-l-khayrīya li-sanat 1976, sec. 3.

higher religious colleges, faculties and universities.⁴⁵⁹ A new state project for Sunnī higher religious education had begun in 1967 with the opening of the Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty which was based in Baghdad and had several branches in other provinces. The faculty was open to graduates from the secondary schools and offered a six-year education in Islamic law with a bachelor’s degree and a qualification for the teaching on the secondary level and the service as *muftī*, Friday and normal preacher (*khaṭīb* and *wā‘iẓ*), and religious guide (*murshid*) in mosques or the army. Already before the rise of the Ba‘th Party, the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* administered the endowments of most of these schools and faculties.⁴⁶⁰

In 1970, the Ba‘th Party heavily contributed to the secularisation of religious education. It introduced a new system of Islamic colleges (*ma‘āhid islāmīya*) for the middle and preparatory levels and subordinated them additionally to the system and rules of the Ministry of Education. The new law assigned religious schools in mosques and bigger Islamic colleges (a merging of at least two religious schools) the responsibility of Islamic education for the service in religious schools, mosques, and religious guidance. As a result of the new system, the newspapers mentioned the merging of seventy religious schools into such colleges in Baghdad and the rest of Iraq.⁴⁶¹ In 1972, religious schools in smaller mosques were officially excluded from this system. They became again subordinated to the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* and the years of study reduced to six years.⁴⁶² From then on, curricula for religious education at colleges were under the authority of the Ministry of Education and not, as before, the religious scholars of the *Dīwān al-Awqāf*. The next secularising step in the nationalisation of religious education came in 1975 when the Shī‘ī *fiqh* faculties in Najaf and the Sunnī Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty in Baghdad became state faculties and subordinated to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.⁴⁶³ Religious elementary schools were, furthermore, subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior, then headed by ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī.⁴⁶⁴ The state took control of most independent religious schools at that time. Among them was, for instance, the religious school attached to the Kīlānīya

⁴⁵⁹ ‘Ārif, *Nizām madāris al-awqāf al-ibtidā’īya al-islāmīya*; ‘Ārif, *Nizām al-madāris al-dīnīya al-ibtidā’īya wa-l-mutawassīta wa-l-i‘dādiyya* raqm (44) li-sanat 1967.

⁴⁶⁰ ‘Ārif, *Nizām kullīyat al-imām al-A‘ẓam li-l-dirāsāt al-islāmīya* raqm (38) li-sanat 1967.

⁴⁶¹ Bakr, *Nizām al-ma‘āhid al-islāmīya* raqm (40) li-sanat 1970. The newspaper additionally highlighted the reduction of the years of study from twelve to eight years. Yet, the twelve years in the former laws included also the elementary level, which would actually mean an extension of middle and preparatory education from six to eight years (*al-Jumhūrīya* 27.07.1970, 4).

⁴⁶² Bakr, *Nizām al-ta‘dīl al-awwal li-nizām al-ma‘āhid al-islāmīya* raqm 40 li-sanat 1970.

⁴⁶³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 13.09.1974, 5.

⁴⁶⁴ Bakr, Raqm 360 (ilḥāq al-madāris al-ibtidā’īya al-dīnīya bi-wizārat al-dākhilīya).

mosque which became in 1975 part of the Islamic college in Baghdad's Şulaykh quarter under the authority of the *Dīwān al-Awqāf*.⁴⁶⁵ These laws remained in force until 1980 when the Ba'ṯh introduced again a new system for religious secondary education which will be dealt with in Section 4.2.3.

In the first half of the 1970s, the Ba'ṯh regime gradually subordinated religious schools, colleges, and faculties to the secular authority of the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This constituted a further significant loss of independence and the influence of religious scholars on the respective curricula. For Sufi schools, too, such as the one attached to the Kīlānīya, this meant the end of independent teaching.

3.1.8. Conclusion

Throughout the 1970s, the Ba'ṯh largely stuck to its secular principles and vehemently suppressed and crushed any Islamic or Islamist opposition to its rule in Iraq, Sunnī, Sufi, and Shī'ī alike. The regime aimed to weaken the influence of Iraq's religious scholars over society, deprived them as far as possible of a platform in the public discourse, or forced them into compliance in order to show public support. The Ba'ṯh leaders themselves began to instrumentalise particularly a Shī'ī religious symbolism in official shrine visitations and Khayr Allāh Ṭīlfāḥ very cautiously their Prophetic descent to create a religious legitimacy. However, the main aim remained to gain control over Iraq's religious landscape. In order to achieve this, the Ba'ṯh purged Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood and representatives of renown Sufi clans from the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* and the cabinet. It restructured the Ministry of *Awqāf* into an administrative vehicle of control and in 1976 into a means to spread a Ba'ṯh-aligned, moderate, and anti-sectarian Islam in Iraq. This coincided with the first appointment of a minister of *awqāf* who continued a Sunnī dominance over endowment affairs but enjoyed also close relations to Baghdad's religious scholars and Sufis. Further legal measures turned men of religion into civil servants and prescribed their religious duties and the content of their sermons in conformity with Ba'ṯhism. The eventual nationalisation of religious education granted a secular authority over the formation of new men of religion and additional control of religious teaching in Iraq. All these

⁴⁶⁵ 'Abd Allāh, *Dalīl al-ḥaḍra al-qādirīya*, 198.

developments added up to the markers of decline in the previous chapter and meant a continuing stagnation for Iraq's religious landscape.

3.2. The Sufis under the Early Ba'th Regime

In the first decade of Ba'thist rule, the situation of Sufism in Iraq seems to have been as outlined in Chapter 2. Sufism still showed signs of life but lacked the former vigour, popularity, and state support of late Ottoman times.⁴⁶⁶ The popularity of Sufism in the Kurdish regions was, again, much better and the orders proliferated there as an integral part of the Kurdish tribal structure.⁴⁶⁷ The perception of a state of decline in the Arab regions became reiterated several times in the literature.⁴⁶⁸ The continuity of a decline there prompted the aforementioned scholarly circles of the Rifā'iya and Qādirīya to publish several books with the aim to revive a *sharī'a*-minded Sufism in Iraq. This is important as it indicates a counteraction against anti-Sufi polemics which criticised particularly the Rifā'iya for its un-Islamic practices and rituals over centuries. Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'i's book on Aḥmad al-Rifā'i reveals his vision of a *sharī'a*-conform and pure Rifā'i Sufism which appears clearly adjusted to the larger reformist Salafi discourse in the Islamic world.

A rather politically relevant feature of this and the other Sufi publications at that time was their contribution to the spread of the Ba'thist president's alleged descent from the Prophet Muḥammad via the genealogical network of the Rifā'iya order in Iraq. The central book for the president's *nasab* with the full genealogical history of his tribe, the Āl Nāṣir, appeared parallel to the Sufi publications in 1971. The author was the genealogist Aḥmad al-Rujaybī, who wrote it certainly upon the initiative of Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ. An analysis of the book reveals the origin of this descent in the Āl Nāṣir's history in the Rifā'iya at the end of the nineteenth century; a historical link which was verified by the mentioned Sufi authors. Apart from this genealogical link, the Ba'th showed no interest in Sufism in the Arab regions and the case of the Rāwīs makes clear that the Sufism of the Rifā'iya further stagnated among their central shaykh clan. After all, the Ba'th Party's secular religious policies of the 1970s, the public

⁴⁶⁶ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*; DeJong, 'Les confréries mystiques'; Luizard, 'Les confréries soufies'. An outline of their observations was already given in the introduction.

⁴⁶⁷ See here the work of Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*.

⁴⁶⁸ 'Azzāwī, *Ashā'ir al-'Irāq*, 1947, 2:225, 228.

marginalisation of religious scholars and shaykhs, the new system for administrators of endowments and their donations, the nationalisation of religious servants and religious education, generally affected the Sufis and the Sufi orders just like all other religious communities in Iraq. In contrast to their Arab contemporaries, the Kurdish Sufis benefitted much more from state support in the context of the ongoing conflict between the central government and the Kurdish separatists. The Ba‘th’s tactic to divide the Kurds through the patronage of influential Sufis and their recruitment as additional paramilitary forces provided them with more freedom of action, material benefits, and state services for the mosques and *takāyā*.

3.2.1. Early Literary Attempts to Revive a Sharī‘a-Minded Sufism

From the mid-1960s until the early 1970s, the scholarly circles of the Rifā‘īya and Qādirīya indicate an increasing publication activity with the clear aim to revive Sufism and its traditions again. Between 1964 and 1973, at least thirteen books about the history, traditions, teachings, and rituals of both orders have been published by different authors.⁴⁶⁹ Many among these represent attempts to revive a scholarly and *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism against accusations of Sufism as superstitious and un-Islamic. The latter anti-Sufi polemics are widespread throughout the entire Islamic world and prompted over centuries countless Sufi statements in defence of Sufism’s deep rootedness in Islamic tradition. The aforementioned Rifā‘īya and Qādirīya defences of Sufism in the early 1970s were in this sense nothing new but include positions which Sufis had already been advocating for centuries. A further level of estrangement with Sufi teachings and traditions commenced with the ongoing secularisation and modernisation of Iraqi society over the twentieth century. Not only traditionalist Salafis but also modern educated and more secular-oriented Iraqis tended to view Sufism as mere “superstition, forbidden innovations, and lies”.⁴⁷⁰ Two points should be highlighted with regard to this defence of Sufism, namely its political context and its origin. The political context of the increasing literary Sufi output is the Ba‘th

⁴⁶⁹ Rāwī, *Mukhtaṣar al-qawā‘id*; Rifā‘ī and Ṣayyādī, *al-Hikam ar-rifā‘īya*; Ṣayyādī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifā‘īya*; Rifā‘ī, *al-Majālis*; Others: A‘zamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-Imām al-A‘zam*, 1964; A‘zamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-Imām al-A‘zam*, 1964; Sāmarrā‘ī, *Marāqīd al-a‘imma wa-al-awliyā’ fī Sāmarrā’*; Qushairī, *Arba‘ rasā’il*; Sāmarrā‘ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī*; Sāmarrā‘ī, *al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*; A‘zamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*; Sāmarrā‘ī, *Manāqib al-aqṭāb al-arba‘a*; Sāmarrā‘ī, *al-Junayd al-Baghdādī*.

⁴⁷⁰ Sāmarrā‘ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī*, 5; Sāmarrā‘ī, *al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, 5; Ṣayyādī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifā‘īya*, Alif.

regime's political takeover and its proclamation to lead Iraq's society into a secular and socialist future. The origin of this defence of a *sharī'a*-minded Sufism is the Sāmarrā' circles of the Rifā'iya and Qādirīya.

One of the most outstanding Sufi authors who took it upon himself to write for a *sharī'a*-minded Sufi revival in the early 1970s was the imam Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī (1934-1990). His case is exceptional in two respects. As a graduate from the Sāmarrā' School, he stands as a jurist, first, for a *sharī'a*-minded Sufism and shows that also Qādirīya and Rifā'iya circles adopted the strong scholarly orientation towards Quran and Prophetic Traditions. From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on, Naqshbandīs like the Ālūsīs became popular as the primary advocates of this current in Iraq. Secondly, he made over the seventies and throughout the eighties a quite successful career as imam in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs and gained popularity in the Ba'hist press. The following section will outline which kind of Sufism he represented.

Sāmarrā'ī was born in 1934 into a Sufi-shaykh family of the sharīfian al-Bū 'Abbās tribe in Sāmarrā'. His father Ibrāhīm was a deputy (*khalīfa*) of the Qādirī shaykh Ḥasan al-Qara Jiwārī from Qādir Karam and headed a *takīya* of the Qādirīya in the city's Qala'at quarter.⁴⁷¹ Sāmarrā'ī studied in the Sāmarrā' School from 1947 until 1958 under the aforementioned shaykhs Aḥmad al-Rāwī, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Badrī, 'Abd al-'Azīz Sālīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb, and Mukhlīṣ al-Rāwī. After his graduation, he worked as imam and preacher in Sāmarrā''s Qala'at mosque until 1965 and moved thereupon to Baghdad where he had overseen the construction of a new mosque for himself; the Sāmarrā'ī mosque.⁴⁷² In 1970, Sāmarrā'ī published two books with the aim to revive the memory and legacy of the Sufi saints Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī (1106/18-1182) and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (1077-1166).⁴⁷³ In these books, he complained about the widespread ignorance of most people concerning these saints and the superstitions (*khurāfāt*), delusions (*awhām*), heretical innovations (*bida'*), and lies (*akāzīb*) which were wrongly associated with their lives.⁴⁷⁴ In both books, the Sufism of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī is clearly presented in a *sharī'a*-minded light and reflects some of the core issues of modern Salafī thought, namely

⁴⁷¹ Badrī al-Ḥusaynī, 'al-Takāyā wa-l-ṭuruq', 134.

⁴⁷² Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, back; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 725.

⁴⁷³ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*; Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*.

⁴⁷⁴ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 5; Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, 5.

emphasis on monotheism (*tawḥīd*), precedence of Quran and the *sunna* of the Prophet, as well as a strong orientation towards the righteous forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*).⁴⁷⁵

In the following, I will concentrate on the book about Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī in order to present Sāmarrāʾī's view of the Rifāʿīya and its practices which have been for centuries one of the main targets of Ibn Taymīya's and later Salafī thinkers' critique.

According to Sāmarrāʾī, sayyid al-Rifāʿī called for the pure Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf al-khālīṣ*) which the author understood as the call for the pure monotheism (*tawḥīd*) of the pious forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). He exemplified this with Rifāʿī's words

Be a pure Sufi, do not be a dissembling Sufi, for then, you will perish. Sufism is the turning away from everything except God, abstinence from the occupation with God's essence (*dhāt*), trust in God, putting the fate of [one's worldly] condition to [God's] gate of authority (*tafwīd*), waiting for the opening of the gate of generosity (*karam*), reliance on the superiority of God (*faḍl Allāh*), fear of God in every time, and a good opinion of Him in every situation. Do not say as some Sufis do: We are the people of *bāṭin* and they are the people of *ẓāhir*. This is the comprehensive religion; its *bāṭinī* dimension is the core of its *ẓāhirī* dimension and its *ẓāhirī* dimension is the vessel of the *bāṭinī* one.⁴⁷⁶

In the following, Sāmarrāʾī promoted the equal importance of both, *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*, the esoteric and exoteric in Islam. For him, the science of *bāṭin* (*ilm al-bāṭin*) was the reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of the heart which brings only a benefit within the frame of the *ẓāhirī* legal dimension. There was no benefit for good intentions in the heart if one did not follow the rules of the *sharīʿa* as there was vice versa no benefit in following the latter rules if the heart was corrupted. For Sāmarrāʾī there was no separation between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* in Rifāʿī's Sufism and everyone who made such a separation committed a deviation (*ẓaygh*) and an unlawful innovation (*bidʿa*). Therefore, he stipulated

Do not disregard the rules of the religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), for that is ignorance and stupidity. Do not take the sweetness of knowledge and nullify the bitterness of work. Sweetness is not beneficial with anything other than bitterness and bitterness generates everlasting sweetness.⁴⁷⁷

Describing Rifāʿī's view on Sufism, Sāmarrāʾī emphasised the shaykh's call for adherence to the Quran, the *sunna* of the Prophet and the truth (*al-ḥaqq*). Rifāʿī is presented as one of the staunchest opponents of deviating trends in the tenets of faith (*ʿaqīda*). He buttressed this statement with several sayings of Rifāʿī, two of which read as follows:

⁴⁷⁵ Compare Nafī, 'Salafism Revived', 91–92.

⁴⁷⁶ Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī*, 27–28.

⁴⁷⁷ Sāmarrāʾī, 28. This position implies Ibn Taymīya's and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's critique against a Sufi elitism based on the assumption that the emphasis on interior (*bāṭinī*) spiritual wisdom bestowed upon a shaykh elevates him above other believers (Schallenberg, 'Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya', 102–4).

One who has not always weighed his sayings, deeds, and states against the Book and the *sunna*, has not questioned his thoughts and did not stand fast among us in the *dīwān* of men.

The Sufi does not follow any other path than that of the messenger, prayers and peace be upon him, he does everything based on him.⁴⁷⁸

In the section about Rifā'ī's call for monotheism (*tawhīd*), we find that he called for pure monotheism, devotion for the creator (*khāliq*), and not to rely on a created servant. He warned not to follow the adherents of innovations (*bida'*) and errors (*ḍalālāt*) as he allegedly said "Take care not to reject the Sufi faction in every word and deed, admit to them their spiritual states (*aḥwālahum*) unless the revelation (*shar'*) does not refute them. Then, be with the revelation".⁴⁷⁹ In Sāmarrā'ī's interpretation, Rifā'ī was one of the staunchest opponents of what came about a hundred years after his death to be known as the concept of the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). He cites Rifā'ī with the words "Beware of the speech of *waḥdat al-wujūd* which some Sufis deal with, and beware of straying, for the prevention of the sins (*dhunūb*) is the first step of the prevention of blasphemy (*kufr*)".⁴⁸⁰ Referring to the concept's collision with the basic tenet of *tawhīd*, he added the first part of the Quranic verse (4; 48) to buttress this position: "Allāh forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him [i.e. polytheism]; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth." Closing this section, he repeated the call to adhere to the revelation and to hold on to the Prophet.⁴⁸¹

In the section entitled „His Call for the Adherence to the Book and the *sunna*“, Sāmarrā'ī presented Rifā'ī in the same *sharī'a*-minded light.

Beware of the companionship with the group whose habit is the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the words of the great men (*al-akābir*) and the amusement with their stories. There is no relationship with them. Most of those became deceived. And this is nothing else but part of God's obstacles for the people (*khalq*). When they became ignorant towards the truth and desired the immediate benefits, God tried them with people of courage and foolishness. They attributed *aḥādīth* to the messenger (ṣ) which are far from the rank of his message, prayer and peace be upon him, in relation to things that were eagerly desired or feared, inner mysteries and outward phenomena. God gave also power to the people of unlawful innovations (*bida'*) and error (*ḍalāla*). They lied to the people and the great men and attributed to their speech what was not in it. A part followed them, and they added 'those who lose most in respect of their deeds, those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were

⁴⁷⁸ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 29.

⁴⁷⁹ Sāmarrā'ī, 29.

⁴⁸⁰ Sāmarrā'ī, 29.

⁴⁸¹ Sāmarrā'ī, 29–30. Discussions about the term "*wujūd*" referring to matters of existence can be found among Muslim theologians long before Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. In mystical circles, the term appeared in the writings of Sufi masters such as al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj or Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī as early as the ninth century and was used for the description of mystical experience in the sense of a realisation of divine existence. The earliest instance of the mystical term "*waḥdat al-wujūd*", according to the research literature, dates back only to the thirteenth century. It is at least certain, that the term became at that time a major issue of discussion and mainly attributed to Ibn 'Arabī and his disciples (Leaman, 'Wuḍjūd'; Chittik, 'waḥdat al-shuhūd'). Hence, it seems questionable to what kind of meaning al-Rifā'ī could have referred in this quotation. Sāmarrā'ī does not mention its source.

acquiring good by their works' [Quran 18;103-104]. God is the one you must have and hold on to reach Him through the *sunna* of His Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation, and the noble revelation (*sharʿ*) before your eyes [...] Do not act like the people of exaggeration (*ghulū*), believe in the rightness among the shaykhs and rely on them regarding the matters between you and your Lord. God is zealous, He does not like to enter into what is attributed to His essence between Him and His servant. He relinquishes the superfluous, he abstains from action through individual judgement (*bi-l-rāʾi*).⁴⁸²

Sāmarrāʾī closed:

We see, sayyid al-Rifāʾī fought paganism (*wathanīya*), polytheism (*shirk*) and he fought those who worship the graves (*qubūr*) without God, for he says 'Do not make the tent (*riwāq*) of your shaykh a holy place (*haram*), and his grave an idol and an occasion for begging. The man whose shaykh is proud of him is not the one who is proud of his shaykh'.⁴⁸³

From here, Sāmarrāʾī moved on to the foundations of the Rifāʾīya according to Rifāʾī as they were outlined in Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī's *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifāʾīya* and Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's *Mukhtaṣar al-qawāʾid al-marʾīya*. Both of these books were republished shortly before Sāmarrāʾī's publications, in 1969 and in 1968 respectively.⁴⁸⁴ He strongly emphasised again the belief in the Quran, the *sunna* of the Prophet, the keeping of the pillars of Islam as well as avoidance of sins and elaborates the following abbreviated foundations: precision of *tawḥīd*; glorification of the book of God; belief in everything the Prophet brought; continuing presence of the heart and use of the tongue in the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God; love (*maḥabba*) for the Prophet; adhering to the tenets of faith of the forefathers (*salaf*) and the manners of their successors (*khalaf*), i.e. the two generations after the Prophet's companions;⁴⁸⁵ glorification of the Prophet's companions (*aṣḥāb*); belief in divine foreordainment (*qadar*); contemplation about God's creations (*maṣnūʾāt*); remembrance (*dhikr*) of God, *sharīʿa*-conform clothing, concern with the moulding of the nature of the Prophet as the best creation; or reading and studying the Quran.⁴⁸⁶

In the final chapter, Sāmarrāʾī dealt with the stories about Rifāʾī's miracles (*karāmāt*) which he recounted from sources like Yūsuf b. Ismāʿīl al-Nabhānī's *Collection of the Saints' Miracles* (*Jāmiʿ karāmāt al-awlīya*), ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī's *The Virtues of the Pious* (*Manāqib al-ṣāliḥīn*), and even Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī's *The Divine Secrets in the Comment of the Rifāʾī Qaṣīda* (*al-Asrār al-ilāhīya fī sharḥ al-qaṣīda al-rifāʾīya*).⁴⁸⁷ The reference to Maḥmūd Shukrī's book is here of particular

⁴⁸² Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifāʾī*, 38–39.

⁴⁸³ Sāmarrāʾī, 39.

⁴⁸⁴ Ṣayyādī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifāʾīya*; Rāwī, *Mukhtaṣar al-qawāʾid*.

⁴⁸⁵ Chaumont, 'al-salaf wa 'l-khalaf'.

⁴⁸⁶ Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifāʾī*, 39–42.

⁴⁸⁷ Sāmarrāʾī, 45–47.

interest as Sāmarrā'ī introduced the former explicitly as a sympathiser with the Salafiya.⁴⁸⁸ Thus, he buttressed the truth of Rifā'ī's miracles by showing that even such a Salafī figure supported them. In his book, Maḥmūd Shukrī recounted and pleaded for the truth of a miracle story about the Prophet's putting forth of his hand towards Rifā'ī (*qiṣṣat madd yad al-nabī*). According to this story, Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī entered the mosque of the Prophet Muḥammad in Medina during his pilgrimage (*hajj*) in 1160 and addressed the shrine of the Prophet with the words "Peace be upon you, o forefather". Then, the Prophet's voice could be heard replying "And peace be upon you, my son" whereupon he put forth his hand from his grave towards Rifā'ī. Maḥmūd Shukrī listed twenty-four books of religious scholars and Sufis which mention the story and argued therewith for "the uninterrupted transmission of the truth of this noble section among the saints (*awliyā'*), transmitters (*ḥuffāz*), noble men (*a'yān*), and the great venerable forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) who are the essence of the *umma*".⁴⁸⁹

Then, Sāmarrā'ī turned to the question if the *karāmāt* are proven in the *sharī'a*, the Quran and the *sunna*. He regretted the spreading waves of apostasy (*ilhād*), materialism (*māddīya*), and the movements of scepticism and deception which deny or doubt *karāmāt* or consider them as strange due to their weak faith in God and His power. Against such trends, he wanted to show that *karāmāt* were indeed proven in the Quran, the *sunna* of the Prophet as well as in the stories about his companions (*ṣaḥāba*). He gave, first of all, four examples of Quranic verses about God's *karāmāt* as signs to guide the believers. These were the story of the people of the cave (*aṣḥāb al-kahf*) from (18; 17, 18, 25),⁴⁹⁰ the miracles which God performed for Mary in (19; 25)⁴⁹¹ and (3; 37)⁴⁹² as well as the ones for the Prophet Sulaymān (Solomon) in (27;

⁴⁸⁸ In fact, Sāmarrā'ī held Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī in high esteem and was convinced that he was a true Sufi in his early years. He claims that the latter only turned to Salafism after he had spent time in Mosul with 'Abd Allāh al-Ni'ma in 1902 (Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 624). It is noteworthy that one of Maḥmūd Shukrī's Salafī disciples, Muḥammad Bahjat al-Atharī interprets the background of *al-Asrār al-ilāhīya* quite differently as a deliberate dissimulation. He assumes that Maḥmūd Shukrī wrote the piece only to assure Abū l-Hudā's and the sultan's favour and to secure himself in this way a teaching post at the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque (Luizard, 'Les confréries soufies', 305). For the historical context of Shukrī's *The Divine Secrets*, see Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī*, 102.

⁴⁸⁹ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 47–49.

⁴⁹⁰ The people of the cave were early believers in one God and lived in a city where paganism was practiced. At one point, they secluded themselves under divine guidance in a cave and fell asleep for over three hundred years. When they awoke, the people of the city had already become monotheists.

⁴⁹¹ Here, Mary retreats during her pregnancy with Jesus to a remote area when the contractions set in. While she laments wishing to have already died earlier, Baby Jesus talks to her and shows her where to get water and fresh dates.

⁴⁹² Dedicated to God and under His protection, Mary grew up in the house of the Prophet Zakariyā. Every time, when Zakariyā visited her in the temple (*miḥrāb*), he found nourishment next to her, given from God.

20).⁴⁹³ He recounted similar stories of miracles from the *ḥadīth* collections of Bukhārī and Muslim with *aḥādīth* and finally also from the stories about the Prophet's companions such as Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq or 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.⁴⁹⁴

In consideration of the latter, Sāmarrā'ī posed the question of why there are much fewer reports about *karāmāt* of the companions than there are of later saints (*awliyā'*). Here, he presented Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī's (1322-1354) reply to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (780-855) according to Nabḥānī's records, namely that the formers' faith was much stronger than the latters' so that they did not need a lot of *karāmāt* to bolster the faith of the community. Subkī's answer leads again to the general question of the purpose of *karāmāt* which Sāmarrā'ī addressed next. Generally speaking, it is God who is believed to bestow the honour of different kinds of phenomena which exceed the customary or transcend the rational (*khawāriq al- 'ādāt*) upon his beloved and saints. He does this in order to support them in their struggle (*jihād*) for the spread of God's religion by exhibiting his power as a proof to the people. An opponent of this view, admitted Sāmarrā'ī, might object that the spread of God's religion should not be accomplished through miracles but through logical and reasonable proofs. Sāmarrā'ī conceded the truth of this objection. Yet, fanaticism (*ta'aṣṣub*) and stubbornness (*'inād*) among the people made the additional use of *karāmāt* necessary just as God Himself had to support the cause of His prophets and messengers with miracles (*mu'jizāt*). *Mu'jizāt* are a category of miracles which were only bestowed upon prophets whereas the *karāmāt* are only bestowed upon saints.⁴⁹⁵

This brought Sāmarrā'ī to the difference between *karāmāt* and mere allurement (*istidrāj*), i.e. the problem that there were also godless people (*fasaqa*) who pretended to perform *khawāriq al- 'ādāt* even though they obviously sinned and deviated from the religion of God. Are the *khawāriq* which happen at the hands of those unbelievers (*zanādiqa*) and godless (*fasaqa*), such as the piercing of the body with the sword, the swallowing of fire and glass or other things, so he asked, a kind of allurement (*istidrāj*)?⁴⁹⁶ Sāmarrā'ī stated that true *karāmāt* can only happen at the hands of a saint

⁴⁹³ In this episode, Solomon is reported by a hoopoe about Balqīn, the queen of Saba.

⁴⁹⁴ For the sake of brevity in my argument, I omit going into detail with the miracle stories (Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 50–56).

⁴⁹⁵ Sāmarrā'ī, 56–57.

⁴⁹⁶ Such practices are widespread among Iraq's Sufi communities, especially among the Rifā'īya and Kasnazānīya. The latter uses the term *dirbāsha* for the perforation of the body with swords and skewers. Elsewhere, the terms *darb* or *ḍarb al-shīsh* or *darb al-saif* are used. For such miracles and practices in the context of the Rifā'īya see Ṣayyādī, *Kitāb al-ghāra al-ilāhīya*. On the *dirbāsha* of the Kasnazānīya see Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *Al-Bārāsīkūlūjīyā*.

(*walī*). What distinguishes the saint from others is that he does himself not believe in the *karāma* and does not pride himself upon it. With reference to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, he declared that the performer of a *karāma* is not accustomed to it but even fears God during its appearance and is cautious whether it originates rather from the gate of allurements (*bāb al-istidrāj*). The performer of *istidrāj*, on the contrary, prides himself with it assuming that it is a true *karāma* to which he is entitled. He is confident and does not fear its outcome.⁴⁹⁷

Despite this attempt to formulate a criterion to clearly distinguish *karāmāt* from *istidrāj*, he concluded that if we see someone performing *khawāriq al-‘ādāt*, we are not able to judge him on sainthood nor can we consider his action as a *karāma* unless we see his manners (*sulūkahu*) and his adherence to the *sharī‘a* of God (*tamassukahu bi-sharī‘at Allāh*). He cited in this context Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī (died between 874 and 878) saying “If a man unfolds his place of prayer on the water, and sits cross-legged in the air, then do not be deceived by him until you saw how you find him with what is enjoined and what is forbidden (*al-amr wa-l-nahī*)”.⁴⁹⁸

Sāmarrā’ī was, indeed, to a certain extent critical towards miracle performances such as the perforation of bodies with swords or eating glass which are so widespread in Iraq, especially among the Rifā‘īya and Kasnazānīya. He generally accepted miracles as they can only originate from God and mainly in support of the dissemination of Islam when logic and arguments cannot accomplish anything. The criterion which he offered to distinguish true *karāmāt* from mere *istidrāj* is rather introspective and can hardly constitute an objective measure for the believer. In the end, someone’s moral conduct and adherence to the *sharī‘a* are seen as a criterion to decide if his performances can be *karāmāt* or not. On such a ground, each and every performance of *khawāriq al-‘ādāt* can be acknowledged and rejected at will. Theoretically, Sāmarrā’ī’s position offers a certain compatibility with the *sharī‘a*-mindedness of Salafism but leaves practically much space to proceed with such widespread practices such as the *dirbāsha* or shrine veneration in Iraq as before.

Sāmarrā’ī’s account provides evidence that he saw the Sufī traditions and heritage of Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī and ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī waning in Iraqi society of the early 1970s. A major reason for this was surely the ongoing modernisation and secularisation of

⁴⁹⁷ Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī*, 57.

⁴⁹⁸ Sāmarrā’ī, 58.

society with an increasing positivism and materialism that left less space for Sufi spirituality and miracles than before. Obviously, Sāmarrā'ī saw the solution for this problem in the correction of a widespread misunderstanding of these Sufi traditions by proving their origin in the Quran and the Prophetic Traditions. This was the kind of Sufism which he had learned as a jurist in the Sāmarrā' School from teachers like Aḥmad al-Rāwī. His books probably did not have a major impact for a revival of Sufism during the 1970s, but he gained enormous popularity through these and other numerous publications and made later on a quite successful career in the Ministry of *Awqāf*. In the early 1980s, he finally gained a leading position among Baghdad's religious scholars and directed the Ba'th regime's propaganda efforts to raise Islamic awareness (*al-taw'īya al-islāmīya*) in society. He supported in this way as a leading *sharī'a*-minded Sufi scholar and imam the Ba'th's religious propaganda during the Iran-Iraq War until he died from an incurable disease in 1990. Before this official religious role, he had already supported the new Ba'th regime indirectly. Already his early book about Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī was linked to the Ba'th leaders' political ascendancy in that it acknowledged in another chapter Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr's claim to descent from the famous Sufi saint. The effort to revive Sufism gained in this way also a political dimension. Sāmarrā'ī's aim to recall the traditions and the heritage of this shaykh and the Rifā'īya order in association with him included the "memory" that the Ba'thist leader represented the offspring of this seemingly forgotten heritage. In order to understand the background of this claim, we need to have a look at the genealogical history of the president's clan and tribe as outlined in the aforementioned book *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*.

3.2.2. *The Genealogical Link of the Ba'th Leaders to the Rifā'īya*

One year after Sāmarrā'ī's aforementioned book, another one with the voluminous title *The Shining Stars in the Pedigree of Sayyid Emir Nāṣir: and We Register in it Part of the Rifā'ī Families and Others Who are Connected with the Trunk of this Noble Pedigree to their Complete Benefit* – from now on referred to as *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* - appeared on the book market.⁴⁹⁹ It was written by the genealogist (*nassāba*) Aḥmad al-Rujaybī al-Ḥusaynī, himself a Shī'ī sayyid from Ba'qūba. The initiator behind this

⁴⁹⁹ *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir fī shajarat al-sayyid al-amīr Nāṣir: wa-athbatnā fihā qism min al-usar al-rifā'īya wa-ghayruhā al-lātī tattaṣil bi-'amūd al-nasab al-sharīf itmām li-l-fā'ida* (Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*).

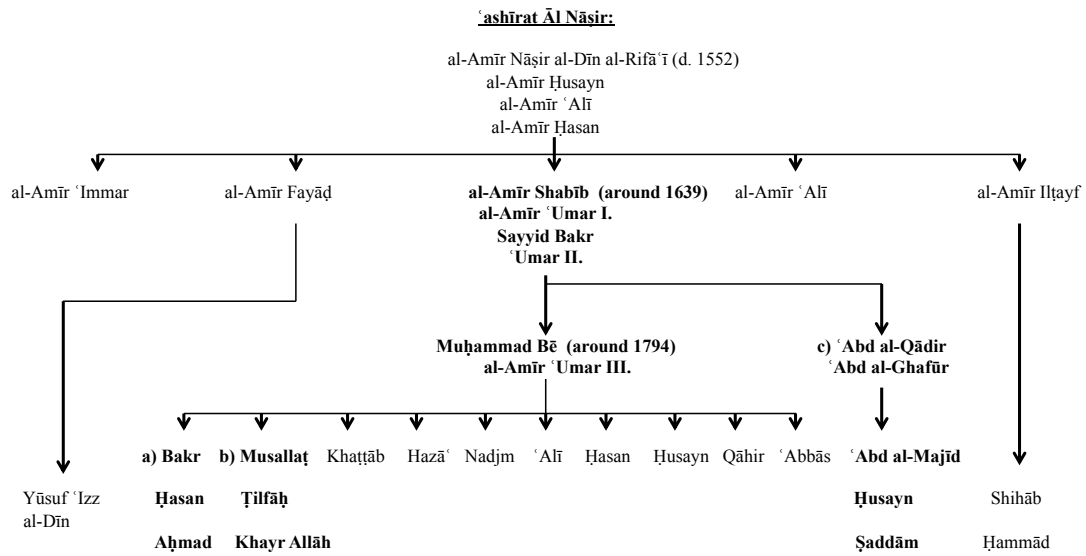
book project seems to have been the president's second cousin Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ. He was mentioned in it many times as an informant about the presidential Āl Nāṣir tribe, his nasab appeared as the first in the introduction, and his biography generally received more space than the ones of Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr or Ṣaddām Ḥusayn.⁵⁰⁰ Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ had already published their tribe's sharīfian pedigree (nasab) in his book *Iraq during Six Years* (al-ʿIrāq fī sitt sanawāt) in 1968.⁵⁰¹ Three years after the Baʿth Party's takeover, al-Nujūm al-zawāhir's publication came right at the time when the regime was struggling against its image of being atheist while simultaneously confronting a strong Islamist opposition.⁵⁰² Remarkably, it was not only intended to buttress the presidential clan's religious legitimacy with a genealogy to the Prophet Muḥammad but to present the Baʿth leaders' genealogical connection, as suggested by the subtitle of the book, to the Rifāʿī families in Iraq, i.e. the representatives of the Rifāʿīya Sufi order.

The first third of the book offered detailed biographies of Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ, Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, and Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, as well as a genealogical history of their tribe. Its style of presentation followed classical works on genealogies (*ansāb*) and listed one generation after the other from son to father with all kinds of available biographical data for each person within the pedigree. The book highlighted their tribal identity with a detailed history of the Āl Nāṣir tribe and its founding figure, Amīr Aḥmad Nāṣir al-Rifāʿī who died in 1552. The following graph shows the basic branches of this tribe including the ones of Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, Khayr Allāh and Ṣaddām numbered a) to c).

⁵⁰⁰ Rujaybī, 3–4, 23–28, 51.

⁵⁰¹ Ṭilfāḥ, *al-ʿIrāq*, 2:175.

⁵⁰² Luizard, 'The Nature of the Confrontation Between the State and Marja'ism'; Aʿzami, 'The Muslim Brotherhood'; Shourush, 'Islamist Fundamentalist Movements'; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 268–69.



F-6

Figure 6: Genealogy Āl Nāṣir – Rujaybī

Amīr Nāṣir was presented as the son of Ḥusayn al-‘Irāqī, an Emir from Baṣra who migrated to Aleppo in the sixteenth century and emerged there as the leading shaykh over the ‘Abāda tribes. Nāṣir took over the shaykhdom in Ḥarrān near Aleppo after his father’s death. Only his descendant in the fourth generation, Shabīb was the first to settle and to establish his rule over the tribes in Tikrīt and its surroundings in the seventeenth century. From then on, Shabīb’s descendants appear to have ruled over this area continuously over 286 years. He and his brothers, ‘Immar, Fayāḍ, ‘Alī, and Ilṭayf were the founding figures of the tribe’s respective clans (*aḥkhādh*) with Shabīb as the leading one from which all chiefs emerged. The lowest level of the graph above represents the extended families of each clan, i.e. the *furū’*, including the three families of a) Bakr, b) Musallaṭ, and c) ‘Abd al-Qādir.⁵⁰³

As noted, the interesting feature of the book is not the claim of Prophetic descendancy in itself but rather the emphasis on the genealogical frame or network that Rujaybī used to express it, namely the genealogical frame of the Rifā‘īya Sufi order. He ranked the Āl Nāṣir among the Rifā‘ī, Ḥusaynī families (*usar*) of Iraq and praised their nobility and moral excellence.

In the last centuries [this family] was on the point of turning from the religious leadership or the leadership of the *ṭarīqa* and its shaykhdom to the emirate or [more precisely] it did not turn but the social circumstances impelled it to do so. In both cases, this was a noble idea because affection for religion and the study of its instructions are accepted more easily and comprehended better among the Arabs of the desert if the leader is a spiritual guide (*murshid*) without the likes of him, especially, if he is powerful and influential. In this way, many families took power over the emirate through asceticism (*zuhd*), piety (*taqwā*), worship (*‘ibāda*), and

⁵⁰³ Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 15, 38.

spiritual guidance (*irshād*). In the course of time and the development of the social situation, the offspring of this family became the ruling one and this is well-known and testified in history.⁵⁰⁴

Rujaybī described the tribe's history from Amīr Nāṣir to President Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr as a socially forced transition from religious leadership of the *ṭarīqa* to secular leadership and keeps emphasising their unification of religion and worldly matters. Additionally, he highlighted tribal values such as manliness, courage, and bravery through a revolutionary episode of the Āl Nāṣir about their fight against the Ottoman authorities during a local revolt in 1909. The Ba'ṭhist revolutionary struggle of the president appeared in this context as a historical continuation of his forefathers' fight against tyranny. In accordance with the concept of *nasab*, the author presented al-Bakr and his forefathers' religiosity, courage, and bravery as essentially inherited from their glorious ancestors al-Ḥusayn and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. He emphasised the important religious and scholarly positions of many tribal members inside and outside of Iraq over the course of history as well as the miracles of saints (*karāmāt al-awlīyā*) attributed to them.⁵⁰⁵ To seal this portrayal, he added the following verse by Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: "There is nothing more beautiful in religion and this world except when both come together / and nothing more ugly than infidelity and bankruptcy in man."⁵⁰⁶

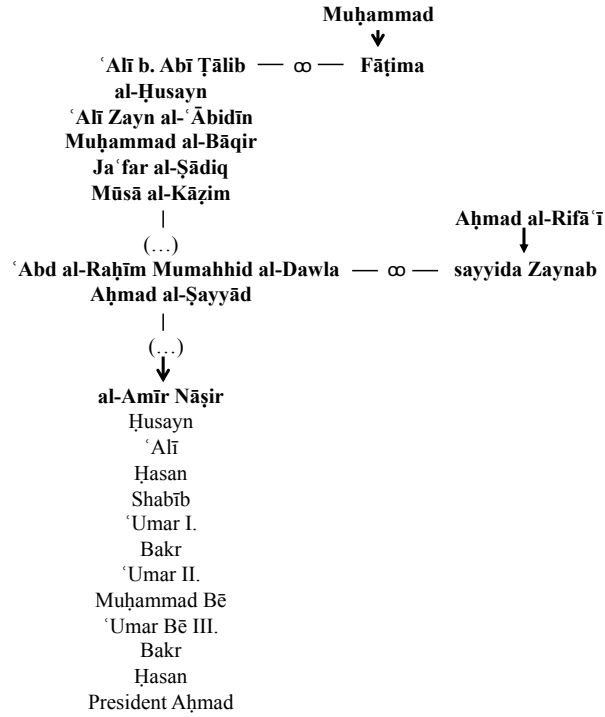
Finally, the presentation of al-Bakr's full Rifā'ī genealogy (Figure 7) included not only the patrilineal blood line via Mūsā al-Kāẓim to 'Alī, Fāṭima, and the Prophet Muḥammad but also an additional matrilineal branch from his forefather Aḥmad al-Ṣayyād (d. 1271-2) – the founding figure of Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī's branch of the Rifā'īya – to the ultimate saint of the order, shaykh Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī (1118-1182).⁵⁰⁷ The author could have simply omitted this matrilineal branch of the genealogy. Yet, he added instead this additional lineage bestowing therewith a Sufi legitimacy upon the president.

⁵⁰⁴ Rujaybī, 15.

⁵⁰⁵ Rujaybī, 18.

⁵⁰⁶ "Mā aḥsan al-dīn wa-l-dunyā idhā jtama 'ā / wa-aqbaḥ al-kufr wa-l-īflās bi-l-rajuḥ" (Rujaybī, 18).

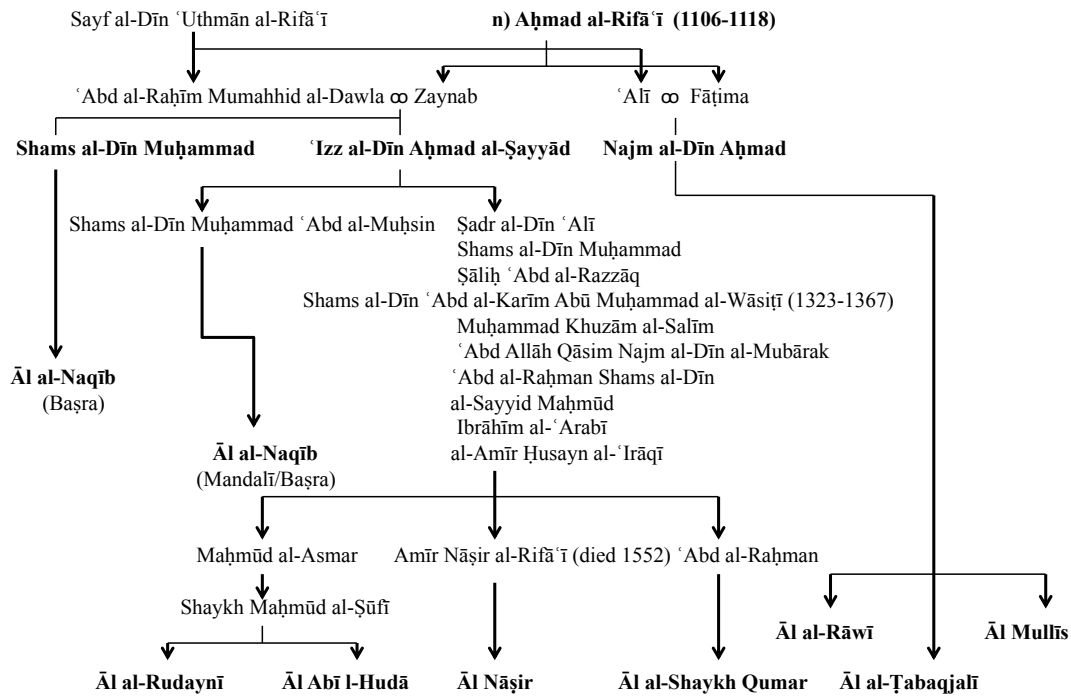
⁵⁰⁷ Rujaybī, 19 f.



F-7

Figure 7: Sharīfian Genealogy of Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr – Rujaybī

In the second part of the book, the focus shifted from political and worldly leaders to purely religious personalities. Here, Rujaybī described not only the bloodline from the Āl Nāṣir to Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī but also located their position within the wider genealogical network of related tribal clans of the Rifāʿīya order (Figure 8). This part reads like a genealogical and biographical dictionary of the most famous Rifāʿī Sufi clans since the early nineteenth century and it seems to be the first comprehensive collection of Rifāʿīya genealogical networks inside and partially outside of Iraq since the times of Abū l-Hudā al-Šayyādī.



F-8

Figure 8: Genealogical Network of the Rifā'īya – Rujaybī

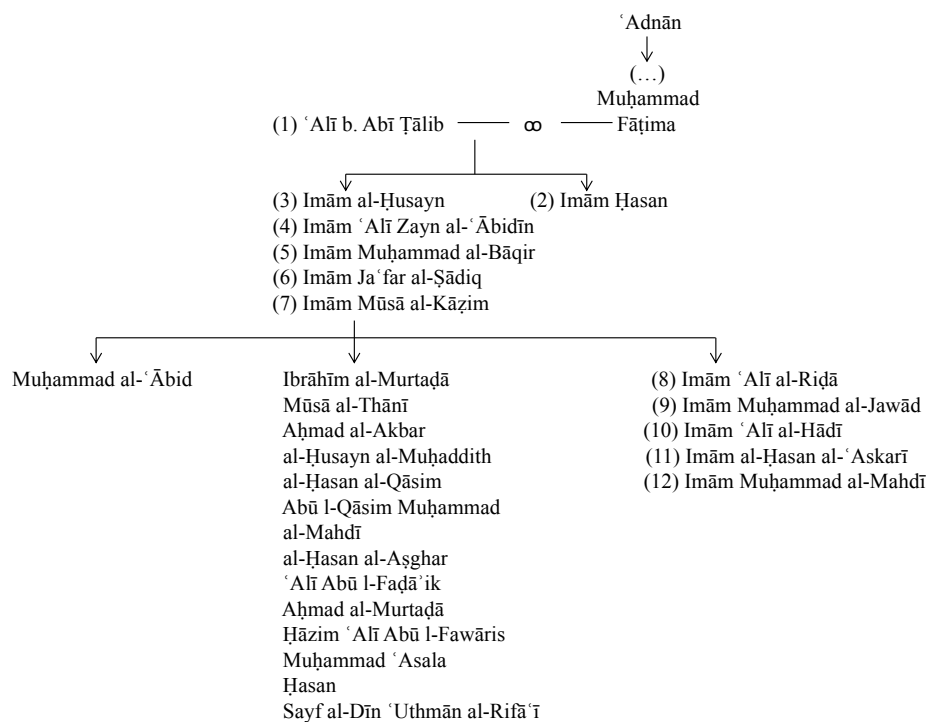
The second third of the book clearly focused on biographies of the most famous Iraqi Sufi saints, their religiosity, saintly miracles as well as their regularly visited shrines across Iraq. These are, for instance, Muḥammad Bahā' al-Dīn Maḥdī al-Rawwās (1805-1870) from the Āl al-Rudaynī, Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī (1850-1909), Muḥammad, 'Abd al-Raḥīm, and 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Qumar from Āl al-shaykh Qumar in Baghdad, Kāsib al-Rifā'ī (d. 1682) from the Āl al-Naqīb in Mandalī, the *naqīb* and *muftī* Ibrāhīm al-Kabīr al-Rifā'ī and his descendant Ṭālib Bāshā al-Naqīb from Baṣra, Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī (1860-1946), the *muftī* of Baghdad Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Ṭabaqjalī, and Muḥammad Jamīl al-Rifā'ī from the Āl Mullīs in Sāmarrā'. It is noteworthy that the author devoted the largest biographical chapter of the whole book not to the Prophet Muḥammad as one may assume but to the order's founding figure Ahmad al-Rifā'ī.⁵⁰⁸

The third and final part of the book introduced the remaining generations via the seventh Shī'ī Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim to the Prophet Muḥammad and the ultimate forefather of the Arab tribes 'Adnān.⁵⁰⁹ As Figure 9 indicates, this line itself includes six of the Twelve Shī'ī Imams, i.e. the first 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the lineage from the

⁵⁰⁸ Rujaybī, 80–90.

⁵⁰⁹ Rujaybī, 104–21.

third, al-Ḥusayn to the seventh, Mūsā al-Kāẓim. Here, too, Rujaybī added the branches to the second Imam al-Ḥasan and from the eighth Imam, ‘Alī al-Riḍā to the twelfth, Muḥammad al-Mahdī. The full presentation of all Twelve Imams including the disputed Mahdī and their relation to the president would, again, not have been necessary but seems to be a deliberate address to the Shī‘ī community. Rujaybī prominently used here the ecumenical potential of the Rifā‘īya’s *ansāb* and their veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*.



F-9

Figure 9: Genealogical Link of the Rifā‘īya with the Ahl al-Bayt

The authenticity of this descendance is a controversial question in Iraq to this day. Regarding the Āl Nāṣir’s historical origin in other sources, Faleh Abdul Jabar pointed to British intelligence reports, which recorded the tribe’s leading clan, the so-called Baykāt or Bayjāt as a mixed group with no common lineage. The clan was said to have descended from various segments of the Dulaym tribe in Anbār and inhabited the areas of Tīkrīt, ‘Awja, Bayjī, and Shirqāt on the upper Tigris valley and even ‘Āna and Hīt to the west, in the upper Euphrates valley.⁵¹⁰ Yet, it remains an open question, too, whether these British sources can be reliable in this respect. We can at least note with certainty, that most modern Arabic sources on Iraqi tribes record the Āl Nāṣir and its

⁵¹⁰ Abdul-Jabar, ‘Sheikhs and Ideologues’, 85.

Bayjāt clan as *sāda rifāʿīya* as Rujaybī did. The tribes descendancy became in this way widely established over the twentieth century and particularly under the Baʿth.

A closer reading of *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, moreover, reveals an interesting historical connection. The information about the genealogical network of the Rifāʿīya stems mainly from writings of Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī or Muḥammad Sirāj al-Rifāʿī and date back to the late nineteenth century.⁵¹¹ Particularly Abū l-Hudā acted not only as the highest shaykh and architect of the Rifāʿīya in the Ottoman Empire but also as marshal of the Prophet's descendants (*naqīb al-ashrāf*) and most of the Rifāʿī genealogies in *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* seem to have emerged under his influence. Many Rifāʿī clans mentioned by Rujaybī also appear in Eich's analysis of shaykh Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī's biography,⁵¹² where he shows that all of them were Sufi followers of this shaykh and received the authentication of their sharīfian titles most probably through him. Many Rifāʿī clans such as the Āl al-Qumar clan gained in this way their sharīfian status officially by Abū l-Hudā.⁵¹³ Others were appointed under his influence by the Ottoman authorities as *nuqabāʾ al-ashrāf* in major Iraqi cities.⁵¹⁴ The Āl Nāṣir, too, appear already in the late nineteenth century as *sāda rifāʿīya* in the milieu of Abū l-Hudā. As mentioned in Section 2.4, a member of their ʿImmar sub clan in Tikrīt, Aḥmad Ḥamdī b. ʿAlī Āl Nāṣir al-Rifāʿī became initiated into the Rifāʿīya by Abū l-Hudā around 1887 and received subsequently the post of *naqīb al-ashrāf* in Sāmarrāʾ.⁵¹⁵ Thus, the whole claim of the Āl Nāṣir's sharīfian Sufi descend was already established at the end of the nineteenth century.

3.2.3. The Sufi Authentication of the Presidential Genealogy

Even though *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* was not part of the other publications that aimed at a Sufi revival, it automatically contributed to such efforts since it represented the most comprehensive genealogical register of the Rifāʿīya in Iraq since the late nineteenth century. The Sufi authors themselves reacted to it directly or indirectly and generally

⁵¹¹ Rujaybī often refers to Muḥammad Sirāj al-Rifāʿī's *Ṣiḥāḥ al-akhbār* or Abū l-Hudā's *al-Rawḍ al-bassām* (Makhzūmī al-Rifāʿī, *Ṣiḥāḥ al-akhbār*; Ṣayyādī, *Kitāb al-rawḍ al-bassām*; Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 49–64, 81, 100–102).

⁵¹² Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī*.

⁵¹³ Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 2:448.

⁵¹⁴ Rāwī, 'Ball al-ṣadā'; Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifāʿīya and Shiism', 144–45.

⁵¹⁵ Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifāʿīya and Shiism', 145; Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī*, 120, 124. Aḥmad Ḥamdī also appears in the Ottoman register 'Ilmīye sālnāmesī from 1887 as *sayyid* from the Āl Nāṣir in Tikrīt ('*Ilmīye sālnāmesī*, 79).

authenticated the Āl Nāṣir's old Rifā'ī genealogy. Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī indirectly supported *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* and counted this tribe and the presidential clan already in his book about Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī as well as in his later publications among *al-sāda al-rifā'īya*.⁵¹⁶ The first direct literary reaction to *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* came in the same year 1971 from none other than the Rifā'īya order itself. The first book which commented on Rujaybī's work was part of the new *Rifā'īya Series* (*al-silsila al-rifā'īya*) edited by the Rifā'ī historian and genealogist (*nassāba*) Maḥmūd Fāḍil al-Ḥājj A'wīd al-Sāmarrā'ī. The series included four books, three of which were reprints of classical manuals of the order, namely Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's *The Brief Outline of Rules* (*Mukhtaṣar al-qawā'id*), as well as Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī's *The Rifā'ī Wisdoms* (*al-Ḥikam al-rifā'īya*) and *The Rifā'ī Path* (*al-Ṭarīqa al-rifā'īya*). Only the last one, *The Rifā'ī Study Sessions* (*al-Majālis al-rifā'īya*), constituted a new compilation of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī's dialogues during teaching sessions and picked up the presidential *nasab*.⁵¹⁷

In its final chapter, Maḥmūd Fāḍil al-Sāmarrā'ī critically corrected some historical information about his own Āl Mullīs clan wrongly given by Rujaybī and explicitly referred at the beginning to the president's sharīfian descendancy.

The book [*al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*] was published and describes the descent of the *sāda* Āl Nāṣir al-Rifā'ī in Tikrīt. This is the tribe ('*ashīra*) of His Excellency, the President of the Republic, *sayyid* General Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr. Many of its truths and defamations, that we wish to become evident in order to achieve a benefit from it, became clear to us. Nevertheless, we acknowledge and affirm that this tribe is of Rifā'ī descent (*nasab*) and 'Alawite origin, as it is handed down to us in uninterrupted sequence with the acknowledgment of the great Rifā'ī *sāda* and their shaykhs in Iraq. Among them is shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī al-Rifā'ī, shaykh of the Rifā'ī prayer rug (*shaykh al-sajjāda al-rifā'īya*) in Iraq. They have a handwritten pedigree (*nasab*), which was signed by the religious scholars and *sāda*, and sayyid Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī, may God have mercy upon him, approved of it.⁵¹⁸

The Sufis of the Rifā'īya themselves authenticate in this passage the sharīfian genealogy of the president and the Āl Nāṣir and eventually refer to its likely historical origin at the time of Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī and Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī.

It is doubtful whether the Ba'ṯh leadership or Khayr Allāh had supported the whole Sufi publication effort above. The aforementioned forewords rather indicate a wider network of Sufi shaykhs who collectively worked for these publications. In the case of *al-Majālis al-rifā'īya*, Yūsuf b. Hāshim al-Rifā'ī and a man named al-Ḥājj Yūsuf

⁵¹⁶ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*; Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Qabā'il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 30–32.

⁵¹⁷ Rāwī, *Mukhtaṣar al-qawā'id*; Rifā'ī and Ṣayyādī, *al-Ḥikam al-rifā'īya*; Ṣayyādī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-rifā'īya*; Rifā'ī, *al-Majālis*.

⁵¹⁸ Rifā'ī, *al-Majālis*, 156.

Jamāl al-Dīn donated for and eventually financed the printing and publication. Khāshī al-Rāwī wrote the foreword, and another sayyid Fu'ād Ṭaha al-Hāshimī helped with the printing.⁵¹⁹ The most important authority among these people was certainly Yūsuf b. Hāshim al-Rifā'ī who became over the following decades the leading Rifā'ī shaykh in the Gulf region. He descended from the Āl al-Naqīb in Baṣra and served then as parliamentarian in Kuwait. Khāshī al-Rāwī, as will be seen in the next section, was the representative of the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque at that time and certainly a Sufi but not a leading shaykh. All that makes it rather unlikely that the book was part of a Ba'ṭhist agenda but certainly supported the Ba'ṭh leaders' genealogical claim with its authentication above. Whether the connection of the secular and socialist Ba'ṭh Party's leader figures to *al-sāda al-rifā'īya* was desirable for the Sufis or not remains controversial. Given the repressive character of the regime it should be clear that there was probably no save way to publicly negate the president's *nasab* at all.⁵²⁰ Sāmarrā'ī's main aim was the correction of Rujaybī's information with regard to his own tribe, the Āl Mullīs. Criticising the accuracy of the author of *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, he certainly had to make unmistakably clear that he was not questioning the presidential *nasab* either. However, he did not have to do so anyway as its authenticity was already established since the late nineteenth century.

Had the three Ba'ṭhists from the Āl Nāṣir a religious Sufi background? All three hailed from a rural and tribal environment in Tikrīt and surrounding villages like al-'Awja where Sufi communities of the Rifā'īya are deeply anchored in tribal society. The literature mentions here the Sufi clans of sayyid Khalaf in Tikrīt or the Abū 'Ajja in Dūr as the most famous representatives, less the Āl Nāṣir.⁵²¹ As to the three Ba'ṭhists themselves, neither open source material nor interviews with contemporary witnesses reveal an active Sufi connection or spiritual leaning. Khayr Allāh even ruled out Sufism as part of Islam in one of his books when he defined "wisdom" (*ma'rifa*) as one foundation of Islam divided into the two parts of spirit (*rūḥ*) and reason (*'aql*). For him, wisdom in Islam was based on the (literal) understanding (*mafhūm*) of the Quran, and not on the understanding of philosophy, Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), or theology (*'ilm al-*

⁵¹⁹ Rifā'ī, 4.

⁵²⁰ The early example of Imam 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Badrī, a Naqshbandī Sufi and Muslim Brother, who had already fallen prey to the regime due to his open opposition in 1969, bears evidence that its repressive measures did not stop at Sunnī Sufi scholars (A'zami, 'The Muslim Brotherhood', 173).

⁵²¹ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh al-Dūr*, 23; 'Āmirī, *Mawsū'a*, 1993, 5:45–51.

kalām).⁵²² Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr was known to be very religious and a visitor of shrines but most probably not a Sufi. Neither was Ṣaddām Ḥusayn a Sufi. Some interviewees only reported that he started to believe in the powers of dervishes (i.e. Sufis) in the late 1980s probably influenced by his comrade ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī.⁵²³

The Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party’s leader figures’ claim to descent from the Sufi saint Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī and to represent *al-sāda al-rifā‘īya* definitely ran against the early Ba‘thist secular and egalitarian programme and should have come as a surprise at that time. Against the background of the previous sections, it becomes clear that Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ only reinvented an old claim that had been put forward a century earlier by another branch of his tribe. He did this primarily in order to underline their political ascendancy with a noble descent from the Prophet, the Shī‘ī Imams, and one of Iraq’s most famous Sufi saints. The findings in the previous section (3.1.3) suggest that he did this particularly to address Iraq’s Shī‘a community with which the regime stood from the beginning of its rule in open conflict. Khayr Allāh was the first to reveal their noble descent during an official address in front of a Shī‘a audience in Karbalā’, obviously to take advantage of the special status of *sāda* and *ashrāf* among Shī‘īs for his own political ends. It remains unclear, whether this was merely his private project, or the leadership left the revelation of their descentance to him and not to the president himself in order to keep the possibility of withdrawal. In case of a bad resonance from the Shī‘a, Khayr Allāh could have been dismissed and the president would not have been affected by any criticism. In the end, the claim of noble descent did not appear again until Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s takeover in 1979. Throughout the 1970s, the link to the Rifā‘īya seems to have been less important for Khayr Allāh than the link to the Shī‘ī Imams. He only used a traditional Sufi framework of the Rifā‘īya to attract the Shī‘a population with the common veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*. Neither did Sufism play a central role for the regime yet, nor did the Sufi orders in the Arab regions receive much support by the state at that time. A look at the Sufi life in the Sulṭān Alī mosque, the Kīlānīya, and the Sāmarrā’ School with its offshoots will rather indicate traces of stagnation.

⁵²² Ṭilfāḥ, *al-Īmān bi-llāh*, 1:7–8. However, there remains a possibility that his understanding of “Sufism” is not the same as the Sufi traditions that he intended to revive in *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*.

⁵²³ Interview with Professor Walter Sommerfeld, 16.10.2013. An Iraqi general and an Iraqi senior diplomat claimed the same in interviews with Sassoon (Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba’th Party*, 109).

3.2.4. *Abandonment by the State and Stagnation among Sufis in the Arab Regions*

With Khayr Allāh's attempt to gain religious legitimacy for the Ba'th leaders through their genealogical connection to the Rifā'iya, one could assume that the regime particularly patronised this order in exchange for their authentication of this connection. However, the sources suggest that nothing of the sort happened in the first decade of Ba'thist rule. The Ba'th regime rather continued with the general sponsorship of all religious institutions as did its predecessors and clearly increased its expenses in this respect only from 1976 onwards. The Sufis in the Arab regions did not benefit in any special way from state patronage during that time. Sufi life among the most prominent Arab shaykh families even seems to have rather stagnated.

In contrast to the regime's considerable investments in restoration projects for the Shī'i shrines in the south, no comparable projects were mentioned in the press for the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'i in Maysān province or for other shrines and *takāyā* of the Rifā'iya. Only a single announcement in the press mentioned a major agricultural development project for the peasants in the surrounding Isle (*jazīra*) of sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'i.⁵²⁴ The shrine itself lay at that time still in decay as Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'i had documented in his book.⁵²⁵ The lack of interest in this Sufi shrine furthermore underlines the Ba'th leaders' aim to address the Shī'a for purely pragmatic reasons and not to commemorate their alleged Sufi origin. This stands in contrast to *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, where the matrilineal connection of the president to Aḥmad al-Rifā'i was explicitly mentioned and the latter shaykh received the most detailed chapter in the whole book.

Despite the early literary attempts to revive the purified Sufism of the Rifā'iya and Qādirīya, there are also no traces of an increasing Sufi activity in the 1970s. Among the Rāwīs in the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque, practiced Sufism stagnated. Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's grandson Jamāl took over the post as *jalīs al-sajjāda* already in the mid-1950s without being a shaykh of the order. As he was primarily a lawyer, Jamāl left the post temporarily to his second cousin Khāshi' al-Rāwī (1913-1974) who had not the spiritual rank of a shaykh either.⁵²⁶ A son of shaykh Muḥsin, Khāshi' had once been sent from 'Āna to Baghdad in order to study under Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī but he refused to

⁵²⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.08.1973, 3. Until 1972, the centre of this area was known as Umm 'Abīda.

⁵²⁵ Sāmarrā'i, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'i*, 6, 10, 13, 17, 24, 76.

⁵²⁶ Interviews with Nadīm al-Rāwī, 11.11.2015, 17.11.2015.

enter any school and preferred to study and write for himself. Later on, he made a successful career in the state administration and worked many years in the Ministry of Information (*wizārat al-i‘lām*) until his retirement in 1970. Additionally, he became well-known as a poet in Iraq.⁵²⁷ Some researchers of Sufism presented him as the leading shaykh of the Rifā‘īya in the 1970s.⁵²⁸ Yet, according to his relatives, this is not true. He only helped out in the Sulṭān ‘Alī mosque, received people there and studied with some others. His foreword in *al-Majālis al-rifā‘īya* in 1971 shows that he was well versed in the tradition of the order and probably also practiced it, but not as a shaykh.⁵²⁹

Khāshi‘ al-Rāwī stood in as *jalīs al-sajjāda* until his death in 1974. From then on, Jamāl al-Rāwī returned to his former post as *jalīs* in the mosque and exercised this position until 2003. His entire life, he remained a lawyer in the first place and made himself a name as the clan’s genealogist (*nassāba*) which brought him close and good relations to the Ba‘th regime later in the 1990s.⁵³⁰ The Rāwīs of his generation rather preserved their Sufi heritage or the memory of it as part of their family identity and indicated no traces of active proselytism and spread of the order from the seventies on. All the persons presented above were and still are proud of their Rifā‘īya family background and tradition. They emphasised the preservation of what they understand as morals of the Rifā‘īya as inherited by shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī and visited *dhikr* performances from time to time. The example of their most prestigious institution, the Sulṭān ‘Alī mosque, indicates how descendants of former shaykhs remained active in the official post but mainly pursued non-religious careers as lawyer or in the ministries. While religious Sufi education and training may have been preserved in the smaller *takāyā* in Rāwa, ‘Āna, or Mosul, such activities ended in their most important mosque with Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī’s death. In Ba‘thist Iraq there was no regular *dhikr* in the Sulṭān ‘Alī mosque, only annual festivities on occasions such as the Prophet’s birthday (*al-mawlid al-nabawī*).⁵³¹

⁵²⁷ Sāmarrā‘ī, *Majālis Baghdād*, 163–67.

⁵²⁸ DeJong, ‘Les confréries mystiques’, 229; Godlas, ‘Rifā‘īyah’, 438.

⁵²⁹ Rifā‘ī, *al-Majālis*, 5–18.

⁵³⁰ See in Section 5.1.6.

⁵³¹ After 2003, the situation became even worse when leading family members with relations to the Ba‘th Party had to leave Iraq once and for all, including the family of the *jalīs al-sajjāda*. The Sulṭān ‘Alī mosque itself became damaged during the civil war 2006 and 2007 and its library looted. The looting resulted in the complete loss of most of the library’s manuscripts which had been donated to the mosque by the Ottoman sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II. For a certain period, active Sufi life in the mosque was disturbed when its neighbourhood came under control of Shī‘ī militias prompting Sunnī visitors to refrain from going there (Interviews with Naḏīm al-Rāwī, 17.11.2015 and Ḍiyā‘ al-Rāwī, 19.05.2016). Nevertheless, in absence of Jamāl al-Rāwī’s offspring, ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Muḥsin al-Rāwī

The Kīlānīya, by contrast, benefitted more from the state during the 1970s and indicated, furthermore, one new impulse of Sufi life. This mosque and shrine complex became refurbished three times between 1968 and 1970, and again in 1977.⁵³² Since the Kīlānīya is after the Imam al-A‘ẓam mosque the second most important Sunni mosque in Baghdad, these projects should not be over interpreted as a Ba‘thist agenda to revive or patronise particularly Sufism. These restorations were always announced together with others for the Shī‘ī shrines in Kāẓīmīya and the Imam al-A‘ẓam mosque. With regard to ritual life, Hāshim al-A‘ẓamī, one of the Kīlānīya’s imam’s and himself a Rifā‘ī Sufī, reported that the *mawlid* of shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was celebrated there for the first time with many guests attending in 1970.⁵³³ The *mawlid* for this shaykh as an annual celebration had already been introduced in the seventeenth century.⁵³⁴ Al-A‘ẓamī’s report suggests, that the practice had at some point probably stopped for unknown reasons by 1970. The new celebration of this occasion meant in this sense indeed a certain revival of Sufi life in the Kīlānīya. Additionally, the mosque complex still offered spiritual guidance to novices and had its own *dhikr* leader (*ra’īs ḥalaqāt al-dhikr*), i.e. the shaykh who leads regular performances of the remembrance of God through a rhythmical recitation of prayer phrases (*dhikr*). However, the *dhikr* leader in the 1970s, al-Ḥājj ‘Abd al-Bāqī ‘Āl Shaykh al-Ḥalaqa (b. 1929), was not from the aforementioned Gailānī family. He worked as preacher (*wā‘iz*) in the Sirāj al-Dīn mosque and headed the *dhikr* in the Kīlānīya every Friday and at major occasions and every Tuesday night in his own *takīya* next to the Kīlānīya.⁵³⁵

The systematic nationalisation and secularisation of religious schools under the Ba‘th and their merging into larger colleges (*ma‘āhid*), finally, meant major structural changes and a further loss of independence. The Sufi teachers and shaykhs at these institutions and in the Ministry of *Awqāf* lost much of their previous freedom in religious education. With the subordination of the new colleges to the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, their curricula

took the post as *jalīs al-sajjāda* and organised monthly *dhikr* performances and lectures (*muḥāḍarāt*) on Sufism and the *sharī‘a* (‘Āmirī, *Mu‘jam al-marāqīd*, 272).

⁵³² *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.08.1977, 3 (special issue). For the years 1960 to 1970, 1981 and 1991 see also A‘ẓamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, 89; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 189; ‘Abd Allāh, *Dalīl al-ḥaḍra al-qādirīya*, 175; Gailani, ‘The Shrines of the shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilani’, 74.

⁵³³ A‘ẓamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, 93.

⁵³⁴ Gailani, ‘The Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’, 318.

⁵³⁵ The Shaykh al-Ḥalaqa clan is related to the Gailānīs and traces its descent back to shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, via the aforementioned ‘Abd al-Razzāq branch who had held the custodianship of the Kīlānīya during the nineteenth century (A‘ẓamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī*, 148–50; Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 331; Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh masājīd*, 300).

became determined by these secular ministries rather than by the Scholarly Councils of the Ministry of *Awqāf*. At the same time, however, religious Sufi scholars were not replaced in these schools and colleges but largely kept their previous positions or moved on to new ones in other state institutions. The Sāmarrā' School and its offshoot in Ramādī are suitable examples for this development. The Sāmarrā' School had already turned into an Islamic state college (*ma'had islāmī*) in 1963 under the direction of Ṭaha 'Alwān al-Sāmarrā'ī and with Mukhlis Ḥamād al-Rāwī (1925-2005) as first teacher. The latter taught there officially until 1971 but continued his work until 1975.⁵³⁶ In 1971, Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb advanced to the position of first teacher and remained there, also after the subordination of the school as Islamic College to the Ministry of Education in 1975, until his death in 1999.⁵³⁷ The religious school of shaykh 'Abd al-Malik al-Sa'dī in the great mosque of Ramādī lost its independent status similarly through its attachment to an Islamic college in 1975. Al-Sa'dī, in turn, moved in the same year to a new post as teacher to the state-run Imam al-A'ẓam Faculty.⁵³⁸

Thus, we find almost no new impulses of Sufi life during the 1970s despite the literary attempts to revive its traditions early in the decade. The shaykh lineages had seized in the most important Sufi clans of the Rifā'iya and Qādirīya, namely the Rāwīs and Gailānīs. There were no considerable restorations of their shrines, mosques, and *takāyā* and the religious Sufi schools were nationalised.

3.2.5. *State Patronage and Recruitment among the Sufi Orders of the Kurds*

The situation of the Sufis in the Kurdish regions and their relation to the Ba'th regime were different and from the beginning overshadowed by the constant conflict between the central government in Baghdad and the growing separatist movement of Kurdish nationalists. The whole conflict became a long-time problem for the Ba'th regime and peaked in 1974 and 1975 with a full-scale war between both parties. Similar to the confrontation with the Shī'ī scholarly circles, the regime counted also here on patronage through material support in order to win over large parts of the Kurdish population. This tactic included similar support for religious institutions, particularly for Sufi orders as the regime was aware that Sufism still played a central role in

⁵³⁶ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, 85–86; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 657–58.

⁵³⁷ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 109, 658.

⁵³⁸ More on 'Abd al-Malik al-Sa'dī will follow in the next section (Sa'dī, 'al-Sīra al-dhātīya').

Kurdish tribal societies. The Iraqi newspapers propagated from the beginning of Ba‘thist rule huge investments for the development and spread of mosques, religious schools, and Sufi *takāyā* in Kurdistan in order to gain loyalty and divide the separatist Kurdish movement. In exchange, Kurdish shaykhs and imams had to support the official propaganda. One article from 1970 states that

the spread of mosques for the Friday prayer and smaller ones (*jawāmi‘ wa-l-masājid*), religious schools (*madāris*), *takāyā* and other Sufi establishments (*zawāyā*) in all districts, areas, and villages of the province as well as the great number of people, who believe in these mosques and institutions attract every day the attention of the traveller and visitor to Sulaymānīya.⁵³⁹

The rest of the article presented an interview with shaykh Muḥammad ‘Umar al-Qarah Dāghī,⁵⁴⁰ the preacher of the great mosque in Sulaymānīya and the director of the state-controlled Islamic college, who emphasised:

We, the Kurds are Muslims and believers in God and his book, an Arabic Quran without any deviation. The love for the Arabs and the esteem for their brothers is deeply rooted in the soul of every Kurd. I state with truth and insistence that the bitterness of the past years could not weaken this brotherhood or break the bare and steady love (*mawadda*), the true cooperation, and mutual friendship (*hubb*). For, Arabs and Kurds are indeed brothers in religion, history, and fatherland (*waṭan*).⁵⁴¹

In order to buttress his statement with historical examples of this brotherhood, he referred to the joint fight against colonial powers or the liberation of the al-Aqṣā mosque in Jerusalem from crusaders through the Iraqi, Kurdish,⁵⁴² and Islamic hero Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī. Other historical figures mentioned were the scholars Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (950-1013), Ibn Khallikān (1211-1282) and Ibn al-Athīr (1160-1233), as well as the Sufi shaykhs Khālīd al-Naqshbandī, Ma‘rūf al-Nūdehī, or Kākā Aḥmad.⁵⁴³ All of them were influential Sufi leaders of the region. Khālīd al-Naqshbandī had introduced the Khālīdīya branch of the Naqshbandīya to Kurdistan in the early nineteenth century whereas Ma‘rūf al-Nūdehī and his son Kākā Aḥmad were Qādirī shaykhs of the Barzinja tribe who opposed the former.⁵⁴⁴

In the early years, we find among the state projects for Kurdistan the construction of the Mawlānā Khālīd mosque in Sulaymānīya and of a religious school in Ḥalabja in 1969.⁵⁴⁵ Further projects followed 1975 in Shaqlāwa, Arbīl with the construction of a

⁵³⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 31.03.1970, 3.

⁵⁴⁰ For his biography, see Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 608–9.

⁵⁴¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 31.03.1970, 3.

⁵⁴² Ba‘thist propaganda usually presented Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī as an Arab, for instance, in *al-Thawra* 14.03.2002, 2 which was already mentioned in Section 3.2.

⁵⁴³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 31.03.1970, 3, 4.

⁵⁴⁴ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 327; see also Bruinessen, ‘The Qadiriyya’.

⁵⁴⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 28.07.1969, 3, 11.

great number of flats on the ground of the Qādirī endowment (*waqf*) next to the Murādīya mosque. In Sulaymānīya, a building with five floors and 35 flats was planned on the plot of the Ṭālabānī *takīya* as well as another two buildings and several shops on the land of the al-Maḥwī *takīya*.⁵⁴⁶ Such material patronage had not only a propagandist purpose of showing care for religious sites but also a tactical one. During the war with the Kurdish separatists of Mullā Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī, the Ba‘th systematically tried to win over certain Sufi shaykhs for its cause. Left largely to themselves after ‘Abd al-Karīm Qāsim’s rule and the threat of the Communist Popular Resistance Forces (*al-muqāwama al-sha‘biya*), the *takāyā* proliferated again and attracted still large followings in the region and beyond.

In exchange for state services, Sufi shaykhs and their followers joined irregular pro-government forces, which were called “the knights of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn” (*fursān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*) referring back to the aforementioned Kurdish founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty.⁵⁴⁷ With this tribal and Sufi recruitment, the Ba‘th continued a policy that had originated in the late Ottoman Empire with the aforementioned Ḥamīdīya regiments. The Kasnazānī shaykhs had been part of these Ottoman forces and shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī and his son Muḥammad represented now again only one example of Sufi shaykhs who formed militias from among their followers as part of the *fursān* against the movements of Bārzānī or later Jalāl al-Ṭālabānī. Bruinessen reports already for the 1960s and 1970s that shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm had cultivated the Iraqi government which supported him in gaining even more followers.⁵⁴⁸ Other loyal Sufi shaykhs who still sided with the government during the Iran-Iraq War were the Qādirī shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jaw‘īsa⁵⁴⁹ (1920-1992) from Sulaymānīya or the prominent Naqshbandī shaykh Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn from Biyāra.⁵⁵⁰

The Ba‘thist who oversaw this recruitment among the Sufis was ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s close ally and party struggler who gained the portfolio of the Ministry of the Interior and the Military Bureau in 1974.⁵⁵¹ In this position, he took personal charge of the security situation in Kurdistan and the recruitment for so-called

⁵⁴⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 26.04.1975, 12.

⁵⁴⁷ The Kurdish rebels of Bārzānī or Ṭālabānī named them derogatively *jash* or *juhūsh* (little donkeys or mules) (McDowall, *A Modern History*, 312, 327).

⁵⁴⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 327.

⁵⁴⁹ The Kurdish Jaw‘īsa clan traces its *nasab* back to ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and has a strong presence in Sulaymānīya province and many *takāyā* in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan (Tavakkulī, *Tārīkh-i taṣavvuf*, 194). See also their official Facebook page, Jawīsa, ‘Jawīsa’.

⁵⁵⁰ More information on these shaykhs will follow in Section 4.1.4.

⁵⁵¹ Baram, ‘The Ruling Political Elite’, 481.

irregular National Defence Battalions (*afwāj al-difā' al-waṭanī*) of which the *fursān* were a part. His crucial role for Ba'ṭhist politics in the region lies mainly in his personal networks among the Sufis as he cultivated good relations with Kurdish Sufi and tribal shaykhs who were opposed to Bārzānī.⁵⁵² His own Sufi background brought him here a special advantage, for 'Izzat Ibrāhīm is said to have been a regular visitor of the Sufi orders in Kirkūk governorate. After 2003, Nehrū al-Kasnazānī, the grandson of shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm, confirmed that 'Izzat Ibrāhīm and his whole family had been followers (*murīdūn*) of the Kasnazānīya already before his political career and his ascension within the Ba'ṭh Party. One of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm's uncles from the mother's side was a spiritual guide (*murshid*) of the order and 'Izzat himself had personally sworn the oath of allegiance to shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī.⁵⁵³ According to McDowall and Shourush, he also regularly attended the *dhikr* circles in the *takīya* of shaykh Ibrāhīm Jaw'īsa (or Chaw'īsa) in Qādir Karam near Kirkūk.⁵⁵⁴ At about the same time in 1976, he personally ordered the restoration of the Sufi shrine of sayyid Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Durrī in his hometown Dūr, an alleged nephew of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. The entrance of this shrine prominently bore an inscription with the date of his ordering the restoration, 24 May 1976, and 'Izzat Ibrāhīm's ministerial title and full name.⁵⁵⁵ Such an order by a leading Ba'ṭhist other than the president was at that early period extremely unusual and hints perhaps at his personal Sufi religiosity since there was no tactical need for the regime to support Sufis in his hometown.

The participation of Sufis in armed battle is certainly not unheard of in history but still not a usual phenomenon of Sufi orders. Therefore, a few words about the historical background of this phenomenon should be added. The phenomenon of the *fursān* can be explained with the tribal nature of the Sufi orders in Kurdistan. Over centuries, Sufi shaykhs in Kurdish society had not only been spiritual guides but at the same time also tribal shaykhs with political influence. The history of Kurdish Sufi shaykhs bears many examples of armed conflicts and feuds between rival shaykhs and orders but also

⁵⁵² McDowall, *A Modern History*, 354.

⁵⁵³ 'Ḥiwār al-amīn al-'āmm'.

⁵⁵⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, 355; Shourush, 'The Religious Composition', 119.

⁵⁵⁵ He ordered the restoration on 24 May 1976 as could be seen on the inscription at the entrance of the shrine, see the video material of the shrine's destruction in November 2014 (Islamic State (IS), *I'lām wilāyat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*). Yaḥyā is a descendant of the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm. His shrine is located near the most splendid shrine of his father in Dūr as well as of the Sufi shaykhs 'Abd al-Karīm Ḥamad al-Nu'aymī, sayyid Ḥamad b. Maḥmūd al-Nu'aymī (died 1983), and sayyid Ṣāliḥ Ibrāhīm al-Nu'aymī (1898-1958) from the Buyūḍ section (*far'*) of the Nu'aym in Tikrīt (Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh al-Dūr*, 23-27).

against foreign intruders.⁵⁵⁶ Already shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī’s forefathers, shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir and Sulṭān Ḥusayn had declared holy war (*jihād*) against Russian military in Iran and the British occupation during the First World War. Both shaykhs led their followers into battle against Russian and British troops in Iran and Iraq and Sulṭān Ḥusayn had allegedly “killed many of them”. They also supported the famous shaykh Maḥmūd al-Ḥafīd who had declared himself king of Kurdistan during his rebellion against the British from 1918 until his surrender in 1927.⁵⁵⁷

The *fursān* Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn were established under the monarchy and reflect the continuing split among the Kurds along the lines of old tribal rivalries. Such internal rivalries continued to affect the gradual emergence of the Kurdish nationalist movement, mainly associated with Mullā Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī. This Kurdish rebel, who became the figurehead of the nationalist movement, represented only a small clan of formerly Naqshbandī Sufi shaykhs who were not accepted as leaders among all the Kurdish tribes. Inner-tribal feuds prompted many tribal leaders already under the monarchy and later under Qāsim to rather side with the government in Baghdad and against Bārzānī. By the 1960s, many rival tribal chiefs and landlords (*āghās*) from the Bārādūstīs, Barzinja, Sūrjīs, Hīrkīs, Zībārīs, Jāf, and Khūshnāws as well as masses of unemployed Kurds joined the *fursān*. According to McDowall, these forces amounted to about 10,000 fighters at that time.⁵⁵⁸ Many of these tribal shaykhs were influential Sufi shaykhs, too, and large parts of their tribes followed an order. One prominent Sufi and leader of the Bārādūst tribes was shaykh Rashīd of Lawlān, an archenemy of Bārzānī who had first opposed the Qāsim government but sided later with them together with the Hīrkīs and Zībārīs.⁵⁵⁹ The leading shaykh of the Sūrjīs was a Sufi *murshid* with a *takīya* in Kūyi Lān.⁵⁶⁰ The Barzinja, which include the Kasnazānīs, were traditional followers of the Qādirīya.⁵⁶¹ The Mīkāyīlī branch of the Jāf was the original tribe of Khālīd al-Naqshbandī.⁵⁶² Part of the Khūshnāw followed traditionally the Qādirīya and another part the Naqshbandīya.⁵⁶³ This Sufi composition of the

⁵⁵⁶ See for instance the old rivalry between the Barzinjīs and the Ṭālabānīs in Çetinsaya, ‘The Calif and the Shaykhs’, 99–105; Nikitin, *Les Kurdes*, 215. Bruinessen additionally presents an impressive list of the Ṭālabānīs’ horse and man power in the 1920s with 410 horses and 400 additional men under the command of only three of their many shaykhs. This shows that they commanded indeed a considerable military strength (Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 221).

⁵⁵⁷ Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 84–88.

⁵⁵⁸ McDowall, *A Modern History*, 354–55.

⁵⁵⁹ Rubin, ‘Abd Al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds’, 364–66.

⁵⁶⁰ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 6:6, 66–68.

⁵⁶¹ ‘Āmirī, 6:182–88.

⁵⁶² ‘Āmirī, 6:137.

⁵⁶³ ‘Āmirī, 6:91.

Kurdish tribes and their internal feuds explain, why the Ba‘th regime continued the practice of its political predecessors and aimed to recruit loyal supporters among the Kurdish Sufi clans for its own cause. However, this was not a deliberate support of Sufism either since all the Ba‘th needed here was loyalty and manpower. It was a merely tactical patronage which benefitted the Sufis *en passant*.

3.2.6. Conclusion

The Ba‘th regime did not support Sufism as such in any special way during the 1970s. In the Arab regions of central Iraq, we find scholarly Sufi circles of the Rifā‘īya and the Qādirīya with early literary attempts to revive a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism of both orders, but their impact remained insignificant during this decade. Rather than reviving Sufism, they contributed to the dissemination of the presidential *nasab*-link to the Rifā‘īya in Iraq and authenticated it. This authentication might be another instance of compliance in a repressive political environment, but the sources show that the Āl Nāṣir Rifā‘ī *nasab* dates at least back to Ottoman times. Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ did not invent it out of thin air but reinvented it for his political ambitions. For the Ba‘th leaders themselves, the Sufi link was most probably secondary since only the descent from the Shī‘ī Imams played a role on the political level. Aside from this early Sufi-Ba‘th link, Sufism seems to have further stagnated in the Arab regions. In the Kurdish areas, certain Sufis only fared better because the regime needed their loyalty and manpower in order to oppose Kurdish nationalists. State support and patronage contributed in this way to the proliferation of many Sufi centres as in the case of the Kasnazānīya even though the Ba‘th was not interested in a promotion of Sufism as such.

Sections 3.1 and 3.2 make clear that the Ba‘th of the 1970s was still a secular and authoritarian regime which aimed to control Iraq’s religious landscape, to eliminate unwanted or opposing figures and movements, and, from 1976 on, to propagate its own Ba‘th-aligned Islam. Sufis and Sufism did not yet play a central role in these endeavours. They only supported the regime out of compliance, for instance in the literature, or in exchange for privileges and material support against Kurdish separatists. Particularly Kurdish shaykhs secured themselves in this way a position as mediators between the state and their Kurdish people, i.e. as guarantors of material resources and power. Even though ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī and his Sufi background already played a central role in the regime’s Sufi patronage in Kurdistan during the

1970s, his Sufi image did not surface in public. Such an image would still have been unwanted in the Ba‘th Party. Nevertheless, the regime’s early policies of control and co-option, the gradual emergence of the presidential *Rifā‘ī nasab*, the restructuring of the Ministry of *Awqāf*, and the recruitment of Kurdish Sufis formed the basis for state-Sufi relations over the next two decades. All of these policies were further intensified during the 1980s and contributed eventually to an official revival of Sufism in Iraq during the 1990s.

4. Ba‘thist Religious Propaganda and the Rise of Sufis, 1979-1989

The previous chapter outlined the Ba‘th’s early policies to control Iraq’s religious landscape, its repression of Islamists, its marginalisation of religious scholars, its cautious use of a Shī‘ī religious symbolism and the emergence of the presidential sharīfian *nasab*, as well as the restructuring of the Ministry of *Awqāf* into a means of control and for the spread of a Ba‘th-aligned Islam. It has shown that these policies resulted in a continuing stagnation of Sufism in the Arab regions whereas the Ba‘th’s co-optation of tribes and Sufis in Kurdistan as a counterforce against Kurdish nationalists benefitted their proliferation considerably.

In the 1980s, the Ba‘th regime continued its repression against Islamists but it drastically increased its religious propaganda and its employment of Islam in politics to an unprecedented degree. This did not constitute an ideological shift in the party as suggested by Amatzia Baram⁵⁶⁴ since the leadership internally consolidated its secularism at the same time in 1982, but Islam was now a central part of the political discourse. The Ministry of *Awqāf* underwent further changes and commenced the massive spread of an ecumenical Islam in accordance with Ba‘thist principles. The new religious policies left a lasting imprint on Iraqi society and improved the situation of Sufism in the country through an increasing state support and a considerable Sufi-friendly, political climate. The previous marginalisation of religious scholars turned into their massive public support and prominent Sufi shaykhs, who did not oppose the regime, found as political refugees and allies a safe haven in Baghdad and could expand their orders; the state restored shrines, mosques, and *takāyā* all over Iraq; Sunnī Sufi scholars regained wide popularity through the regime’s propaganda as well as new career opportunities in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs and higher religious education; even the presidential Sufi genealogy became an essential part of the religious propaganda. Sufi literary production reflected, moreover, the political spirit of this time and generated ecumenical attempts to overcome ethnic and sectarian differences inside Iraq but also regarding the country’s foreign relations with the new ally Saudi Arabia. Thus, this decade constitutes a precursor for the ultimate, state-sponsored revival of Sufism that fully unfolded during the 1990s.

This development was overshadowed by the devastating eight-year-long war against Iran (1980-1988) in the course of which two other antagonistic religious currents

⁵⁶⁴ Baram, ‘From Militant Secularism to Islamism’; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*.

began to take a stronger foothold in Iraq, namely Shī'ī Islamism and Wahhābism. The fateful political turning point for Iraq, Iran, and the whole region that brought about the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War came already in 1979. In Iraq, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn took over the presidency and consolidated his power to an unprecedented degree for more than two decades to come, whereas in Iran the Shī'ī Ayatollah Rūḥollāh Mūsavī Khomeynī emerged as political leader with his successful Islamic revolution. Iraq's domestic Shī'ī Islamist opposition that had agitated against the Ba'ṯh since the 1970s reached with Khomeynī's success in Iran a new, international dimension. The new Islamist regime in Teheran accused the Ba'ṯh Party, henceforth, of being atheist and openly urged the Iraqi people to topple Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in order to establish an Islamic republic in Iraq.⁵⁶⁵ As shown by Amatzia Baram, Ṣaddām himself admitted in a secret meeting a few years later that Khomeynī's accusations against the Ba'ṯh as enemies of Islam had indeed hurt the party.⁵⁶⁶

In order to cover the skyrocketing expenditures during the economically ruinous war, the Ba'ṯh regime had to rely on foreign financial aid from Saudi Arabia with whom it cultivated the closest diplomatic relations. As a side effect of these close relations and in order not to alienate its financial donour, the regime turned a blind eye to the increasing influx of Wahhābī and Salafī literature into Iraq. Recent interviews with religious scholars and members of Iraq's Salafī circles at that time brought to light that this literature was distributed for free by the Saudi embassy in Baghdad and other Saudi-affiliated organisations while other Sunnī and Shī'ī religious works remained officially banned. The spread of such books and their inherent ultra-conservative ideas paved the way for a gradual conversion of many Sunnīs to Salafism.⁵⁶⁷ However slow and gradual the spread of such circles moved on in the 1980s, Salafism or Wahhābism were not perceived as a major threat, neither by the government which concentrated on Shī'ī Islamism nor by the society at large. The Ba'ṯh regime itself took a middle path between both of these antagonistic Islamic currents and chose many Sufis as useful allies for its cause.

Against this historical background, the following two sections, 4.1 and 4.2, will illustrate how the Ba'ṯh regime created in the 1980s, despite increasing state repression

⁵⁶⁵ Hiro, *The Longest War*, 35–36; Karsh and Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein*, 138–39.

⁵⁶⁶ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 80.

⁵⁶⁷ Kubaysī, 'al-Salafīya fī l-'Irāq', 5–6; Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 86–87. One of the Salafī groups which began to flourish in the mid-1980s was called *jamā'at al-muwahḥidīn* (Community of the professors of God's unity).

and the hardship of war, the foundations for a gradual revival and proliferation of Sufism; a revival that reached its apex only one decade later. Section 4.1 will, first of all, focus on the Ba‘th’s ecumenical Islamic propaganda, and religious policies during the war years. An investigation of the regime’s internal Ninth Regional Party Congress in 1982 (4.1.1) will clarify that the massive increase of religious war propaganda only was a pragmatic step. By then, leading Ba‘thists within the state’s highest political organs internally attracted attention through a growing religiosity, particularly a Sufi religiosity, but the leadership made it unmistakably clear that it would not tolerate at all religion within the party and dismissed the accused members. Despite the internal rejection of Sufi religiosity, the Ba‘th had already in 1980 commenced unprecedented religious war propaganda and religious policies which aimed, in reaction to Khomeynī’s war rhetoric, to undermine sectarian differences between Sunna and Shī‘a in Iraq. This began with another reshuffling of the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs which was already tasked with the raising of an Islamic awareness in Iraq (4.1.2). The Ba‘th almost tripled the total budget of the ministry and invested huge sums into the restoration and construction of Sunnī and Shī‘ī mosques, shrines, and *takāyā* all over Iraq. This campaign brought about a real architectural renaissance of mosques, shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* but also Sufi saints and considerably benefitted Iraq’s Sufi communities (4.1.3).

After a decade of public marginalisation, Sunnī and Shī‘ī men of religion regained wide publicity in the official war propaganda being obliged to state support of the Ba‘th regime against Iran. As part of this propaganda, newly established, mixed Sunnī and Shī‘ī Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness (*lijān al-taw‘īya al-dīniya*) toured throughout Iraq and even regularly visited the soldiers at the front. Sunnī Sufi scholars and Sufi shaykhs figured prominently in this campaign (4.1.4). Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself now officially turned his alleged sharīfian genealogy into a political tool, republished *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, installed his Rifā‘ī *nasab* at major Shī‘ī shrines, and tried as leading Sunnī descendant of the Imams ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Ḥusayn to appeal to the Iraqi Shī‘a. His Rifā‘ī Sufi genealogy provided an ideal ecumenical Sufi framework for this policy; a framework which was reinvented by his uncle Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ in the late 1960s (4.1.5). Ṣaddām’s closest ally, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī turned into the Ba‘th’s ultimate religious specialist and mediator between the regime and the shaykhs and religious scholars. Since his youth, he had been a Kasnazānī Sufi but his role as religious representative of the party in the public

discourse surfaced only now. He was the foremost Ba‘thist to appear during religious occasions, meetings with religious Sufi scholars, and visitations of shrines across Iraq including many Sufi shrines (4.1.6). Eventually, all the religious propaganda should not belie the fact that state control and repression of Iraq’s religious landscape still expanded (4.1.7).

Turning the attention to the Sufis themselves, Section 4.2 will reveal that the political climate during the war also created new opportunities for Sufis in Iraq and contributed to their increasing popularity. This can be illustrated by the relocations of prominent Sufi shaykhs to Baghdad, the careers of religious Sufi scholars in Ba‘thist institutions, and by the latter’s Sufi literary production at that time. At the beginning of the war, three from among the most prominent Sufi shaykhs in Syria, Iraq, and Iran found a permanent base in Baghdad where they supported the regime and created new spiritual centres. Two of them, Muḥammad ‘Umar al-‘Izzī al-Naqshbandī (Syria) and Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī (Iranian Kurdistan) found a safe haven as political refugees and a welcoming climate in Baghdad and became permanent residents (4.2.1). Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī, too, moved his spiritual centre from Kirkūk to Baghdad, not as a refugee but in order to expand his order; a move that made the Kasnazānīya the most successful Sufi order across Iraq over the following years (4.2.2). Parallel to the arrival of the Sufi shaykhs, a large number of Sufi scholars from the religious schools in Sāmarrā’, Fallūja, and Ramādī were additionally recruited for the Ba‘th’s new state institutions of higher religious education in the 1980s. All of them made successful careers and became leading figures in the Ba‘thist religious education sector until 2003 (4.2.3).

4.2.4 and 4.2.5 will introduce two instances of those scholars’ literary production in order to show their ecumenical ideas of Sufi Islam which reflected the Ba‘th’s religio-ideological outlook and complemented its religious propaganda. Fayḍī al-Fayḍī’s project of a Salafī Sufism provides an instance of the *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism that he developed among the aforementioned Sufi scholars at Baghdad University in order to to overcome doctrinal differences between Sufism, Salafism, and Wahhābism – the doctrine of the Ba‘th’s newly gained war-ally Saudi Arabia. Fayḍī developed his thesis into a book in the 1980s and made a successful career in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs and as dean of the Ṣaddām Faculty for the Preparation of Imams, Preachers, and Missionaries in the 1990s (4.2.4). Another Sufi scholar and vice-chairman of Baghdad’s Committee for the Raising of Religious Awareness was Yūnus

Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī. He promoted in his genealogical encyclopaedias of Iraq's tribes and *ashrāf* a resurgence of sharīfism in the mid-1980s. His works reflected the general resurgence of tribal culture and sharīfism that was endorsed by the Ba'ṯh regime after it had fiercely suppressed the very same phenomenon a decade earlier. Sāmarrā'ī's books, too, complemented the regime's official propaganda of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's sharīfian descendancy from a Rifā'ī tribal clan and promoted the idea of a sharīfian unity among the numerous Kurdish, Arab, Sunnī, and Shī'ī descendants of the *ahl al-bayt* in Iraq. This ecumenical unity aimed at bypassing ethnic and sectarian differences based on the shared veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* and the religious meaning of a *nasab*. Being himself a Qādirī Sufī, Sāmarrā'ī particularly concentrated in his encyclopaedias on Sufī clans including the presidential Āl Nāṣir as the foremost representatives of Sunnī *ashrāf* in Iraq and contributed, thereby, also to a wider popularity of the country's genealogical Sufī heritage (4.2.5).

4.1. The Instrumentalisation of Islam and Sufis during the Iran-Iraq War

It took only about one year after Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's takeover in Iraq and Khomeynī's Islamic revolution in Iran that the political and ideological conflict between both camps erupted in a full-scale war in September 1980. Throughout this eight-year-long war, the Iranian brand of Shī'ism became the major ideological enemy that threatened to undermine the Iraqi Ba'ṯh Party's secular base at home. As shown by Samuel Helfont, the regime had faced an Islamist uprising in Iraq already since the late 1970s.⁵⁶⁸ Notably the Shī'ī Islamist Da'wa Party, backed by Khomeynī, carried out a wave of assassination attempts against Ba'ṯh politicians such as the Christian Prime Minister Ṭāriq 'Azīz in April 1980. Answering such attacks with fierce repression, the regime put several Shī'ī scholars, including the leading Ayatollah Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū'ī in Najaf, under house arrest. The co-founder of the Da'wa Party, Ayatollah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr and his sister Āmina bint al-Hudā were both arrested and secretly executed. The former had publicly supported the Iranian revolution and declared membership in the Ba'ṯh Party as forbidden (*ḥarām*). Further targeting Shī'ī dissidents in Iraq, the regime rigorously applied the Iraqi nationality law and deported

⁵⁶⁸ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 74.

about 40,000 Iraqi citizens allegedly of Persian descent in 1980 alone.⁵⁶⁹ Apart from this tactic of coercion and violence, the regime was forced to ideologically reassess its own stance towards religion and adopted itself an intensive religious propaganda campaign with a considerable Sufi influence. Internally, however, the leadership still stuck to its secular Ba‘thist principles and declared its overt rejection of religion inside the party.

4.1.1. *The Ba‘th’s Internal Consolidation of Secularism: Sufism within the Party*

During the Ninth Regional⁵⁷⁰ Party Congress in 1982, the Ba‘th Party clearly consolidated its secularism in the context of an internal criticism against the growing religiosity among several leading party members. Baram marked this event as the last stand of the Ba‘th’s fortress secularism and demonstrated the leadership’s need to clarify its secular stance towards religion for the last time.⁵⁷¹ Helfont, by contrast, has shown that Ba‘th Party members still had to study the decisions in the central report of this congress in Islam courses during the 1990s, suggesting that the event did not mark a last stand but rather a continuation of the regime’s secularism.⁵⁷² Apart from the question of the continuity of the Ba‘th Party’s secularism, the Ninth Regional Party Congress also reveals new insights about the Ba‘th regime’s relationship with Sufism. Previous accounts of this congress have neglected a closer scrutiny of what the criticised religiosity among party members meant in detail.⁵⁷³ This section will show that the party leadership and Ṣaddām Ḥusayn in particular questioned the political conduct and the ideological party principles of several Ba‘thist politicians on the basis of their Sufi religiosity and Sufi practices with the eventual result of their dismissal.

After successful offensives at the beginning of the war, Iraq had suffered major defeats through an Iranian counter-attack in 1982 with a high number of casualties and about 40-50,000 Iraqi prisoners of war, the loss of all conquered territories and about ninety per cent of its foreign currency reserves due to the growing military expenditures. The defeat combined with continuing attacks by the Kurdish and the Shī‘ī Islamist

⁵⁶⁹ Bengio, ‘Shi‘is and Politics’, 8–12; Karsh and Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein*, 138–39; Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 221.

⁵⁷⁰ ‘Regional’ refers in Ba‘thist terminology to the national level.

⁵⁷¹ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 156.

⁵⁷² Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 190.

⁵⁷³ See for instance Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1984, 561–64; Hiro, *The Longest War*, 64–66; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 156.

opposition in Iraq put strategy, conduct, and legitimacy of the Ba‘th leadership into question with the result of a severe existential crisis.⁵⁷⁴ These circumstances prompted the leadership to secretly convene from June 24 to 27, the Ninth Regional Party Congress in Baghdad with 250 attending delegates who had been elected earlier.⁵⁷⁵ The congress, chaired by ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī and three other party members, resulted in a major reshuffle of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and Regional Leadership (RL) through several dismissals of leading party members. The RCC shrank after eight dismissals and the addition of one new member from a body of sixteen to a more manageable body of nine members. Seven of those eight dismissed members were also replaced in the RL. According to Baram, the whole reshuffle of the two highest institutions was largely organisational in nature but left the RCC composed of Ṣaddām’s closest supporters and kinsmen.⁵⁷⁶

The congress resolutions were published in Baghdad in January 1983⁵⁷⁷ and included as a major topic “the religious-political phenomenon in Iraq” (*al-ẓāhira al-dīniya al-siyāsīya*). Under this heading, the party openly discussed for the first time the growing Islamisation of Iraq and identified the militant, Islamist Da‘wa Party’s successful recruitment among the Shī‘ī Iraqi youth as a serious problem.⁵⁷⁸ Yet, the congress report did not limit the problem to the Iraqi Shī‘a alone.

It is quite a mistake to think that the religious-political phenomenon in Iraq is connected only with the Ja‘fari sect [i.e. Shī‘a]. Indeed, it is present among some of the followers of the Sunni sect who stand against the Party and Revolution in exactly the same way as do the members of the Al-Da‘wa Party.⁵⁷⁹

The report admitted certain mistakes within the Ba‘th Party itself, contributing to the success of the religious-political phenomenon, and hints at the existence of a religious faction within the party.⁵⁸⁰

In our treatment of the religious-political phenomenon we have to study the stances towards this phenomenon taken in the past by certain Party members as well as their behaviour towards the religious question as a whole. This should be done in accordance with the method of criticism and self-criticism to overcome mistakes and continue the revolutionary course in an improved form. (...) During the past phase, a number of Party members of various levels took erroneous stands towards the religious question and the religious-political phenomenon

⁵⁷⁴ Hiro, *The Longest War*, 55–94; Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime*, chap. 2.

⁵⁷⁵ Hiro, *The Longest War*, 64.

⁵⁷⁶ Baram, ‘The Ruling Political Elite’, 456.

⁵⁷⁷ I only had access to the official English translation by SARTEC, in Lausanne (Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party, Iraq, *The Central Report of the Ninth Regional Congress*).

⁵⁷⁸ A detailed discussion of the congress resolutions with respect to al-Da‘wa activities offers Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 157–61.

⁵⁷⁹ Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party, Iraq, *The Central Report of the Ninth Regional Congress*, 278.

⁵⁸⁰ Following the congress, Bengio assumed the existence of three different factions within the party, a party-orthodox, a pragmatic (of Ṣaddām), and a religious-conservative one (Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1984, 561).

contravening the Party principles and its correct essential practices. This had reflected in one way or another on the reality of this phenomenon in Iraq causing harm to the process of its confrontation by the Party and special organs of the Revolution. What are the mistakes committed in this regard? Some Party members began to practice religious rites in a superficial [this is a translation error, read: excessive]⁵⁸¹ manner. Religious concepts began gradually to overcome Party concepts in these members' treatment of essential issues of thought and practice in various fields facing the Party in the process of comprehensive revolutionary change. The religious aspect began to spread gradually and in a spurious manner among certain Party members who started to imitate senior Party members, imagining that the Party Leadership demanded it. (...) Moreover, some Party members started to make the practice of religious rites a standard of Party assessment.⁵⁸²

The report criticised a general confusion among party members as to whether religious practices were advisable for advancement inside the party hierarchy or not. This confusion could involve the party members's lack of alertness for the political exploitation of these religious practices, their involvement with religious-political circles by praying in the same mosque, and increasing distinction along sectarian lines within the party.⁵⁸³ In an unmistakable statement, the accused religious party members were finally confronted with the question "[I]f the religious conceptions and practices were considered by some comrades as a moral and ideological alternative to the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and a way to solve the essential question of life, why did they choose the Ba'th Party?"⁵⁸⁴ With such a statement, the Ba'th drew a sharp line of demarcation between religion and its party principles and demonstrated a clear hostility against religion within the party.

Closer scrutiny of the debate during the congress and the accused party members makes clear that the mentioned practice of religious rites included Sufi rituals and practices. The memoirs of one of the accused party members, namely Ṭāhir Tawfīq al-ʿĀnī, bear evidence of it. Ṭāhir al-ʿĀnī was a member of both the RL and the RCC and served as minister of industry and natural resources at that time. He was a close friend of ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī with whom he had worked together in the party's Karkh branch, the peasant office (*maktab al-falāḥīn*), and the Highest Agricultural Council (*al-majlis al-zirāʿī al-aʿlā*).⁵⁸⁵ Ṭāhir al-ʿĀnī mentioned that next to himself, three other party members in the RL and RCC were targeted for their religiosity (*tadayyun*) and

⁵⁸¹ The English translation "superficial" must be erroneous. With respect to the whole text, the authors most probably meant "excessive" in the sense that the accused overemphasised their religious practice in front of other colleagues.

⁵⁸² Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, Iraq, *The Central Report of the Ninth Regional Congress*, 279–80.

⁵⁸³ Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, Iraq, 281–82.

⁵⁸⁴ Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, Iraq, 281–82.

⁵⁸⁵ Ṭāhir al-ʿĀnī originally hails from the Nu'aym tribe of the Rifā'ian *sāda* in ʿĀna and had family ties to ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī and Ṣaddām Ḥusayn (ʿĀnī, *Inhiyār al-Irāq*, 13, 136; Baram, 'The Ruling Political Elite', 479).

eventually dismissed from their offices, namely Ja‘far Qāsim Ḥammūdī, Burhān al-Dīn Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Tikrītī and in the cabinet Sa‘dī ‘Ayāsh ‘Uraym. Ja‘far Qāsim Ḥammūdī was a Shī‘ī economist from Baghdad, one of the earliest Ba‘thists and a member in the leadership of the party’s Baghdad branch since 1968.⁵⁸⁶ Burhān al-Dīn Muṣṭafā was a Sunnī party worker and teacher from Tikrīt who had worked as deputy secretary general of the party’s Kirkūk branch in the early 1970s and in the Baṣra branch later in 1976. He had served as minister of youth until April 1977 and thereafter as minister of state for Kurdish affairs in Baghdad.⁵⁸⁷ Sa‘dī ‘Ayāsh, finally, a Sunnī from Anbār province, had served in 1969 and 1973 as governor of Nīnawā and from 1975 until 1978 in Nāṣiriya.⁵⁸⁸ Since 1978, he had worked as attorney (*wakīl*) in the ministry of the interior for development projects in the autonomous Kurdish region.⁵⁸⁹ He was appointed minister of local government from June till December 1982.⁵⁹⁰ Especially the latter two were important mediators between the Ba‘th and the Kurdish Sufī shaykhs. This is evident from a meeting in 1982 between Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and the Qādirī shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jaw’īsa in the course of which the shaykh named particularly them as negotiators.⁵⁹¹

Ṭāhir al-‘Ānī described how members of the military bureau (*al-maktab al-‘askarī*) complained about him and his colleagues with the aim of blocking their candidacy at the upcoming elections. He was accused of moral and religious sternness (*tashaddud*) and of accompanying religious party members.⁵⁹² The leadership heavily criticised him for the building of a mosque from his own funds on a lot of land that he had obtained from the state in order to build a residential house on it. He gave priority to this mosque, so the accusation, over a house for his own family.⁵⁹³ In 1981, he had additionally dared to oppose the regime on religious grounds against the permission for the import of whiskey. The reason for his outrage was, according to his memoirs, the governments parallel denial of a request by the Ministry of *Awqāf* to print new

⁵⁸⁶ Baram, ‘The Ruling Political Elite’, 483.

⁵⁸⁷ Baram, 477; Bengio and Dann, ‘Iraq’, 1978, 406, 411.

⁵⁸⁸ See *al-Jumhūrīya* 13.04.1973, 4.

⁵⁸⁹ See *al-Jumhūrīya* 10.02.1978, 4.

⁵⁹⁰ Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1984, 564.

⁵⁹¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 13.07.1982, 5.

⁵⁹² ‘Ānī, *Inhiyār al-‘Irāq*, 99.

⁵⁹³ ‘Ānī, 68. Every member of the RL received a plot of land of about 500sqm in Baghdad to build a residential house on it, but Ṭāhir al-‘Ānī used it to build the al-Khasnā’ mosque. Party members had to be cautious with such activities indicating certain religious tendencies (Interview with Farḥān Kāzīm, a former Ba‘thist, 24.01.2016).

Quran books in Germany.⁵⁹⁴ Proud of his religiosity, Ṭāhir al-‘Ānī defended his belief in his memoirs and affirmed the importance to hold on to religion in order to confront the temptations of power and luxurious life. According to him, a Ba‘thī needed immunisation not to deviate from the principles of the party, that is an immunity of religion (*hiṣānat al-dīn*) in addition to the ideological party immunity.⁵⁹⁵ Contrary to his view, the congress report explicitly warned of “the deficiency in the principled and ideological immunity of certain party officials” against “backward and retrogressive religious and social concepts and habits.”⁵⁹⁶ Similarly, Ja‘far Qāsim Ḥammūdī, Burhān al-Dīn Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Raḥman, and Sa‘dī ‘Ayāsh ‘Uraym were attacked for their “ultra-religiosity” (*tadayyun*) and their frequent visitations of Sufi *takāyā* and religious shrines (*al-marāqīd al-dīniya*).⁵⁹⁷ The regime charged them with “having become immersed in worship and the approach to the shaykhs” (*inghimāsihim fī l-ta‘abbud wa-l-taqarrub min al-mashāyikh*).⁵⁹⁸

During the congress, all four had to respond to the accusations in front of the congregated party members. A sequence from a video recording of the congress, which was broadcasted by Al Arabiya and became available online after 2003, provides a glimpse of the debate. The video shows that ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī opened the discussion about “some negative remarks” regarding certain party members. Then, Ṣaddām’s half-brother Bārzān Ibrāhīm al-Tikrītī drew attention to a religious current which had damaged the party and was represented by some leading members such as comrade Burhān al-Dīn who regularly participated in religious practices.⁵⁹⁹ Afterwards, Fāḍil al-Barrāk, head of General Intelligence, further charged Burhān al-Dīn, Ṭāhir, and Ja‘far with creating a negative climate. Similar to the case of Burhān al-Dīn, he accused Ja‘far of frequenting *takāyā* and Sufis (*darāwīsh*) “as is well known”. Ṭāhir was additionally criticised for his aforementioned mosque building and for his evaluation of party members on the basis of whether they prayed or not.⁶⁰⁰ The accused Burhān al-Dīn appeared as the first to defend himself with the words “the party is the party and religion is religion” insisting that his religious practice

⁵⁹⁴ ‘Ānī, 16.

⁵⁹⁵ ‘Ānī, 99.

⁵⁹⁶ Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party, Iraq, *The Central Report of the Ninth Regional Congress*, 18.

⁵⁹⁷ Other criticised Ba‘thists, but for different and unknown reasons, were Na‘īm Ḥaddād, Tāyih ‘Abd al-Karīm, ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil, Ḥikmat al-‘Azzāwī, and ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Yāsīn (‘Ānī, *Inhiyār al-‘Irāq*, 99, 181).

⁵⁹⁸ ‘Ānī, 68.

⁵⁹⁹ Qar, *Ijtīmā‘ bayn qiyādat ḥizb al-Ba‘th*, pts 2:14-3:03.

⁶⁰⁰ Qar, pts 3:04-3:52.

(*mumārāsa dīnīya*) was ordinary and a human right between him and his Lord. Nevertheless, he stated that, if needed, he would not hold fast to his candidacy for the leadership (*qiyāda*) but would also serve as a soldier for the party on each level and under all circumstances.⁶⁰¹ Ṭāhir tried to defend his stance against Ṣaddām Ḥusayn as follows:

[Ṭāhir]: I receive this attention from distant people. As far as people know me, they know that my [religious] practice is not more than immunity directed to the formation of a new immunity in addition to the principal [ideological] immunity. My whole life, I...” [Interruption by Ṣaddām]: “The one who becomes a Ba‘thī has an immunity corresponding to the immunity of ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb [applause by the other party members]. The one who becomes in this way a Ba‘thī, a true Ba‘thī, starts to see with his heart/mind (*ḍamīr*) and not with his eyes [inaudible]. Well, do we turn things upside down? Which immunity? From where do we inquire about immunity? Why is the party’s faith insufficient and why are its principles insufficient? It belongs to the deeds of the pious (*fuqarā*), of every single one that he performs the pilgrimage to Mecca and returns a hundred times. The pilgrim does not develop immunity, an immunity corresponding to what, what without us? That means this one does not prove himself [as trustworthy] except by entering a *takīya*?! (...).”⁶⁰²

Ṣaddām made clear that party principles stood above anything else, even above religious ones. His contrasting of religiosity as expressed by the pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the central pillars of Islam, with the immunity of the second caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is only comprehensible against the background of the Ba‘th’s secular and purely historical view of the early Islamic period. According to this view, neither the pilgrimage nor visitations of *takāyā* make a Ba‘thī, as historical heir of the Prophet and his successors who had united the Arabs, more reliable or morally immunised. Finally, Jā‘far tried to defend himself but was interrupted by ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī: „[Ja‘far:] What is my crime (*dhanb*)? I am Shī‘ī! I enter *takāyā*? I do not know a single *takīya* in Iraq at all! [‘Izzat Ibrāhīm:] He [Fāḍil al-Barrāk] says it is well known that you go there.”⁶⁰³ In the end, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm joked about Ja‘far’s prayer. On the one hand, the accusation against the Shī‘ī Ja‘far of frequenting Sunnī Sufī circles seems puzzling and raises the question as to whether this was only a pretence for a political purge. On the other hand, his attraction to Sufism could indeed have been possible. As argued in Sections 2.6 and 5.2.6, some Sufī orders developed a closeness to the Shī‘a in Iraq and there are also Shī‘īs among the followers of Sunnī Sufī shaykhs. In addition, some Iraqi Sufis who stood close to the Muslim Brotherhood sympathised with Khomeynī and the Shī‘ī Da‘wa Party against the Ba‘th regime. Unfortunately, we

⁶⁰¹ Qar, pts 3:51-4:23.

⁶⁰² Qar, pts 4:23-5:33.

⁶⁰³ Qar, pts 6:54-7:07.

know nothing about the circles which Ja‘far allegedly frequented but he and the others perhaps had approached Sufis of the latter sort.

Another puzzling aspect of the whole debate suggests that the Sufism of the accused was not per se problematic but only their alleged overemphasis of it in a political context or perhaps their contacts with the wrong shaykhs. In fact, two other Ba‘thists with a well-known Sufi affiliation continued to play leading roles in the government. The first and most popular, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, was spared from criticism even though he was known to be a Sufi follower, too. Ṭāhir al-‘Ānī reported that soon after the hearings, Ja‘far, Burhān al-Dīn, and Sa‘dī approached their comrade and Sufi affiliate, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, to talk to Ṣaddām on their behalf.⁶⁰⁴ However, the latter’s intervention was to no avail and all of them were dismissed from the RCC, RL, and the cabinet but received instead minor positions as compensation.⁶⁰⁵ The second successful Ba‘thist with a Sufi inclination was ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil ‘Abbās al-Sāmarrā’ī who was dismissed for different reasons in 1982 including poor performance in office. As a member of the Baghdad branch of the party since September 1970, he had served in the RCC since 1973, as governor of Maysān province in 1975, in the RL since 1977, as well as in the northern and southern party organizations (*tanẓīmāt*).⁶⁰⁶ After the purges in 1982, the leadership tasked him with a fairly important position for the religious propaganda during the war years. He was appointed minister of *awqāf* and religious affairs and successfully performed in this position for over ten years throughout the regime’s major crises during the Iran-Iraq War and the invasion of Kuwait. Among the successive ministers of *awqāf* under the Ba‘th, he was the only one with a well-known Sufi inclination.

Like many popular religious scholars and Sufis in Iraq such as the aforementioned Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī, ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil originally hailed from the sharīfian al-

⁶⁰⁴ ‘Ānī, *Inhiyār al-‘Irāq*, 100–101.

⁶⁰⁵ It is unknown whether they received other positions due to ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s influence or not. Ṭāhir was relieved of his duties in the RCC and RL, but remained politically active in other capacities, for example as governor of Nīnawā in 1987 (Baram, ‘The Ruling Political Elite’, 479). Ja‘far and Burhān al-Dīn received merely symbolic compensation with positions as advisors to the RCC. Baram assumes that both were allegedly arrested in 1983, particularly Ja‘far on charges of alleged ties with the radical Shī‘ī opposition (Baram, 477, 483). According to my interview with a former party member, Ja‘far soon died of natural causes in the early 1980s (Interview with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba‘thist, 11.11.2015). Sa‘dī ‘Ayāsh ‘Uraym’s further career is unknown. Ṭāhir al-‘Ānī reportedly asked Ṣaddām after the congress why he was not completely dismissed due to his religiosity like the other three members. He described himself as “their shaykh in religiosity” (*shaykhihim fī al-tadayyun*). According to his interpretation, he only stayed because he had nothing to hide and always remained open and honest. He thought that Ṣaddām soon regretted to spare him as he constantly kept criticising the former’s men of trust (‘Ānī, *Inhiyār al-‘Irāq*, 181–82).

⁶⁰⁶ Baram, ‘The Ruling Political Elite’, 476; ‘Ānī, *Inhiyār al-‘Irāq*, 181.

Bū ‘Abbās tribe in Sāmarrā’. He was also said to have a close relationship with ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī who called him his cousin (*ibn ‘amm*).⁶⁰⁷ ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil allegedly became a novice (*murīd*) of the Qādirīya and was known in Iraq for his sponsorship (*ri‘āya*) of the Sufī orders, shrines and *takāyā*.⁶⁰⁸ It is not clear when ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil became attracted to Sufism or if he followed a certain Qādirī shaykh. However, his appointment coincided with the beginning of lavish construction and restoration campaigns of mosques, shrines, and *takāyā*. The Sufī orders received abundant material support during his tenure. He often appeared publicly with ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm in religious contexts such as leading the Friday prayer in the Umm al-Ṭubūl mosque or celebrating the revelation of the Quran (*laylat al-qadr*) in the Kīlānīya.⁶⁰⁹ The upcoming section about the role of Sunnī Sufī scholars and shaykhs in war propaganda will show that his Sufī inclination constituted even an advantage with regard to the regime’s foreign relations to Sufī orders.⁶¹⁰ Under his tenure as minister of *awqāf* and religious affairs, the Sufīs had another influential patron from 1982 to 1993.

Asking what had happened to the Ba‘th Party before the Ninth Regional Congress, Baram argued that “parts of the leadership genuinely lost their faith in the Ba‘th extreme secularism and became more or less religious.”⁶¹¹ The material presented above suggests that several members of the Ba‘th leadership indeed actively participated in Sufī traditions and practices, and seemingly mixed their religious and political life as early as 1977. In 1982, some of their Sufī inclinations were a thorn in the flesh of the leadership and led to their eventual dismissal. Interestingly, neither ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī nor ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil ‘Abbās were criticised for their Sufī religiosity even though Ba‘thist memoirs and my interviewees confirmed that they were known to be devout Sufīs by then.⁶¹² As to ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm, he was in a too

⁶⁰⁷ ‘Ānī, *Inhiyār al-‘Irāq*, 181.

⁶⁰⁸ ‘Ubaydī, ‘al-Ṭaṣawwuf fī l-‘Irāq’, 73. This was also reported in my interview with another tribal member of the al-Bū ‘Abbās who is neither attracted to Sufism nor the Ba‘th Party, as well as in an interview with a leading party member in Baghdad (see my interviews with ‘Abd Allāh Maḥmūd, a businessman from Sāmarrā’, 16.05.2016 and with Maḥmūd Shākir, a former personal advisor to the presidential *dīwān* of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, 11.05.2016).

⁶⁰⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 16.04.1983, 6; for *laylat al-qadr* with Imam ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ṭu‘ma, 13.05.1988, 8.

⁶¹⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 27.02.1984, 6.

⁶¹¹ Alternatively, Baram assumed that some senior Shī‘ī members suspected a defeat of the Ba‘th by Khomeynī and prepared to change sides (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 160).

⁶¹² As mentioned in Section 3.2.5, he had already ordered the restoration of a Sufī shrine in his hometown Dūr in 1976 and was known to be a regular visitor to the Kurdish Sufī shaykhs in Kirkūk. Former minister of economy, Fakhrī al-Qaddūrī similarly noted ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s insistence to pray in the cave where the Prophet had received his heavenly message during a mission to Saudi Arabia (Qaddūrī, *Hākadhā ‘araftu al-Bakr*, 380).

powerful position to be dismissed as right hand of Ṣaddām. The following sections will additionally show that both Ba‘thists became central figures in the regime’s religious war propaganda which means that the regime needed them explicitly for their well-known religiosity, which might be the main reason for their exemption from criticism. As mentioned above, the Islamist uprising in Iraq at that time and the Islamist enemy in Iran posed major threats for the regime which had to fear a religious infiltration of the party. Particularly ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm and ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil’s religiosity combined with their loyalty made them so valuable for the Ba‘th during those years.

4.1.2. *The Further Reshuffling of the Ministry of Awqāf*

Despite the clear internal rejection of religion during the Ninth Regional Party Congress, the Ba‘th regime began outwardly with a massive religious propaganda campaign during the Iran-Iraq War. One of the first major events that marked its beginning and even predated the aforementioned congress was a further reshuffling of the Ministry of *Awqāf* in 1981, in fact its greatest reshuffling up to that point (see Figure 10 below).⁶¹³ Already in November 1979 with the new appointment of Nūrī Faiṣal Shāhīr al-Ḥadīthī⁶¹⁴ as minister of *awqāf*, the ministry had been renamed Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs,⁶¹⁵ foreshadowing not only the state’s still growing need to control religious institutions but the whole religious discourse in Iraq. In order to accomplish this task, the state increased the total budget of the ministry with the start of the war from 6.75 million Iraqi dinars (around \$23 million) in 1980⁶¹⁶ to 17.7 million Iraqi dinars (about \$60.1 million) in 1981.⁶¹⁷ In the words of Baram, “the regime conducted its economic policy as if there was no tomorrow.”⁶¹⁸

The new propaganda campaign is also reflected in the first paragraph of law number fifty from 1981, which gives for the first time a detailed nine-point definition of the

⁶¹³ Gailani focuses in one chapter of her PhD mainly on the respective law for this reshuffling and highlights the regime’s more direct and active role in the propagation of Islamic faith (Gailani, ‘The Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī’, 357–58).

⁶¹⁴ Bengio and Dann, ‘Iraq’, 1981, 502. A Ba‘th Party member since 1955 and educated at the military academy, he had served in several minor posts from 1969 until 1979 and can certainly be considered as a newcomer to the field of *awqāf* (Ghareeb and Dougherty, *Historical Dictionary*, 559).

⁶¹⁵ Ḥusayn, Qānūn al-ta‘dīl al-thānī li-qānūn wizārat al-awqāf raqm 78 li-sanat 1976; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 188.

⁶¹⁶ Ḥusayn, Qānūn mīzānīyat wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu‘ūn al-dīnīya raqm (29) li-sanat 1980.

⁶¹⁷ Ḥusayn, Qānūn mīzānīyat wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu‘ūn al-dīnīya raqm (37) li-sanat 1981. According to the US Treasury Reporting Rates of Exchange, one dinar equalled in 1980 3.3990 US Dollars and in 1981 3.4 US Dollars.

⁶¹⁸ Baram only mentions the contribution by the state, namely 10.9 million dinars (around \$30 million) (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 187–88).

ministry's goals. The first five points refer to religious issues and indicate a continuity of the stipulations from 1976 and 1977: 1. "The development of an Islamic awareness (*al-wa'ī al-islāmī*), the dissemination of Islamic culture and the essence of the heavenly message." 2. "The sponsorship of the affairs of religious sanctuaries and the organisation of their administration and preservation." 3. "The assurance of the requirements to ideally perform the religious duty of the *ḥajj*." 4. "The care (*inā'a*) for affairs of religious and charitable institutions and their administrative, technical, financial, and organisational development." 5. "The sponsorship of affairs of religious sects (*al-ṭawā'if al-dīniya*) in general and the organisation of affairs related to the administration of their endowments and places of worship in particular."⁶¹⁹ Point five was entirely new and refers to the establishment of a separate Office for Affairs of Religious Sects (*dā'irat shu'ūn al-ṭawā'if al-dīniya*)⁶²⁰ that brought all officially acknowledged non-Muslim religious communities under the rooftop of the ministry. The term *ṭā'ifa* encompassed here Iraq's fourteen Christian churches, Sabians, Yazīdīs, and Jews.⁶²¹ This office had, in fact, already been formally introduced in 1979⁶²² but its structure and tasks were only defined in September 1981.⁶²³

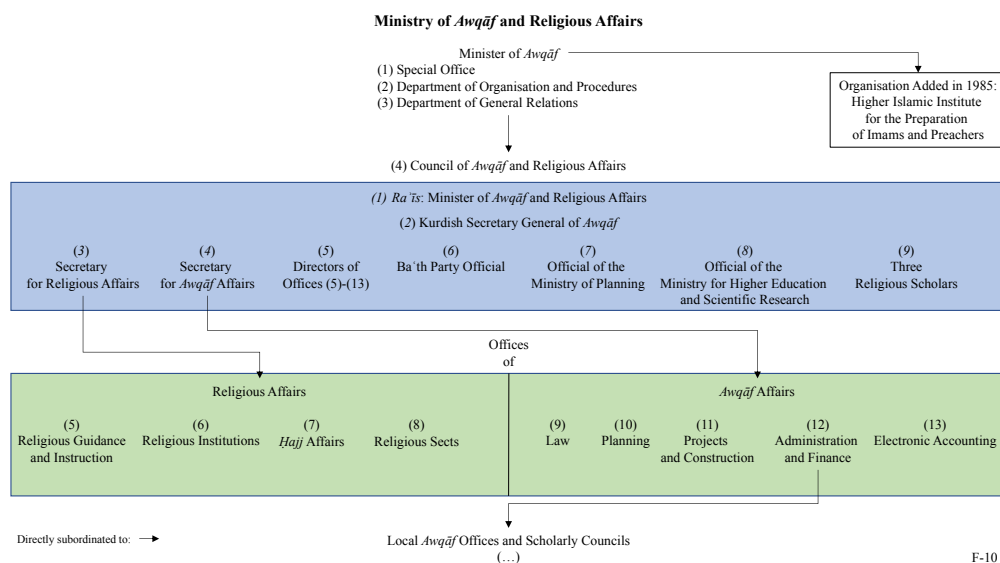


Figure 10: The Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs in 1981

⁶¹⁹ Ḥusayn, Qānūn wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu'ūn al-dīniya, para. 1.

⁶²⁰ The former General Directorates were renamed offices in 1981. This change will be explained later on in this section. A few months later, the office became the Office of Religious Sects.

⁶²¹ Ḥusayn, Nizām mulḥaq nizām ri'āyat al-ṭawā'if al-dīniya (*al-ṭawā'if al-dīniya al-mu'taraf bihā fī l-'Irāq* raqm 32 li-sanat 1981).

⁶²² Ḥusayn, Qānūn al-ta'dīl al-thānī li-qānūn wizārat al-awqāf raqm 78 li-sanat 1976.

⁶²³ Ḥusayn, Nizām ri'āyat al-ṭawā'if al-dīniya (32) li-sanat 1981.

The establishment of this office, (8) in the figure above, reflects the aim to expand state control more effectively to all other religious groups in Iraq. Yet, the regime in this way also propagated an ecumenical Islam that was not hostile to other religions. The secular Ba‘th faced the dilemma of reconciling its recourse to intensive Islamic propaganda –which will be outlined in more detail in the rest of this chapter– with its approach to Iraq’s numerous non-Muslim groups such as the Christian churches or the Yazīdīs. After all, the Ba‘th leadership itself included with Ṭāriq ‘Azīz also a prominent Christian who should not have been quite fond of an Islamisation of the party rhetoric. Through the addition of this new directorate, the ministry assumed control of all affairs related to the country’s other religious groups, the administration and appointment of their men of religion, the administration, building, and restoration of religious institutions, the endowment administration, the organisation of religious feasts, publications etc.⁶²⁴ The Ba‘th, however, also granted them their separate institutional representation with authority over their own affairs. It created the Highest Council for Religious Sects (*al-hay’a al-‘ulīyā li-l-tawā’if al-dīnīya*) under the headship of a secretary of the ministry for religious affairs (*wakil wizārat al-shu’ūn al-dīnīya*). The members of the council included the head (*ra’īs*) of the office for religious sects who was also the deputy of the *wakīl*, the respective leaders of the different religious sects and at least one specialist from a related field within the ministry selected by the minister.⁶²⁵ The council met at least monthly and discussed general affairs of the religious sects, the building and restoration of churches and other houses of worship, their problems, subsidies and material support for the different groups, the ministry’s plans with regard to the different religious sects, and, finally, proposals for the ministry about their sponsorship.⁶²⁶

The Supreme Council for *Awqāf*, too, was renamed the Council of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs (*majlis al-awqāf wa-l-shu’ūn al-dīnīya*) and was once more extended from a sixteen to a nineteen-member body. Its composition altered considerably in comparison to its predecessors with several new representatives of other ministries and the party. Headed by the minister, it still included the secretary general (*amīn ‘āmm*) of the *awqāf* administration in the autonomous Kurdish region, one secretary of the ministry for religious affairs (*wakil al-wizāra li-l-shu’ūn al-dīnīya*), one secretary for *awqāf* affairs (*wakil al-wizāra li-l-shu’ūn al-awqāf*), the heads of the respective offices

⁶²⁴ Ḥusayn, para. 1.

⁶²⁵ Ḥusayn, para. 2.

⁶²⁶ Ḥusayn, paras 3, 4.

(*dawā'ir*), for the first time a representative of the Ba'ṯh Party, one representative of the Planning Ministry, one of the Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Research, and three religious scholars. The secretary general of the Kurdish region, the two secretaries, heads of offices and directors received their authority directly from the minister.⁶²⁷

Obviously, the number of religious scholars was again reduced while the presence of a Ba'ṯh Party representative suggests that the spread of an "Islamic awareness" should still not deviate from the frame of Ba'ṯhist ideology. The whole ministry became reorganised through a new splitting of the General Directorates into eleven bodies. The highest ranking was the special office of the minister followed by two departments, one for organisation and procedures (*al-tanzīm wa-l-asālīb*) responsible for the development of the ministry's administrative structure and one for general relations which defined the ministry's goals. The latter was also responsible for welcoming foreign religious delegations and the representation of Iraq on Islamic conferences abroad. The rest of the former General Directorates was split up and changed into offices (*dawā'ir*, sing.: *dā'ira*) the first four of which were for (1) Religious Guidance and Instruction (*al-irshād wa-l-i'lām al-dīnī*), (2) Religious Institutions (*al-mu'assasāt al-dīnīya*), (3) *Hajj* Affairs, and (4) Religious Sects (*al-ṭawā'if al-dīnīya*). The remaining five were tasked with law, planning, building projects, administration, and finance. The offices themselves were divided into two to three departments in the cases of (1) to (4), or even up to nine departments in the other cases. They were additionally divided into two groups according to their administrative tasks since (1) to (4) were directly subordinated to the secretary of religious affairs and the others to the secretary for *awqāf* affairs.⁶²⁸ The merging of the administration of Sunnī and Shī'ī institutions under the rooftop of one office, namely the Office for Religious Institutions was maintained. It was subdivided in three departments, one for mosques, one for the *'atabāt*, and one for religious colleges (*ma'āhid*).⁶²⁹

All the new offices had more clearly defined goals now. The first goal of the Office for Religious Guidance and Instruction, for instance, read "raising the awareness (*al-taw'īya*) of the principles of the true Islamic religion and the dissemination of Islamic

⁶²⁷ Ḥusayn, Qānūn wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu'ūn al-dīnīya, paras 3, 7.

⁶²⁸ Ḥusayn, para. 11; Ḥusayn, al-Nizām al-dākhilī li-wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu'ūn al-dīnīya, para. 2.

⁶²⁹ Ḥusayn, al-Nizām al-dākhilī li-wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu'ūn al-dīnīya, para. 8.

culture.”⁶³⁰ The term *taw'īya* appeared in this form for the first time and meant in practice the establishment of so-called Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness (*lijān al-taw'īya al-dīniya*) from among Sunnī and Shī'ī religious scholars who were sent out across the country. The rest of this study will illustrate that the Ba'ṯist understanding of “the true Islamic religion” was an ecumenical mixture between Sunna and Shī'a in which Sufism was to play an essential role by the 1990s. The system of Local Directorates in the respective Iraqi provinces remained intact and centrally subordinated to the Office of Administration and Finance (*dā'irat al-idārīya wa-l-mālīya*).⁶³¹ All this constituted an immense extension of the ministry's whole apparatus and aimed according to the words in the end of law number fifty from 1981 at the increase of the ministry's efficiency and capability. A huge body to control and actively form Iraq's religious landscape was now active.

In 1985, the Ba'ṯh went even one step further and commenced a project to educate a new generation of Ba'ṯist-inspired religious scholars in its own state institution; this meant that the regime itself took over the higher religious education of imams and preachers for the state service. It founded for this purpose the Higher Islamic Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers (*al-ma'had al-islāmī al-'ālī li-i'dād al-a'imma wa-l-khuṭabā'*) in Baghdad as an organisation (*tashkīl*) connected to the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs and directly linked to the minister himself.⁶³² The institute had a leading council (*majlis*) with the secretary of the ministry for religious affairs (*wakil al-wizāra li-l-shu'ūn al-dīniya*), the dean (*'amīd*) of the institute, the dean of the *Sharī'a* Faculty, the dean of the *Fiqh* Faculty, two religious scholars who were appointed by the Council of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs, two heads of offices in the ministry and one representative of the national students union.⁶³³ According to Baram, the institute was mixed Sunnī and Shī'ī and was to represent an ecumenical Islam which should be in harmony with the aims of the Ba'ṯist revolution.⁶³⁴ However, the mere fact that it was housed in the building of Iraq's traditionally most prestigious Sunnī Imam al-A'ẓam Faculty in Baghdad rather

⁶³⁰ The other goals of this office were defined as the care for old manuscripts and the study of them, the publication of religious and judicial books, the approval of religious books which were submitted to the ministry, the planning of cultural and communication affairs, coordination with religious study centres as well as the organisation and administration of libraries (Ḥusayn, para. 7).

⁶³¹ Ḥusayn, para. 15.

⁶³² Ḥusayn, Qānūn al-ma'had al-islāmī al-'ālī li-i'dād al-a'imma wa-l-khuṭabā' raqm (98) li-sanat 1985; Ḥusayn, Nizām wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu'ūn al-dīniya, para. 1.

⁶³³ Ḥusayn, Qānūn al-ma'had al-islāmī al-'ālī li-i'dād al-a'imma wa-l-khuṭabā' raqm (98) li-sanat 1985, para. 3.

⁶³⁴ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 264.

suggests a Sunnī domination. With the opening of this institute, the Ba‘th even partially reversed the nationalisation of the Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty from 1974 and gave a new impulse to *sharī‘a* studies under the authority of the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs as in pre-Ba‘th Iraq.⁶³⁵

This structure of the ministry remained in force until 1987. One year before the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the regime faced a heavy financial burden and had to save expenditures in order to survive. As a consequence, it reduced state institutions including the ministry’s body to about half of its former size. The number of secretaries was reduced to one, the number of Offices (*dawā’ir*) to four, i.e. for (1) Religious Guidance and *Hajj* Affairs, (2) Religious Institutions, (3) Engineering and Planning, and (4) Administration and Finance. The secretary general of the *awqāf* administration in Kurdistan, too, seized to have a seat in the Council of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs. Some offices were converted into departments such as the ones for law affairs or religious groups. As mere organisations (*tashkīlāt*) connected to the ministry were considered the Scholarly Council, the Local Directorates, and the Department of Religious Sects. The Local Offices in the respective provinces became restructured and merged into larger administrative units from formerly twelve directorates in 1970 to ten in 1987.⁶³⁶ The ministry largely kept this structure throughout the 1990s to 2003. After the *intifāda* in 1991, the regime lost control over the Kurdish provinces and a newly established Kurdish National Council formed its own Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs in 1992.⁶³⁷

The laws which were available for this study clearly show how the regime successively reorganised the Ministry of *Awqāf* from 1968 onwards and developed it into a vast and effective state institution in order to administer, control, and support religious institutions in 1981. The regime had to reduce its size due to financial problems only at about the end of the war. The aim to control the religious discourse at a time when Islam became a medium of war propaganda is especially visible with the ministry’s new ideological task to develop and spread an Islamic awareness as early as 1977, a

⁶³⁵ Still today, the Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty presents the foundation of this institute on its website as a positive impulse (‘Nubdha tā’rīkhīya’). More on this institute will follow in Section 4.2.3.

⁶³⁶ These were the Offices of (1) Baghdad (including Wāsit), (2) the southern territory (including Baṣra, Maysān, Dhī Qārr), (3) the middle Euphrates (including Bābil, al-Qādisīya, al-Muthannā), and (4) Nīnawā, (5) Najaf, (6) Karbalā’, (7) Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, (8) Anbār, (9) Tā’mīm, and (10) Diyālā. The provinces in the Kurdish autonomy regions were not mentioned at all (Ḥusayn, Nizām wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu’ūn al-dīniya; Ḥusayn, I’ādat al-naẓar fī l-haykal al-tanzīmī li-wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu’ūn al-dīniya).

⁶³⁷ Āghā, Qānūn wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu’ūn al-islāmīya li-iqlīm Kurdistān.

task that was only fully carried out with the respective scholarly committees and the state education of imams and preachers in the 1980s. The reshuffling of the ministry laid thereby the institutional foundation for the Ba‘th’s further religious propaganda and policies which benefitted Sufism in Iraq considerably and which will be outlined in the following sections. These were large-scale construction and restoration campaigns for mosques, shrines, and *takāyā*, the public promotion of religious scholars after their earlier marginalisation, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s use of his alleged sharīfian genealogy, and finally, the religious turn of ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī. In addition, the last section of this chapter will show that the whole religious propaganda during the 1980s should not belie the fact that the regime still expanded its mechanisms of repression to the religious circles.

4.1.3. *The Large-scale Building and Restoration of Mosques, Shrines and Takāyā*

Since the 1970s, one way to bolster the Ba‘th’s religious credentials has been the propagation of state patronage and sponsorship of religious institutions, mainly mosques, shrines, and *takāyā*. In the 1980s, this policy increased to an unprecedented degree. With the beginning of the war, the Ba‘th regime commenced a huge construction and restoration campaign for religious institutions all over Iraq. The previous imbalance in its emphasis on state support for the Shī‘ī *‘atabāt* and mosques, shrines, and *takāyā* in Kurdistan turned now into a largely equal sponsorship in all Iraqi provinces and led to a real architectural renaissance of the country’s Islamic architectural heritage. Generally, this campaign aimed at all kinds of Islamic institutions and not only Sufi establishments. In comparison to many other Sunnī or Shī‘ī mosques and shrines, however, the Sufi institutions particularly benefitted after decades of ongoing decay and neglect and experienced a considerable renaissance due to the Ba‘th Party. Religious sites also received more publicity in the press since Ṣaddām Ḥusayn began with regular and widely covered visitations at mosques and holy shrines in all provinces as part of his religious propaganda.⁶³⁸ Shrines became during the war even a national marker of original Iraqi and Arab heritage in contrast to the Persian enemy as can be seen in a media campaign early in 1981. In the course of this media campaign, religious scholars from all parts of Iraq publicly condemned

⁶³⁸ These visitations were linked to Ṣaddām’s instrumentalisation of his alleged sharīfian descent and will be analysed in Section 4.1.5.

alleged claims by Khomeynī to transfer the mortal remains of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib from Najaf to Qom in Iran.⁶³⁹ Whether these claims were invented or not, the media campaign portrayed ‘Alī’s shrine not only as Iraq’s most important religious but also national sanctuary.

A summary of projects in Kurdistan printed in *al-Jumhūrīya* shows that the regime emphasised its own sponsorship of religious institutions since 1968 in comparison to its political predecessors in Iraq. The Ba‘th’s construction and restoration campaign did not yet indicate a particular preference of Sufism, but it heavily benefitted Sufi institutions as one part of Iraq’s Islamic heritage. The regime, indeed, highlighted numerous projects for Sufi mosques and *takāyā* in the newspapers. Kurdish Sufi institutions had already benefitted from state patronage in exchange for their loyalty during the 1970s but during the campaign in the 1980s, this support increased even further. A newspaper article from 1983 summarised the work of the ministry in Kurdistan and contrasted the situation of mosques for the Friday prayer (*jawāmi‘*) in Arbīl before the Ba‘thist revolution with the situation in the early 1980s. The article claimed that before the 1968 revolution, there had allegedly only been fifteen mosques for the Friday prayer in Arbīl and that this represented the state of religion for hundreds of years under different rulers, kings, and republican presidents. Between 1968 and 1981, however, the new Ba‘th regime had built twenty-five new big mosques in addition to several restoration projects with the result that the Friday prayer took place in forty mosques (*masājīd*) from among a total of 140 mosques (*jawāmi‘ wa-l-masājīd*) and *takāyā* in Arbīl alone. The article claimed the same improvement also for Sulaymānīya and Dohūk. According to the secretary general of the endowment administration in the Kurdish region, Bashīr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Atrūshī, the Ba‘th invested “tens of millions of Iraqi dinars” for such projects. He mentioned 215 new building projects by the government, ninety-six in Arbīl, fifty-nine in Sulaymānīya, and sixty in Dohūk. Additionally, there were 342 restoration projects, 184 in Arbīl, eighty-six in Sulaymānīya, and seventy-three in Dohūk. Some of those restorations cost between 70 and 80,000 Iraqi dinars (around \$238,000 and \$272,000).⁶⁴⁰

In a later summary from 1987, Atrūshī presented newly implemented projects during the war years. He listed for Sulaymānīya in 1986 the completion of eighty new mosques and *takāyā* and forty-one refurbished ones for 148,790 Iraqi dinars (around

⁶³⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 29.04.1981, 1; 08.05.1981, 1.

⁶⁴⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 19.02.1983, 4.

\$480,000).⁶⁴¹ According to him, 150 mosques and *takāyā* have been built in different areas of the Kurdish region since the start of the war. Arbīl received sixty-five new institutions including the Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī mosque in Khalīfān, the sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī *takīya* in Kawīr, and the Kasnazān mosque. Forty-nine mosques, *takāyā*, and *khānaqās* have been renovated for a total of 178,184 Iraqi dinars (around \$575,000), among them the *takāyā* of shaykh Muḥyī l-Dīn, shaykh al-Rifāʿī and ʿUmar al-Baylasānī, the Mawlawī, Ṭālabānī, Kānīskān, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, and the shaykh Bābā ʿAlī mosques, as well as the *takāyā* of Mullā ʿAlī, Kākā Mand al-ʿAṣrīya, and sayyid Ḥasan. In Dohūk fifty new projects were implemented as well as twenty-six restorations for 71,149 Iraqi dinars (around \$229,000).⁶⁴² Finally, in a project summary from 1988, Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs ʿAbd Allāh Fāḍil ʿAbbās announced the construction of 299 mosques during the wartime throughout Iraq. The costs for all projects including non-religious institutions amounted to about 100 million Iraqi dinars (around \$322 million). Within a listing of projects in the different provinces, he mentioned the construction of nine *takāyā* in Sulaymānīya.⁶⁴³

In the Arab regions, the construction and restoration campaign had a similar effect and meant also here an architectural renaissance of Sufi mosques, shrines, and *takāyā*. The two most prominent examples of the Qādirīya and Rifāʿīya are the shrines of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Baghdad and of Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī in Maysān province. The Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs financed on the order of the president a restoration of the Kīlānīya and the Shīʿī shrine of Mūsā al-Kāẓim with their surrounding areas for 146 million Iraqi dinars (\$496 million) in 1981.⁶⁴⁴ While this represented largely a continuation of previous state support of the Kīlānīya, the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī received now, for the first time, closer attention by the regime. One reason for this new attention may be Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's revived claim to descend from particularly this Sufi saint (Section 4.1.5). Another, weightier reason was the strategic location of this shrine in a southern province close to the front line. In such war-torn regions, it was very important for the regime to demonstrate state support and sponsorship in order to assure the loyalty of its people. In exchange for these services, religious representatives at such institutions had to proclaim their complete loyalty to the

⁶⁴¹ According to the US Treasury Reporting Rates of Exchange, one Iraqi dinar equalled 3,2258 US Dollar in 1986.

⁶⁴² *al-Jumhūrīya* 29.06.1987, 7.

⁶⁴³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.07.1988, 11.

⁶⁴⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 09.05.1981, 7; 18.05.1981.

regime. In 1982, *al-Jumhūrīya* published a letter of gratitude to Ṣaddām from the custodian (*sādin*) of the Rifāʿī shrine, Ḥasūn Gharīb ʿAlī al-Nuʿaymī. In the letter, he thanked the president for his support to build several residential houses for the families of the servants at the shrine and pledged to Ṣaddām: “our blood will be cheap for the defence of our sacred fatherland’s soil and our borders will be a grave for all the greedy invaders from among the aggressive racists, Zionists, and imperialists”.⁶⁴⁵ At the end, the article bore the signatures of Ḥasūn Gharīb ʿAlī and nine other servants from his tribe and family. In 1983, the *sādin* thanked again for the construction of two resting rooms for pilgrims at the shrine.⁶⁴⁶ Another ten houses were added in 1988.⁶⁴⁷

The state sponsored not only the two most important Sufi sanctuaries of the Qādirīya and Rifāʿīya, but many others of all kinds of saints throughout Iraq. Many of those are described in Thāmir al-ʿĀmirī’s dictionary of shrines. Among them are shrines of prophets,⁶⁴⁸ companions of the Shīʿī Imams,⁶⁴⁹ the Shīʿī Imams themselves and their offspring,⁶⁵⁰ as well as great Sufi masters.⁶⁵¹ The following table illustrates that the regime also refurbished many shrines of local saints of the Rifāʿīya in Anbār province far away from the battle fields.

⁶⁴⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 28.06.1982, 6.

⁶⁴⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 12.01.1983, 6; 09.07.1983, 9.

⁶⁴⁷ *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.07.1988, 11.

⁶⁴⁸ For instance, the mosques of the prophets Yūnus and Jirjīs in Mosul (*al-Jumhūrīya* 01.02.1985, 7).

⁶⁴⁹ For instance, the shrine of Maytham b. Yaḥiyā al-Tamār in Kūfa (*al-Jumhūrīya* 18.06.1983, 9). According to Baram, “[t]he media never told the public that those minor holy tombs were of the supporters of the Shiʿi Imams, but the regime could rest assured that the Shiʿis understood it well” (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 271). This sort of a secret code for Shīʿīs seems rather unlikely as Sunnī and Shīʿī communities in Iraq were not two separate worlds. Many of these shrines are located in mixed Sunnī and Shīʿī regions and locally visited by both communities whether they know the background of the respective saint or not. Apart from that, the regime obviously restored many shrines of descendants of the Shīʿī Imams and even the gate of occultation (*bāb al-ghayba*) to the cave in Sāmarrāʾ where the Mahdī, according to Shīʿī belief, went into occultation (ʿĀmirī, *Muʿjam al-marāqid*, 348). Particularly the latter is one of the most important Shīʿī sanctuaries.

⁶⁵⁰ Among the latter were, for instance, Ḥamza al-Sharqī, Abū l-Faḍl b. Mūsā, Muslim b. ʿAqīl, sayyid Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Hādī, Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Kāẓim, or ʿAlī al-Aṣghar (see *al-Jumhūrīya* 25.04.1981, 6; 16.01.1982, 11; 27.11.1982, 6, 01.10.1983, 9; 27.12.1982, 7; 09.07.1983, 9; 18.11.1983, 11; 01.02.1985, 7; 09.05.1987, 7; 09.05.1987, 7).

⁶⁵¹ So for example the shrines of Ḥabīb al-ʿAjāmī in *al-Jumhūrīya* 17.07.1970, 15, or al-Sirrī al-Saqāṭī in Baghdad in 1977 (ʿĀmirī, *Muʿjam al-marāqid*, 204–5).

Years of Restoration	Description of the Shrine
Early 1980s	Shaykh Rajab al-Rāwī al-Rifā'ī in Rāwa was a Sufī shaykh of the Rifā'īya and founding figure of the Rāwī clan, who founded a mosque and a religious school in the town. His shrine became, according to 'Āmirī, the most famous one in Anbār province. ⁶⁵²
1983	Shaykh Muḥammad in Ḥadītha. He is a descendant of sayyid Khalīfa b. 'Uthmān b. al-Miqdād al-Rifā'ī. 'Āmirī mentions that the ministry restored all shrines of Rifā'īs in the Ḥadītha region in the mid-1980s. ⁶⁵³
1983 and 1986	al-shaykh al-Ḥadīd in Ḥadītha. A deputy of Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī, shaykh Ḥadīd was the founding figure of Ḥadīdīyīn as well as of the Ṣumayda'īn who count many Sufī shaykhs of the Rifā'īya among themselves. ⁶⁵⁴
Mid-1980s	shaykh Najm al-Dīn al-Rifā'ī in Ḥadītha is believed to be a descendant of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī as a founding figure related to the Rāwī and Shuwaykh clans in Ḥadītha. The ministry rebuilt the shrine completely and attached a mosque to it. ⁶⁵⁵

Table 5: Restorations of Rifā'īya Shrines in the 1980s

Material support of the Naqshbandīya in the Arab regions was harder to find in the newspapers. As noted earlier, the Arab Naqshbandīs, particularly in Baghdad, gathered less in their own *takāyā* but more in regular mosques such as the Kīlānīya and the Imam al-A'ḥam mosque.⁶⁵⁶ The latter is the most important Sunnī mosque in Baghdad and received even more often material support from the regime than the Kīlānīya.⁶⁵⁷ Apart from the central mosques, Baghdad's famous Khālīdīya *takīya* stands out as a Naqshbandī sanctuary where shaykh Khālīd himself had once taught. Durrūbī described it already in 1958 as a desolate ruin (*khirba khāwīya*) due to long ongoing neglect⁶⁵⁸ but due to the Ba'ṥist restoration campaign, it experienced a revival with two restoration projects in 1979 and 1981.⁶⁵⁹

Did the regime have a particular reason to support these Sufī shrines and *takāyā*? Generally, there are no traces that the regime restored Sufī establishments more than others in the 1980s. The aim rather was to renew the whole Iraqi shrine-infrastructure in order to bolster the regime's religious credibility and buy the loyalty of men of religion during the war propaganda. As a by-product of this campaign, however, Sufī shrines and *takāyā* experienced an enormous architectural renaissance after decades of

⁶⁵² 'Āmirī, 172–74. The restoration through the ministry was confirmed by a descendant of the clan (Interview with Naḍīm al-Rāwī, 19.05.2016).

⁶⁵³ 'Āmirī, 366–67.

⁶⁵⁴ 'Āmirī, 135–37.

⁶⁵⁵ 'Āmirī, 390–91.

⁶⁵⁶ Ḥammūd, 'al-Ṭuruq', 115. See also my interview with Dāwūd 'Abd al-Razzāq, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Fallūja, 13.11.2015.

⁶⁵⁷ See for instance in *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.10.1968, 4; 28.07.1969, 3, 11; 17.07.1970, 15; 28.07.1982, last page; *al-Thawra* 14.10.2001, 4.

⁶⁵⁸ Durrūbī, *al-Baghdādīyūn*, 168.

⁶⁵⁹ Ra'ūf, 'al-Takīya al-khālīdīya'. For the latter date see *al-Jumhūrīya* 09.05.1981, 7.

decay and neglect. Moreover, there are also good reasons why the regime sponsored particularly Sufi shrines. First of all, the sponsorship of Kurdish Sufi institutions during the war still had the tactical reason to assure the loyalty of the orders, not only in the fight against Kurdish separatists inside Iraq but now also against Iranian troops at the northern front or even inside Iranian Kurdistan. The regime used Kurdish orders clandestinely as a Sunnī bridgehead into Iran.⁶⁶⁰ A second reason certainly was the personal interest of Sufis in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Endowments. The start of the huge restoration campaign in the early 1980s coincided with the ministerial appointment of ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil ‘Abbās who was inclined to Qādirī Sufism. It is more than likely that he and his Sufi colleague, the secretary general in Kurdistan Bashīr ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Atrūshī, facilitated the material sponsorship of Sufi shrines considerably. On the one hand, their presence in the ministry could be interpreted as a first gesture of the regime towards the Sufis but it clearly contradicts, on the other hand, the open hostility against religion in the party during the Ninth Regional Party Congress in 1982. As a third reason, personal relations of certain Sufi clans with family members in the Ba‘th Party may have played a role as well. Many members of the Rajab al-Rāwī clan made successful careers in the regime while they continued holding the custodianship over the Sulṭān ‘Alī mosque in Baghdad and the family shrine in Rāwa. Other clans from the cities of the upper Euphrates such as Ḥadītha, too, were conspicuously represented in the Republican Guard.⁶⁶¹ The restoration of a clan’s shrine could in this respect also be interpreted as a gesture by the regime to honour the clan’s heritage and, again, to buy loyalty.

Finally, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself claimed Rifā‘īan descent and revived with the restoration of old Rifā‘ī shrines a heritage which he had himself adopted to bolster his own claim. With restorations such as the ones mentioned above, the regime resurrected an infrastructure of Rifā‘ī shrines which was established in the late Ottoman era due to Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī’s influence. Under the Ottoman sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II, such projects were part of a policy to establish the order and to halt the mass conversion of Iraq’s population to the Shī‘a or at least to better integrate them into the empire. Especially the Sunnī Rifā‘īya played a more ecumenical role in this policy due to its closeness to certain Shī‘ī traditions and practices.⁶⁶² Something similar may have been attempted under the Ba‘th as it had to balance its stance between hostility against

⁶⁶⁰ McDowall, *A Modern History*, 355.

⁶⁶¹ Sakai, ‘Tribalization’, 145.

⁶⁶² Eich, ‘Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā‘īya and Shiism’.

Iranian Shī'ism and support of Iraq's home-grown majority Shī'a population. In 1971, the genealogist Aḥmad al-Rujaybī had published the book *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* under Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ's influence describing Ṣaddām's Rifā'īan descent within the wider genealogical network of the Rifā'īya in Iraq including the connection to the Twelve Shī'ī Imams. This book included already then biographical information about the saintly founding figures within the Rifā'ī clan networks, their shrines and locations.⁶⁶³ Interestingly, it was reprinted in 1980 when the mentioned shrine renovations began.⁶⁶⁴ The regime seemingly adopted the old Rifā'īya heritage again for its own current aims.

The above overview shows the Ba'th's huge investments to renew religious and particularly Islamic establishments all over Iraq during the 1980s, Sunnī and Shī'ī alike. Although there are no clear signs of a preferential construction and restoration of Sufi institutions among all the numerous projects, the Ba'th heavily contributed in those years to an unprecedented architectural renaissance of Sufi mosques, shrines, and *takāyā*. After decades of gradual decay and neglect, these investments must have brought a new impulse for Sufi life in Iraq. This is not to say that the renovation of buildings goes necessarily along with an increasing interest in Sufism among the population but in consideration of the miserable state of many Sufi establishments over decades, this campaign and its advertisement certainly raised the general awareness of the country's Sufi heritage. To fully evaluate its impact for the later Sufi revival in the 1990s, however, it must be seen in context with the other Ba'thist policies which will follow in the rest of this chapter.

4.1.4. *Sunnī Sufi Scholars and Shaykhs in the War Propaganda*

The public marginalisation of religious scholars in the 1970s turned in the 1980s into the opposite. The Ba'th regime now commenced to integrate men of religion from all areas of Iraq with a more active role into its religious war propaganda and successfully co-opted them for its new media campaign. This campaign provided publicity for men of religion from all major religious groups in Iraq. Shī'ī religious scholars still received the highest attention as the regime's need to address its Shī'ī majority population against the Shī'ī Iranian war enemy steadily increased. Yet, Sunnī religious scholars and even Christian priests received an increasing publicity in the media, too. In the

⁶⁶³ For instance, Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 106.

⁶⁶⁴ See also Section 4.1.5.

context of this public promotion of men of religion, many religious Sufi scholars and Sufi shaykhs gained an official recognition by the state and used their new public role to improve their popularity in Iraq. Many of them pursued successful careers in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs and newly established state institutions. The state created the aforementioned Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness, recruited increasing numbers of new religious personnel for the restored and newly built mosques as well as the new Ba‘thist institutes for higher religious education, and it regularly provided them a public platform in the state press.⁶⁶⁵ Baram mentions that the regime itself observed as early as 1986 in a closed-door meeting of the Pan-Arab Leadership “that the popularity and influence of men of religion had just taken a significant leap upward.”⁶⁶⁶ With respect to the new Ba‘thist policies and propaganda, this observation should not have come as a surprise and it benefitted also many Sufis in Iraq.

The growing role of men of religion was already foreshadowed in 1976 with the establishment of a separate Department for Religious Guidance and Instruction (*al-irshād wa-l-tawjīh al-dīnī*) within the Ministry of *Awqāf*. In 1978, first newspaper articles still emphasised the role of men of religion in the raising of national awareness (*al-taw‘īya al-waṭanīya*)⁶⁶⁷ but in 1981, the respective office became officially tasked with the raising of religious awareness (*al-taw‘īya al-dīnīya*) in Iraq.⁶⁶⁸ Henceforth, the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs formed so-called Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness (*lijān al-taw‘īya al-dīnīya*) with prominent religious scholars to send them out all over the country. The annual budget for this programme increased between 1980 and 1981 from 37,000 (around \$126,000) to 300,000 Iraqi dinars (around \$1 million).⁶⁶⁹ A Sufi influence on the highest level of these committees is apparent from the time of their foundation onwards. The central committee in Baghdad was headed at that time by shaykh Shākir al-Badrī (1912-after 1990) and his deputy became the already mentioned Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī. Shākir al-Badrī was one of the highest-ranking religious scholars in Baghdad and stood with his religious

⁶⁶⁵ Of course, men of religion were obliged to support the regime publicly, but their enormous public presence, compared to their absence in the 1970s, should have made a huge difference for public awareness.

⁶⁶⁶ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 257.

⁶⁶⁷ *al-Jumhūrīya* 10.11.1978, 5.

⁶⁶⁸ Ḥusayn, *al-Nizām al-dākhilī li-wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu‘ūn al-dīnīya*, para. 8.

⁶⁶⁹ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 188.

education also in the tradition of a *sharī'a*-minded Sufism.⁶⁷⁰ With the introduction of the new system of Islamic colleges in 1970, the state had united Baghdad's religious schools under the roof of Shākir al-Badrī's school to the Āṣifiya College (*ma'had al-Āṣifiya*) in the Ruṣāfa quarter and appointed him as director. Later on, he became head of the Scholarly Council, a member of the Supreme Council for *Awqāf* and was considered as the highest-ranking religious scholar in Iraq.⁶⁷¹ Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī had continued his career as imam in the 1970s, became inspector for mosques in the Ministry of *Awqāf* in 1976, and a member of its Scholarly Council in 1980 before his appointment as vice-chairman of the newly established committees.⁶⁷²

Throughout the war years, Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs 'Abd Allāh Fāḍil 'Abbās and his Kurdish Secretary General Bashīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Atrūshī regularly announced the aim to appoint a higher number of men of religion for religious guidance and the raising of religious awareness, and for the service in newly established and renovated mosques, shrines, and *takāyā*. At the same time, they emphasised the regime's steps to improve those religious employees' standard of living through rises of salaries, free land grants, and exemption from military service.⁶⁷³ In 1987, Bashīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān announced the appointment of more than 1,000 new imams, Quran readers (*qurā'*), and employees (*khudum*) in Kurdistan's mosques, *takāyā* and *khānaqās* (*khānaqāhāt*).⁶⁷⁴ Similarly in 1988, 'Abd Allāh Fāḍil stressed the state's appointment of more than 4,250 new men of religion in Iraq since the July revolution in 1968.⁶⁷⁵ Samuel Helfont presents this number in an entirely

⁶⁷⁰ He was born in Baghdad in 1912, into a family from the al-Bū Badrī tribe in Sāmarrā'. The shaykh received most of his religious education in Baghdad and Cairo. In Baghdad, he studied under several Sufis in the Nā'ilat Khātūn school under Iraq's former grand *muftīs* Qāsim al-Qaysī al-Naqshbandī and Najm al-Dīn al-Wā'iz, and under shaykh Muḥammad Rashīd Āl al-shaykh Dāwūd al-Naqshbandī, in the Qablāniya under *muftī* Yūsuf al-'Aṭṭā', in the Ḥaydarkhāna under 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Ṭā'ī, in the Sulṭān 'Alī school under Muḥammad Darwīsh al-Ālūsī, in the Naqshbandī influenced Āṣifiya mosque under 'Abd al-Jalīl Āl Jamīl, and finally, in the *sharī'a* faculty under Ḥamdī al-A'zamī. He had several posts as imam and preacher in different mosques such as the Āṣifiya and the Imam al-A'zam mosques. In 1941, he was appointed as the grand preacher (*wā'iz āmm*) of Baghdad and received several teaching posts, the last one in the Āṣifiya mosque until his death in the 1990s. He was a regular visitor to the Salafi *ḥadīth* scholar 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ṣā'iqa's study circles (Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 249–52).

⁶⁷¹ Sāmarrā'ī, 249–52.

⁶⁷² Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, back; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 725; Sāmarrā'ī, 'Tarjamat ḥayāt al-shaykh Yūnus al-shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī'. See also *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.02.1982, 4.

⁶⁷³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 11.11.1982, 7; 19.02.1983, 4, in the latter article, Bashīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān mentioned 1,200 religious employees in Kurdistan; 09.05.1985, 5; 20.07.1988, 11. See also Bengio, 'Iraq', 1984, 578; Bengio, 'Iraq', 1985, 484.

⁶⁷⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 29.06.1987, 7.

⁶⁷⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.07.1988, 11. The correctness of these numbers could not be confirmed with certainty.

different context and interprets ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil’s statement in the sense that “there were 4,250 men of religion in the Army”.⁶⁷⁶ This is not correct since the article in *al-Jumhūrīya* refers to men of religion only as civil servants and does not mention the army at all. The Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness also visited soldiers at the front lines, but it would be misleading to assume that the Ba‘th recruited such a high number of religious scholars into the army.

As part of the regime’s religious media campaign, religious scholars were covered in the press during official meetings with high government officials like ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī or Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself. The leadership cultivated for such meetings primarily Sunnī Sufi scholars from its own home regions in central Iraq. ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī received already in 1980 a delegation of Sunnī religious scholars including the Sufis Shākīr al-Badrī, Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb, and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris.⁶⁷⁷ The latter was a deputy of the Naqshbandī shaykh Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn, head of the religious scholars’ union (*rābiṭat al-‘ulamā’*) of Iraq since 1976 and a member in the Scholarly Council in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs.⁶⁷⁸ According to the newspaper article, they discussed the development and spread of religious studies in Iraq.⁶⁷⁹ During the war, men of religion from all parts of Iraq regularly appeared in the media in order to support the regime’s cause. They condemned Khomeynī as a deceiver or in Arabic *dajjāl*⁶⁸⁰ attributing to him the image of the apocalyptic figure with miraculous powers which is said to arrive before the end of times in order to rule for a certain period with impurity and tyranny. In one article from 1980, Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb labeled Iraq’s war against “Iran of the Persians and heirs of Zaratustra” as Ṣaddām’s Qādisīya in analogy to the Muslims’ historical battle of Qādisīya against Sassanid Persia in 636. He described the ongoing war as a continuation of this old battle, congratulating Ṣaddām and his army in the name of the religious scholars’ association for their victories and praying for them.⁶⁸¹ The Sāmarrā’ School’s first lecturer since 1971 was then already *muftī* of Sāmarrā’, head of the religious scholars’ union (*rābiṭat al-‘ulamā’*) in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn province as well as a member in the religious scholars’ union of Iraq. In 1980, he was appointed into the Council of *Awqāf*

⁶⁷⁶ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 41. He refers to an article by Ofra Bengio who presents the statement correctly without any reference to the army (Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1988, 379).

⁶⁷⁷ *al-Jumhūrīya* 26.06.1980, 1.

⁶⁷⁸ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 442–45.

⁶⁷⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 26.08.1980, 1.

⁶⁸⁰ Abel, ‘al-Dajdjāl’.

⁶⁸¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 03.11.1980, 6.

and Religious Affairs in the ministry for two tenures until 1986 and for an unknown period also into its Scholarly Council. From his statement in the press we cannot deduce more than that he was successfully co-opted by the regime and remained compliant enabling him to make a really successful career. Nevertheless, other reasons than political force might have played a role, too, as he shared, for instance, the same tribal origin as ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī from the Mawāshiṭ tribe in Dūr.⁶⁸² This was not an exception. A quite similar case is the one of the already introduced Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī who hailed from the same tribe as the Minister of *Awqāf* ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil ‘Abbās, the al-Bū ‘Abbās in Sāmarrā’. In an article from 1982, Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī, among other scholars, accused Iranian troops of killing prisoners of war. He cited verses from the Quran, the Tradition of the Prophet, sayings of the first caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, and the eighth Umayyad caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as examples for Islamic principles to treat prisoners of war well. Then, he continued that “the Persian racists (*al-unṣurīyīn al-furs*) do not believe in these principles of Islam” but commit their crimes and kill prisoners without any fear of God.⁶⁸³

Throughout the whole war, the Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness organised regular visitations of religious scholars to Iraqi soldiers at the front line in order to support them religiously and to convince them about the righteousness of their cause. To make sure that no one would overlook these visitations, for instance by Shākir al-Badrī, they were generously covered in full-page articles including large photos of the event and portraits of each religious scholar.⁶⁸⁴ An article from 1983 even redefined the role of men of religion as soldiers with the subheading “Man of Religion: Soldier at the Front and Battle Speech on the Pulpit (*minbar*)”. Bashīr ‘Abd al-Raḥman explained here that in addition to the visits by the Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness, the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs organised seminars (*nadawāt*) in which the minister explained the position of the enemy and the new tasks of men of religion. He particularly stressed the weekly sermons (*khutab*) in mosques as their religious obligations. In these sermons, they had to explain the exalted meanings of the defence of fatherland, soil, and religion, the free donation of wealth and blood, and the martyrdom and sacrifice (*al-istishhād wa-l-fidā’ wa-l-taḍhīya*) for the defeat of evil and the enemy. In the end, he stated that Iraq’s men of religion not

⁶⁸² Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 108–9; ‘al-Shaykh Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb’.

⁶⁸³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.02.1982, 4.

⁶⁸⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 21.12.1981, 4. For other examples see *al-Jumhūrīya* 08.12.1981, 10; 19.12.1981, 4; 19.03.1983, 9. For further visits at the front, see Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1988, 379.

only contributed with their speech to the defence of the fatherland, but many of them even fought and died in active combat.⁶⁸⁵

In a further step, the regime tried to mobilise more Muslim support on the international level during the war and commenced to host the first Popular Islamic Conference (*al-mu'tamar al-islāmī al-sha'bī*) in 1983. This conference series was originally initiated by Iraq in cooperation with Egypt and Saudi Arabia and had its headquarter in Baghdad.⁶⁸⁶ Further conferences were held 1985 in Baghdad, 1987 in Kuwait, and 1990 again in Baghdad.⁶⁸⁷ These conferences brought together up to 300 Muslim representatives from about fifty countries which were allied with Iraq, most of them Muslim clerics, ministers, or lay activists but also some Islamists. The aim was to pass resolutions against Iran and to bolster Iraq's religious credibility. The first conference was presided over by the Iraqi Shī'ī cleric 'Alī Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' from Najaf and many Sunnī Iraqi religious scholars participated as well.⁶⁸⁸ Afterwards, the press published a series of articles in which Iraqi religious scholars like 'Abd Allāh al-Shaykhli publicly welcomed the implementation of the conference resolutions.⁶⁸⁹ 'Abd Allāh al-Shaykhli was another Baghdad-born scholar who was educated in the Sufī milieu of the Kīlānīya and later on in the Badawī *takīya* under 'Abd al-Qādir al-Khaṭīb, Ṣafā' al-Dīn Āl al-shaykh al-Ḥalaqa a-Qādirīya as well as under Shākir al-Badrī's teachers. He started his career as imam and preacher in several minor mosques of Baghdad in 1932 and had taught in the Khālidiya *takīya* and in the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque in the 1950s and 1960s. Next to other religious posts in the 1970s, he was also appointed into the Scholarly Council of the *Dīwān al-Awqāf* as well as the Supreme Council for *Awqāf*.⁶⁹⁰

From the mid-1980s onwards, the regime undertook, for the first time, more concrete steps to mould a new generation of religious scholars according to its Ba'ṭhist outlook and against the growing Islamist tendencies among the Sunnī and Shī'ī communities. Two projects received the most prominent advertisement in the press. The first started with the foundation of the already mentioned Higher Islamic Institute for the

⁶⁸⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 19.02.1983, 4. This could be a hint at the regime's recruitment among the Kurdish Sufi shaykhs to fight in the irregular National Defence Battalions such as the militia of shaykh Muḥammad 'Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī from Biyāra mentioned in Section 3.2.5.

⁶⁸⁶ Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 216, Fn. 23.

⁶⁸⁷ Kramer, 'Iraq', 195. See also *al-Jumhūrīya* 23.04.1985, 6; 28.01.1987, 3.

⁶⁸⁸ For newspaper articles on the event: *al-Jumhūrīya* 17.04.1983, 1,3; 18.04.1983, 11; 19.04.1983, 1, 7; 23.04.1985, 3; 25.04.1985, 1, 3, 9.

⁶⁸⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 28.05.1985, 4. For other examples, see *al-Jumhūrīya* 11.05.1985, 9; 23.05.1985, 9; 27.05.1985, 6; 30.05.1985, 8.

⁶⁹⁰ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 426–27.

Preparation of Imams and Preachers (*al-ma'had al-islāmī al- 'ālī li-i 'dād al-a'imma wa-l-khuṭabā'*) in 1985. Initially headed by Shākir al-Badrī, the institute was open for graduates from the preparatory school level and only for Iraqi students with both parents from Iraqi origin. The preparation of imams and preachers-to-be was again intended to be in harmony with the goals of the revolution and Sufi scholars were to play a considerable role in this institute.⁶⁹¹ Parallel to this project, the regime continued to close down independent religious schools, partially in order to undermine extremist tendencies but most probably also to assure the wider impact of the new institute and its later offshoots. By 1986 rumours started to circulate that the authorities had closed eighty-six religious centres exiling or executing their leaders.⁶⁹²

The second project was the foundation of the Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies (*jāmi'at Ṣaddām li-l- 'ulūm al-islāmīya*) in 1989. This university was a result of the International Popular Islamic Conferences that were organised by the regime from the early 1980s on. According to the respective law for its foundation, it aimed at

the teaching of original (*aṣīl*) and contemporary Islamic sciences, education, cultures, and trends and the revival of the art of free Islamic Arabic dialogue for which Iraq was historically known, far from sectarianism and sectarian fanaticism (*madhhabīya wa-ta' aṣṣub ṭā' ifī*).⁶⁹³

The university was financially and administratively independent and intended to be a small elite institution for fifty percent of the best international Muslim students and fifty percent Iraqis with a degree of the preparatory school level.⁶⁹⁴ The programme of this university will be discussed later on.⁶⁹⁵

From time to time, Sufi shaykhs, too, participated in the regime's religious media campaign. In 1982, the Iraqi media lavishly covered a meeting of Ṣaddām with men of religion from Kurdistan and Nīnawā province. During the meeting they discussed their political stance towards Iraq, their social and religious role, as well as the general amnesty of former Kurdish resistance fighters and their families during the war. Central in this newspaper coverage and on television was the recording of a dialogue between Ṣaddām and the Kurdish Qādirīya shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jaw'īsa (or:

⁶⁹¹ Ḥusayn, Qānūn al-ma'had al-islāmī al- 'ālī li-i 'dād al-a'imma wa-l-khuṭabā' raqm (98) li-sanat 1985; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 264. The influence of Sufis in this institute will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.3.

⁶⁹² Bengio, 'Iraq', 1986, 469. Bengio's source is an article from Le Monde 08.03.1986.

⁶⁹³ Ḥusayn, Qānūn jāmi'at Ṣaddām li-l- 'ulūm al-islāmīya raqm (10) li-sanat 1989, sec. 3.

⁶⁹⁴ Ḥusayn, Qānūn jāmi'at Ṣaddām li-l- 'ulūm al-islāmīya raqm (10) li-sanat 1989; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 264.

⁶⁹⁵ See also Section 4.2.3.

Chaw'īsa) with the help of his representative and translator who praised the president as a hero and pledged allegiance to Iraq and the regime. When the translator of the shaykh talked about his confidence to solve some “negativities” between the Kurds and the regime, he explicitly praised the religious Ba'thists 'Abd Allāh Fāḍil, Burhān al-Dīn Muṣṭafā, and Sa'dī 'Ayāsh as respected negotiators who had met the Kurdish shaykhs many times before.⁶⁹⁶ 'Abd Allāh Fāḍil also successfully managed to establish further relations to Sufi orders abroad. In 1984, he received the Qādirī shaykh Muḥammad Būnā Kuntā from Senegal who pledged that the sons of the *ṭarīqa al-Qādirīya* stood on the side of the sons of Iraq against Iran.⁶⁹⁷

One of the participants at the first Popular Islamic Conference in 1983 was the leading shaykh of the Rifā'īya in Kuwait, Yūsuf b. Hāshim al-Rifā'ī. He praised the conference in the Iraqi press as a great opportunity to strengthen the ties of Islamic brotherhood.⁶⁹⁸ Being a descendant of the Rifā'īan Naqīb clan in Baṣra, this was not the first time that he supported the Ba'ṭh leadership. As mentioned in Section 3.2.3, he had financed the publication of *al-Majālis al-rifā'īya* in the early 1970s, a book which authenticated the Rifā'ī *nasab* of Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr. As *sāda rifā'īya*, he and the presidential clan of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn shared a genealogical bond. Another Rifā'ī shaykh appeared two years later. In May 1985, religious scholars in Kirkūk summoned a meeting for all men of religion in the Ṭālabānī *takīya* to spread and clarify the resolutions of the second Popular Islamic Conference. In the article that covered the event, shaykh of the Rifā'īya in Kirkūk, Fu'ād al-Ḥanṭāwī al-Mashāyikhī praised the efforts during the conference as the embodiment of the Muslims' will.⁶⁹⁹ In addition to this religious war propaganda, the newspapers regularly presented religious scholars and Sufis throughout the whole war as speakers at official religious occasions organised by the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs and quoted parts of their sermons.⁷⁰⁰ Finally,

⁶⁹⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 13.07.1982, 1, 3, 4, 5. The choice to present specifically this Sufi shaykh as loyal dialogue partner of the regime in Kurdistan may be the result of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm's personal Sufi relationship as a regular visitor of 'Abd al-Qādir's relative, shaykh Ibrāhīm Jaw'īsa in Qādir Karam (Shourush, 'The Religious Composition', 119).

⁶⁹⁷ *al-Jumhūrīya* 27.02.1984, 6.

⁶⁹⁸ *al-Jumhūrīya* 17.04.1983, 11.

⁶⁹⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 17.05.1985, 7.

⁷⁰⁰ Sufi-influenced scholars who regularly appeared in the newspapers were 'Abd al-'Alīm al-Sa'dī, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa'dī, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris, Shākir al-Badrī, Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, Hāshim al-A'zamī, 'Abd al-Majīd al-Qutb (president of the Committee for the Raising of Religious Awareness in Tā'mīm province), 'Umar al-Naqshbandī (Muftī of Dayr al-Zūr who relocated to Baghdad in 1980), Ṣubḥī al-Hītī (president of the Committee for the Raising of Religious Awareness in Anbār), Muḥammad 'Umar al-Qārah Dāghī from Sulaymānīya, and 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ṭu'ma (Imam of the Kīlānīya) (see *al-Jumhūrīya* 18.06.1980, 7; 04.08.1980, 4; 08.08.1980, 1; 09.08.1980, 6; 18.01.1981, 7; 05.06.1981, 6, 11; 30.07.1981, 6; 25.03.1982, 6; 09.07.1983, 6; 17.12.1983, 1, 11; 18.06.1984, 6;

Sufi scholars like Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī published essay series on diverse religious topics in the press.⁷⁰¹ I searched the sample of newspapers from 1968 to 1979 in vain for any comparable essay series by a religious scholar.

This section makes clear that the publicity of men of religion in Iraq during the 1980s tremendously increased as compared to their public marginalisation during the 1970s. This publicity was obviously initiated by the Ba‘th regime itself as part of the religious war propaganda in reaction to Khomeynī’s Islamist rhetoric. The state began to employ increasing numbers of men of religion, integrated them into the war propaganda, and even took over higher religious education with the foundation of its own institutes. Ba‘thist propaganda and religious policies were not yet designed to particularly promote a Sufi Islam but religious Sufi scholars and shaykhs played central and prominent roles in it. The influence of Sufis in the Ba‘thist higher religious education will be discussed later (4.2.3). Here, we learned that Sufis were represented in the highest levels of the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs and in the Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness. They toured Iraq for the regime and visited the soldiers at the front line. They had to support the regime’s cause regularly in the press publicly condemning Khomeynī, participating in the Popular Islamic Conferences and advertising them. Some could, for the first time, publish essay series on religious issues in the press. In several cases, a common tribal kinship with the Ba‘th leadership may have influenced their prominent role in addition to coercion and co-optation. In summary, the Ba‘th leadership’s observation of an increasing popularity and influence of men of religion in 1986 should not have been quite surprising. The regime itself had heavily contributed to it and helped that also many Sufis gained a new popularity during the 1980s.

4.1.5. *Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s Sharīfian nasab: The Son of ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn*

A further central part of the Ba‘th’s religious war propaganda became the increasingly religious personality cult of President Ṣaddām Ḥusayn as descendant of the Prophet with a strong emphasis on his alleged ancestors ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Ḥusayn. The previous Sections 3.1.3 and 3.2.2 have already described how his uncle, Khayr Allāh

06.12.1984, 8; 19.04.1985, 4; 29.03.1987, 6; 25.05.1987, 7; 30.10.1987, 4; 05.11.1987, 7; 07.04.1988, 5; 14.08.1988, 6; 22.10.1988, 6; 25.10.1988, 7; 12.10.1989, 4).

⁷⁰¹ See for his series of essays in *al-Jumhūrīya* 29.06.1984, 3; 13.05.1988, 6; 16.04.1989, 9; 18.04.1989, 9; 19.04.1989, 9; 20.04.1989, 9; 21.04.1989, 7; 22.04.1989, 7; 23.04.1989, 9; 24.04.1989, 9; 26.04.1989, 9.

Ṭilfāḥ, strove, for political ends, to reinvent and establish their clan's sharīfian Sufi genealogy (*nasab*) in relation to the genealogical network of the Rifā'īya order as early as 1968. As was shown, the book *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* from 1971 played an essential part in this undertaking as it outlined in detail their genealogical links to Iraq's famous Rifā'ī clans, the Rifā'īya's founding figure, Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī, and all the twelve Shī'ī Imams. However, only Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ had publicly laid claim to this descent throughout the 1970s and failed to make it part of the official political rhetoric. This was only accomplished with mastery by Ṣaddām Ḥusayn soon after his assumption of the presidency in 1979. He was then in a position where he could easily resort to Khayr Allāh's groundwork. During the war years, the Iraqi media only propagated Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's descent from the Shī'ī Imams like 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Ḥusayn but not his Sufi descent from Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. The exclusive emphasis of his descent from the Shī'ī Imams served mainly to counterbalance Khomeynī's Islamist rhetoric and to address Iraq's religious Shī'a population in order to improve his religious image. Nevertheless, the Sufi background of his genealogy formed the essential background for this policy and continued to be disseminated beneath the political propaganda. This background formed a genealogical link between the presidential family and the country's Rifā'ī Sufis and Section 4.2.5 will show that it gained gradually importance with the revival of tribalism during the 1980s. By 1989, the presidential family had cultivated close personal links to those Sufis (5.2.1). This section is mainly concerned with the political use of Ṣaddām's noble descent against the background of its historical origin in a Sufi context.

Directly after the assumption of the presidency, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn directly resorted to his alleged sharīfian descent and introduced it in two steps to the public discourse. The first step consisted in the further dissemination of *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*. The author Jalīl al-'Aṭīya gives in his *Hotel of Bliss (Funduq al-sa'āda)*, published in 1993, an account of how the regime tried to spread and officially acknowledge the book in October 1979. He reports that an envoy of the government was sent with the book and a *nasab* document to the leading Shī'ī Ayatollah Abū l-Qāsim al-Khū'ī to receive for a considerable sum of money his blessing and verification of it. However, al-Khū'ī allegedly refused to do so and called it a pure lie.⁷⁰² We need to treat the content of such reports with caution since the source of this information remains obscure. Aside from the details such as al-Khū'ī's refusal, however, the story shows that *al-Nujūm al-*

⁷⁰² 'Aṭīya, *Funduq as-sa'āda*, 245.

zawāhir was known to the public and the regime itself strove for its further promotion. ‘Aḥīya is silent about the further consequences of this refusal but notwithstanding the alleged failure to authenticate the genealogy and the book by the highest Shī‘ī authority of the country, the regime republished *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* in a second edition in 1980.⁷⁰³

As a second step in the same year, the sharīfian genealogy was introduced as an essential part of Ṣaddām’s official biography by Amīr Iskandar, *Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, as a Struggler, Thinker, and Human* (*Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, munāḍilan wa-mufakkiran wa-insānan*). In its first chapter, even before the story of Ṣaddām’s childhood, the author mentions the president’s descent from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. He writes that Ṣaddām had never publicly mentioned “this truth” in his speeches or interviews before, perhaps, since he rejected to outdo other people with historical and religious roots (*uṣūl*). He concealed it in order to embody a modern and secular (‘*almānī*) meaning of “*karāma*” (nobility; magnanimity) and “*sharaf*” (eminence) which he defined as follows: “The nobility (*karāma*) of the citizens is derived from the nobility of the fatherland (*waṭan*) and the eminence of the struggler emanates from the struggle for the revolution”.⁷⁰⁴ Iskandar additionally quoted a short and ambiguous phrase from a speech by Ṣaddām after his take over on 8 August 1979 where he stated “we are the descendants of ‘Alī” (*naḥnu aḥfād ‘Alī*). This statement, so Iskandar, bore without a doubt a real personal, historical, and political meaning which many listeners perhaps did not notice. Two pages later, he presented a photo of the complete Āl Nāsir pedigree with ‘Alī at its root.⁷⁰⁵ The focus in this biography clearly was on descendancy from ‘Alī whereas the connection to the Rifā‘īya is not explicitly mentioned. Obviously, the secular meanings of *karāma* and *sharaf*, to which Iskandar alluded, did not suffice anymore.

In the course of the war years, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn aimed to address particularly Iraq’s Shī‘a majority population with his genealogical link to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Ḥusayn in order to legitimise his position as the state’s leader. This policy has already been observed by historians and political analysts and the logic behind it is obvious. The

⁷⁰³ Dawod, ‘The “State-Ization” of the Tribe’, 129, Fn. 3. Hosham Dawod annotates that the book did neither attract much publicity among the Iraqi population nor among experts. According to him, the book was soon removed from Iraqi libraries for political reasons related to Ṣaddām’s family which are not further elaborated. In contrast to this assumption, the catalogue of the Iraqi National Library together with the two editions mentioned in this study make clear that the regime deemed it at least necessary to reprint *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* a second time in 1980 (Eskander, ‘Iraqi National Library’).

⁷⁰⁴ Iskandar, *Ṣaddām Ḥusayn*, 18.

⁷⁰⁵ Iskandar, 18–21.

majority of the Iraqi army consisted of Shī'ī soldiers who fought against co-religionists under a Shī'ī Islamist regime in Iran, which accused the Ba'ṯh of atheism and tried to get a foothold among the Iraqi Shī'a as well. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn intended with his sharīfian descent not only to counteract these allegations of atheism but also to provide Iraqi Shī'īs with an additional religious reason for their loyalty. The regime propagated Ṣaddām's link to the Imams 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn throughout the Iraqi nation on an almost weekly basis and turned it, according to Jerry Long, into a necessary connection.⁷⁰⁶

Such religious allusions can be directly observed after Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's take over which was accompanied by major purges inside the party and government following an alleged plot. In the context of these events, Ṣaddām put his own treatment of political enemies in analogy to Prophet Muḥammad's treatment of traitors and he associated himself with Imam 'Alī and the latter's conflict with the governor of Damascus, Mu'āwīya b. Abī Sufyān. Jerry Long mentions a speech of Ṣaddām in August 1979 in which he drew an analogy between himself, the Prophet and Imam 'Alī, "a man of honor representing all [the] meaning and spirit of the Islamic mission" and who "triumphed because he sought the heavenly values." Mu'āwīya by contrast, representing Ṣaddām's enemies, "was fighting for the sake of earthly temptations" and "won the earth on which he lived [but] lost the heavenly values".⁷⁰⁷ During the same speech, he hinted at his descent with the ambiguous statement "we have the right to say today – and we will not be fabricating history – that we are the grandsons of Imam Hussein [Ibn Ali]."⁷⁰⁸ In another account by Said Aburish, Ṣaddām personally visited Najaf after Ayatollah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr's execution in order to demonstrate fearlessness, regime control, and to justify his political conduct in front of the Shī'a population with the words "I am the son of Ali, and I kill with his sword."⁷⁰⁹

In order to evoke a further dividing line between the Shī'a of Iraq and Iran, the Ba'ṯh added an ethnic dimension to its religious rhetoric in relation to the Shī'ī Imams. Here, we need to keep in mind that Ṣaddām did not stand alone with his claim of noble descent. In fact, Ayatollah Khomeynī, son of the cleric and *sayyid* Muṣṭafā Mūsawī, similarly claimed sharīfian descent from 'Alī via Mūsā al-Kāẓim.⁷¹⁰ Thus, Ba'ṯhist

⁷⁰⁶ Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 65.

⁷⁰⁷ Long, 63.

⁷⁰⁸ Long, 64.

⁷⁰⁹ Aburish, *Saddam Hussein*, 186; Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 62.

⁷¹⁰ Hiro, *The Longest War*, 33.

sayyid fought against Islamist *sayyid* in this war. Therefore, the Ba‘th began to underline the Arab and Iraqi character of the Shī‘ī Imams in order to draw an ethnic line between the Iraqi and the Persian Shī‘a. Using this ethnic marker, the regime could also deprive Khomeynī of his own noble status. This is obvious in a statement by Ṣaddām in 1982, which is mentioned by Long, that “al-Najaf is an Iraqi and an Arab town. Its soil is Arabic, and its great symbol is our grandfather Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, who is definitely not the father of Khomeini.”⁷¹¹

Leading Ba‘th Party members and loyal religious figures frequently referred to the president’s noble descent in official speeches at all kinds of occasions. Artists produced drawings and paintings connecting the president visually to the Imams⁷¹² and his sharīfian pedigree was even painted in gold on the main entrances of the major Shī‘ī shrines, such as Imam ‘Alī’s shrine in Najaf and al-Ḥusayn’s and al-‘Abbās’ shrines in Karbalā’.⁷¹³ The following statements and headlines from the 1980s are only a selection but serve to give a good impression of this policy.

The knight of our nation (*umma*) and carrier of our banner, president and struggler Ṣaddām Ḥusayn is connected with our Imam al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, in more than one relation (*nasab*), as he is first of all connected [to him] through the link of the pedigree (*nasab*), secondly through the Arabic link (*nasab*), and thirdly through the revolutionary link (*nasab*). (Sa‘īd al-Rūmī, member of the Najaf branch (*shu‘ba*) of the party at the birthday of Imam al-Ḥusayn).⁷¹⁴

There is more than one bond which unites the leader and this holy province. Besides the great love, which its people show to his eminence, the embracing of his leadership, and the faithfulness for him, it is also the holy Arab city of history and lofty cultural heritage, which makes every Arab proud. It likewise embraces the shrine of his forefather Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him). No wonder that the leader visits the city of his forefather (*sayyid* Ḥusayn al-Rufay‘ī, the custodian (*sādin*) of ‘Alī’s shrine during a speech on the latter’s birthday).⁷¹⁵

It is a wisdom of divine foreordination that the cycle of the Islamic Arabic glory begins anew in Iraq due to the historical leadership of the *sayyid*, president and leader Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, the descendant of al-Ḥusayn, the lofty symbol of Iraq and the cause of its renaissance (‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī during an inauguration ceremony for a project to gild the dome of al-Ḥusayn’s shrine in Karbalā’ in 1987).⁷¹⁶

Parallel to this policy, Ṣaddām began far more often and regularly than in the 1970s with visitations and public prayers at mosques and holy shrines across Iraq. This is

⁷¹¹ Long, *Saddam’s War of Words*, 64.

⁷¹² See for example a drawing by Wisām Murqus in *al-Thawra* picturing Ṣaddām on a white horse in a pose that is famous for Imam ‘Alī, yet also with many pre-Islamic Mesopotamian symbols (Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology*, 79, 107, 111).

⁷¹³ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 101; Hiro, *Desert Shield*, 496, Fn. 11; Long, *Saddam’s War of Words*, 178–79.

⁷¹⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 28.06.1980, 6.

⁷¹⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 19.02.1984, 4.

⁷¹⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 18.02.1987, 6.

evident from the analysis of Iraqi newspapers which lavishly covered his visitations on front pages and additional full-page articles with photos of Ṣaddām dressed in uniform and in praying position inside mosques or shrines. The majority of his visitations occurred at the shrines of his alleged forefathers, the Shī‘ī Imams and their descendants, in order to personally underline his noble descent from them. The intention behind them was clearly ecumenical in nature and made use of the shared veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*. It can certainly be interpreted as a symbolic attempt to show respect for and assure loyalty from Iraq’s Shī‘ī majority population during the war. However, this practice did not remain limited to the Shī‘a alone. Anxious to avoid any sectarian reproaches, Ṣaddām visited also Sunnī shrines like the one of the famous Sufi ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and even Christian sanctuaries. The following table 6 lists a sample of sanctuaries visited by the president in the 1980s.

Location	Sanctuaries
Anbār (Ḥadītha, Jawā‘ina, ‘Āna, Rāwa)	Local mosques and the shrine of Rifā‘ī Sufi sayyid Rajab in Rāwa. ⁷¹⁷
Bābil	Shrine of Muslim b. ‘Aqīl ⁷¹⁸
Baghdad (Bāb al-Shaykh)	Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī ⁷¹⁹
Baghdad	Al-Khulafā’ mosque
Baghdad	Christian al-Lāṭīn church ⁷²⁰
Baghdad (Kāẓimīya)	Shrine of Mūsā al-Kāẓim and Muḥammad al-Jawād ⁷²¹
Balad	Shrine of sayyid Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Hādī ⁷²²
Dīwānīya	Shrine of Abū l-Faḍl b. Mūsā al-Kāẓim ⁷²³
Ḥilla	Shrine of Imam al-Ḥamza al-Sharqī ⁷²⁴
Najaf	Shrine of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ⁷²⁵
Nīnawā (Mount Alfaf)	Christian Monastery of Dayr Mār Mattī ⁷²⁶
Karbālā’	Shrines of al-Ḥusayn and al-‘Abbās ⁷²⁷
Kūfa	Mosque of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ⁷²⁸
Sāmarrā’	Shrines of ‘Alī al-Hādī and al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī ⁷²⁹

Table 6: Ṣaddām’s Shrine Visitations during the 1980s

⁷¹⁷ *al-Jumhūrīya* 01.03.1983.

⁷¹⁸ *al-Jumhūrīya* 16.01.1982.

⁷¹⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 01.03.1981.

⁷²⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 08.08.1980.

⁷²¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 01.08.1981; 12.06.1982; 22.03.1985.

⁷²² *al-Jumhūrīya* 10.10.1981; 28.04.1984.

⁷²³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 01.01.1982.

⁷²⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 25.04.1981.

⁷²⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 01.09.1981; 04.02.1982; 20.02.1982; 20.02.1984; 06.10.1984.

⁷²⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 11.03.1981.

⁷²⁷ These are the third Shī‘ī Imam and his half-brother (*al-Jumhūrīya* 14/15.10.1980; 19.06.1981; 21.07.1982; 20.07.1983; 06.10.1984).

⁷²⁸ *al-Jumhūrīya* 16.01.1982.

⁷²⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 06.09.1980; 08.08.1981; 20.10.1982; 18.09.1987.

At a first glance, Ṣaddām's, and before him al-Bakr's, visitations were not dissimilar to the policies of their Sunnī political predecessors in Iraq. Already the Ottoman governors of the nineteenth century, King Faiṣal and his successors, and even the previous rulers of the republic all engaged in this practice as they had always to deal with a Shī'a majority population.⁷³⁰ What distinguishes the Ba'ṭhist presidents from all the others is, first of all, the sheer quantity of these visitations and their lavish coverage in the media during the 1980s. The second central distinguishing feature is their genealogical Rifā'īya background which was gradually woven around their person, their shrine visitations, and their sponsorship for religious sites. Admittedly, king Faiṣal, too, was a sharīf from Mecca and a more prominent one, but he was foreign to Iraq and had only little local support. Ṣaddām could present himself as a home-grown Iraqi *sayyid* from Tikrīt, a descendant of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī and six of the Twelve Imams who are buried in Iraqi soil. As president, he could thereby establish a personal link to his country's saintly heritage. This was the important point regardless of the truth or falsity behind his claim or the fact that hundreds of thousands of other Iraqis could rightly claim the same.

The meaning of the Rifā'īya background up to the end of the 1980s becomes only gradually accessible. In the public religious discourse of the press Ṣaddām was the descendant of 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn but not the descendant of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. Not even the custodians of the Rifā'ī shrine in Maysān brought up this genealogical link when they publicly thanked Ṣaddām for his sponsorship in 1982. An explanation for this is most probably that a direct emphasis and advertisement of a Sufi link in the political discourse would have been counterproductive and perhaps even more harmful for the Ba'ṭh's image. The main reason for the regime's propaganda was Khomeynī's Islamist rhetoric and his allegations against the Ba'ṭhists as atheists. Hence, the primary goal of the Iraqi regime was to prove its religiosity towards the Iraqi Shī'a and in opposition to Iran's Shī'ī Islamists by showing esteem for the Shī'ī Imams. An emphasis on Ṣaddām's descent from 'Alī made much more sense in this context than his descent

⁷³⁰ Apart from political implications, this is a widespread practice in view of the fact that also many Sunnis highly value the Shī'ī Imams as descendants of the Prophet even though they would not attribute certain qualities to them as Shī'īs do, such as infallibility. The whole practice gained an increasing political impact with the growing Shī'a majority population in Iraq since the late Ottoman Empire up to this day. Early historical examples of political visitors to these shrines include the Ottoman governor in Baghdad Najīb Bāshā who also heavily supported the Qādirīya and Naqshbandīya, and King Faiṣal I. and his sons (Abu-Manneh, 'The Khālidiyya and the Salafīyya', 35–36; Allawi, *Faisal I*, 368, 375, 380, 434, 494). The republicans 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim and 'Abd al-Raḥman Muḥammad 'Arif, too, made such visitations (*al-Jumhūrīya* 06.01.1968, 2; 16.07.1968, 16).

from Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. During the war, there was simply no urgent need to address the minority of Sufis and *al-sāda al-rifā'īya* from among the Sunnī Arab population. Most of them should have already supported the regime by then. In the Sunnī tribal environment, the Rifā'ī genealogy of the Āl Nāṣir was known and some had authenticated the presidential genealogy already in the early 1970s as shown in Section 3.2.3. In addition to that, the leadership had dismissed four leading members explicitly for their accentuated Sufi religiosity in 1982. Outwardly, the secular Ba'th regime needed to show that it was always on the side of faith, but a direct emphasis of a Sufi image was counterproductive on the political level at that time. Although Sufism was deeply anchored in Iraq's Sunnī community, it struggled during those days, as it does today, with a considerably negative image of being un-Islamic due to widespread anti-Sufi polemics on the national and international level. Playing off Khomeynī by presenting Ṣaddām Ḥusayn as a representative of Iraq's Rifā'ī Sufis would have provided the former with even more ammunition for allegations.

Despite these problems, the Rifā'īya background remained, nevertheless, salient on a subtler level beneath the official religious propaganda. Ṣaddām's sharīfian descent and his visitations to Shī'ī shrines were political with an ecumenical purpose and his genealogical Rifā'īya background, that is his being a member of *al-sāda al-rifā'īya* imparted a further religious and historical justification for this practice. Of course, to most Shī'īs in the south without direct experience with Rifā'ī Sufis, this did not matter, but to many Sunnīs in Iraq, it could offer an important religious context since visitations at Shī'ī shrines particularly by Rifā'īs were a widespread practice. The Rifā'īya indicated ecumenical traits and a closeness to Shī'ī traditions and rituals at least since the time of Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī in the late nineteenth century. Against this background, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn did not merely appear as a Sunnī Ba'thist politician who had no connection to those shrines at all, but as a Rifā'ī *sayyid* who visited the shrines of his alleged forefathers just like *al-sāda al-rifā'īya* had traditionally done for ages. In *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, published two times in 1971 and 1980, the Ba'th leaders were directly linked to this Rifā'ī heritage, the genealogical Ṣayyādī branch, and other famous shaykh clans in the Rifā'īya network. When Ṣaddām assumed the presidency, he ordered among various projects also the restoration of the old Rifā'ī shrines and *takāyā* that had been first built under Abū l-Hudā about a hundred years earlier in central Iraq. He sponsored the southern shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī, to whom he was linked in *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* as well. When Ṣaddām began to tour the shrines all over

Iraq, he visited the Rifā'ī shrines quite early. I could not detect a newspaper article that covered Ṣaddām visiting the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī, something one would expect of a Rifā'ī descendant, but my interviewees assured me that he had allegedly visited this shrine as well. His full Rifā'īan pedigree was, finally, even painted at the main entrances of the shrines in Najaf and Karbalā' and made the chain of his ancestors visible to all visitors. Ṣaddām recreated and cultivated in this way the old Rifā'īya heritage and clan networks as a cultural and religious basis on which his own descent and his shrine visitations could be solidly founded and contextualised.

4.1.6. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's Turn from Secular Party Worker to Religious Specialist

The beginning of the Ba'th's massive religious propaganda in 1980 is also marked by a considerable religious turn in the career of the Ba'thist who made himself a name as the leading Sufī within the regime during the 1990s. This man was 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, who became the second man after Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and the regime's most important religious figure. As mentioned in the first Section 4.1.1, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī was not affected by the party's internal criticism against the Sufī religiosity of some leading party members during the Ninth Regional Party Congress; despite the fact that he had already been a Sufī before his political career and did not conceal his religiosity in front of party comrades. This religiosity was known among party comrades from the 1970s on, but it did not surface in public and the media where we witness a clear religious turn in his appearances during the 1980s. It was particularly his religiosity which made him now a central and valuable figure in the regime's religious war propaganda. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī performed now as a religious specialist of the Ba'th Party foreshadowing his later appearance as Iraq's Sufī patron.

A short summary of his political career until the 1980s makes this turn visible. The newspaper coverage of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's early political appearances in the 1970s does not exhibit any religious context nor are there any hints of his religious background. He is almost consistently portrayed as a secular party worker who successfully advanced in the party and the government to the highest positions. Following his election into the RL in November 1969, he soon started to engage in so-called popular action campaigns (*hamalāt al- 'amal al-sha 'bī*) to organise development programmes in Iraq's remote rural areas. He became the head of the Supreme

Committee for Popular Action (*al-lajna al-‘alīyā li-l-‘amal al-sha‘bī*) and regularly headed delegations to southern Iraq. On 17 and 30 July 1969, for instance, he personally supervised two projects in the provinces Maysān and Nāṣirīya to evaluate the standard of living and direct agricultural as well as settlement projects there.⁷³¹ Such missions continued in the following years with his appointment as minister of agricultural reform between 1970 and 1975. In May 1970, he announced the implementation of the new revolutionary law of agricultural reform (*qānūn al-iṣlāḥ al-zirā‘ī al-jadīd*) and the beginning of the agricultural revolution (*al-thawra al-zirā‘īya*). He became deputy president of the newly established Supreme Agricultural Council (*al-majlis al-zirā‘ī al-‘ālā*), discussed the revolutionary goals with peasant and worker unions, and inspected on-going development projects throughout the country. In October 1970, the Supreme Agricultural Council announced its decision to start the great agriculturalisation campaign (*ḥamlat al-istizrā‘ al-kubrā*) to implement the new law of agricultural reform nationwide.⁷³²

In contrast to Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, he was barely covered visiting holy shrines. A first very tiny report appeared only after he had assumed the position as minister of the interior in 1975.⁷³³ His visit together with Ṣaddām Ḥusayn at the shrine of al-Ḥusayn in Karbalā’ in 1977 brought him, for the first time, greater publicity in relation to the regime’s religious propaganda.⁷³⁴ With the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, which turned immediately into an ideological and propagandist battle about which party represented true Islam, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī commenced to play a central role in the Ba‘th’s tactic to improve its public religious image. Some Western analysts tended to underestimate his role in this context as more ceremonial than actual,⁷³⁵ but this is to misinterpret the ideological danger of Iran’s Islamists for the regime at that time and its dire need of a negotiator for the religious circles at home.

In June 1980, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm received together with Nūrī Faiṣal Shāhir, the current Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs, a group of Sunnī religious Sufi scholars in

⁷³¹ The members of the delegations were Ḥāmid al-Jubbūrī, minister of state for primary issues of the republic, Ṭaha Ibrāhīm al-‘Abd Allāh, minister of irrigation, Hāshim Qaddūrī, director of agricultural machines and tools, and Anwar Ṣabrī, director of general cooperation in the ministry of agricultural reform (see *al-Jumhūrīya* 04.09.1969, 4; 14.09.1969, 4; 22.09.1969, 4; 30.09.1969, 4; 02.10.1969, 5; 06.10.1969, 5; 03.11.1969, 6; 04.11.1969, 4).

⁷³² *al-Jumhūrīya* 22.05.1970, 1, 3; 02.07.1970, 1, 4; 09.07.1970, 4; 17.07.1970, 11; 07.10.1970, 4; 20.11.1970, 5; 27.11.1970, 4; 07.12.1970, 4; 02.02.1971, 4, 11; 22.02.1971, 3; 27.09.1971, 1; 28.10.1971, 3; 27.11.1971, 3; 18.07.1972, 4; 13.02.1973, 4.

⁷³³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 19.07.1975, 4.

⁷³⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 14.12.1977, 1, 5, 6.

⁷³⁵ Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1982, 580.

his office in Baghdad. The heading of the newspaper article read “Mr. ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm Affirms the Wish of the Leader President Ṣaddām Ḥusayn for the Sponsorship of the Men of Religion and the Hoisting of the Flag of Islam Up High”.⁷³⁶ During the meeting, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm declared that colonialism has threatened in the past and still threatens today to harm and defame Islam and tries to divide and weaken the *umma*. As a force to successfully foil such plans in Iraq, he presented the revolutionary leadership of the Ba‘th Party and its leader Ṣaddām Ḥusayn. In accordance with Ba‘th ideology, he warned that “religion, if one does not deal with its essence like an important and original part of the *umma*’s heritage and past, it will foster the shortening of time and the blasting of man’s capabilities on the path of good and progress for humanity.”⁷³⁷ The participants then talked about the need to develop and extend education in religious schools (*madāris dīnīya*) throughout Iraq. The attending scholars finally praised Ṣaddām’s and the party’s sponsorship (*ri‘āya*) of religious heritage, religious schools, as well as the holy shrines of the Shī‘ī Imams (*‘atabāt*) and holy places of worship (*dawr al-‘ibāda*). This article reflects not only the regime’s new approach towards men of religion after a decade of marginalisation but also ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s new role as the main negotiator with them. As minister of the interior, he had cultivated the Kurdish shaykhs as early as the mid-1970s, but only behind the scenes. The proclaimed hoisting of the flag of Islam, finally, stood in contradiction to the party’s internal hostility against religion during the Ninth Regional Party Congress two years later and demonstrates the regime’s merely propagandist use of Islam.

Soon afterwards, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm accompanied Ṣaddām on tours through all Iraqi provinces propagating their faith and supporting the country’s religious heritage. In September 1980, the newspapers covered both during a visit in Sāmarrā’, Dūr, and Ṣaddām’s birthplace al-‘Awja touring the streets, inspecting and promising development projects, and affirming the necessity to sponsor religious sites; particularly the shrines of the Imams ‘Alī al-Hādī and al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī in Sāmarrā’. Three days after the visit, *al-Jumhūrīya* proclaimed, among other projects for houses of living and guesthouses, the construction of “two programmatic mosques” in Tikrīt and al-‘Awja on the order of Ṣaddām.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 26.06.1980, 1.

⁷³⁷ *al-Jumhūrīya* 26.06.1980, 1.

⁷³⁸ *al-Jumhūrīya* 06.09.1980, 1, 11, 07.09.1980, 12, 08.09.1980, 4.

With the ongoing religious war propaganda, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm stepped more and more into the limelight. His public image and role in the Iraqi media fully turned from secular party worker preoccupied with agricultural reform to a specialist for religious affairs. The press covered him not anymore as a mere companion of the president but as his representative on religious occasions at the holy shrines across Iraq. He even served as an important negotiator between the Ba‘th and the Shī‘ī religious establishment. This role is evident from his lengthy speeches on occasions such as the birthdays of the Imams ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn where he praised them in the religious rhetoric of the Ba‘th’s ecumenical Islam as ideal role models. Loaded with anti-Iranian war propaganda, he praised ‘Alī as the ideal Arab (in contrast to Persian) hero (*baṭal*) and knight (*fāris*) of Islam and al-Ḥusayn as the Arab who embodied heroism (*buṭūla*) and sacrifice (*fidā*) on the path of Islam.⁷³⁹

‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s image change coincided with the massive government campaign to construct and restore religious shrines, including many Sufi shrines. Similar to Ṣaddām, the Iraqi press mainly pictured him during visitations at the shrines of the Shī‘ī Imams ‘Alī in Najaf, al-Ḥusayn and al-‘Abbās in Karbalā’ commemorating their birthdays (*mawālīd*) and on other occasions. In July 1982 he prayed at al-Ḥusayn’s shrine for the safety of the Iraqi people, the *umma*, and its leader Ṣaddām in their struggle against the enemies of Arabism and Islam, namely the imperialists, Zionists, and Iran.⁷⁴⁰ Apart from the Shī‘ī sanctuaries, he also began with regular visitations at Sufi shrines, such as the shrines of Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī in Maysān province or ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Baghdad.⁷⁴¹ Accompanying the deputy of the Sudanese president and Qādirī Sufi,⁷⁴² Major General ‘Umar Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib, and the Sudanese ambassador, he visited the shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and performed the afternoon prayer there in October. They beseeched God to support the Arabic *umma* against her enemies. Afterwards followed a visit to the *madrasa* of the Kīlānīya and its old religious manuscripts.⁷⁴³

In company with Ṣaddām and a Ba‘th delegation, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī was depicted performing the small pilgrimage (*‘umra*) and visiting the mosque of the Prophet

⁷³⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 15.03.1987, 6; 06.04.1987, 6.

⁷⁴⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 21.07.1982, 6; 18.02.1987, 6; 15.03.1987, 6; 06.04.1987, 6; 02.03.1988, 6; 23.03.1988, 6; 19.02.1989, 2.

⁷⁴¹ Interview with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba‘thist, 11.11.2015.

⁷⁴² Thomas, *Islam’s Perfect Stranger*, 212.

⁷⁴³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 19.10.1982, 6.

Muḥammad in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁴⁴ He publicly performed the Friday prayer together with Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil ‘Abbās and a congregation of religious scholars in Baghdad’s *al-Shuhadā’* (*Umm al-Ṭubūl*) mosque in April 1983 when the city hosted the first Popular Islamic Conference.⁷⁴⁵ ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm was a central figure and regular attendant at these conferences, for instance in Baghdad 1985 and in Kuwait 1987.⁷⁴⁶ His new outward Muslim image figured even during pre-Islamic pagan festivals such as the Spring Festivals (*mahrajān al-rabī’*) in Mosul. Despite the pre-Islamic context,⁷⁴⁷ ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm annually introduced these festivals with obviously religious vocabulary and opened in 1988 together with the then Governor of Mosul, Ṭāhir al-‘Ānī exhibitions about the holy Quran and the Islamic heritage organised by the bureau of religious endowments.⁷⁴⁸ On all these occasions mentioned above, his image as a pious man and Muslim was apparent while he still avoided explicit commitments and obvious traces of his Sufi identity during public appearances.⁷⁴⁹

As could be seen in this section, the beginning of the Ba‘th’s massive use of Islam in politics in the 1980s coincided with ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s image change from secular party worker to religious specialist. The man who emerged as the leading Sufi within the Ba‘th Party during the 1990s, became in the 1980s, for the first time, a central figure for religious propaganda. He performed as the Ba‘th’s main negotiator with Sunnī (Sufi) and Shī‘ī men of religion, toured Shī‘ī and Sufi holy shrines, and represented the president on major religious occasions, festivals, and the Popular Islamic Conferences. In contrast to Ṣaddām and other Ba‘thists, he made intensive use of religious rhetoric during his speeches cultivating in this way an image as pious Muslim during the 1980s. However, his Sufi identity did not yet surface in public.

⁷⁴⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 21.04.1988, 1; 05.12.1988, 1.

⁷⁴⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 16.04.1983. The mentioned mosque contains the graves of the martyrs who died during the July revolution in 1968 (Ṭilfāḥ, *Ana al-‘arabī: rawād al-‘urūba*, 39).

⁷⁴⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 23.04.1985, 6; 28.01.1987, 3.

⁷⁴⁷ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 63, 75.

⁷⁴⁸ *al-Jumhūrīya* 16.04.1985, 3; 08.04.1988, 4.

⁷⁴⁹ Interview with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba‘thist, 11.11.2015.

4.1.7. *The Further Expansion of State Control over Religious Establishments*

The Ba‘th’s prominent political employment of Islam in the 1980s must not belie the fact, that it continuously expanded its mechanisms of control and repression against independent religious establishments and men or religion. The increasing involvement of both in the official propaganda brought them more publicity than before but the regime thoroughly restricted their material independence and aimed to prevent the establishment of state independent mosques or *takāyā*. The Islamist uprising in the early 1980s influenced this development as well. The security services, additionally, kept all mosques, shrines, and *takāyā* under close surveillance, dismissed, arrested, or assassinated oppositional shaykhs, imams, and preachers.

In 1980, the regime targeted once more the financial independence of religious institutions and broadened its legal measures for religious donations. The Ba‘th had gradually begun with the confiscation of donations of the major Shī‘ī shrines from 1969 onwards. With the outbreak of the war, the regime finally regulated in a centralising step the collection and administration of donations for all religious institutions through the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs itself, including mosques, religious schools (*madāris*), *takāyā*, and shrines.⁷⁵⁰ The respective law prescribed in detail the use of donations for the up keeping, servants’ wages, and restorations of the respective institutions but these steps nevertheless meant a further loss of material independence of religious institutions, including the Sufī shrines and *takāyā*.

Another source of income for religious institutions was the trading business. Still under the monarchy, many mosque endowments, for instance the Sultān ‘Alī mosque, were connected to several small shops in their surroundings. Those shops were mostly part of the family or charitable endowment – in the Sultān ‘Alī’s case the endowment of the *jalīs al-sajjāda* – and guaranteed the independent financing of costs related to the mosque. This system for a regular income was also widely used for the upkeep of Sufī *takāyā*.⁷⁵¹ The Ba‘th also targeted this base of material independence, for according to later Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-Tikrītī, the government completely prohibited such trading businesses in relation to mosques

⁷⁵⁰ Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs, Ḥawla tawzī‘ al-hadāyā.

⁷⁵¹ See for instance A‘ẓamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-Imām al-A‘ẓam*, 1964, 2:185–87.

in the 1980s.⁷⁵² The immense dimension of the state's centralising efforts following the gradual expansion and reorganisation of the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs in 1981 can be illustrated with an official statement in the newspapers. In 1983 Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs 'Abd Allāh Fāḍil 'Abbās stated the ministry's total supervision (*ishrāf tāmm*) over 1,852 out of 3,183 religious institutions in Iraq, and partial supervision over the rest.⁷⁵³

Apart from legal measures, control of religious institutions was gradually achieved with the help of the secret services. Joseph Sassoon, Aaron Faust, and Samuel Helfont show in their studies of internal Ba'ṯh files that the secret services began in the 1980s with a much closer surveillance of all religious groups due to the serious Islamist threat after the rise of Khomeynī in Iran and the growing activities of the Da'wa Party but also the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq. More than before, they kept all religious institutions under constant surveillance, Friday prayers in mosques, servants, imams, preachers, even all persons who regularly attended the mosque for prayer. Party members were advised to befriend religious leader figures in mosques in order to influence them and convince them to cooperate with the security apparatus. In the 1970s and early 1980s, large religious ceremonies and processions, particularly Shī'ī ones during the month Muḥarram, were often prohibited as they could not yet be easily controlled and carried the danger of mass protest.⁷⁵⁴ By the late 1980s, the regime seems to have infiltrated the Shī'ī scholarly circles in the south successfully and could thereby control such processions much better.⁷⁵⁵

Baram mentions the aim to tighten surveillance of all persons other than religious scholars with strong religious inclinations in a top-secret memorandum from the party's Bureau of the North Organization in 1980. The recommendations in the memorandum included the limitation of influence of the more outstanding elements among them and their attraction to the party and its activities. Persons with extremist religious orientations (*ittijāh dīnī mutaṭarrif*) who could not be won over were to be neutralised (*tahyīd*).⁷⁵⁶ Helfont and Faust reveal in their analyses of BRCC files that the regime even considered several times to expel the Shī'ī study circles (*ḥawza*) in

⁷⁵² Interview with 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-Tikrītī, 12.05.2016. He served as minister from 1993 until 2003.

⁷⁵³ Bengio, 'Iraq', 1985, 484.

⁷⁵⁴ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ṯh Party*, 223–24, 259–68; Faust, *The Ba'ṯhification of Iraq*, 135–36; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, chap. 2.

⁷⁵⁵ Faust, *The Ba'ṯhification of Iraq*, 188; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 85.

⁷⁵⁶ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 267–68.

Najaf altogether from the country during the 1980s. Simply afraid that the *hawza* would move to Iran, it decided to control and support it in its own revolutionary way, for instance by Arabising and Iraqising its student body.⁷⁵⁷

Several extreme examples make clear, that the regime did also not shy away from assassinating even the most prominent religious leaders. As mentioned earlier, state repression against the Shī'ī circles and particularly the Da'wa Party culminated in the murder of its ideological founding figure, Ayatollah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr together with his sister Āmina bint al-Hudā in April 1980. Their arrest and execution came in answer to a Da'wa assassination attempt against Foreign Minister Ṭāriq 'Azīz on the first day of that month.⁷⁵⁸ The murder of 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Badrī in 1969 has already demonstrated that Sufis, too, were targeted from time to time, when they openly opposed the regime, especially as members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1983, the regime poisoned also al-Badrī's former Sufi shaykh, the prominent reformist Naqshbandī shaykh Nāẓim al-'Āṣī in Kirkūk. Shaykh Nāẓim was part of the Allepian reformist Naqshbandīya-Shādhilīya network of shaykh Aḥmad al-Nabhān and is considered a "renewer of the Sufi movement" in Iraq (*mujaddid al-ḥaraka al-ṣūfīya*). He was most probably a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and assassinated for his resistance towards the Ba'th government and his pro-Khomeynī stance.⁷⁵⁹

The expansion of state control of religious institutions continued quite successfully, if 'Abd Allāh Fāḍil's numbers above are reliable. However, a generally growing demand of mosques, like in other Muslim regions, and many private construction projects, left still a possibility for independent space. It was generally quite difficult to open new state-independent religious institutions in Iraq under the Ba'th Party, mosques and *takāyā* alike. Yet, several instances show that this was not entirely impossible. Even Ba'thist politicians themselves founded their own private mosques. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī had several mosques attached to each of his private houses and Ṭāhir al-'Ānī founded his own mosque in Baghdad even though he became afterwards heavily criticised for it.⁷⁶⁰ Private persons, too, could succeed with such projects. One quite successful businessman from Sāmarrā' reported to me that he managed in 1984 the foundation of his own mosque in Baghdad against the regime's obstacles. He financed

⁷⁵⁷ Helfont, 'Saddam and the Islamists', 358; Faust, *The Ba'thification of Iraq*, 136–38.

⁷⁵⁸ Davis, *Memories of State*, 190–91.

⁷⁵⁹ 'Ubaydī, 'al-Ṭaṣawwuf fī l-'Irāq', 71–72. The Mosulite writer and historian Ibrāhīm Khalīl al-'Allāf listed him among the leader figures of the movement ('Allāf, 'Tā'rīkh wa-ḥāḍir jamā'at al-ikhwān al-muslimīn fī l-'Irāq').

⁷⁶⁰ See in Section 3.4.

the whole project out of his own pocket, remained the owner of the mosque, administered its affairs and payed himself the wages for its employees. The man was not a member of the Ba‘th Party and according to him, it was extremely difficult to get the official permission since the regime wanted to control all mosques. In the end, he succeeded through his personal connections to Minister ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil ‘Abbās. Yet, not even these personal relations prevented the constant surveillance of his mosque by the secret services. Once, so the businessman reported, the regime objected to the appointment of a certain imam which he had chosen for the mosque. The authorities forced him to drop the imam and to appoint a new one.⁷⁶¹

The foundation of new Sufi *takāyā*, finally, seems to have been easier. New *takāyā* were oftentimes founded independently from the ministry either as a separate building owned by a shaykh or as a room in the house of a shaykh’s deputy or another follower. The founder of a new *takīya* was generally obliged to apply for a security authorisation (*muwāfaqa amnīya*) from the government but this was not always the case. Apart from such official registrations, my interviews revealed that deputies (*khulafā*) and shaykhs of Sufi orders also tended to establish *takāyā* in their private houses.⁷⁶² In this way, they remained independent from the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs. Such private *dhikr* gatherings were also a way to avoid too much attention by the security apparatus and certainly more difficult to keep under surveillance.

As shown in this section, the Ba‘th regime continuously expanded its control of Iraq’s religious landscape during the 1980s. It publicly promoted Islam and loyal religious scholars in the political propaganda and restored religious sites all over Iraq, but it strove at the same time to control them all tightly. It attacked their financial independence, kept mosques and religious circles under surveillance and slowly infiltrated them, removed unreliable men of religion from their positions, or assassinated them in extreme cases. This repression struck all men of religion, Sunnī, Shī‘ī, Sufi, Christian, and others. Yet, the regime never managed to gain total control of the religious landscape as there remained also some independent mosques or *takāyā*. The religious communities also found certain ways to circumvent the state’s control and surveillance.

⁷⁶¹ Interview with ‘Abd Allāh Maḥmūd, a businessman from Sāmarrā’, 16.05.2016.

⁷⁶² Interviews with Nadīm al-Rāwī, 17.11.2015; ‘Iṣām al-Rāwī, 05.05.2016; and Dāwūd ‘Abd al-Razzāq, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Fallūja, 24.07.2016.

4.1.8. Conclusion

During the 1980s, the Ba‘th did still not promote Sufism as such but it commenced with its enormous religious war propaganda a new political course that enhanced the position of many loyal Sufis in Iraq tremendously and already foreshadowed the official revival of Sufism in the 1990s. By 1982, a certain Sufi religiosity had even reached the highest echelons of the regime, but the leadership outwardly rejected it as incompatible with party principles and dismissed some of the respective members. The dismissed members remained active in other minor fields whereas another criticised Ba‘thist with Sufi inclinations, namely ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil ‘Abbās, became minister of *awqāf* and an important figure in the regime’s religious policies. At the beginning of these religious policies stood a further reshuffle of the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs which implemented its task to spread a Ba‘th-aligned ecumenical Islam. It began with the large-scale restoration of mosques, shrines, and *takāyā* and contributed to a real renaissance of Sufi establishments throughout Iraq. The regime successfully recruited and co-opted religious Sufi scholars and shaykhs for its religious propaganda, granting them much more publicity than in the 1970s. Sufi scholars occupied leading positions in the ministry as well as in the Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness and pursued in this way successful careers under the Ba‘th. Section 4.2.3 will show that they also played central roles in the Ba‘thist religious education from the mid-1980s on. In addition, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself fully employed his descendancy from the Shī‘ī imams in politics, based on his Rifā‘ī Sufi genealogy. The implicit revival of particularly this Rifā‘īya heritage could confer an Iraq-specific authenticity to his shrine visitations as compared to his political predecessors. The traditions of the Rifā‘īya offered an already existing ecumenical Sunnī-Shī‘ī religious framework that Ṣaddām Ḥusayn could use for Ba‘thist policies. His right hand ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī turned at the same time into the Ba‘th’s religious specialist and cultivated an image of a pious Muslim within the regime. With him, the regime made a Sufi with close relations to many orders the figurehead of its religious propaganda. His religious turn on the political level foreshadowed his later role as leading Sufi patron of the Ba‘th during the 1990s.

4.2. The Sufis' Gradual Rise to Prominence

The eight-year-long Iran-Iraq War altered Iraq's society considerably and impelled the Ba'th regime to pursue an Islamic propaganda campaign that left a lasting imprint on Iraq's religious landscape. The Ba'th's aim merely was to appear outwardly Islamic whereas the events at the Ninth Regional Congress in 1982 still revealed an overt hostility towards religion within the party and the government. The previous chapter has shown that many Sufis and their mosques, shrines, and *takāyā* were strongly involved in this political campaign and benefitted from large-scale construction and restoration projects as well as from the public promotion of religious scholars and shaykhs. Even Ṣaddām Ḥusayn associated himself implicitly with the Sufis through his own sharīfian Sufi genealogy from the Rifā'iya. This chapter will turn to specific examples of important Sufi shaykhs and religious Sufi scholars who found in the context of the official religious war propaganda a welcoming climate in Baghdad. The Ba'th regime had an active share in creating this climate as it patronised certain orders and their rise out of a political calculus. It provided their *takāyā* the possibility to proliferate and offered new career opportunities for Sufi scholars in new state institutions of higher religious education. Ba'thist politics in the 1980s provided – despite a devastating war and the continuing repression of an authoritarian regime – the groundwork not only for a gradual religious but also for a Sufi revival in Iraq and the Ba'th's official promotion of Sufism that was yet to come in the 1990s. The following sections will present five specific cases which illustrate the gradual rise of the Sufis during the 1980s.

The first two sections depict the beginning of a renewed Sufi friendly climate in Iraq's capital with the concurrent relocation of three from among the most prominent Sufi shaykhs in Syria, Iran, and Iraq to Baghdad following the outbreak of the war. Two of them, namely Muḥammad 'Umar al-'Izzī al-Naqshbandī and Muḥammad 'Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī, fled Syria and Iran as political refugees but found in Baghdad a safe haven for the rest of the decade (4.2.1). The third relocation of Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī marked the transfer of his order's spiritual centre to Baghdad and the beginning of the Kasnazānīya's unparalleled expansion across the Arab regions of Iraq (4.2.2). In the third section the focus will switch from the Sufi orders to Iraq's religious Sufi scholars. Many *sharī'a*-minded Sufi scholars, particularly from the religious schools in Sāmarrā', Fallūja, and Ramādī, were hired for the new Ba'thist higher religious education of imams and preachers. From 1985

onwards, several of these Sufi scholars made successful careers in the Ba‘th’s new institutes and some of them even advanced into the highest political positions close to the leadership. The chronological order of this section will be broadened to include related developments in the following decade in order to show that this phenomenon continued until 2003 and laid the basis for a gradual rise of Sufism till the 1990s (4.2.3).

The final two sections focus on the Sufi literary production throughout the 1980s with two instances from among the Ba‘th’s recruited Sufi scholars and their ecumenical versions of Islam which complemented the Ba‘th’s religious propaganda. The Ba‘th regime needed and heavily relied on these scholars in order to realise its own vision of Islam. The first example is Fayḍī al-Fayḍī’s attempt to bridge Sufism, Salafism, and Wahhābism in his Magister thesis at Baghdad University. He represents a young generation of religious scholars from the environment of the Sāmarrā’ School who had received their complete education under the Ba‘th. His project reflects, inter alia, the growing influx of Wahhābī and Salafī literature into Iraq as a result of Saudi Arabia’s close relations with the country at that time and its massive financial support of the Ba‘th regime (4.2.4). The second example is a new trend of genealogical literature about Iraq’s tribes that began in the mid-1980s with Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī’s activity as genealogist. His and later books offered a geographical overview of sharīfian tribal clans across Iraq, contributed to the further promotion of Ṣaddām’s Rifā’ī origin, and brought new literary publicity for the country’s sharīfian Sufi clans. Above all, they implied the idea of a sharīfian unity among Iraq’s numerous Prophetic descendants. Based on the shared veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*, this unity purported to bypass ethnic and sectarian boundaries between Kurds, Arabs, Sunna, and Shī‘a (4.2.5).

4.2.1. Baghdad’s Safe Haven for Sufi Shaykhs

In 1980, two prominent Sufi shaykhs were forced by political circumstances to leave their home countries for Baghdad, namely Muḥammad ‘Umar al-‘Izzī al-Naqshbandī from the Syrian Dayr al-Zūr and Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī from the Iranian Durūd. Each of their cases is related to the political turmoil in the region that fully commenced in 1979, namely the Islamic revolution in Iran followed by the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War and the parallel armed uprising of Sunnī Islamist

groups against the Ba‘th regime in Syria between 1979 and 1982. In both cases, the Iraqi Ba‘th regime actively welcomed the Sufis mainly out of tactical considerations and granted them a safe haven in Baghdad over the following decade. Both of them contributed to the Ba‘th’s religious propaganda against Iran during the war and the latter even organised a Sufi militia for one or two years. The presence of these two shaykhs over the whole decade enhanced the city’s meaning as spiritual centre of Sufism considerably.

Muḥammad ‘Umar al-‘Izzī al-Naqshbandī was a prominent religious scholar and Sufi shaykh of international standing. From the 1950s onwards, he had served as *muftī* of the provinces al-Ḥasaka and Dayr al-Zūr and represented Syria as a member of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (*al-majlis al- a’lā li-l-shu’ūn al-islāmīya*) in Cairo. In 1970, he had started a successful political career and entered the Syrian parliament as representative for the governorate of Dayr al-Zūr. As a spiritual guide (*murshid*) of the Naqshbandīya, he had, additionally, cultivated a network of followers in Syria, Turkey and Egypt. During the Islamist uprising in Syria, however, his political fate began to turn due to his resistance against the government. As a participant in the uprising, he and his whole family were eventually forced to relocate permanently to Baghdad in 1980.⁷⁶³ His case was not an exception. The Syrian Asad regime’s harsh repression of the uprising which peaked in the massacre of Ḥamā in 1982, forced several prominent shaykhs under suspicion to take refuge abroad in order to escape arrests, torture, and assassinations.⁷⁶⁴ While others fled to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, or Kuwait, Muḥammad ‘Umar al-Naqshbandī chose Iraq. This choice can be explained, first of all, with his personal relation with the country. His father Aḥmad originally hailed from the sharīfian A‘rajī tribe in the region of Ḥawīja close to Kirkūk and ‘Umar himself had spent time as a religious disciple of Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris in the Kurdish village Biyāra from 1931 until 1938. There, he had become a deputy of shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī on the paths of the Naqshbandīya and the Qādirīya. This was not the last stay before his permanent relocation to Iraq. In Syria, first political conflicts with the local authorities erupted already in 1949 and forced him to take refuge in Baghdad for one year.⁷⁶⁵ During this year, he had won further personal networks among the local religious scholars and shaykhs who should have facilitated his establishment of a foothold there in 1980.

⁷⁶³ Sāmarrā’ī, *Majālis Baghdād*, 99–100.

⁷⁶⁴ Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*, 68–70.

⁷⁶⁵ Sāmarrā’ī, *Majālis Baghdād*, 98–99.

However, his eventual relocation would not have been possible without the permission of the Ba‘th regime, which became tactically more open to loyal religious scholars and shaykhs during the war. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn treated the shaykh reportedly with the highest hospitality, granted his family a residential house in Baghdad, and enabled him thereby to pursue his religious career permanently in Iraq.⁷⁶⁶ In exchange for this official support, the shaykh joined the regime’s religious propaganda. Henceforth, he publicly appeared during official celebrations of religious occasions such as the Prophet’s night journey and ascendancy to heaven (*al-isrā’ wa-l-mi‘rāj*) in 1982 as a special guest in the first row next to regime figures such as Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ and the Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs.⁷⁶⁷ Until the end of his life, Muḥammad ‘Umar established himself as a reknown religious scholar in Baghdad. Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī even dedicated a full chapter to him in his book about Baghdad’s most popular study circles at that time. Sāmarrā’ī himself visited these circles and counted the shaykh in his book among “the most learned scholars of our present age”.⁷⁶⁸ It is not certain if the shaykh’s stay in Baghdad had other political advantages for the Ba‘th than being a further welcome religious supporter of the regime’s new propaganda strategy. As an enemy of the Syrian regime and former member of parliament, he certainly constituted a valuable link to the Syrian Islamist opposition. Samuel Helfont has shown that the Iraqi Ba‘th regime actively approached particularly the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in order to instrumentalise it against the Asad regime.⁷⁶⁹ Even though there is no hard evidence, a role of Muḥammad ‘Umar al-Naqshbandī in such a context would be plausible.

In the second case of Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī (‘Uthmān II), too, a political advantage of his stay in Baghdad is apparent. The republican revolution in Iraq in 1958 and the parallel rise of the Communists had forced the shaykh to relocate permanently to Iranian Kurdistan for more than two decades. Yet, the Islamic revolution in 1979 and the political ascendancy of Ayatollah Khomeynī in Iran ended his privileged status there once more. As a former associate with the Pahlavi regime, he became soon a target of retaliation for the new political leaders. In the aftermath of the revolution, the shaykh demanded a general amnesty for all former supporters of the Shah, a halt of land confiscations, and the abandonment of Khomeynī’s central

⁷⁶⁶ ‘Izzī al-A‘rajī, ‘al-Sayyid al-shaykh Muḥammad ‘Umar’.

⁷⁶⁷ See for instance *al-Jumhūrīya* 25.03.1982, 6.

⁷⁶⁸ Sāmarrā’ī, *Majālis Baghdād*, 100.

⁷⁶⁹ Helfont, ‘Saddam and the Islamists’.

doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh*; but to no avail. The new regime forced him to return to Iraq again. Temporarily based in his home region Hawrāmān, the shaykh set up a minor Sufi militia, the Army of Liberation (*sepā-ye rizgārī*), led by his son Madīḥ against Khomeynī's forces in Iranian Kurdistan for one or two years. Shaykh 'Uthmān II himself reported that the group counted about a thousand men, mainly from Hawrāmān. According to Martin van Bruinessen, the establishment of this force was rather defensive in nature as the new Shī'ī regime threatened the very basis of his existence and social standing.⁷⁷⁰

The shaykh's influence and his militancy seem to have dwindled soon over the next two years, but he found an important ally in the Ba'ṯh regime. After the Islamic revolution, the political situation in Iranian Kurdistan had deteriorated into chaos due to the breakdown of central government control. Various warlords, tribal chiefs, parties and Kurdish independence movements, vying for power and influence, emerged to fill this political vacuum. A traditional religious leader like shaykh 'Uthmān II became attractive in this situation as an alternative authority and mediator to many peasants and landlords. Similar to other historical examples of Kurdish Sufi shaykhs, 'Uthmān II initially tried to defend his privileged status and influence by force. The Ba'ṯh regime in Iraq welcomed the shaykh's militia as one among many Kurdish irregular pro-government forces which supported the combat against Iranian troops in the early 1980s. It certainly encouraged the shaykh to fight against Khomeynī and reportedly became *Sepā-ye rizgārī*'s main provider of arms. After a few first clashes with the Iranian revolutionary guards, infighting erupted between *Sepā-ye rizgārī* and its regional rival, the Kurdish left-wing Komala party by which it was eventually defeated on Iranian soil. In the Iraqi Hawrāmān region, they came similarly under attack by Jalāl al-Ṭālabānī's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) which rebelled at that time against the Baghdad government and considered the shaykh as a collaborator who fought against Kurdish brothers.⁷⁷¹ Hence, the shaykh's power base also waned there and the *Sufi* militia gradually dissipated.

After a short stay in Hawrāmān, the shaykh himself took residence in Baghdad, probably due to the danger of the war and the growing hostility of Ṭālabānī's forces. Still after the dissolution of his militia, shaykh 'Uthmān II remained a valuable ally of

⁷⁷⁰ Bruinessen, 'The Naqshbandi Order', 1–3; Algar, 'The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya in Talish', 190–91.

⁷⁷¹ Bruinessen, 'The Naqshbandi Order', 1–3, 23–25; see also Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 335–36; McDowall, *A Modern History*, 355; Algar, 'The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya in Talish', 189–91.

the Ba‘th regime through his unbroken Sufi networks inside Iran and his continuing agitation and propaganda against Khomeynī from abroad. In 1982, he visited France for medical treatment and called for Khomeynī’s overthrow in brochures.⁷⁷² He sided with the Iraqi government until the end of the war, lending his religious authority for a Sunnī struggle against a Shī‘ī Iranian threat. Still in 1987, the London based *Ad Dastour (al-Dustūr)* published an interview with shaykh ‘Uthmān II in which he accused Khomeynī as the original instigator of the war backed by Zionist and colonial powers. He denounced Khomeynī’s Islamic revolution as directed against true Islam “as we know it from the holy Quran, the Prophetic biography and the *sharī‘a*”. According to him, Iran had already bombed Kurdish villages like Panjwīn and his hometown Ṭawīla near the Iranian border before the start of the war and killed some of his relatives there. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, on the contrary, had offered all possible means to solve the differences between the two countries peacefully. To bolster this position, he emphasised that many of his Naqshbandī Sufi followers (*murīdūn*), who visited him regularly from Iran, Turkey, and even the Soviet Union, expressed their annoyance and rejection of Khomeynī.⁷⁷³

The shaykh remained in Baghdad until 1989 or 1990, when the Turkish government permitted him to take up residence and establish a *khānqāh* on the outskirts of Istanbul for the last seven or eight years of his life.⁷⁷⁴ This permission needs to be seen in light of the Naqshbandī background of the Turkish ruling elite during the presidency of Turgut Özal from 1989 until 1993; a link that certainly facilitated the shaykh’s move. Turgut Özal came himself from a religious Naqshbandī family in Eastern Anatolia and was, together with his brother, a follower of the order. Already since his time as prime minister in 1983, he integrated the traditional networks of Sufis orders, kinship ties, and the mosque associations into modern urban society and promoted the Islamisation of the educational system. Under Özal, Islamic movements such as the Naqshbandīya, traditionally excluded from the state, were even encouraged to construct a more activist political consciousness.⁷⁷⁵ Apart from the pro-Naqshbandī climate in Turkey, the move could hint at an estrangement between the shaykh and the Ba‘th as it came notably after the notorious Anfal operations between 1986 and 1989 which left several

⁷⁷² Algar, ‘The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya in Talish’, 190.

⁷⁷³ *al-Dustūr* 02.02.1987, 20.

⁷⁷⁴ Algar, ‘The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya in Talish’, 190–91.

⁷⁷⁵ Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, 34, 75–76. They were followers of shaykh Mehmet Zahit Kotku of the Gümüşhanevi Naqshbandī order (Yavuz, 141–44).

thousand Kurdish residents in his home region dead, particularly in Biyāra's neighbouring village Halabja in 1988. However, he still returned from time to time to Iraq during the 1990s as for instance for the celebration of the Prophet's birthday together with Muḥammad 'Umar al-'Izzī al-Naqshbandī.⁷⁷⁶ Finally, with the parallel deaths of him and his brother, shaykh Mawlānā Khālīd in Sanandaj, the main Naqshbandī lineage of this clan came to an end. Neither one of them designated an official spiritual successor for the order.

How did the shaykh's stay in Iraq influence the further proliferation of the Naqshbandīya? Throughout his lifetime, shaykh 'Uthmān II remained the most venerated Naqshbandī shaykh in the region, but he does not seem to have pursued a vigorous expansion of the order. He authored a couple of books as well as poetry in Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish. Among his books are an incomplete collection of his correspondences, i.e. *Nāmihā wa-jawābīyehā*, an interpretation of Quran *sūra* ninety-five, *Tafsīr-i sūrat-i tīn*, the aforementioned *Sirāj al-qulūb*, as well as a collection of his poems, *Dīwān-i ash 'ār*.⁷⁷⁷ Several researchers who worked about his life observed a certain laxness in shaykh 'Uthmān II's role as Sufi shaykh. Hamid Algar summarised several observations of this kind: according to Bruinessen, "no special hours of spiritual instruction" were reserved for resident novices when he stayed in the *khānqāh* in Durūd and the shaykh was mostly absent during *dhikr* performances;⁷⁷⁸ Hakim found that the shaykh's discourses in Paris merely revolved around the deeds of his ancestors;⁷⁷⁹ Zarcone, eventually, noted the absence of distinctively Naqshbandī themes in his writings.⁷⁸⁰ Thus, Algar concludes that simple veneration of the shaykh's lineage became the defining element in the life of this particular Naqshbandī branch.⁷⁸¹ Having outlined the history of this family over the twentieth century, it seems that the Sufism in this family slowly faded with shaykh 'Uthmān II and the political turmoil of his time. It became gradually reduced to a mere Sufi heritage to legitimise social standing and privilege. Considering the shaykhs successive political alliances with the British mandate, the Iraqi monarchy, the Shah of Persia, and the Ba'th Party, the precedence to keep both of the latter rather than to spiritually guide and expand the order seems evident.

⁷⁷⁶ Mawlana Xalid, *Hezrehtī shaykh Muḥammad 'Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn (Baghdād)*, pt. 19:38.

⁷⁷⁷ My dear colleague Soraya Khodamoradi provided me with this information.

⁷⁷⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 241.

⁷⁷⁹ Hakem, 'La confrérie des Naqshbandis', 242.

⁷⁸⁰ Zarcone, 'Note sur quelques shaykh soufis Kurdes', 122.

⁷⁸¹ Algar, 'The Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya in Talish', 193.

Nevertheless, other Sirāj al-Dīn clan members uphold the Naqshbandī tradition until today. A grandson of shaykh ‘Umar Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn, shaykh Muḥammad Ma‘šūm al-Naqshbandī gained the permission for spiritual guidance and teaching from Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn and received an education in Islamic theology. Similar to shaykh ‘Uthmān II, he spent his life in Iranian Mahābād until 1979, migrated then to Iraq, for several years to Europe, and eventually relocated to Texas. In the United States, he worked for several years as the spiritual guide of the Naqshbandiyya Foundation for Islamic Education (NFIE). After his death in 2007, his son Dr. Ja‘far al-Naqshbandī became his spiritual heir and works nowadays as cosmetic surgeon in Arbīl.⁷⁸²

In the Arab regions of Iraq, new *takāyā* of the Naqshbandīya were indeed founded during the 1980s, for instance in Sāmarrā’, but the respective shaykhs trace their spiritual roots back to masters other than ‘Uthmān II such as ‘Abd Allāh Muṣṭafā al-Naqshbandī from Arbīl.⁷⁸³ The latter as well as the majority of the other most prominent Naqshbandī shaykhs of Iraq⁷⁸⁴ emerged as independent *murshidīn* of the Naqshbandīya and established, thus, independent growth centres of the order at large. Most of them trace their spiritual lineage back to one of the Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs in Biyāra, but these links originated mainly from the Sufī activity of the shaykhs ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn I, ‘Umar Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn, and Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn. Among the religious Sufī scholars in this study, I did not come across a spiritual lineage to shaykh ‘Uthmān II. This may be another evidence that he was busier preserving his given status in politically difficult times than expanding the order.

The examples of both Naqshbandī shaykhs show how political circumstances forced them to seek refuge in Baghdad where they became valuable allies of the Ba‘th regime. Both cases suggest that they were not particularly welcomed because they were Sufis, but rather because they were the enemies of the Ba‘th regime’s arch-enemies. As Sufi shaykhs, however, they contributed to the Ba‘th’s new religious propaganda campaign

⁷⁸² I owe this information to Annabelle Böttcher who stood in close contact to this family during her own research. For more information about shaykh Muḥammad Ma‘šūm al-Naqshbandī, see ‘Shaykh Muhammad Masum Naqshbandi’.

⁷⁸³ These were the first two *takāyā* of the Naqshbandīya in this town, founded by shaykh ‘Abbās Fāḍil al-Ḥasanī and shaykh Mūsā Āl Yāsīn Āl ‘Abd al-‘Aẓīm al-Ḥusaynī (Badrī al-Ḥusaynī, ‘al-Takāyā wa-l-ṭuruq’, 137–38).

⁷⁸⁴ The most important Naqshbandī shaykhs and scholars were certainly Muṣṭafā b. Abī Bakr Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Harshamī (1888–1986) and his son ‘Abd Allāh in Arbīl, Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Naqshbandī (1860–1920), Qāsim al-Qaysī (1876–1955), Muḥammad ‘Umar al-‘Izzī al-Naqshbandī (b. 1917/21) from Dayr al-Zūr, and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris (1901–2005) in Baghdad. A detailed list of the Sirāj al-Dīn deputies in the Arab regions is attached in the appendix.

and to Baghdad's prestige as spiritual Sufi centre in general. They were not merely two minor shaykhs but two of the most prominent Naqshbandī shaykhs, the latter even the most prominent shaykh in the whole region. Their presence, together with many other Sufi shaykhs of other orders, raised Baghdad's meaning as spiritual Sufi centre in the 1980s considerably.

4.2.2. *The Rise of the Kasnazānīya in Baghdad and the Rest of Iraq*

Two years after the arrival of the two Naqshbandī shaykhs, a third prominent Sufi shaykh relocated from Kirkūk permanently to Baghdad, namely Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī. His move may also have been influenced by the war and Iranian air strikes against Kirkūk in 1982, but it bears indeed stronger traces of the shaykh's expansion efforts. The move to Baghdad marked, in fact, the beginning of the order's unprecedented success story and massive expansion all over Iraq up to this day. Here too, the order's remarkable success could not have been accomplished without the permission of the Ba'ṯh regime in exchange for the shaykh's loyalty; a loyalty that had already been established in the mid-1970s when Muḥammad and his father had supported the regime with their men against Kurdish separatists. The paramilitary support of the Ba'ṯh regime and the political involvement of the Kasnazānī clan also remained during the Iran-Iraq War intact, for instance, with a brother of shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm commanding a paramilitary unit of their tribesmen as part of the National Defense Battalions. This longtime alliance lasted until the late 1990s and paved the way for the Kasnazānīya to become Iraq's most influential Sufi order which contributed tremendously to the Sufi revival a decade later.

Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī (b. 1938) succeeded his father in 1978 as single spiritual head of the order and fullfills this position quite successfully to this day. According to Muḥammad's own account, shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm designated him as spiritual successor a few days before his passing away during their last visitation of the family shrines in Karbajna.⁷⁸⁵ From then on, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm trod in his father's footsteps and continued the former's efforts to spread the order in Iraq throughout the 1980s, gathering new novices and establishing numerous *takāyā* during several round trips. The successful expansion of his order was also accompanied by quite extensive building and reconstruction efforts of its sanctuaries. As shown in

⁷⁸⁵ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 1.

Section 4.1.3, the shaykh's efforts were paralleled by the Ba'th's religious building and restoration campaign and its further expansion of state control over Iraq's religious landscape. This new dimension of Ba'thist state sponsorship for religious establishments should have facilitated if not benefitted shaykh Muḥammad's own projects. They could simply not have been possible without the state's approval. After the death of shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm, Muḥammad perpetuated him and the history of his family through the refurbishing of their architectural monuments. He rebuilt and enlarged the great mosque which his father had begun to build in Karbajna and added new calligraphic embellishments and furniture. The shrines of his father 'Abd al-Karīm and his forefather 'Abd al-Karīm Shāh al-Kasnazānī were covered with golden cages and became united under the rooftop of one larger, lavishly decorated, and domed building. Muḥammad rebuilt a mosque at the cave where his forefather Ṣulṭān Ḥusayn had gone into seclusion (*khalwa*) and founded three big *takāyā* for men and one *takīya* for women in Karbajna with several rooms for the families of pilgrims attached. The *takīya* in Kirkūk was enlarged as well and another *takīya* for women added, too.⁷⁸⁶

The most important step came with shaykh Muḥammad's move to Baghdad in 1982 and marked the beginning of the order's successful expansion in the Arab regions of Iraq. After his succession, shaykh Muḥammad went two times into spiritual seclusion (*khawla*) to fast and meditate, in 1978 and again in 1979. It was allegedly during these seclusions that he took the decision to relocate to the capital and purchased soon afterwards a plot of land in Baghdad's Quḍāt quarter (*ḥayy al-quḍāt*) next to the Dāwūdī quarter in the western part of the city. The area is located quite centrally and not too far from the presidential palace at the Tigris river. On this plot, the shaykh personally supervised the construction of the order's central and biggest *takīya* (*al-takīya al-ra'īsīya*) including a mosque. Upon its completion in 1982, he turned his house in Kirkūk into as *takīya* for the order and moved with his whole family into the house which was attached to the main *takīya* in Baghdad. This house remained their permanent residence for the next two decades to come. In the publications of the Kasnazānīya, this move is even used to put shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm into a further relation with 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, for it is emphasised that he was the first

⁷⁸⁶ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, 3–4.

shaykh of the order after Jīlānī who chose Baghdad as a permanent residence.⁷⁸⁷ Shaykh Muḥammad returned in this respect to the spiritual origin of the order.

The shaykh increased his tours for spiritual guidance (*irshād*) and preaching (*wa‘z*) to several Arab provinces and built several *takāyā* in Fallūja (Anbār), Tal‘afar (Nīnawā) and other smaller villages all over Iraq. The grand *takāyā* in Ramādī (Anbār) and Arbīl were enlarged during this period.⁷⁸⁸ The central Kasnazānīya complex in Baghdad served henceforth also as a public mosque for the Friday prayer with its own personnel including an imam and preacher (*khaṭīb*). A Kasnazānī complex of this dimension exists only in Baghdad and in the order’s centre in Sulaymānīya. Since the 1970s, the order also ran a religious school in Karbajna for a basic religious education in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), *sharī‘a*, the Prophet’s biography (*sīra*), and the Prophetic sayings (*ḥadīth*). The school had to be closed during the war but afterwards it was reopened in Sulaymānīya. Students could study there over a period of six months to one year and received a certificate after graduation which was not acknowledged by the state.⁷⁸⁹

The huge dimension of the order’s expansion is best illustrated by the number of *takāyā* which were built after shaykh Muḥammad’s succession. As shown in Section 2.1, Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī counted seventy-nine *takāyā* of the Rifā‘īya in Iraq and forty-eight of the Qādirīya in 1970. His lists were certainly far from complete but still reflect the orders’ presence in various provinces quite well. In contrast to these data, we find much higher even though sometimes contradictory numbers for the Kasnazānīya. ‘Ādil ‘Allāwī al-Nu‘aymī lists in his doctoral thesis about the order, *The Islamic Sufism in Iraq* (2014), 156 *takāyā* in Iraq.⁷⁹⁰ These are way more *takāyā* than the Rifā‘īya and Qādirīya had together in Sāmarrā’ī’s lists. The author himself is a Kasnazānī Sufi and used the data of the order’s central office as a source, his numbers should therefore be treated with some caution as they might be somewhat exaggerated. A closer look at the case of Sāmarrā’ reveals that some of his information might be flawed or he only listed the three central *takāyā* of the city in his thesis. Another Kasnazānī author, Yāsir Muḥammad al-Badrī mentions the establishment of two *takāyā* of the Kasnazānīya in Sāmarrā’ by deputies of shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm in the 1960s. After shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm’s takeover in 1978, the order

⁷⁸⁷ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, 4; Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 96.

⁷⁸⁸ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 3–4; Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 95–97.

⁷⁸⁹ Interview with Dāwūd ‘Abd al-Razzāq, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Fallūja, 13.11.2015.

⁷⁹⁰ Nu‘aymī, ‘al-Taṣawwuf al-islāmī’, 135–38. It should be noted, that ‘Ādil ‘Allāwī listed only three *takāyā* for Sāmarrā’. The reason for this difference remains obscure. Both authors are Kasnazānī Sufis themselves and have access to the orders central office.

reportedly built thirteen additional *takāyā* in and close to the city.⁷⁹¹ The official secretary of shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm, finally, assured me that the number of *takāyā* in the city would far exceed thirteen at present.⁷⁹² Wherever the truth lies between these numbers, the order proliferated successfully in almost all Iraqi provinces and it seems unlikely that other branches of the aforementioned Sufi orders experienced a similar heyday during these years. The following table lists the numbers of *takāyā*, according to ‘Ādil ‘Allāwī, in the different provinces of Iraq.

Province	Number of <i>takāyā</i>
Baghdad	23
Anbār	30
Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn	26
Nīnawā	17
Tā’ mīm	8
Diyālā	11
Arbīl	14
Sulaymānīya	8
Dohūk	5
Bābil	6
Karbalā’	2
Wāsiṭ	1
Muthannā	1
Nāṣirīya	1
Baṣra	3

Table 7: *Takāyā of the Kasnazānīya (1980s and 1990s)*

Apart from the order’s regions of origin in the Kurdish north of Sulaymānīya, Tā’ mīm, and Arbīl, it spread most successfully in the Arab dominated areas of central Iraq, i.e. Anbār, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Baghdad, Nīnawā, and Diyālā. It even managed to establish *takāyā* in the Shī‘ī south, i.e. Bābil, Karbalā’, Wāsiṭ, Muthannā, Nāṣirīya, and Baṣra.⁷⁹³ There had already been *takāyā* of the order in these Arab regions under shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm, but this vast network of institutions has only been achieved under shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm in the decades after the building of his spiritual center in Baghdad in 1982.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹¹ Badrī al-Ḥusaynī, ‘al-Takāyā wa-l-ṭuruq’, 134–35.

⁷⁹² Correspondence with the secretary, 11.04.2018.

⁷⁹³ More about the Kasnazānīya’s and Rifā‘īya’s ecumenical outlook and attraction of Shī‘īs among their members will follow in Section 5.2.6.

⁷⁹⁴ Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 97. During the 1990s, deputies of the shaykh spread the order even further to Sudan, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, some states of the former Soviet Union, the United States, Germany, as well as Romania.

The remarkable success of the Kasnazānīya can partially be explained through political patronage by the state but also partially through the order's high emphasis on gaining new followers and its ecumenical outlook. As early as the 1970s, the Kasnazānīya had closer relations with the Ba'ṯh leadership. Ṣaddām's right hand, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī has been a follower of the order since his youth and became its highest-ranking patron. As shown in Section 4.1.6, he turned into the regime's foremost religious propagandist during the 1980s and may have promoted the order in his new role. Already in the 1970s, shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm and his son had fought for the Ba'ṯh against Bārzānī's rebels and this relationship seems to have continued during the Iran-Iraq War.⁷⁹⁵ Similar to shaykh 'Uthmān II, the Kasnazānīya, too, maintained Sufi networks in Iranian Kurdistan. The Ba'ṯh had instrumentalised already the former's networks as a clandestine Sunnī bridgehead behind the frontline. Even though hard evidence could not be found in this study, there are lots of rumours that also the shaykh himself led a militia in support of the Ba'ṯh regime in the early years of the war.⁷⁹⁶ The Iraqi newspapers prove at least that several members of his clan were politically active under the Ba'ṯh as candidates (*murashshaḥūn*) for the National Council (*al-majlis al-waṭanī*) during the 1980s. The election lists for Sulaymānīya in 1980 include a first-cousin of shaykh Muḥammad, Ṭāhir Ḥusayn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kasnazānī who worked as director (*mudīr*) of the local *awqāf* department as well as 'Alī Ḥusayn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī, the district president (*qā'im-maqām*) of Banjwīn close to the Iranian border.⁷⁹⁷ Still in 1989, 'Alī appears in the election lists of Sulaymānīya together with a brother of shaykh Muḥammad, Helkūrd 'Abd al-Karīm 'Abd al-Qādir al-Kasnazānī. 'Alī served by then in his third term as member in the Ba'ṯh's Legislative Assembly of the autonomous Kurdish region.⁷⁹⁸ These election lists of Kurdistan were always full of influential tribal leaders who served with their men as commanders (so-called *mustashārūn*) of the National Defense Battalions (*afwāj al-difā' al-waṭanī*).⁷⁹⁹ The aforementioned Kasnazānīs were no exception. The newspapers explicitly

⁷⁹⁵ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 327; Shourush, 'The Religious Composition', 119. See also Section 3.2.5.

⁷⁹⁶ Wong, 'Sufis Under Attack' Wong quotes here Martin van Bruinessen; Jannābī, 'Asrār amām al-sha'b'. Martin van Bruinessen confirmed the existence of this militia also in one of our correspondences, 06.06.2015.

⁷⁹⁷ *al-Jumhūrīya* 16.06.1980, 7.

⁷⁹⁸ *al-Jumhūrīya* 12.03.1989, 7; 20.03.1989, 5; 30.03.1989, 13.

⁷⁹⁹ The battalions were mostly recruited from the biggest Kurdish tribes such as the Jāf who had several battalions, but with the ongoing war also smaller ones formed single units. The army leadership appointed three military officers from the Iraqi army to each battalion and the tribal chiefs served as counselors (*mustashārūn*) who controlled and commanded the whole unit (Khazrajī, *al-Ḥarb al-irāqīya-al-irānīya*, 328).

mention in the case of ‘Alī his participation in the war (*fī Qādisīyat Şaddām*) in addition to his material support through the donation of money and gold.⁸⁰⁰ Helkūrd appears as commander (*mustashār*) of the eighty-third battalion (*fawj*) in the lists of alleged perpetrators who participated in the notorious Anfal operations in 1987 which cost the lives of thousands of Kurds.⁸⁰¹ Thus, the Kasnazānīs had established a political longtime alliance with the regime which should have also facilitated the spread of the order.

Noorah al-Gailani presents another episode which illustrates how powerful the order had become through the backing of the regime. The incident which she describes revolves around Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm’s presentation of a new gold-plated cage to the shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in 1983 with permission of the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs.⁸⁰² According to Gailani, the present was unwelcome and aroused the indignation of the Gailānī family who interpreted it as an attempt to gradually take over the custodianship of the shrine. In order to avoid a crisis between the Sufī orders and afraid of the shaykh’s political backing, the Gailānīs resorted to a trick and ordered immediately a new silver cage in Pakistan claiming that such a one was already in the process of being manufactured there. In the meantime, the Gailānīs accepted shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm’s gift until the new cage was ready. The Kasnazānī cage was removed from the Kīlānīya in 1987 and installed again at the shrine of the saint’s son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Jīlānī in the Kurdish ‘Aqra. The whole episode led allegedly to a permanent estrangement between both Sufī clans.⁸⁰³ It may provide a glimpse of how the Ba‘th could influence and possibly alter Iraq’s Sufī landscape through its state patronage.

State patronage was certainly an important factor which offered a considerable degree of support, freedom of action, and other privileges for the order’s growth but it cannot serve as the only explanation for its tremendous success. It cannot account for the order’s attractiveness among Iraqis, even beyond the demise of the Ba‘th Party. This attractiveness is, at least partially, guaranteed through certain religious characteristics of the Kasnazānīya, which would deserve a separate study. These special characteristics which distinguish the order from others in Iraq are its high emphasis on

⁸⁰⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 20.03.1989, 5.

⁸⁰¹ Sulaymān, ‘Tāwānbār ū tomatbārakānī dosyay anfāl’. The author took his information from Dibagayyi, ‘*Isiklopidiyāy tāwānakānī anfāl ū jinosāidkrdnī galī bāshūrī Kurdustān* (*The Encyclopedia of the Crimes of Anfal and Kurdsides of the Nation of South Kurdistan*)’.

⁸⁰² Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 3–4; Ḥusayn and Fattūhī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 95–97.

⁸⁰³ Gailani, ‘The Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’, 373–75.

missionary activities among its members, its forms of advertisement, and its general ecomenical outlook. Most Kasnazānīs whom I met stressed that the order attaches strong importance to missionary activities (*da'wa*) of all its members, not just the shaykh himself and his deputies (*khulafā'*) but also all other followers.⁸⁰⁴ They are constantly obliged to find and introduce new followers and associate this strongly with the concept of spiritual guidance (*irshād*).⁸⁰⁵ The shaykh's own strong interest in *irshād* is seen as an embodiment of Prophet Muḥammad's saying "Irshād is the most significant religious practice⁸⁰⁶ in Islam" (*al-irshād a'ẓam 'ibāda fī l-Islām*). Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm himself undertook several spiritual guidance campaigns throughout several provinces in Iraq in order to preach to the people, appoint many new deputies, and open new *takāyā*.⁸⁰⁷

The Kasnazāniya also pays a lot of attention to advertisement on a literary but more importantly on a performative level. The shaykh's publication activity began in the late 1980s with a first programmatic book about the order, its history, and its teachings, as well as with an edition of a manuscript of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.⁸⁰⁸ Section 5.2.6 will show that this activity further increased in the 1990s when the order specifically aimed to recruit more prolific writers among its followers for its spiritual cause. Another quite effective form of advertisement through which the order gained enormous fame in Iraq is the extensive use of miracle performances during *dhikr* sessions and other public religious occasions. Performances such as the perforation of the body with swords and skewers (*ḍarb al-sayf/al-shīsh*) are generally widespread among Iraq's Sufis, particularly the Rifā'iya. Yet, the Kasnazāniya surpassed other orders in this regard with its publicly effective use of a whole variety of different miracle performances which the order subsumes under the term *dirbāsha*. Aside from the perforation of body parts, these include cutting the tongue with knives, hammering daggers into the skull, snakebites, fire-eating, shooting through the marginal parts of

⁸⁰⁴ One of my informants originally was a Christian from Baghdad. He joined the Kasnazāniya and converted to Islam through a university friend who happened to be a follower of the shaykh in 1982. In later years, both became deputies (*khulafā'*) of the shaykh (Interview with Bakr 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, a deputy of the Kasnazāniya from Baghdad, 25.10.2014).

⁸⁰⁵ In the official interviews, the missionary activity was stressed by Bakr 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, a deputy of the Kasnazāniya from Baghdad, 25.10.2014 and deputy B of the Kasnazāniya from Fallūja, 13.11.2015.

⁸⁰⁶ The Arabic term *'ibāda* literally means submissiveness to a master and refers to religious practices, similar to a cult, which concern the relationship between the believer and God. Its opposite, the term *mu'āmalāt*, refers, in turn, to the relationship between the believers themselves (Bousquet, 'Ibādāt').

⁸⁰⁷ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 3; Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 97.

⁸⁰⁸ The book is the already cited *al-Taṣawwuf: Anwār al-raḥmānīya fī l-ṭarīqa al-qādirīya al-kasnazānīya* from 1988, (Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*). The edition is named Clarification of the Mind (*Jalāl al-khātīr*) and mentioned in: Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-'alīya*, last page.

the belly with rifles and so on and so forth. Later publications of the order in the 1990s lavishly present these performances in lots of coloured photos.⁸⁰⁹

The heavy stress on such miracle performances seems peculiar with regard to the growing modernisation of society and the successful spread of Salafi ideas and a stronger orientation towards the Quran and *sunna* all over the Islamic world in the twentieth century. Secularist voices against such performances as pure charlatanism were as widespread as Salafi criticism against them as un-Islamic magic. The Kasnazānīya received such criticism as well, beginning in the 1980s but more intensively in the 1990s when Wahhābī tendencies in Iraq became more influential. Already shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm’s first publication in 1988 reflects this when he explicitly defends the order’s religious exercises against “opponents” (*mu’taridūn*) in his book.⁸¹⁰ A later publication in the 1990s bears evidence of an even stronger *sharī’a*-mindedness and tries painstakingly to trace the orders teachings and rituals back to the Quran and the Prophetic Tradition.⁸¹¹ In the end, the Kasnazānīya managed to successfully combine the traditional *sharī’a*-mindedness of the Qādirīya with rather unorthodox practices of miracle performances.

The last factor which facilitated the Kasnazānīya’s success is its ecumenical outlook which bears some resemblance to the Ba’th’s ideal vision of an ecumenical Islam between Sunna and Shī’a. It should thereby have been attractive for the agenda of the regime. The order’s ecumenical approach will be analysed in more detail in Section 5.2.6, but I will mention its basic features already here shortly. Similar to the Rifā’īya in Section 2.6, the Kasnazānīya tried to address the Shī’a with the common veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*, the visitation of their shrines, and the celebration of Shī’ī religious occasions such as the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn on ‘*āshūrā*’. It not only considered all four Sunnī schools of law as equally valid but also the Shī’ī (*ja’farī*) school of law. As shown above, the order managed with such an approach to open several *takāyā* in the provinces of the Shī’ī south and, as will be seen later, even to win over Shī’ī members. The Kasnazānīya equally tries to reach out to Christians in Iraq through the use of Christian symbolism and the veneration of Jesus, yet, with the opposite intention to convert them to Islam.

⁸⁰⁹ See in Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya*; Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *Al-Bārāsīkūlūjīyā*.

⁸¹⁰ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 199–200.

⁸¹¹ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya*.

To sum up, the Ba‘th’s intensive religious war propaganda, its increasing religious concessions, and patronage of certain Sufi orders provided a new, more open, and welcoming climate for Sufi shaykhs such as the aforementioned Naqshbandīs and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī. Despite the hardships of the war, they managed to establish themselves and to proliferate their orders in this new religious climate, sometimes seemingly in competition with other orders. Kurdish shaykhs who fought for the regime had received already since the 1970s more privileges than others and this patronage further increased during the Iran-Iraq War when even more paramilitary units were needed. Particularly the Kasnazānīya rose in these years to the most widespread and successful order in Iraq. On the one hand, this can be explained through those Sufis’ services in the religious war propaganda, political alliances or the active support of the regime in combat, but in the case of the Kasnazānīya, on the other hand, also through its ecumenical outlook which was so important during the war. The Ba‘th should have welcomed the Sufi ecumenism between Sunna and Shī‘a and could use it for its own ecumenical vision of a national Islam in Iraq.

4.2.3. *Sharī‘a-Minded Sufis in the New Ba‘thist Higher Religious Education*

Aside from the Sufi orders, religious Sufi scholars, too, gained new career opportunities during the 1980s, especially with the the foundation of the Ba‘th’s own higher religious institutes to prepare a new generation of modern Muslim scholars from 1985 onwards. Many Sufi scholars and graduates from the religious schools in Sāmarrā’, Ramādī, and Fallūja became gradually recruited as staff for the new Ba‘thist institutions. Their *sharī‘a*-minded Sufi Islam influenced the higher religious education in Iraq thereby already in the 1980s, before the Ba‘th fully embraced and propagated Sufism a decade later. The regime’s first prominent project of higher religious education was the foundation of the Higher Islamic Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers in 1985. In 1989 followed the Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies, and in the 1990s the Ṣaddām Higher Institutes for the Study of the Blessed Quran and the Prophet’s Esteemed Sunna both of which will be analysed in Section 5.1.3. The focus of this section will mainly be the first institute. According to an estimation by a former head of the Ba‘th Party’s Baghdad branch, about half of the teaching staff at all three higher institutions had a pro-Sufi attitude or were Sufis

themselves.⁸¹² Due to the lack of sufficient information about the whole staff in all institutions, this estimation can hardly be verified. Nevertheless, this section aims to provide a first insight into the Sufi influence of the first institute as far as it could be established during my research.

Up to now, researchers have interpreted all of these Ba‘thist institutions merely as further institutional steps to destroy the independence of religious establishments in Iraq. Ofra Bengio estimated with regard to the Higher Islamic Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers that “this institution, whose curriculum was to be decided by pro-government men of religion, fitted into the policy of systematically destroying the autonomous power of religious institutions.”⁸¹³ Amatzia Baram similarly interpreted this and the other institutions as breeding grounds for Ṣaddām’s “own Islamic clones” with whom he planned to populate Sunnī religious institutions.⁸¹⁴ These interpretations are correct in the sense that all the new institutes were part of the state’s Ba‘thisation of religious education and the control of Iraq’s religious landscape at large. However, previous research missed to consider who the religious scholars in these new institutions actually were and which background they had. The fact, that many of them represented Iraq’s traditional Sunnī Sufi scholars has not yet been considered. During the war, the state needed especially them to counter what it termed “deviating trends”, i.e. Khomeynī’s Shī‘ī Islamism and, only later in the 1990s, Wahhābism. The Ba‘th needed a religious middle path that was compatible with its secular outlook, but it could not invent a Ba‘thist Islam out of the blue. Therefore, it had to recruit religious scholars with a certain standing and influence. This is exactly what happened in the Higher Islamic Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers. The collected information about this institute and its foundation show that a considerable part of *sharī‘a*-minded Sufi scholars played central roles in it.

The Ba‘th regime’s ideological preparations for the foundation of the higher institute commenced in the early 1980s and indicates a clear dominance of secular party principles. After the ideological promotion of men of religion as soldiers at the front in 1983, the regime once more assigned to them a central role in society. The newspapers presented “the man of religion” in 1984 as an intellectual, social, and

⁸¹² Interview with Ḥaytham ‘Abd al-Qādir, a former Ba‘thist, 18.05.2016.

⁸¹³ Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1986, 469.

⁸¹⁴ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 265.

pedagogical leader (*qā'id*) in addition to his previous role as “traditional civil servant” (*muwazzaf taqlīdī*). The Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs, ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil explained in an interview with *al-Jumhūrīya* the ministry’s new approach to form a modern man of religion for the new Ba‘thist society. The vision he presented was clearly a progressive one with a strong concern about contemporary society and Ba‘thist ideology. According to his words, this ideal modern man of religion had to understand the development of society according to the principles of the revolution and must never contradict them. He should be, furthermore, open-minded for the contemporary modern spirit and concerned with the problems of modern society.⁸¹⁵

With its campaign, the ministry sought to foster religious scholars in their fundamental role to spread Islamic principles and to pedagogically and morally guide the citizens. As an ultimate aim, ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil even advocated a revival of the mosque’s influence in the life of Iraqis as it was at the time of the messenger of God and his successors (*khulafā'*). He openly defined the ideological tasks of men of religion against unwanted Islamic trends. They had to clarify the true meanings of Islam and to counter foreign religious sectarian, racist, and reactionary propaganda (*da'wāt ṭā'ifiya wa-'unṣuriya wa-raja'iya*). The article explicitly singled out the Khomeynī regime in Iran as originator of this propaganda and denounced its religious principles as unlawful innovations (*bida'*) and errors (*ḍalālāt*).⁸¹⁶

In order to form such a modern man of religion, the ministry organised, for the first time, a preparatory study course (*dawra taṭwīrīya*) for twenty-five imams and preachers from different mosques in Baghdad in 1984. This course was a first test before the mentioned Higher Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers was founded at the Sunnī Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty in 1985. It was organised in Baghdad’s Āṣifiya mosque under the direction of shaykh Shākir al-Badrī.⁸¹⁷ Shākir had already been director (*mudīr*) of the Āṣifiya college since 1970. As a former student at the most prestigious Islamic University in the Arab world, al-Azhar, he was at that time one of the most respected Sunnī scholars in Iraq and certainly a good choice for the advertisement and implementation of this course. Having additionally been a student of the Sufis Dāwūd al-Naqshbandī and Qāsim al-Qaysī as well as of the Salafi ‘Abd

⁸¹⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 24.04.1984, 4.

⁸¹⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 24.04.1984, 4.

⁸¹⁷ *al-Jumhūrīya* 24.04.1984, 4.

al-Karīm al-Šā‘iqa, Shakir al-Badrī certainly combined a Sufi inclination with a strong orientation towards the Quran and the Tradition of the Prophet.⁸¹⁸ His course offered religious, cultural, and language classes which encompassed topics like *ḥadīth*, religious duties (*farā‘id*), dogma (*‘aqā‘id*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), inflection (*ṣarf*), grammar (*naḥū*) and general culture (*thaqāfa ‘āmma*). As an important part of the campaign to raise religious awareness, the participants also studied the party’s view on and stance towards religion, heritage, and the religious question in general. These issues were taught according to the outlines in the central report of the Ninth Regional Party Congress from 1982 as well as with Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s essays, in which he had clarified that the party stood always on the side of faith and against heresy (*ilhād*).⁸¹⁹ Sufism was not a separate subject in this programme, but Shākir al-Badrī’s religious school provided a Sufi-friendly environment.

It is difficult to estimate how many of the students actually shared a religious Sufi outlook but, significantly, the Iraqi press presented a Sufi in the official announcement of the whole programme. *Al-Jumhūrīya* published an interview with one of the first participants in the course and ideal future “modern man of religion”: the imam of the Ḥārithīya mosque in Baghdad’s al-Karkh quarter, Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sāmarrā’ī.⁸²⁰ Like many of the aforementioned Sufi scholars, Bakr hailed from the al-Bū ‘Abbās tribe of Minister ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil and had succeeded his father as imam of the Ḥārithīya mosque in 1979. Already his father ‘Abd al-Razzāq had himself been a religious scholar and graduate from the Sāmarrā’ School, who “sympathised with the Sufi path and loved the pious” (*yamīl ilā al-ṭarīqa al-ṣūfīya wa-maḥabban li-l-ṣāliḥīn*).⁸²¹ Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq followed in the footsteps of his father and became himself attracted to the Sufism of the Qādirīya. Much later in the mid-1990s he made a successful career as imam and Friday preacher in the Kīlānīya.⁸²² In the latter, he gained a certain popularity with the broadcasting of his Friday sermon in February 2003 in which he incited the believers with a drawn sword to holy war against the American and British invaders.⁸²³ In the mentioned interview, Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq talked about the general culture (*al-thaqāfa al-‘āmma*) classes, which discussed the

⁸¹⁸ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 249–52.

⁸¹⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 24.04.1984, 4.

⁸²⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 24.04.1984, 4.

⁸²¹ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Sāmarrā’*, 83–84; Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 372.

⁸²² ‘Abd Allāh, *Dalīl al-ḥaḍra al-qādirīya*, 58.

⁸²³ montherabee, ‘Akhar khuṭba’.

educational, social and cultural role of men of religion in the climate of hostile attacks against “our region” by the Iranian enemy. He stressed that men of religion had to raise and maintain a spirit of zeal (*ḥamās*), self-abandonment (*indifā*), and courage (*shujā‘a*) among the people.⁸²⁴

After the official opening of the institute in 1985, prominent *sharī‘a*-minded Sufis continued to play leading roles among its staff until 2003. At least eight of them were religious scholars and graduates from the Sāmarrā’, Fallūja and Ramādī Schools, namely Ḥamad ‘Ubayd al-Kubaysī, Mukhliṣ al-Rāwī, ‘Abd al-Malik and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa‘dī, Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Ṭaha, Hāshim Jamīl, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-‘Ānī, and, later in the 1990s, Fayḍī al-Fayḍī. Ḥamad ‘Ubayd al-Kubaysī was originally from Anbār province and a disciple of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālīm al-Sāmarrā’ī in Fallūja. He had received a doctoral degree from al-Azhar in Cairo and worked as lecturer at Baghdad and Mustanṣiriyya Universities before his appointment as dean (*‘amīd*) of the Higher Islamic Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers.⁸²⁵ Mukhliṣ al-Rāwī has been introduced in Section 2.5 as great-grandson of shaykh Ṭaha al-Rāwī and disciple of Aḥmad al-Rāwī at the Sāmarrā’ School. He taught there himself as teacher until 1975 and worked afterwards as imam in Baghdad until his appointment at the new institute.⁸²⁶ ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa‘dī, as mentioned earlier, was imam and preacher in Ramādī’s great mosque from 1966 onwards, deputy president of the religious scholars’ union (*rābiṭat al-‘ulamā’*) in Ramādī until 1979 and became its president in 1993. Next to various other teaching positions, he was appointed as lecturer (*muḥāḍir*) and later assistant professor (*ustādh musā‘id*) at the higher institute from 1986 until 2001.⁸²⁷ His brother ‘Abd al-Razzāq began likewise in 1986 as lecturer (*mudarris*) for Arabic language and *sharī‘a* until 2003. From 1990 until 2003, ‘Abd al-Razzāq was additionally a member of the institute’s board (*majlis*) where he took part in the decision making about curricula and staff.⁸²⁸

Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Ṭaha (b. 1931) hailed from the al-Bū Darrāj tribe in Sāmarrā’ and had studied at the Sāmarrā’ School under Aḥmad al-Rāwī and Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb, and later on in the Kīlānīya under ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris. He held several posts as

⁸²⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 24.04.1984, 4.

⁸²⁵ Dulaymī, *Ākhar al-maṭāf*, 66.

⁸²⁶ Sāmarrā’ī, *Irshād al-Rāwī*, 15.

⁸²⁷ Sa‘dī, ‘al-Sīra al-dhātīya’.

⁸²⁸ Sa‘dī, ‘al-Sīra al-dhātīya’, 5 March 2009; Ḥusayn, Qānūn al-ma‘had al-islāmī al-‘ālī li-‘dād al-a’imma wa-l-khuṭabā’ raqm (98) li-sanat 1985, sec. 4.

teacher in the Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty and as teacher and imam in Sāmarrā’ until his appointment as lecturer in the higher institute in 1987, later on as assistant professor, and finally professor.⁸²⁹ Hāshim Jamīl (b. 1941) came from Fallūja and had studied there under ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālim as well as under Aḥmad al-Rāwī and Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb in Sāmarrā’. He, too, completed his academic education at al-Azhar, and took up a post at the Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty. From the mid-1980s on, he taught at the higher institute and became later a member of its board of trustees.⁸³⁰

Late in 1997 and 1999, the higher institute became converted together with the Ṣaddām Center for the Reading of the Holy Quran into the Ṣaddām Faculty for the Preparation of Imams, Preachers and Missionaries (*Kullīyat Ṣaddām li-i‘dād al-a‘imma wa-l-khuṭabā’ wa-l-du‘āh*). With this step, the regime gave, for the first time, permission to establish further branches of the new institute in all other Iraqi provinces. The newly merged faculties consisted of two departments, one for mission and preaching and one for studies of the Quran and *ḥadīth*. Article three of the law for the faculties explicitly defined the education there as far from confessional extremism (*ghulū madhhabī*) and sectarian fanaticism (*ta‘aṣṣub ṭā’ifi*), i.e. at that time Wahhābism and Salafism.⁸³¹ In the Baghdad faculty, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-‘Ānī (1945-2009⁸³²) joined the Sa‘dī brothers as lecturer (*muḥāḍir*) from 1998 until 2003. He, too, was a graduate of the Āṣifiya school in Fallūja and had studied under ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālim al-Sāmarrā’ī and ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa‘dī and under ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris in the Kīlānīya. Similar to his colleagues, he had earned a bachelor from the Imam al-A‘ẓam Faculty in 1976, a magister at the *Sharī‘a* Faculty of al-Azhar University in 1982 and finally a doctor at the Faculty for Islamic Sciences of Baghdad University. He made a successful career in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs during the 1980s, as a member in its fatwa committee (*lajnat al-iftā’*) and deputy of the Iraqi *mufī* (*nā’ib mufī al-diyār al-‘irāqīya*). Among his previous teaching posts between 1993 and 2003 were positions as lecturer (*muḥāḍir*) at the Faculty for Islamic Sciences of Baghdad University from

⁸²⁹ Later in 1995, he seems to have had a fallout with the regime which reportedly ordered his official retirement and a general prohibition of any religious activities against him, particularly for his public opinion on consolation ceremonies, graves, and feasts of rejoicing (*al-ta‘āzi wa-l-maqābir wa-l-afrah*). Further details could not be found (Sāmarrā’ī, *Tārīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 75–76; for his later biography, see his official Facebook website, Ṭaha, ‘al-Shaykh al-duktūr Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Ṭaha’).

⁸³⁰ ‘Ānī, ‘al-‘Allāma al-faqīh d. Hāshim Jamīl’.

⁸³¹ Ḥusayn, *Qānūn kullīyat Ṣaddām li-i‘dād al-a‘imma wa-l-khuṭabā’ wa-l-du‘āh* raqm 19 li-sanat 1997, paras 1, 3, 8.

⁸³² One interviewee reported that he died in 2012 (Interview with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba‘thist, 04.05.2016).

1993 to 1997 and in the Kīlānīya. In all these teaching positions, ‘Abd al-Qādir specialised and taught next to jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and its principles (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) explicitly in Sufism.⁸³³ The Qādirī shaykh Fayḍī al-Fayḍī, finally, was the youngest disciple of the aforementioned Sufis and became in the late 1990s dean of the faculty in Mosul. Fayḍī had worked throughout his career as director of the Islamic secondary Ḥadbā’ school and as lecturer in the Imam al-A‘ẓam faculties in Mosul and Baghdad. In both cities he had preached the Friday sermon in several mosques and founded a branch of the Society for Islamic Morals (*jam‘īya al-ādāb al-islāmīya*) for Islamic education as well as several other religious study centres. Fayḍī was a member in the Scholarly Council of the Directorate of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs in Nīnawā as well as in its Council of Directors (*majlis al-mudarā’*).⁸³⁴

All the aforementioned teachers in the new Ba‘thist institutes between 1985 and 2003 shared the same scholarly Sufi background and an orientation towards a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism. This Sufi inclination should have been very welcome to educate new imams and preachers in opposition to the mentioned extremist trends. For sure, Minister ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil ‘Abbās, who served from 1982 until 1993, did not approve of these teachers for the Ba‘th’s new modern men of religion randomly. As he was himself a follower of the Qādirīya and Sāmarrā’ian of origin, he was certainly familiar with the Sāmarrā’ School, its offshoots and its scholarly tradition and encouraged it in this way.

In addition to this shared Sufi outlook, the factor of kinship should also be considered. All aforementioned religious scholars who made successful careers within the Ba‘thist religious institutions originally hailed from Anbār or Sāmarrā’ or had strong ties to the religious schools there. Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī, the Sa‘dī brothers, Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sāmarrā’ī and Minister ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil al-Sāmarrā’ī all shared the same tribal origin from the al-Bū ‘Abbās in Sāmarrā’. Shākir al-Badrī had tribal ties to Sāmarrā’. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ānī was born, like the Sa‘dī brothers, in Hīt and, similar to Fayḍī al-Fayḍī, a student of ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa‘dī. These kinship and scholarly network relations certainly played a role in the regime’s choice of religious scholars

⁸³³ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 415; Ālūsī, ‘al-Sīra al-dhātīya wa-l-‘ilmīya li-l-dukhtūr ‘Abd al-Qādir’. There was no information available what his teaching of Sufism included. For his post as deputy mufti, see my interview with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba‘thist, 04.05.2016. The interviewee was a student of the mentioned religious scholars at Baghdad University.

⁸³⁴ WaqfNineveh, ‘Film wathā’iqī ‘an al-shaykh Fayḍī’.

as well. It reflects recruitment strategies along kinship lines which have already been observed in the regime's organisation of security services and special forces in the army.⁸³⁵ This phenomenon will similarly become apparent in the other two mentioned Ba'athist institutions for higher religious education in Section 5.1.3.

In contrast to the situation of the 1970s, the Ba'ath regime created with its new religious institutes in the mid-1980s new career opportunities for religious scholars in Iraq. Apparently, the Ba'ath relied on familiar Sufi scholar networks and kinship bonds for its recruitment of religious scholars into leading positions in its new religious institutes. These institutes were not traditional religious schools but had a clear Ba'athist and progressive outlook since the Ba'athist programmatic writings about its stance towards religion were a central part of the curriculum and determined the institute's ideological framework. Apart from these secular boundaries, the teaching staff was represented by religious Sufi scholars who stood in the tradition of the Sāmarrā' School and its offshoots. This Sufi tradition seems to have been attractive for the Ba'ath regime and it relied on these very people until the end of its rule in 2003.

The remaining two sections will now turn to the literary production of the aforementioned *sharī'a*-minded Sufi scholars in the 1980s with two examples that were specific of this period. These sections will illustrate for what kind of Islam and Sufism many of the aforementioned scholars stood. Both instances reflect the current political and religious state of affairs during the war and constitute yet further instances of the ecumenism that grew in Iraq's Sufi milieu. The instances I am referring to are shaykh Fayḍī al-Fayḍī's Salafi Sufism and the new emphasis of Iraq's sharīfian culture that commenced with Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī.

4.2.4. *Bridging Sufism, Salafism, and Wahhābism: Fayḍī al-Fayḍī's Salafi Sufism*

During the 1980s, we find a remarkable attempt to overcome the old antagonism between Sufism, Salafism and eventually even Wahhābism among the leading Sufi scholarly circles which were recruited for the higher religious education under the

⁸³⁵ See for instance Baram, 'La « maison »'; Baram, 'Saddam Husayn'; Baram, 'Saddam's Power Structure'; Abdul-Jabar, 'Sheikhs and Ideologues'; Sakai, 'Tribalization'.

Ba‘th. It was the young scholar Fayḍī b. Muḥammad Amīn al-Fayḍī (1963-2004) who developed his vision of a Salafi Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf al-salafī*) as a student of ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa‘dī at Baghdad University during this period. Reflecting the debates of his time, Fayḍī’s project proclaimed a return to a reformed, pure Sufism of the righteous forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) in order to overcome the old controversies with Salafism and Wahhābism⁸³⁶ for the sake of Muslim unity. His project must, furthermore, be understood against the background of an increasing dissemination of Wahhābī and Salafī literature and, along with it, a proliferation of Salafi circles in Iraq at that time. During the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq cultivated close relations to Saudi Arabia as a welcome Sunnī ally against Shī‘ī Iran and heavily relied on the kingdom’s material support. The Ba‘th did not support the ultra-conservative Wahhābī branch of Islam but due to the much-needed financial aid, it made concessions to the Saudis and turned a blind eye to the import and spread of Salafī literature. The Saudi embassy in Baghdad and other Saudi-affiliated organisations could under these circumstances freely promote their books while many other Sunnī and Shī‘ī religious works remained officially banned.⁸³⁷ A contemporary of Fayḍī, the army historian Major General Maḥmūd Shīt Khaṭṭāb affirms in one of his essays from 1983 the activities of Salafī circles in their home city Mosul:

The Salafī mission was firm in the past, is still so in the present, and will be firm in the future. We witness in our days a harsh struggle between the Salafī mission of the religious scholars and the Sufis (*mutaṣawwifa*) as well as the adherents of blind imitation (*muqallidīn*). The Salafī books of the old [authors] such as Imam Ibn Taymīya, and the new ones such as shaykh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā were and still are widespread in Mosul and people are heavily interested in them.⁸³⁸

The Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn Taymīya (d. 1328) and the modernist Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) represent rather different religious trends which cannot be put on the same level with Wahhābism. Nevertheless, Khaṭṭāb’s statement points into the direction of a harsh Salafī-Sufī controversy which must have affected Fayḍī as a Sufī and which is important for the context of his concerns. The latter, in turn, picked out explicitly the thirteenth-century figurehead of modern Salafism, Ibn Taymīya, for his project.

⁸³⁶ In another very short essay, Fayḍī tried to show that the movement’s founder Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb himself did not condemn Sufism as such but embraced actually a Sufism with a strong orientation towards the Quran and *sunna* (Fayḍī, ‘al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’).

⁸³⁷ Kubaysī, ‘al-Salafiya fī l-‘Irāq’, 5–6; Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 86–87. Both studies touch this topic only slightly but rely on interviews with Iraqi religious scholars and Islamists who clearly affirm such a trend. More studies in this direction will be necessary to evaluate its wider impact on Iraqi society. For more critical comments see Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 114. I could not find out which books exactly were banned.

⁸³⁸ Khaṭṭāb, ‘al-Imām Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’, 84.

Fayḍī al-Fayḍī is an example of a younger generation of scholars who received their complete religious education under Ba‘th rule. Born in Mosul, he finished elementary (*ibtidā’iyya*) education in Baghdad and studied afterwards in the Āṣifiyya school in Fallūja as well as in ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa‘dī’s school in Ramādī. By then, both schools had already been converted into Islamic colleges (*ma‘āhid islāmīya*) by the state. Following his graduation in 1981, he enrolled in the *Sharī‘a* Faculty at Baghdad University and studied there until 1985. Afterwards, he continued his academic career in *ḥadīth* studies at this university with a Magister degree in 1990 and a doctoral degree in 1998. Among his teachers were several prominent Sufi scholars such as already mentioned ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris, ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa‘dī, or Hāshim Jamīl. He received his scholarly authorisation (*ijāza*) by the Sāmarrā’ School graduate ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Dabbān⁸³⁹ in 1989 and became at some point the *khalīfa* of his father Muḥammad Amīn on the Sufi path of the Qādirīya.⁸⁴⁰

Fayḍī presented his project of a Salafi Sufism for the first time in 1986 with his thesis *Remarks about Sufism Written by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīya* (*Kalimāt fī l-taṣawwuf bi-qalam shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīya*). In his own view, the thesis had a positive impact for the right understanding of Ibn Taymīya against allegations of this shaykh’s anti-Sufi stance. Some students of his thesis allegedly understood it as a defense of Ibn Taymīya in particular and of Sufism in general. For Fayḍī himself, the essence of his thesis was the defence of Islam, the flawless understanding of it, and the call for love (*maḥabba*) as well as union (*tā’līf*) among the Muslims.⁸⁴¹

In Fayḍī’s Salafi Sufism, he intended to return to the Sufism of the righteous forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), on the truth of which Muslims could largely agree. He expressed this also in the phrase “the true Sufi is the true Salafi and the true Salafi is the true Sufi” drawing major inspiration from Ibn Taymīya whom he considered as a Sufi and ascetic (*zāhid*).⁸⁴² According to him, all the conflicts and disputes about Sufism within the Muslim community in the previous century have no justification at all and even transgress Islamic customs, the revelation, and God’s approval. Referring to the contemporary Allepian Shādhilī shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Īsā’s⁸⁴³ *Truths about*

⁸³⁹ ‘Abd al-Karīm Ḥamādī al-Dabbān (1910-1993) was a religious scholar and Qādirī Sufi from Tikrīt (Anīs, ‘‘Ālim al-‘Irāq wa-zāhiduhu al-shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Dabbān’).

⁸⁴⁰ WaqfNineveh, ‘Film wathā’iqī ‘an al-shaykh Fayḍī’.

⁸⁴¹ Fayḍī, ‘Taṣawwuf al-salaf’, 109.

⁸⁴² WaqfNineveh, ‘al-Ṣūfī al-ṣāliḥ’.

⁸⁴³ ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Īsā (1920-1991) was another Syrian shaykh who fled from the Asad regime to Turkey in 1980 (Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria*, 69).

Sufism (*Ḥaqā'iq 'an al-taṣawwuf*), he defined Sufism as “morality (*khuluq*), [for] the one who exceeds you in his morality exceeds you in his Sufism.”⁸⁴⁴ Here, he already follows in the footsteps of Ibn Taymīya who already advocated a moral-ethical mysticism with a strong orientation towards the *sharī'a*.⁸⁴⁵ In obvious analogy to *'ibādāt* and *mu'āmalāt*,⁸⁴⁶ Fayḍī distinguished two sides of morality, one in relation to God, “that you worship God as if you see him” and one in relation to humans, i.e. to be “the perfect believer and the best of them in morality”.⁸⁴⁷

In his understanding of the term *salaf*, he followed the usual standard definition of the first three generations of Muslims after the Prophet as expressed in the *ḥadīth* “the best people of my century, then the ones who follow them, then [again] the ones who follow them”. Fayḍī found his vision of Sufism represented in the biographies and books of the first imams, for

the most exemplary men of the *umma* from among the *salaf* are imams of Sufism with whose right guidance the people of this knowledge are led. [...] The imams of Sufism are the senior *salaf* of the *umma*, for this knowledge grew and developed in the best centuries, its nature (*sha'n*) is the nature of the commonly known legal sciences (*al-'ulūm al-shar'iya*).⁸⁴⁸

Moreover, the pure Sufi spirit of the early Muslim community was associated by Fayḍī with the latter's unification to a perfect whole (*takāmul*) generating a strong bond of love (*maḥabba*) between the Muslims. He made the gradual loss of the early community's state and knowledge responsible for the *umma's* withdrawal and decline. As the ultimate goal, he articulated the restoration of this great unity (*al-waḥda al-kubrā*).⁸⁴⁹

In what follows, Fayḍī justified his Salafī approach to Sufism with quotations of the most famous fountainheads for the modern Salafīya movement. He sees the clearest and most immediate expression of his approach in the scholarly and literary heritage of Ibn Taymīya. Although this thinker lived in the thirteenth century, explains Fayḍī, he is certainly known for his method of the *salaf* (*manhaj al-salaf*) in understanding and applying the texts. The meanings of Salafī Sufism come together in Ibn Taymīya's books and his biography. Against widespread prejudices about Ibn Taymīya's

⁸⁴⁴ Fayḍī, ‘Taṣawwuf al-salaf’, 106.

⁸⁴⁵ Homerin, ‘Ibn Taymīya's al-Ṣūfiyah’, 237.

⁸⁴⁶ “*'ibādāt*” refers to the religious ritual practice, i.e. the conduct between man and God while *mu'āmalāt* means the conduct of people between each other (Bousquet, ‘*Ibādāt*').

⁸⁴⁷ Fayḍī, ‘Taṣawwuf al-salaf’, 106.

⁸⁴⁸ Fayḍī, 106.

⁸⁴⁹ Fayḍī, 107. A similar contemporary approach can be found in the Moroccan context by ‘Abd al-Salām Yāsīn (Lauzière, ‘Post-Islamism’, 249).

opposition to certain Sufi practices, Fayḍī emphasised the shaykh's highest praise of Sufism and its imams.

As to the imams of the Sufis and the famous shaykhs from among the old ones such as al-Junayd [al-Baghdādī] and his followers, such as 'Abd al-Qādir [al-Jīlānī] and people like him, they are the greatest people in the adherence to what is enjoined and what is forbidden (*al-amr wa-l-nahī*), in the recommendation to adhere to that, and in the warning from [simply] going along with divine predestination (*qadar*) just as their companions (*aṣḥābuhum*) did. This is the second difference about which al-Junayd spoke with his companions. The speech of shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir revolves around what is enjoined (*ma'mūr*), omission of what is prohibited (*maḥzūr*), and steadfastness to what was predestined (*maqḍūr*). He does not affirm any path which contradicts that originally, neither he nor most accepted shaykhs among the Muslims and he warns against mere noticing of the divine predestination without adherence to what is enjoined and what is forbidden (*al-amr wa-l-nahī*).⁸⁵⁰

As to the Sufis, they affirm the love of God (*maḥabba*), this is even more clear among them than all other issues. The basis of their path is nothing but will (*irāda*) and love (*maḥabba*). The affirmation of God's love is well-known in the speech of their early and their recent masters, as it is affirmed in the book, the *sunna*, and the agreement of the *salaf*.⁸⁵¹

Then, he quoted Ibn Taymīya's writing about the love for obligatory and recommendable deeds.

This love (*maḥabba*), just as Quran and *sunna* mention it, which the *salaf* of the *umma* had, as well as her imams, the people of the *sunna* and *ḥadīth*, and all shaykhs of religion and imams of Sufism, [means] that God is beloved in itself as love (*maḥabba*) and truth (*ḥaqīqa*).⁸⁵²

Therefore, the knowing shaykhs of the Sufis, the people of uprightness heavily recommended to follow knowledge (*ilm*) and the revelation (*al-shar'*).⁸⁵³

Proceeding with Ibn Taymīya's disciples and their opinion about Sufism, he quoted from Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya's *Madārij al-sālikīn*⁸⁵⁴ and al-Dhahabī's *The Paths of the Noble Luminaries* (*Siyar al-lām al-nubalā'*). Writing about the meaning of knowledge (*ilm*), generosity (*jūd*), and patience (*ṣabr*) Ibn Qayyim stated:

These three are things which Sufism realises. Sufism is one of the corners (*zāwāyā*) of the true manners (*al-sulūk al-ḥaqīqī*), the purification and training of the soul in order to prepare it for

⁸⁵⁰ Fayḍī cites here from the *Majmū'at al-rasā'il al-kubrā* li-Ibn Taymīya (Collection of Great Letters of Ibn Taymīya) from the *Risālat al-iḥtijāj bi-l-qadar* (Letter about the Argumentation for Divine Predestination) (Ibn Taymīya, 'al-Risāla al-sādisa', 153–54). See Fayḍī, 'Taṣawwuf al-salaf', 107.

⁸⁵¹ Fayḍī, 'Taṣawwuf al-salaf', 108. He quotes from the same source as before, Ibn Taymīya, 'al-Risāla al-sādisa', 144. See for the same quotation Homerin, 'Ibn Taymīya's al-Ṣūfiyyah', 237–38.

⁸⁵² Fayḍī, 'Taṣawwuf al-salaf', 108. He quotes from Ibn Taymīya's *al-Tuḥfa al-irāqīya fī al-māl al-qulūb* (The Iraqi Present in the Occupation of the Hearts).

⁸⁵³ Fayḍī, 108. He quotes from Ibn Taymīya's *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawīya* (The Method of the Prophetic Tradition).

⁸⁵⁴ Ibn Qayyim's books like *Madārij al-sālikīn fī manāzil iyyāka na'budu wa-iyyāka nasta'in* (The Ranks of the Wayfarer Between the Abodes "you do we worship" and "you do we call for help"), have a considerable impact in Iraqī Sufi circles. The former head of Iraq's Muslim Brotherhood, 'Abd al-Karīm Zaydān al-Ānī, wrote that he became heavily influenced by Sufism at a certain stage of his life and even joined the Rifā'iya order of the Abū Khumra clan. The two books which influenced his Sufi thinking the most were *Iḥiyā' ulūm al-dīn* by al-Ghazzālī and the *Kitāb madārij al-sālikīn* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya (Zaydān, 'Nubdha 'an al-shaykh'). In the latter, Ibn Qayyim manipulated Sufi terms in order to instill the values of the *sharī'a* in the hearts and minds of believers (Schallenbergh, 'Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya').

her progress towards the highest companion, the company of the one you love, for man is with the one who loves, just as Samnūn [d. 910-11]⁸⁵⁵ said: The lovers travel with the nobility of this world and the hereafter, for man is with the one who loves, and God knows best.⁸⁵⁶

[al-Dhahabī:] Sufism, the devotion to religious services, good manners, a blameless way of life is what was reported about the companions of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation, through the approval of God, and also the necessity to devote oneself to God, struggle (*jihād*) on the path of God, a fine education in the rules of the *sharīʿa* through a recitation with articulation and reflection, the practice of anxiety, submissiveness, fasting at a time, fast breaking at another time, taking pains for what is permitted (*badhal al-maʿrūf*), abundance of affection (*īthār*), teaching of the common people, humble behaviour for the believers, strength against the unbelievers. In spite of all that, God guides whom he wants to the right path.⁸⁵⁷

All these statements emphasise more the moral-ethical dimension of Sufism with a strong orientation towards the Quran, the Prophetic *sunna* and the tradition of the *salaf*. At its centre is the legal rulings of what is permitted and what is forbidden. Thomas Homerin's remark on Ibn Taymīya also applies to these thinkers, namely that the spiritual element of Sufism mainly serves here as an "internal basis for the law which necessitated an experiential and emotional, as well as rational, component".⁸⁵⁸ Fayḍī understood his Sufism against this background, first of all, as a method of education (*manhaj tarbiya*) drawn from the book of God and the *sunna* of His Prophet.⁸⁵⁹ He further characterised this method as the one of al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 910), of those who preceded him and those who were his contemporaries from the imams of Sufism. This method, according to Fayḍī, found clear expression in the two greatest Sufi schools (*madrasatayn li-l-taṣawwuf*), namely the school of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and the school of Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī. This is what Ibn Taymīya understood, in Fayḍī's view, and why he was associated with this Sufism. Fayḍī presented this as a matter of consensus (*ijmāʿ*) in the Muslim community.⁸⁶⁰

Finally, he quotes contemporary religious scholars who supported him in his task, such as his teacher ʿAbd al-Malik al-Saʿdī who wrote in his panegyric (*taqrīz*) of the thesis:

Imam Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm b. Taymīya al-Ḥarrānī – God may have mercy upon him – those who praised him and those who slandered him treated him equally wrong. Both parties did not understand the truth in this unique personality and they did not do him justice. Among the acts of injustice, which were directed against him, was the accusation by both parties that

⁸⁵⁵ He was a Sufi from the Baghdad school in the tenth century (Reinert, 'Sumūn').

⁸⁵⁶ Fayḍī, 'Taṣawwuf al-salaf', 108.

⁸⁵⁷ Fayḍī, 108–9.

⁸⁵⁸ Homerin, 'Ibn Taymīya's al-Ṣūfiyyah', 237.

⁸⁵⁹ We find this understanding of Sufism also represented in Fayḍī's teacher in the Ramādī School, ʿAbd al-Malik al-Saʿdī who wrote about his relation to the Nabḥānīya "I do not have a shaykh but shaykh Muḥammad al-Nabḥān, for he is a shaykh of education (*tarbiya*) not a shaykh of a path (*tarīqa*)" (Saʿdī, 'al-Shaykh al-ustādh al-ḍiktūr ʿAbd al-Malik al-Saʿdī').

⁸⁶⁰ Fayḍī, 'Taṣawwuf al-salaf', 109; WaqfNineveh, 'Film wathāʾiq ʿan al-shaykh Fayḍī', pts 3:20-3:48. The same reference to both saints can be found in ʿAbd al-Salām Yāsīn's Salafī Sufism in Morocco (Lauzière, 'Post-Islamism', 248).

he was hostile to Sufism and its men. Those who praise him look at him with their limited view and accuse him that he is hostile to Sufism and its men. They dress him in [such] an attire and he is innocent. They did not know that he is an imam of the imams of Sufism and shaykh of their shaykhs and all that in addition to his refutation of those who lay claim to it [i.e. Sufism] and those who distorted its truth. Truly, in his praise of the great leaders of Sufism is a proof which gives testimony to that. Those who slandered him discredited him with their pens and tongues since they thought that he is a representative of separation and deviation, a man of unlawful innovation and error. Both accusations avoid his real [personality].⁸⁶¹

Fayḍī al-Fayḍī's case provides an instance of what literary production among the Sufi scholars at Baghdad University and the other institutes could look like during the 1980s. His work reflects, on the one hand, an ongoing struggle between Sufis and Salafis as suggested by Maḥmūd Shīṭ Khaṭṭāb, a struggle that obviously prompted Fayḍī himself to devote his thesis to the topic. His approach can be considered ecumenical in the sense that it aims to overcome inner-Islamic controversies between Sufis and Salafis. He defended Sufism by way of returning to its pure *sharī'a*-minded origin among the righteous forefathers and tried to show that not even the Salafī figurehead Ibn Taymīya and his disciples condemned Sufism as such. Contrary to a purported misunderstanding among many modern Salafis and Wahhābīs, Fayḍī held the view that Ibn Taymīya rather condemned unlawful innovations among the later Sufis but followed himself a pure form of Sufism with a strong emphasis on the *sharī'a*. Fayḍī's thesis reflects, on the other hand, also the political climate at that time in the sense that he began to write at a moment when the Ba'ṯh cultivated close relations to the Saudi monarchy and Ibn Taymīya's books widely circulated in Iraq. In a way, his work constituted some sort of a scholarly expression of this political rapprochement and as a scholar, he made a successful career under the Ba'ṯh.

4.2.5. *A Sufi Promotion of Iraq's Sharīfian Unity I*

While Fayḍī al-Fayḍī was still a religious student in the 1980s, Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī faced the peak of his religious career as vice-chairman of Baghdad's Committee for the Raising of Religious Awareness and with his own column in the national newspapers. At the same time, he made a name for himself as genealogist (*nassāba*) and produced three comprehensive publications about tribal genealogies in Iraq. Previous researchers have interpreted Sāmarrā'ī's genealogical books as early literary indicators of a resurgence of tribalism; a tribalism that had previously been outlawed by the Ba'ṯh as a traditional obstacle to its revolutionary course. Since

⁸⁶¹ Fayḍī, 'Taṣawwuf al-salaf', 110. Similar panegyrics are quoted from Dr. 'Imād al-Dīn Khalīl and Maḥmūd Shīṭ Khaṭṭāb.

Sāmarrā'ī promoted in his books also information about the sharīfian genealogy of the presidential al-Bū Nāṣir tribe, they were furthermore seen as tactical contributions to Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's historiography and “‘rewriting’ of family history”.⁸⁶² A closer reading of these books reveals that they promoted far more than a mere resurgence of tribalism and Ṣaddām's tribal origin, namely a resurgence of sharīfism in Iraq. In the middle of the war, when Iraq was in urgent need to keep national unity, these books promoted the idea of a sharīfian unity that aimed, on a religious level, to overcome ethnic differences between Arabs and Kurds as well as sectarian ones between Sunna and Shī'a. This resurgence was, furthermore, strongly related to Iraq's Sufi clans since they were the foremost Sunnī representatives of the *ashrāf* and gained through these books a new publicity.

At the first glance, the idea of such a sharīfian unity is elitist and excludes, of course, all non-sharīfians in the country. However, the important point here is less that not each and every Iraqi is a *sayyid* or *sharīf* but that *ashrāf* had been an important source of collective identity and had played a central role in Iraq's society throughout history. Even though sharīfism lost much of its vigour during the twentieth century, it nevertheless was an enormously widespread phenomenon in Iraq during the 1980s and is still so today with whole tribes claiming Prophetic descent, Sunnis, Shī'is, Arabs and Kurds alike. The numbers of *ashrāf* can therefore be estimated at hundreds of thousands and they were still heavily represented among Iraq's political and societal elites under the Ba'th. Thus, there is a good reason why the Ba'th endorsed the revival of particularly this cultural phenomenon at that time. Sāmarrā'ī's books were among the first ones which provided a general, geographical overview of all sharīfian clans and tribes of Iraq in an encyclopaedic manner. He not only contributed to the dissemination of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's Rifā'ī origin but compiled information of Iraq's most famous Sufi clans, their genealogies, settlements, and information about their *takāyā* in his books. From the perspective of genealogies, these compilations drew new attention to Iraq's Sufis aiming not only to raise the awareness of the country's tribal but more so its sharīfian heritage. What is more, the books advertised in their introductions the religious meaning of a *nasab* and the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*, i.e. they formulate the common cultural and religious mechanisms upon which

⁸⁶² Sakai, 'Tribalization', 137; see also Abdul-Jabar, 'Sheikhs and Ideologues'; Dawod, 'The "State-Ization" of the Tribe'. Sakai accidentally misspelled Sāmarrā'ī's name as Yusuf.

Ṣaddām, the Sufis, but also the *sayyids* among the Shī'ī *marja'īya* built their very status as *ashrāf*.

A very short overview of genealogical literature in twentieth-century Iraq demonstrates, first of all, that Ṣāmarrā'ī's books mark indeed the beginning of a new disciplinary trend in the literary occupation with genealogies. Still in the first half of the twentieth century, so-called genealogists (*nassāba*) published books about *ansāb* often with relation to their own clan and tribe in order to preserve and record their family's genealogical heritage. Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī, for instance, compiled in his book *The Attainment of Desire in the Biography of sayyid shaykh Rajab* (*Bulūgh al-arab fī tarjamat al-sayyid al-shaykh Rajab*) (1915) the whole genealogical history of the Rāwīs from their founding figure to his contemporaries.⁸⁶³ After him, his son Ismā'īl and his grandson Jamāl maintained this tradition as genealogists as will be seen in Section 5.1.6. Samira Haj analysed first detailed studies about Iraq's tribes by Iraqi researchers with a social-anthropologist outlook in the period between the First and the Second World Wars.⁸⁶⁴ The most outstanding among these are 'Abbās al-'Azzāwī's volumes *The Tribes of Iraq* (*'Ashā'ir al-'Irāq*) which remain a standard source until today.⁸⁶⁵ Under early Ba'ṭhist rule, this occupation with kinship and tribalism became subjected to a certain censorship during the 1970s. The Ba'ṭh Party reportedly banned 'Azzāwī's books since it perceived of tribal culture as a feudalist, outdated, and premodern remnant of the past and incompatible with its progressive revolutionary ideology.⁸⁶⁶ However, the actual impact and ramifications of this policy are still not altogether clear. Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ's initiation to publish *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* in 1971, a book which described in detail the president's tribal origin and his illustrious descent from the Prophet within the genealogical network of the Rifā'īya order, clearly contradicted the official party line.

In the mid-1980s, finally, Ṣāmarrā'ī set with his publications and his special focus on *ashrāf* a new trend that continued to grow with support by the regime up to 2003. It is

⁸⁶³ Rāwī, *Bulūgh al-arab*.

⁸⁶⁴ Haj criticises the largely ahistorical and essentialist content of these studies and points to the problem that they, nevertheless, laid the foundation for later social-anthropologist research on tribalism (Haj, 'The Problems of Tribalism', 46–48).

⁸⁶⁵ 'Azzāwī, *'Ashā'ir al-'Irāq*, 1937; 'Azzāwī, *'Ashā'ir al-'Irāq*, 1947; 'Azzāwī, *'Ashā'ir al-'Irāq*, 1955.

⁸⁶⁶ Sakai, 'Tribalization', 137; Davis, *Memories of State*, 174, 204, 238. However, the actual impact and ramifications of this policy are still not altogether clear. Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ's initiation to publish *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* in 1971, a book which describes in detail the president's tribal origin and his illustrious descent from the Prophet clearly contradicted the official party line.

not clear if these publications were commissioned by the Ba‘th. Already Sāmarrā’ī’s books to revive Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī’s and ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’s Sufism in the 1970s exhibit an interest in the genealogies of Iraq’s Sufi clans from one of which he himself hailed after all. His genealogical publications, too, can be considered as a further attempt to revive the genealogical heritage of these and further Sufi saints. He published a book about the tribes, clans, and eminent personalities in the north of Iraq (1985),⁸⁶⁷ one explicitly about the sharīfian tribes and clans of Iraq (1986),⁸⁶⁸ and two volumes generally titled *The Iraqi Tribes* (second edition, 1989).⁸⁶⁹ Other authors soon followed suit such as Khāshī‘ al-Mu‘āḍidī with his three volumes *About Some Genealogies of the Arabs (Min ba‘ḍ ansāb al-‘arab)* in 1986 and 1990.⁸⁷⁰ Thāmir al-‘Āmirī produced the most comprehensive nine-volume Encyclopaedia of Iraqī Tribes (*Mawsū‘at al-‘ashā’ir al-‘irāqīya*) in 1992 and 1993.⁸⁷¹

In his first *nasab*-book from 1985, Sāmarrā’ī focused not merely on Kurdish tribes in the north but on sharīfian tribes and personalities and used their noble descent in order to Arabise them. By logic, any Kurdish tribe who claims to descent from the Prophet must consequently have Arabic roots, but Sāmarrā’ī’s book bears additionally important ideological and political implications. It appeared at a time when the conflict between the regime and the Kurdish resistance was about to reach its apex with the begin of the Anfal operations in 1986 which cost thousands of Kurdish lives. Since the 1970s, the Ba‘th had continuously worked to undermine Kurdish identity through an Arabisation of the northern region, the forced displacement of millions of Kurds and the resettlement of Arabs to the north. Sāmarrā’ī’s book contributed in this context on an ideological level to the Ba‘th’s slightly altered vision of an Arab nation when he emphasised that most prominent Kurdish tribes and clans had in fact Arabic roots.

In the foreword of his book, he declared that Arabic tribes had settled down in northern Iraq during the Islamic conquest under the second caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Over time, they intermingled and intermarried with the local population and altered their language into other languages than Arabic. However, they maintained with pride their Arabic roots and used surnames such as al-Ḥasanī, al-Ḥusaynī, al-Ṣiqqīdī, al-‘Umarī,

⁸⁶⁷ Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt*.

⁸⁶⁸ Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986.

⁸⁶⁹ Sāmarrā’ī, *Al-Qabā’il al-‘irāqīya*; Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il al-‘irāqīya*.

⁸⁷⁰ Mu‘āḍidī, *A‘ālī al-furāt*; Mu‘āḍidī, *A‘ālī al-rāfidayn*, 1990; Mu‘āḍidī, *A‘ālī al-rāfidayn*, 1990.

⁸⁷¹ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1992; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1992; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993.

al-Umawī, or al-Khālīdī which still referred to their noble ancestors al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, the caliphs Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, or military leader Khālīd b. al-Walīd. Sāmarrā’ī stated: “The genealogical and historical facts and evidence confirm without any doubt, that most of the tribes (*qabā’il*), houses (*buyūtāt*), and prominent personalities in the north of Iraq come from Arabic roots.”⁸⁷² In the end, he assured the reader that his motive was not racial fanaticism (*ta’aṣṣub*) but the spread of historical facts. Throughout the book, he introduced the Arabic origin of the most prominent Kurdish tribes and focused afterwards in a separate chapter on the *ashrāf* among the Kurds. All chapters included numerous representatives of the Kurdish Sufi orders and their genealogical history, their *takāyā*, and regional settlements. Among these tribes appear also numerous loyal supporters of the regime like the Naqshbandīs from Biyāra, the Brīfkānīs but also tribes which fought in the aforementioned National Defense Battalions such as the Barzinja, Sūrjīs, Hīrkīs, Jāf, and Khūshnāws.⁸⁷³ Interestingly, he dedicated one section in the chapter about Kurdish luminaries to the twelfth-century sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī whom he introduces notably as an Arab hero.⁸⁷⁴ As noted in Section 3.2.5, the Ba‘thist media has always referred to this prominent Kurdish historical figure as an Arab.⁸⁷⁵

In his three other books from 1986 and 1989, Sāmarrā’ī widened his scope to the *ashrāf* throughout Iraq. The major part of the tribes and houses which he introduced in these books, too, happen to have a Sufi background, historical as well as contemporary. The book from 1986 starts on the first ten pages with sections on the most prominent Iraqi clans many of whom have a well-known Sufi history, namely the Gailānīs, A‘rajīs, Wā‘iz, Ḥaydarīs, and Ālūsīs. The following eighteen pages are dedicated to *al-sāda al-rifā’īya* in Iraq with twelve Sufi clans of the Rifā’īya many of which found already mentioning in *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*.⁸⁷⁶ Sāmarrā’ī presented the presidential Āl Nāṣir as second Rifā’ī clan in Tikrīt next to the Āl al-shaykh Khalaf al-Rifā’ī; the leading clan of Rifā’ī Sufi shaykhs who run, in contrast to the Āl Nāṣir, *takāyā* in Tikrīt. Yet, Sāmarrā’ī explicitly presented the Āl Nāṣir as part of *al-sāda al-rifā’īya* or the Rifā’ī tribes (*al-‘ashā’ir al-rifā’īya*) and mentioned their genealogy from Amīr Nāṣir to ‘Alī

⁸⁷² Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt*, 3.

⁸⁷³ Sāmarrā’ī, 11, 17, 33, 68–69, 70–74, 81, 89.

⁸⁷⁴ Sāmarrā’ī, 97.

⁸⁷⁵ See for instance *al-Jumhūrīya* 12.12.1989, 1; *al-Thawra* 14.03.2002, 2.

⁸⁷⁶ Apart from the Āl Nāṣir, these were the Āl Mullīs in Sāmarrā’, Āl al-shaykh Khalaf al-Rifā’ī in Tikrīt, Āl Qumar in Baghdad and Diyālā, Āl Mullā Ḥuwaysh, Āl Muṣṭafā al-Khalīl in Anbār, Āl al-Ṭabaqjalī in Baghdad, Āl Rajab al-Rāwī, Āl Nāmīs in Bayjī, the Ḥadīdīyūn and Ṣumayda’īyūn in Mosul and Baghdad (Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 28–46).

b. Abī Ṭālib including the matrilineal branch to Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. Afterwards, he named the different subunits (*afkhādh*) of the tribe with a special focus on the presidential families al-Bakr, Ṭilfāḥ, and Ḥusayn. Sāmarrā'ī noted that he had personally consulted Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ for information and used additionally *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*.⁸⁷⁷ He contributed thereby once more to the dissemination and authentication of the presidential genealogy with its link to the Rifā'īya order and its founding figure Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. In the political discourse, the Ba'ṯh itself only stressed Ṣaddām's link to the Imams 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn but on a popular literary level, which was part of the larger official discourse, too, his Rifā'ī Sufi link persisted quite prominently. The nature of the presidential family's relations to the Rifā'īya behind the alleged genealogical link surfaced as early as 1989, when they publicly embraced the Sufi orders, particularly the Rifā'īya from Tikrīt, and invited them for the *dhikr* to Baghdad.⁸⁷⁸

Aside from the president, Sāmarrā'ī revealed in all these publications the tribal and sharīfian origins of many other Ba'ṯhist politicians.⁸⁷⁹ In *The Iraqi Tribes* from 1989, he also mentioned a genealogical Sufi connection of Ṣaddām's close ally 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī to the Abū Khumra clan of the Ḥarb tribe.⁸⁸⁰ This clan's leading shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Abū Khumra is an influential shaykh of the Rifā'īya order but not a descendant of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. He and his family run several *takāyā* in their main settlement Sarḥa, a village south of Kirkūk (the region of Jabal Ḥamrīn), one in each city of Mosul, Tikrīt, Sāmarrā', as well as in Jalawlā' and Ba'qūba (Diyāla province), and two in Baghdad.⁸⁸¹ Thus, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn stood in this regard not alone as a leading Ba'ṯhist and offspring of a Rifā'ī Sufi clan.

Sāmarrā'ī's books were not only a way to promote the noble Sufi origins of the Ba'ṯhist leadership but had, yet, wider ideological implications. His publications presented *ashrāf* clans geographically in each Iraqi region from the Kurdish north to the Shī'ī south with many more Sufi clans but also many famous Shī'ī *sayyid* clans. The overall

⁸⁷⁷ Sāmarrā'ī, 30–32; Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Qabā'il al-irāqīya*, 2:655–58.

⁸⁷⁸ See Section 5.2.1.

⁸⁷⁹ Another example, apart from 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, is Sa'dī 'Ayāsh 'Uraym (Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Qabā'il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 66).

⁸⁸⁰ Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Qabā'il al-irāqīya*, 1:164–65. His tribal section in Dūr is also part of the Mawāshiṭ tribal confederation.

⁸⁸¹ A'zamī, *Tārīkh jāmi' al-Imām al-A'zam*, 1964, 2:178; Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 97–99; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tārīkh masājīd*, 301; 'Āmirī, *Mu'jam al-marāqīd*, 45–46; Nāṭūr, 'Man hum al-Bū Khumra?' 'Izzat Ibrāhīm had mere blood ties with this clan. In the course of my research, I could not find hard evidence that he also followed shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Abū Khumra's order.

picture that emerges from Sāmarrā'ī's books is a huge genealogical network of *ashrāf* all over Iraq that converges in the saintly figures among the *ahl al-bayt* which are buried in Iraqi soil; a network with the presidential clan as leading part and united through the common ancestry from the *ahl al-bayt* such as the Shī'ī Imams 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, al-Ḥusayn, Mūsā al-Kāẓim, 'Alī al-Hādī but also the Sufī shaykhs Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. Moreover, they exhibit that many of these tribes and clans are geographically dispersed throughout different provinces in central and southern Iraq. These tribes manifest therewith a further genealogical and sharīfian cohesion between those various regions, a unity by origin on which the vision of a united Iraqi nation could be built. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's Mawāshiṭ tribal confederation, for instance, with its origin in Dūr, close to Tirkīt, has also branches in Sāmarrā' or in southern Nāṣiriya.⁸⁸² Ṣaddām's own tribe hails from the village al-'Awja south of Tikrīt but has related branches in Fallūja, Ḥilla, Baghdad, and even Najaf.⁸⁸³

Sāmarrā'ī's first sharīfian, genealogical encyclopaedias appeared just at a time during the war when Ṣaddām Ḥusayn had already republished *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir* for a second time, when he was propagating his descent from 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn, and shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* were in the process of restoration all over Iraq. These encyclopaedias aimed to raise the awareness of Iraq's sharīfian culture, a culture that was already on the way of being revived by the Ba'th regime itself after its suppression in the 1970s. Along with them, Sāmarrā'ī contributed to more publicity for the Sufis in the country. Similar to Ṣaddām's addressing of Iraq's Shī'a with his sharīfian descent from the Twelve Imams, Sāmarrā'ī's whole sharīfian tribal network represents descendancy from the *ahl al-bayt* and their veneration as a basic common denominator between Kurds and Arabs as well as between Sunnīs and Shī'īs. This genealogical scheme emerged in the 1980s as a complementation of Ṣaddām's noble origin and became in this way one of the Ba'th's narratives or discourses to bypass ethnic and sectarian differences, even though it could not be applied to all sections of society but to large parts of its leading elite. The very basis of this genealogical scheme and the common denominator between Kurds and Arabs, even more so between Sunna and

⁸⁸² Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Qabā'il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 142; Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Qabā'il al-'irāqīya*, 2:642–43. This might be the reason why he personally supervised agricultural development and settlement projects in Nāṣiriya and Maysān soon after the revolution (see *al-Jumhūrīya* 04.09.1969, 4; 14.09.1969, 4; 22.09.1969, 4; 30.09.1969, 4; 02.10.1969, 5; 06.10.1969, 5; 03.11.1969, 6; 04.11.1969, 4).

⁸⁸³ This is more clearly emphasised in Mu'āḍidī, *A 'ālī al-rāfidayn*, 1990, 2:253.

Shī‘a, became the religious meaning of a sharīfian *nasab* and the religious status of *ashrāf* at large. There are, of course, major doctrinal differences in the status and veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* between Sunna and Shī‘a, differences which mark major points of contention, but in spite of these, we need to focus here on the small realm which both sects share. It was this realm to which Sāmarrā’ī, Rujaybī, the Ba‘thists, but also many Sufis reverted to for a more ecumenical approach and in the end also national unity.

The rest of this section will provide an overview of the religious meaning of a *nasab* which Sāmarrā’ī and other Iraqi authors promoted. Part of Zoltán Szombathy’s observations on a *nasab*’s function under his analytical category “Dynastic Genealogies” also applies here. All the sharīfian tribal and Sufi clans, including Ṣaddām’s tribe, managed, at some unknown point of time in history, to become part of the sanctified universal and Arabic genealogical tree with the Prophet Muḥammad and particularly the Shī‘ī Imams as its most central elements. Here, too, their *ansāb* symbolically express authority, social status, and certain privileges.⁸⁸⁴ Yet, the foundation of all that is the basic religious meaning of sharīfian *ansāb* on which Sunnīs, particularly Sufis and Shī‘īs can largely agree. A *nasab* is, first of all, related to the concept of nobility (*sharaf*) originating not only but especially from Prophetic descendancy. Next to the doctrine of equality between all Muslims, there still survived the idea of the heredity of noble qualities via the blood lineage along a so-called *sharīfian nasab* or to a lesser extent through a closer acquaintance with the Prophet. Among these genealogically hereditary qualities, moral purity (*tahāra*) or divine blessing (*baraka*) find particular emphasis in a Sunnī Sufi and Shī‘ī context. Divine blessing is here understood as a holy force which was bestowed upon the Prophet by God as a spiritual gift, which can be passed on among his descendants and even be transmitted to objects such as amulets.⁸⁸⁵ Throughout Islamic history, the popular belief in this divine blessing of its bearer brought about a special veneration, reverence, trust, and partially even a certain social capital, privileges, and political authority among both sects.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸⁴ Compare for instance Szombathy, ‘Genealogy in Medieval Muslim Societies’, 22–24; Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy*, 192–94.

⁸⁸⁵ Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung*, 30–40.

⁸⁸⁶ The most outstanding example of such a Sufi shaykh in Iraq under the sharīfian monarchy is certainly ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Gailānī. Having been shaykh of the Qādirīya, custodian of the Kīlānīya, and *naqīb al-ashrāf*, he was chosen as Iraq’s first prime minister (see in the Introduction) (Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 2:133–59; Luizard, ‘‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Geylānī’’).

There is, first of all, a normative reason for the public and scholarly occupation with genealogies (*‘ilm al-ansāb*) in the Quranic verses (49;13)⁸⁸⁷ and (25;54),⁸⁸⁸ which many authors cite in order to illustrate that God and the Prophet had already emphasised the salience of genealogies.⁸⁸⁹ In addition to the Quran, the *ḥadīth* phrase “Learn your lineage in order to unite with your kindred”⁸⁹⁰ is often quoted as well.⁸⁹¹ The special status of Prophetic descendents among both Sunna and Shī‘a in Iraq is usually explained with an interpretation of the ambiguous Quranic verse (42; 23): “Say, I do not ask you for any recompense except the love for near kinship”.⁸⁹² Cornelis van Arendonk translated the final part of this verse, “*al-mawaddata fī l-qurbā*”, with “love for the (near) kinsfolk” and noted that the term “*al-qurbā*” is often interpreted as referring to the house of the Prophet whose members are usually called *ahl al-bayt* (the people of the house).⁸⁹³ Throughout Islamic history, we find a variety of different definitions of who actually belongs to the *ahl al-bayt*. Shī‘ī but also many Sunnī commentators interpreted it as referring to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Fāṭima, and their descendants.⁸⁹⁴ The Iraqi authors and Sufi shaykhs follow suit and use the term in this sense, too.⁸⁹⁵ Love for the *ahl al-bayt* becomes, according to their interpretation, already prescribed by God in the Quran. Further elaborating this view, Rujaybī explained (42; 23) with the additional verse (33; 33) which is also important in the Shī‘ī tradition, “God desires only to remove defilement from you, o people of the

⁸⁸⁷ “O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware.”

⁸⁸⁸ “And it is He who created from water a mortal, and made him kindred of blood and marriage (*nasaban wa-ṣihran*); thy Lord is All-powerful.”

⁸⁸⁹ Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 7, 158; Mu‘aḍḍī, *A‘ālī al-rāfīdayn*, 1990, 2:9; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1992, 1:12.

⁸⁹⁰ „*Ta‘allamū ansābakum li-taṣilū arḥāmakum*“ (Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 7; Mu‘aḍḍī, *A‘ālī al-rāfīdayn*, 1990, 2:9).

⁸⁹¹ The full and slightly different version of this *ḥadīth*, which can be found in Tirmidhī’s *Sunan* collection, is the following: “Learn from your lineage what unites you with your kindred, for the union with kindred is love for the people, a means of multiplying wealth, a means of prolonging one’s memorial” (Translation of Lane). Arabic: „*Ta‘allamū min ansābikum mā taṣilūn bihi arḥāmakum, fa-inna ṣilat al-raḥim maḥabba fī l-ahl mathrāt fī l-māl mansā‘t fī l-athar*“ (Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-barr*). For Lane’s translation of the second part, see his Arabic-English Lexicon from 1863, book I., page 2786. Note that there exist also sayings of the Prophet which clearly reject the pride of the Arabs in their ancestry and descendancy as well as the knowledge thereof (Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien I*, 1:69–74; see also Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy* at the beginning of his book).

⁸⁹² “*Qul lā as‘alukum ‘alayhī ajran illā l-muwaddata fī l-qurbā*” (Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 7; Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 7; Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 60).

⁸⁹³ Arendonk, ‘Sharīf’. Arendonk also discusses the changing designations of the latter term. Rainer Brunner provides a more recent overview on the *ahl al-bayt* (Brunner, ‘Ahl Al-Bayt’).

⁸⁹⁴ Momen, *Shī‘i Islam*, 152.

⁸⁹⁵ According to Sāmarrā’ī, the *ahl al-bayt* include the clans (*āl*) of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, his brothers ‘Aqīl and Ja‘far, and his uncle ‘Abbās (Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 5).

house, and to purify you completely”.⁸⁹⁶ The Prophet’s offspring distinguishes itself, therewith, through purity (*tahāra*) before the rest of humankind.

With reference to (42; 23) and (33; 33), the love for the *ahl al-bayt* is also among Sunnīs often interpreted as a religious duty (*fard ‘aynī*). Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī, for instance, wrote in relation to (33; 33) that:

[t]his holy verse clearly confirms God’s, the Exalted and Praiseworthy’s purification (*tathīr*) of the people of the noble and Prophetic house (*āl al-bayt al-nabawī al-sharīf*), their protection through everlasting purity (*tahāra*) and enduring protection by the Lord with the succession of generations. The people of the house (*ahl al-bayt*), which the holy verse presents, are the children of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, and his descendants, and this has been revealed until judgement day (*yawm al-qiyāma*) through the proof of the verse of mutual cursing (*āyat al-mubāhala*): [3; 61] ‘Then whoever argues with you about it after [this] knowledge has come to you – say: Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then supplicate earnestly [together] and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars [among us]’.⁸⁹⁷

The *mubāhala* verse (3; 61) is believed to have been revealed on the occasion of a visit by the Christian community of Najrān to Muḥammad in Medina. After Muḥammad had approached them in order to accept Islam as their new religion, the Christian delegation visited him to discuss questions like the nature of Jesus. As the Christians could not be convinced, the said verse was revealed to Muḥammad ordering him to practice the mutual cursing and leave the final say to God. Especially in Shī‘a tradition, this episode is important for the definition of who belongs to the *ahl al-bayt* since Muḥammad chose after the revelation his daughter Fāṭima, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and their sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn to accompany him to the Christians of Najrān. In the respective *ḥadīth* about this episode (*ḥadīth al-kisā’*), he called them *ahl al-bayt* and brought the four under his cloak (*kisā’*). With relation to the latter, they are still known in Shī‘ī tradition as *ahl al-kisā’*.⁸⁹⁸ Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī considered this story similarly as a proof that the *ahl al-bayt* are indeed ‘Alī, Fāṭima, their children and, notably, also their successive descendants (*aḥfāduhumā nuzūlan*).⁸⁹⁹

The priority of the *ahl al-bayt* before the rest of humanity is furthermore expressed in the following *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: “Every bond of relationship and consanguinity

⁸⁹⁶ „Innamā yurīdu Allāhu li-yudhhibā ‘ankum al-rijsa ahla l-bayti wa-yuṭaḥḥirakum tathīran“ (Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 7). The German scholar Rudi Paret advocated a different interpretation when he held that the term *ahl al-bayt* could, isolated from its context and in analogy to the term *ahl al-kitāb*, also designate the whole Muslim community. However, this thesis was contested by Wilfred Madelung who followed Henri Lammen’s view tallying the interpretation above (see Paret, *Der Koran*, 33; 33; Brunner, ‘Ahl Al-Bayt’).

⁸⁹⁷ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya*, 60.

⁸⁹⁸ Arendonk, ‘Sharīf’, 331.

⁸⁹⁹ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya*, 60.

will be severed on the Day of Resurrection except mine”.⁹⁰⁰ Thus, agnatic and other relationships with the Prophet are the only guarantors for mercy on judgement day. As van Arendonk has shown, the belief that the *ahl al-bayt* are generally excluded from the punishment of hell and that ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and their families will be the first to enter paradise along Muḥammad has been quite widespread in the Islamic world.⁹⁰¹ The *ahl al-bayt* and the Prophetic *nasab* gain in this way also an eschatological meaning for the Sunnī as well as Shī‘ī believer. Rujaybī named this *ḥadīth* as a reason for the centuries-long occupation with *ansāb*, the keeping of progeny (*nasl*) and the link to the family of the Prophet as a separate discipline in order not to forget their origin and not to mingle their blood line with someone who does not belong to them. However, he emphasised this eschatological advantage only together with personal piety (*taqwā*). Only from the proper preservation of the *nasab* together with the quality of piety arise “important benefits and lots of advantages”.⁹⁰²

Such eschatological advantages apply not only to Prophetic descendants themselves as we learn from another *ḥadīth* in the book *The Unveiling of Grief in the Wisdom of the Imams (Kashf al-ghumma fī ma‘rifat al-a‘imma)* by the Shī‘ī ‘Alī b. Īsā al-Irbīlī from the thirteenth century. This book was, again, also consulted by Sunnī Sufis like Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī and his adherents and the said *ḥadīth* reads as follows:

There are four for whom I am an advocate (*shafi‘*) on the venerable judgment day: the venerator of my offspring, the satisfier of their needs, the messenger for them in their matters when they need one, and the lover of them with his heart and his tongue.⁹⁰³

For a Shī‘ī and a Sunnī Sufi, veneration, service, and love for the Prophetic offspring guarantees the Prophet’s advocacy on the last reckoning to enter paradise.

This whole ecumenical framework in the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* and *ashrāf* has been widespread in Iraq’s Sunnī Sufi communities which still dominated the Sunnī religious discourse over large parts of the twentieth century. When Sāmarrā’ī, Rujaybī and the Ba‘thists began to revive this framework in the 1980s, they did not invent something new but took up and reverted to long-standing traditions. These traditions

⁹⁰⁰ „Kull sabab wa-nasab munqaṭi‘ yawm al-qiyāma illā sababī wa-nasabī“, Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 8; Mu‘āḍidī, *A‘ālī al-rāfidayn*, 1990, 2:10; Arendonk, ‘Sharīf’, 335.

⁹⁰¹ Arendonk, ‘Sharīf’, 335.

⁹⁰² Rujaybī, *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, 8; see also Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Qabā’il wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 9.

⁹⁰³ “Arba‘a ana lahum shafi‘ yawm al-qiyāma: al-mukarrim li-dhurriyatī wa-l-qāḍī ḥawā’ijihim wa-l-sā‘ī lahum fī umūrihim ‘indamā idṭarrī ilayhi wa-l-muḥibb lahum bi-qalbihi wa-lisānihi” (Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya, 118).

constituted the lived Islam in regions such as Tikrīt, Dūr, or Sāmarrā' and simply reflected the Ba'th leaders' own societal background and origin. Section 5.1.6 will demonstrate that the Ba'th itself formulated the narrative of Iraq's sharīfian unity even more clearly during the Faith Campaign in the 1990s and tried to re-establish its own version of the *niqābat al-ashrāf* in Iraq, but the groundwork for this project had already been made in the 1980s, also with the help of Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī.

4.2.6. Conclusion

In the 1980s, the Ba'th regime commenced a new course of religious policies which enhanced the situation of Sufism considerably and laid the foundation of the state's official revival of Sufism in Iraq a decade later. With the beginning of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's presidency in 1979 and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, the regime inaugurated a religious propaganda campaign that was led by three Ba'thist figures with a clear Sufi-background, namely 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs 'Abd Allāh Fāḍil 'Abbās, and his Kurdish Secretary-General Bashīr 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Atrūshī. Back in the 1970s, the state had only tactically patronised Sufis in Kurdistan but generally neglected and marginalised men of religion in the Arab regions. The Ba'th's new outward religious campaign altered that situation completely. The state lavishly renovated derelict Sufi shrines and *takāyā* leading to their renaissance all over Iraq, promoted religious Sufi scholars and shaykhs in the media for its religious war propaganda, and granted them new career opportunities in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs as well as in the Ba'th's new institutes for higher religious education. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself propagated in an ecumenical attempt his alleged descent from the Shī'ī Imams, using his Rifā'ī Sufi genealogy and visiting shrines across the nation. His second man 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī became simultaneously the leading religious representative of the party and extended his role as Sufi patron.

Many leading Sufi shaykhs and religious Sufi scholars benefitted from this new climate, entered alliances with the regime, gained more popularity, and pursued quite successful careers for more than two decades to come. The examples of the two Naqshbandī shaykhs at large from Syria and Iran have demonstrated that the regime offered them a safe haven in Baghdad in exchange for their public support and in 'Uthmān II's case for his formation of a militia against Iran. In the Kurdish regions,

state sponsorship in exchange for recruitment into the National Defense Battalions increased drastically during the war as compared to the 1970s. Here, Sufi clans who commanded such battalions and entered political alliances with Baghdad, such as the Kasnazānīs, developed quite powerful positions. These relationships facilitated the Kasnazānīya's establishment in Baghdad and its extremely successful spread all over Iraq. Apart from the fruitful political climate and relations behind this success, the order's high emphasis of proselytism and advertisement as well as its ecumenical outlook played important roles as well.

Apart from the orders, also the religious Sufi scholars from the environment of the Sāmarrā' School made successful careers. These were recruited into leading positions in the Ba'th's new institutes for the education of "the new man of religion" in Iraq. The last two sections of 4.2 have illustrated how some of them publicly articulated certain ecumenical attempts during the 1980s. Fayḍī al-Fayḍī's project reflected the current spread of Wahhābī and Salafī ideas in Iraq and attempted to overcome their anti-Sufism with his own interpretation of a Salafī Sufism based on the thinking of Ibn Taymīya. Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, in turn, revived Iraq's sharīfism in accordance with the widespread *nasab*-tradition and veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* among Iraq's numerous Sufi elites. He contributed not only to the authentication and dissemination of Ṣaddām's Sufi genealogy but offered also a framework to overcome ethnic and sectarian differences for the sake of national unity. All these findings constitute indicators that Sufis and Sufism were about to rise again after a widespread stagnation over the previous decades. The Ba'thist state did its bit in this regard.

5. The Ba‘th’s Official Revival of Sufism, 1989-2003

The previous chapters have made clear that the Ba‘th regime was not interested in Sufism as such, but increasingly promoted Sufis throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In the first of these two decades, it pursued its secular policies and neglected, even marginalised, the Sufis. The only direct support for Sufis could be found in the Kurdish regions but merely as a tactical move to assure their loyalty against Kurdish nationalists. In the second decade, the Ba‘th contributed further to a gradual rise to prominence of many Sufis all over Iraq by incorporating them into a tremendous religious war propaganda, political alliances, and the growing need to recruit many Kurdish shaykhs and their followers to National Defense Battalions during the war with Iran. Finally, in the 1990s, state patronage of Sufis peaked with the Ba‘th’s direct public promotion of Sufism as the true form of Islam.

From the 1990s to 2003, the regime had achieved such effective control of the country’s religious landscape that it now felt able to fully employ Islam in politics and to articulate its religious ideas in a more unrestrained way than in the previous decade. Again, the sources in this study relating to the 1990s do not suggest a fundamental ideological shift of the Ba‘th regime towards Islamism as argued by Amatzia Baram.⁹⁰⁴ While at its core, the regime maintained a secular Arabist understanding of religion,⁹⁰⁵ it inaugurated its own National Faith Campaign and leading figures such as Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī outwardly fully embraced Islam. Many observers reported in parallel a general religious revival and a growing Islamic awareness in Iraqi society at large, even though most of the evidence for this religious revival remains rather anecdotal. These are two of the most striking observations in Ba‘thist Iraq during this decade, which to date have only partially been analysed in terms of the official political discourse, sectarianism, official religious policies, and the regime’s internal mechanisms of control.⁹⁰⁶ In this chapter I aim to scrutinise the Ba‘th’s embracing of Islam and the religious revival in Iraq more closely with respect to the crucial role and development of Sufism in this period. I will show that the Ba‘th regime openly promoted Sufism and the Sufi orders as a panacea for moral decay in society, against the growing threat of Wahhābism and Salafism, and finally, as a bridge to cross

⁹⁰⁴ Baram, ‘From Militant Secularism to Islamism’; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, chaps 5, 6, 7.

⁹⁰⁵ For further arguments of this nature, see Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, pt. III.

⁹⁰⁶ See for instance, Bengio, *Saddam’s Word*; Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, chap. 5; Osman, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 84–88; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, chap. 6; Helfont, ‘Saddam and the Islamists’; Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, pt. III.

sectarian boundaries between Sunna and Shī'a. The Ba'th regime itself strove for an official revival of Sufism and the Sufi orders in Iraqi society during the 1990s.

The full embracing of Islam and the need to support Sufism arose mainly from the political, economic, and societal crisis at that time. This could already be seen in the leadership's religious justification for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and it took shape in a more concrete way with the inauguration of the Ba'th's National Faith Campaign in 1993 for the spread of Islamic principles among all levels of society. The consequences of the Gulf War, the southern and northern uprisings against the state in 1991, and the international sanctions against Iraq left the regime in an unprecedented position of weakness. The country's infrastructure was largely destroyed, and the population faced extreme economic hardships and rising criminality rates. In these circumstances, Islam offered a useful means to restore order in society. With the deterioration of Iraqi-Saudi relations during the Kuwait crisis, the unrestricted influx of Wahhābism that had started in the 1980s was officially outlawed as a threat to state and society. Sufism, in turn, constituted a welcome religious force to counteract the spread of such Wahhābī groups and ideas. Finally, the regime's violent suppression of the uprising in the Shī'ī south resulted in further deterioration of sectarian relations between the state and the Shī'ī community within Iraq. The Sufis could counteract such sectarian divisions with their traditional transgression of Sunnī-Shī'ī boundaries and in this context, too, they became valuable allies.

Section 5.1 will, first of all, examine the Ba'th regime's tactical embracing and promotion of Sufism. The first subsection (5.1.1) is intended to provide background information about the Ba'th regime's perceived weakness and its struggle to survive during the 1990s, the growing threat of Wahhābism in Iraq, and the Ba'th's National Faith Campaign. It will summarise previous research on this period, supplemented by my own findings. The following sections will then focus on the role of Sufism in the Faith Campaign to overcome those problems. Iraq's second-in-command, vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, publicly praised of the Sufi path and the Sufi shaykhs during international Popular Islamic Conferences, foreign missions, and even in a Shī'ī environment during the birthday celebrations for Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Najaf. Particularly the latter instance shows how he attempted to make an ecumenical address to the Shī'a, with his Sufi veneration of 'Alī as source of the Sufi paths (5.1.2). The religious Sufi scholars from the circles in Sāmarrā', Ramādī, and Fallūja continued to occupy leading positions in other

Ba‘thist institutions of higher religious education. Most notable among them was the Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies and the party’s Higher Institutes for the Study of the Blessed Quran and the Esteemed Sunna, which were both designed to counteract sectarian fanaticism. The latter especially provided the ground for closer personal relationships between Ba‘th cadres and their Sufi teachers (5.1.3).

Within the framework of Ṣaddām University, in 1993 the Ba‘th began the official promotion of a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism in annual Sufi seminars on the national and international level. These scholarly events were intended to revive Sufism as the true form of Islam, to re-establish Iraq as the historical and international centre of Sufism, and, finally, to immunise society against radical religious trends (5.1.4). Aside from this scholarly promotion, the Ba‘th continued to rebuild Iraq’s architectural Sufi landscape and heavily invested in restoration projects for Sufi shrines all over Iraq. The salience of Sunnī Sufi and Shī‘ī saints also increased generally in the political discourse, since major cities in Iraq were increasingly associated in the press with the shrines of saints which are located in them. The state even overtly defended the people’s right to visit all of these shrines and thereby drew another clear demarcation line between Iraqi Islam and Wahhābism which condemns such practices (5.1.5). The role of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s alleged descendancy from the Prophet Muḥammad further increased in significance during the 1990s, both on the national and international level, and accompanied a growing interest in sharīfism among Ba‘thist elites and society at large. This development culminated in an attempt to institutionalise these sharīfian claims with a reorganisation of the old *niqābat al-ashrāf* in 2001. This official body for all Prophetic descendants incorporated, traditionally on the Sunnī side, the country’s Sufi *sāda* clans and aimed at the revival of their role as foremost bearers of the Islamic message in society.

Complementing the analysis of state policies, Section 5.2 will concentrate more on activities on the Sufi side in order to demonstrate how state policies and the political environment created further opportunities for Sufis and a revival of Sufism in Iraq. The first two sections present instances of how Sufis cultivated closer personal relations with the Ba‘thist state elite and how Sufism and Sufi practices were gradually even welcomed into the presidential family and his extended clan. By 1989, the presidential clan celebrated a *mawlūd* in memory of the president’s deceased cousin ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh, together with several Rifā‘ī and Kasnazānī Sufi *takāyā* mainly from their home regions Tīkrīt and Sāmarrā’. This intermingling of Sufi circles and

the Ba‘thist state elite continued until at least 2000 when the presidential clan held a Kasnazānī *dhikr* in a villa in Tikrīt (5.2.1). Another active Kasnazānī Sufi within the regime was ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, who allegedly established close personal relations with many Kurdish and Arab Sufi shaykhs, especially in Kirkūk. It was rumoured that he himself was a Sufi shaykh with his own followers, yet the evidence found during my research does not suggest more than a personal interest in Sufism and its public promotion, as well as a tactical cultivation of Sufi shaykhs as part of Ba‘thist policies of recruitment (5.2.2).

Apart from personal relationships between some Sufi orders and the state elite, we also find a more detailed literary promotion of the history of Iraq’s Sufi *sāda* clans in new genealogical encyclopaedias from the 1990s. These encyclopaedias represent a revival of the genealogical and tribal historiography of Iraq and clearly promote the ideal of a united country. They further legitimise the aforementioned personal relations between Sufis and the state elite since they present the presidential clan as well as ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s Abū Khumra clan as members of Iraq’s Sufi *sāda*. The presidential clan in particular appears here in the genealogical company of the very same Rifā‘ī Sufis with whom they celebrated the *mawlūd* in 1989. The stress of national unity, unity of religion, and service for the fatherland is particularly strong in the presentation of the Kurdish Sufi clans, many of whom were long-time supporters of the regime in the National Defense Battalions (5.2.3). The general idea of the Sufi contribution to national unity was also publicly articulated by the Sufis themselves and marks either an individual privilege and power, or a new freedom of political expression in Ba‘thist Iraq. This can be seen in a newspaper article from 1992 by a deputy of the Kasnazānīya who overtly advocated Sufism as the essential link between Islam and Arab nationalism (5.2.4).

In addition to this form of political articulation, leading religious Sufi scholars in Iraq began to publicly advocate for and defend Sufism and Sufi practices from an Islamic legal perspective. Three examples of a fatwa, a speech during an official *mawlid* celebration, and a broadcasted interview show their arguments for the lawfulness of a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism, the visitation of *takāyā*, the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday, and the prayer at shrines against anti-Sufi polemics (5.2.5). The final section will draw attention to a successful Sufi rapprochement with the Shī‘a during the 1990s, with a special focus on the Kasnazānīya and its many publications during this era and some additional examples from the Rifā‘īya. The Kasnazānīya in particular was

reasonably successful with its transgression of sectarian boundaries, which is manifested in the Shī'ī membership of the order, in a shared religious practice, in the emphasis of the shaykh's sharīfian *nasab* and *silsila*, as well as in the status of the *ahl al-bayt* in the transmission of spiritual knowledge (5.2.6).

All these sections provide instances of Sufi life in Iraq which could not be found in this form in the 1970s and early 1980s, and which clearly contradicted the Ba'th's earlier political conduct and principles. They demonstrate a revival of Sufism in Iraq under the supportive umbrella of the state.

5.1. The Ba'th's Tactical Embracing and Promotion of Sufism

After a decade of outward religious war propaganda, in the 1990s the Ba'th regime began another unprecedented move to actively spread a Ba'th-aligned Islam throughout all levels of Iraqi society and the Ba'th Party itself. Previously, the regime had employed religious symbolism and rituals in politics, it had tactically promoted men of religion, and had financed mosques and shrines throughout Iraq. Now, it explicitly aimed to disseminate Islamic principles to the population and the state elite through the obligatory study of the Quran and the Prophetic Tradition. Under the nominal auspices of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, it implemented the National Faith Campaign in 1993 and incorporated more religious scholars and shaykhs than ever into state services and into positions close to the leadership as advisors. As will be shown in the following sections, a key element of the Ba'th's active spread of Islamic principles in society was the propagation of Sufism as the one true form of Islam and an official revival of Sufism in the country – in fact, a renaissance of Baghdad as the historical capital of Sufism. The factors motivating such a move must be sought in the political and societal crisis as well as the regime's weakness at that time; it was, in fact, at its weakest point in history.

5.1.1. Regime Survival, the Threat of Wahhābism, and the Faith Campaign

In this section, I will give an overview of Ba'th policies in the 1990s and the National Faith Campaign, with the addition of my own findings in order to provide the necessary background information for the analysis which follows. I argue that the

Ba‘th regime’s political isolation and ideological weakness, the economic and societal crisis, the perceived moral decay, and the threat of radical Wahhābism and Salafism, prompted it to fully resort to Islam and to implement the National Faith Campaign.

The Iraqi state had emerged from the Iran-Iraq War overburdened with foreign debts, and the ensuing Gulf War, which resulted from Iraq’s disastrous invasion of Kuwait in 1990, left the Iraqi armed forces defeated and the country’s modern infrastructure destroyed. During the southern and northern uprising (*intifāda*) which followed in 1991, the regime temporarily lost control of fourteen out of eighteen Iraqi provinces and thereafter its ultimate authority over a now effectively autonomous Kurdish region. On top of this, in 1990 the United Nations imposed an embargo upon Iraq which resulted in a humanitarian crisis with widespread famine, the deterioration of health services, high mortality rates, and a rise of criminality. In short, the Ba‘th’s revolutionary struggle to unite the Arab nation was now definitively over. All that was left was a struggle to survive. From that point onwards, former state services had to be outsourced, for instance to tribes,⁹⁰⁷ and the regime entirely resorted to religion in order to reinstall order and morality in society. However, the official propagation of a return to Islam would have signalised the party’s obvious surrender and would have played into the hands of Sunnī and Shī‘ī Islamists who still posed a major threat in Iraq. The Ba‘th’s solution to this problem was even bolder than the propaganda in the 1980s: the party did not merely propagate a return to Islam but a renewal of the true Islam. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn now adopted the rhetoric of a sort of *mujaddid*, a renewer who strove to reverse the prevalent deterioration and corruption of Islam.⁹⁰⁸

The Ba‘th’s rhetoric of an Islamic renewal and revival fulfilled several purposes. After the invasion of its Arab neighbour Kuwait, the regime’s Ba‘thism and its goal of one Arab nation lost its credibility and was gradually superseded by Islam and the unity of the Muslim community. Islam as a religion offered relief to the population which was suffering from severe hardships, as well as a way of bringing back order and morality. Finally, these developments coincided with a growing threat of an intolerant Wahhābism and Salafism among the Sunnī population, which made offering a religious alternative inevitable. In order to spread its own alternative brand of Islam, the Ba‘th implemented the National Faith Campaign (*al-ḥamla al-īmānīya al-*

⁹⁰⁷ Baram, ‘Neo-Tribalism’.

⁹⁰⁸ For a detailed overview of these events, see Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, chap. 3; Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1992; Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1995.

waṭanīya) in 1993.⁹⁰⁹ This campaign was first and foremost an educational campaign and ironically reflected the widespread Muslim reformist and Salafi calls for a return to the original sources of the Quran and the Tradition of the Prophet (*sunna*).⁹¹⁰

In her analysis of an article from *al-Jumhūrīya*, Ofra Bengio highlights the major aims of this campaign as being the nationwide study of the Quran and the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, and the moral guidance of the youth and their protection from “‘drifting away’ towards ‘suspect’ ‘radical’, and ‘destructive’ religious movements.” She lists the guidelines as 1) “Teaching Islam according to the Qu’ran and the Sunna”, 2) “[T]o strengthen religious immunity”,⁹¹¹ 3) “Choosing textbooks which would be far removed from narrow or radical opinions”, and finally 4) “Teaching youth the history of the ‘destructive’ Islamic movements and ‘enlightening them about the true aims and evil intentions of some of the contemporary movements which use Islam as a cover for their political ends’.”⁹¹² According to Bengio, this campaign primarily addressed three major problems. First of all, the socio-economic crisis and growing criminality was threatening to tear Iraqi society apart; religion should serve as a moral and uniting force to prevent that. Second, the frustrated youth should be prevented from turning to radical forms of Islam as in other parts of the Arab world. Finally, it aimed to undermine oppositional propaganda efforts from Iran or Shī‘ī groups in Iraq.⁹¹³ Amatzia Baram argues that the focus on the Quran especially was intended to find a common basis for Sunna and Shī‘a in order to create an ecumenical Islam for both denominations.⁹¹⁴

An official recognition of Wahhābism and Salafism as major enemies in Iraq occurred for the first time in 1990. With the deterioration of Iraqi-Saudi relations in the wake of the invasion of Kuwait, the regime ended its previous strategy of turning a blind eye to Salafī activities in the country. Recent studies of internal Ba‘th Party files support this view. According to Aaron Faust, the Ba‘th Party recorded most Sunnī Islamist

⁹⁰⁹ Baram points to the deliberate use of “faith” instead of, say, “Islam”, showing that the regime remained faithful to the traditionally ambiguous Ba‘thist terms of ‘Aflaq. The official use of the latter term would obviously have excluded non-Muslim communities in Iraq. Yet, a little later, the term was explicitly defined as Islam (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 254).

⁹¹⁰ Baram draws an analogy to Muḥammad ‘Abdūh, Ḥasan al-Bannā, or Sayyid Quṭb but emphasises that despite Ṣaddām’s imposition of Quran and *ḥadīth* studies and *sharī‘a* law on Iraq, he still deviated from the programmes of those reformers through many non-*sharī‘a* freedoms in society (Baram, 255).

⁹¹¹ An issue that was vehemently rejected by Ṣaddām in his discussion with Ṭāhir al-‘Ānī during the Ninth Regional Congress in 1982 (Section 4.1.1).

⁹¹² Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1995, 392–93.

⁹¹³ Bengio, 393.

⁹¹⁴ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 254–55.

activities within the BRCC files beginning in 1990.⁹¹⁵ Whereas individual incidents had already occurred, such as the discharge of an army major for Salafī leanings in 1983, the regime now considered the fight against what it labelled “Wahhābism” a major issue. In 1990 it even organised a committee of high-ranking party members in order to develop a plan to combat such movements.⁹¹⁶ Joseph Sassoon points out that the regime officially banned Wahhābism at that time, just like the Da‘wa Party in the 1980s, as a deviation from real Islam and punished its followers, as enemies of the state, with the death penalty.⁹¹⁷ One defected Iraqi general similarly reported that the regime arrested thousands of religious men and pious people from the Sunnī areas north of Baghdad on charges of Wahhābism and Salafīya in 1994. They allegedly disappeared without a trace.⁹¹⁸ As late as 2001, the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs held a meeting with academics, religious leaders, and representatives of the security organisations to discuss the fight against Wahhābism. A presidential order instructed all party branches to gather signed declarations declaring it an infidel movement from the imams in their respective areas.⁹¹⁹

The spread of Wahhābī and Salafī-inspired groups in Iraq was still heavily supported from abroad: on the one hand, by centres of Wahhābism or Salafism such as Saudi Arabia who had a strong influence in adjacent regions in Iraq, such as Anbār province; but, on the other hand, also by Iran. Radical Islamist militias, who were inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood but subsequently developed a Wahhābī outlook, had emerged in Kurdistan with initial support from the Ba‘th regime under the umbrella of the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan (IMK) in 1987. From 1993 onwards, the movement – supported by Iran, but also by Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Lebanon in order to split the Kurds in Iraq – fought the more secular Kurdish parties of the PUK and KDP. Its leader was Mullā ‘Uthmān ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who had commanded Kurdish militias as part of Iraq’s National Defence Battalions (*afwāj al-difā‘ al-waṭanī*) in support of the Ba‘th during the Iran-Iraq War. From the mid-1990s

⁹¹⁵ For Faust, the files show “that these movements began to gain followers” (Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq*, 138). This is certainly correct given the general religious revival at that time. However, these files most probably show primarily that the regime started to be concerned with this Wahhābī trend at that time. With reference to the aforementioned accounts of Iraqi Salafis, it is more likely that the spread of Wahhābism had begun as early as the 1980s.

⁹¹⁶ Faust, 138.

⁹¹⁷ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party*, 11, 261.

⁹¹⁸ Baram, ‘An Iraqi General’, 27.

⁹¹⁹ Baram indicates that the Wahhābism label became even more useful in marking and getting rid of all disloyal Sunnī clerics and others alike (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 268–70). The meeting is also mentioned by Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party*, 261.

onwards, his movement established a stronghold in Ḥalabja and controlled this region, including Ṭawīla and Biyāra, from 1998 until 2000.⁹²⁰ Splinter groups of this movement evolved into more radical factions with ties to al-Qāʿida, such as Anṣār al-Islām (Adherents of Islam) in 2001. One year later, this group imposed its Wahhābī-inspired version of Islam in this region, and desecrated and destroyed the saintly shrines of the Biyāra Naqshbandī shaykhs, such as Ḥusām al-Dīn and his family. Upon that, the shaykh's descendants and their Naqshbandī followers gathered in public demonstrations calling on the Kurdish leaders Jalāl al-Ṭālabānī and Masʿūd al-Bārzānī for help.⁹²¹

In order to counteract such radical trends and to spread its own Baʿth-aligned brand of Islam, the regime established several new institutions of religious education, just as they had done in 1985. Back in 1989, the government had founded the mixed Sunnī and Shīʿī, international Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies in Baghdad.⁹²² In 1990, there followed the opening of the Ṣaddām Centre for the Reading of the Holy Quran (*markaz Ṣaddām li-iqrāʾ al-Qurʾān al-karīm*) to revive Iraq's traditions of Quran reading and interpretation (*tafsīr*) under the auspices of the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs.⁹²³ In 1997 and 1999 respectively, this centre and the Higher Islamic Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers, founded in 1985, were converted into the Ṣaddām Faculty for the Preparation of Imams, Preachers and Missionaries (*duʿāh*).⁹²⁴ With the beginning of the Faith Campaign in 1993, the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs commenced a new foundation campaign of religious schools of the preparatory level with a special focus on the study of the Quran and the *sunna* of

⁹²⁰ During the Iran-Iraq War, several armed Islamist oppositional militias emerged in Iraqi Kurdistan and united for the first time under the umbrella of the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan (IMK) in 1987. Headed by Mullā ʿUthmān ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the organisation also included more radical Islamist factions led by ʿAlī Bābir or Mullā Karīkār aka Najm al-Dīn Faraj. The latter group counted former Afghanistan veterans among its recruits who had fought with the Ṭālibān and maintained obscure links with al-Qāʿida. In the context of regular armed conflicts with Jalāl al-Ṭālabānī's PUK and Masʿūd al-Bārzānī's KDP during the 1990s, the more radical groups separated from the organisation and formed their own militias such as the Islamic Unification Movement (IUM), *Ḥamās* or the Soran Forces. These smaller splinter groups merged in July 2001 again and evolved from the Islamic Unity Front (IUF) to *Jund al-Islām* (Soldiers of Islam) and finally *Anṣār al-Islām* (Adherents of Islam) in December 2001 (Bengio, 'Iraq', 1995, 381; Bengio, 'Iraq', 1996, 343–45; McDowall, *A Modern History*, 380–87; 'Ansar al-Islam'; Shourush, 'Islamist Fundamentalist Movements').

⁹²¹ 'Anṣār al-Islām'; 'Attibāʿ al-naqshbandīya'.

⁹²² Ḥusayn, Qānūn jāmiʿat Ṣaddām li-l-ʿulūm al-islāmīya raqm (10) li-sanat 1989. More on this university will follow in Section 5.1.3.

⁹²³ Ḥusayn, Markaz Ṣaddām li-iqrāʾ al-Qurʾān al-karīm.

⁹²⁴ Only then did new branches of this kind of institute open in other Iraqi provinces (Ḥusayn, Qānūn kullīyat Ṣaddām li-iʿdād al-aʿimma wa-l-khuṭabāʾ wa-l-duʿāh raqm 19 li-sanat 1997; Ḥusayn, Qānūn al-taʿdīl al-awwal li-qānūn ṭalabat Ṣaddām li-iʿdād al-aʿimma wa-l-khuṭabāʾ wa-l-duʿāh raqm 19 li-sanat 1997). Baram wrongly dated its foundation to 1994 or 1995, (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 265).

the Prophet in order to prepare the students for the aforementioned Higher Islamic Institute.⁹²⁵ Lastly, 1994 saw the establishment of the Ṣaddām Higher Institute for the Study of the Blessed Quran and the Prophet's Esteemed Sunna (*ma'had Ṣaddām al-'ālī li-dirāsāt al-Qur'ān al-karīm wa-l-sunna al-nabawīya al-sharīfa*). This institute was neither under the supervision of the Ministry of *Awqāf* nor the Ministry of Education but was an integral part of the party secretariat and only intended to teach the Quran and *sunna* to senior Ba'ṯh Party cadres. By 2000, the institute had branches in Baghdad, Mosul and Baṣra.⁹²⁶ In its final years, religion had become so important that the leadership made the study of the Quran and the Tradition of the Prophet obligatory even for its own party members.

According to Baram, the regime's gradual imposition of a nationwide study of the Quran on Iraqi society reached an extent that had no precedent in the country's history. By 1992, about 60,000 students reportedly were taking Quran memorisation courses in the Ṣaddām Centre for the Reading of the Holy Quran and in Quran reciting courses for high school students during the summer break in mosques. By the mid 1990s, Quran recitation and memorisation were taught from primary school level up to adult level at universities, to judges and even to prisoners, men and women alike and all over Iraq.⁹²⁷ Prisoners could reduce their sentences by at least 10 percent by memorising Quranic *suwar* (plural of *sūra*), for example the four longest of these. In October 1995, the Iraqi newspapers announced that 4,000 prisoners from Abū Ghrayb prison had passed their examination and were eligible to gain freedom.⁹²⁸

All teachers, merchants, and judges had to undergo examinations of their knowledge of the Quran and jurisprudence (*fiqh*).⁹²⁹ By 1998, 4.5 million students reportedly have taken part in Quran courses and 25,000 Quran teachers were active, while preachers were further praising the campaign in their Friday sermons (*khutab*) as an important move for “deepening faith” among the Iraqi people.⁹³⁰ In the Ṣaddām Higher Institutes

⁹²⁵ Ḥusayn, Niẓām al-madāris al-dīniya; Ḥusayn, al-Ta'dīl al-awwal li-niẓām al-madāris al-dīniya raqm 2 lisanat 1993.

⁹²⁶ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 258–60. For the institute's position within the party secretariat, see Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ṯh Party*, 36, 285.

⁹²⁷ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 255–57. According to the former Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs, 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ, upon the request of Christian communities, Ṣaddām also permitted religious study classes about the Bible in all schools with at least 25 per cent Christian students (Interview with 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ, 12.05.2016).

⁹²⁸ Bengio, 'Iraq', 1997, 334. Christian prisoners could also allegedly reduce their sentence by memorising the Bible (Interview with 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ, 12.05.2016).

⁹²⁹ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 258–59.

⁹³⁰ Bengio, 'Iraq', 1999, 297.

for the Study of the Blessed Quran and the Prophet's Esteemed Sunna, middle aged and older full party members from the upper echelons were obliged to study Quran and *ḥadīth* full-time for between six months and two years. After a successful graduation following a written exam, all members received diplomas.⁹³¹ If they failed an exam, party members might be downgraded in their rank and might even lose their positions. According to the then Minister of *Awqāf* 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Šāliḥ, the aim was to strengthen the morals and conduct of party members through the study of the *sharī'a* and the righteous duties (*al-wājibāt al-ṣaḥīḥa*).⁹³² Inauguration and graduation festivities for these courses (*dawrāt*) were always covered generously in the press and attended by 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī.⁹³³ Back in 1982, the leadership had notably dismissed Ṭāhir al-ʿĀnī explicitly for his argumentation that party members needed a "religious immunity" (*ḥiṣāna dīnīya*) in addition to the party principles. Now, the leadership recognised that these principles were no longer sufficient and offered a new religious immunity to its members.

Eventually, this whole educational campaign provided further promotion and new opportunities for religious scholars in Iraq. According to Baram, "the need for Qur'an teachers became so great that professional clerics and even junior students of religion from both sects became a hot commodity on the education job market."⁹³⁴ Due to the lack of personnel for such a religious endeavour, in the early 1990s the regime announced the preparation of 30,000 new Quran and Islam teachers, 11,500 of whom were ready to begin teaching by December 1993. To attract more people to such an education, the salary level of Quran teachers was elevated above others through an additional monthly allowance of 100 to 150 dinars on top of their regular salary.⁹³⁵ The establishment of new religious schools (*madāris dīnīya*) focused on the Quran and *ḥadīth* and a staff of religious scholars was announced as well.⁹³⁶

Alongside these education campaigns, the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs sent out religious scholars across Iraq, as had happened during the Iran-Iraq War

⁹³¹ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 258–60. See also Sassoon's analysis, based on BRCC files, which also gives some information about the content of the curriculum such as the biography and history of the Prophet Muḥammad or Ṣaddām's speeches (Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party*, 266–67).

⁹³² Interview with 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Šāliḥ, 12.05.2016.

⁹³³ For the graduation of the third class in July and the beginning of the fourth class in October 1998, as well as at the beginning of the seventh class in October 2001, see Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 259–60. For the opening of a new branch in Mosul, see *al-Thawra* 12.04.2001, 4.

⁹³⁴ Baram, 257.

⁹³⁵ Baram, 256.

⁹³⁶ Bengio, 'Iraq', 1995, 392.

through the Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness (*lijān al-taw'īya al-dīniya*). In 1994, the head of the ministry's Religious Guidance Department, Sabīḥ Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, announced the initiation of mobile guidance units to reach out to rural areas as well. He stated the ultimate aim of his department as “‘to propagate the correct [sahih] religious preaching and guidance’ among the people so as ‘to immunize them against the deviating trends’ and ‘to expose some sick social phenomena’ which had begun surfacing due to the unusual circumstances in the country.”⁹³⁷ These “deviating trends” and “sick social phenomena” referred to the rising criminality and the growing Wahhābism among the Sunnī community. Only a few months later, an article in the newspaper *Bābil* denounced the spread of the “devilish” Wahhābī movement calling it a “cancer” which seeks sedition in Iraq with direct support from the Saudi regime. The author claimed that the movement paid its members and was active in all theological colleges as well as in mosques “to instigate sedition, confusion, and disturbances.” Calling on ‘Uday Ṣaddām Ḥusayn to put an end to the movement, he even blamed the party and security organisations of being unaware of its strength and incapable of dealing with it.⁹³⁸

Despite the early awareness of this threat in 1990, the regime obviously had difficulties in preventing these circles from influencing the Ba‘th’s various religious institutions. Perhaps as a result of their struggle to gain full control, the regime maintained a level of suspicion towards men of religion. Baram, for instance, argues that even during the Faith Campaign, Ṣaddām remained suspicious of all religious scholars and his alleged hatred of old school scholars, who were not the product of Ba‘thist controlled religious schools, increased even further. Baram’s evidence for this is one of Ṣaddām’s last top-secret orders from 23 January 2003; a time when the regime was already preparing for the foreign occupation. Next to the destruction of all state offices, electrical power and water stations, and the communications system, the order includes the following instructions: “Recruit dependable elements and direct them to the mosques”, “associate with the Islamic religious university in Najaf”, “associate with the Islamic parties”, “assassination of the imams and preachers of the Friday mosques and [ordinary] mosques.”⁹³⁹ The aims behind these commands, especially the last instruction, as yet remain obscure and should be interpreted with more background information from the internal files. Nevertheless, it could be a hint at the strong societal

⁹³⁷ Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1996, 336. Bengio’s transliteration.

⁹³⁸ Bengio, 335–36. The article appeared in *Bābil* on 12.06.1994.

⁹³⁹ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 297.

influence which, by that time, many imams and preachers enjoyed and which marked them as potential competitors for power after the breakdown of the state. Finally, it proves, once again, how far the regime was willing to go in order to survive.

All the aforementioned studies on the Faith Campaign clearly point out the regime's fears, needs, aims, and measures at that time – that is, why it resorted to its own spread of Islam and how it accomplished this. However, there still remains the unresolved question of what kind of Islam the Ba'ṯh envisioned for Iraq. Baram argues that it was a kind of ecumenical Islam between Sunna and Shī'a. He offers a discussion about this question through a process of elimination, by comparing Ba'ṯhist policies with the positions of Shī'ī and Sunnī Islamists and radical jihadists like al-Qā'ida or the Ṭālibān. At the end, he also mentions, to a very limited extent, the role of Sufism at that time.⁹⁴⁰ In the rest of this chapter, I will concentrate more on this central role of Sufism in the Ba'ṯh's adopted and propagated Islam with a particular focus on the religious Sufi scholars who had already been recruited in the 1980s. I will argue that the role of Sufism during the Faith Campaign was much stronger than previously anticipated. The Ba'ṯh propagated Sufism as the one true form of Islam. This can be illustrated in the following five sections, beginning with the most prominent religious Ba'ṯhist and figurehead of the Faith Campaign, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, and his public turn into a Sufi.

5.1.2. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's Public Promotion of Sufism

One initial indicator of the regime's direct promotion of Sufism and the Sufis was a public endorsement of them by the figurehead of the National Faith Campaign, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī. His religious rethoric during public appearances steadily increased during the 1990s and he came to be known as the foremost patron of the Sufis in Iraq. He was notably the only leading Ba'ṯhist who spoke out in favour of Sufism.

Throughout the 1990s, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī managed to further increase and secure his political power at various levels. He still headed, as vice chairman (*nā'ib ra'īs*), the regime's highest body, the RCC, as well as the Northern Affairs Committee in Kirkūk.⁹⁴¹ When the regime closed its ranks during the suppression of the southern and northern *intifāda* in 1991, he was promoted to the rank of a four-star general and finally

⁹⁴⁰ Baram, 295–328.

⁹⁴¹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, 371–72; 'Ānī, *Inhiyār al-'Irāq*, 103.

to deputy commander-in-chief of the armed forces in April 1991, even though he had never served in the army before.⁹⁴² In the late 1990s, Ṣaddām named also him as military commander of the northern region, granting him full authority over what was left after the Kurdish autonomy.⁹⁴³ ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm had already performed as the Ba‘th’s religious spokesman in the war propaganda of the 1980s. His role in this field grew further with the implementation of the Faith Campaign in 1993. Officially, the press presented Ṣaddām Ḥusayn as the leader and sponsor of this campaign, but ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm presided as chairman on several boards of trustees, constantly represented the president, and promoted the campaign in the public media. Thus, he became the figurehead of the Faith Campaign and remained the only member of the leadership who outed himself publicly as a Sufi.

‘Izzat Ibrāhīm appeared regularly as a speaker on religious topics at official occasions such as *mawlid* celebrations and other Islamic feasts, conferences, tribal meetings, the birthday of the president, or even the traditional prayer for rain.⁹⁴⁴ In contrast to his earlier appearances at such occasions during the 1980s, his rhetoric was now excessively religious and oversaturated with quotations from the Quran, *ḥadīth*, and the biography of the Prophet.⁹⁴⁵ In his rhetoric he increasingly emphasised the importance of religious values like sincere devotion (*ikhhlāṣ*), patience or perseverance (*ṣabr*), loyalty (*wafā’*), or truthfulness (*ṣidq*) as moral shields against the daily material hardship. In order for the Iraqi people to embody those values, he regularly referred to the need for spiritual inspiration (*ilhām rūḥī*) and divine assistance (*madad rabbānī*) through the Prophet Muḥammad, ‘Alī, or al-Ḥusayn.⁹⁴⁶ All these terms have their general religious – and not necessarily Sufi – meaning in Islam. Yet, *ikhhlāṣ*, *ṣabr*, and *ṣidq* are also spiritual states in Sufism and figure prominently in the books of the Kasnazānīya and other shaykhs.⁹⁴⁷

⁹⁴² Baram, ‘Saddam Husayn’, 211–13. Ṣaddām’s civilian faction in the party fought from the beginning to remove army influence from the leadership and government as well as to control the army with a network of different security services and special army units headed by his loyal tribesmen (see also Baram, ‘The Ruling Political Elite’; Baram, ‘The Iraqi Armed Forces’).

⁹⁴³ Ghareeb and Dougherty, *Historical Dictionary*, 64.

⁹⁴⁴ He attended the prayer for rain in the great Ṣaddām mosque in Baghdad where luminaries such as shaykh and Dr. ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa’dī preached (*al-Jumhūrīya* 03.12.1995, 4). The latter knows Iraq’s Sufi networks quite well as he himself was a student of shaykh Aḥmad al-Rāwī in Sāmarrā’ and had studied law under him as well as the *ṭarīqa* of the Rifā’īya (Interview with ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa’dī, 27.11.2015).

⁹⁴⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 27.02.1995, 4; 08.08.1995, 4; 09.08.1995, 1; 29.08.1995, 4; *al-Thawra* 05.11.1995, 4; 25.11.1996, 4; 15.12.1996, 4; 05.04.2001, 4; 21.05.2001, 4; 28.05.2001, 4; 23.04.2002, 6; 26.05.2002, 6.

⁹⁴⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 31.05.1995, 1, 2; 05.09.1995, 3; *al-Thawra* 15.12.1996, 4.

⁹⁴⁷ see Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya*; Sāmarrā’ī, *Qawā‘id al-akhlāq*.

In January 1995, he headed a conference for The Popular Supervision of Faith and the Raising of Religious Awareness (*al-riqāba al-shaʿbiya al-īmāniya al-ṭawʿiyya*) organised by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs with the detailed motto “Within the Scope of the Faith Campaign Lies the Necessity to Anchor the Foundations of Moral Excellence in Society through the Education of the Individual in Uprightness, Sincere Devotion, and What is Permissible (*ḥalāl*)”. Among the participants were regime officials from various ministries, scholars of Islamic sciences, as well as men of religion who discussed the legal (*sharʿī*) and spiritual (*naḥṣī*) means of treating “sick social phenomena”, such as usury or exploitation, from which Iraqi society was suffering as a result of hardship under international sanctions. As a central measure against those phenomena, they demanded the spread of Islam and the teaching of Quranic principles in order to create faithful individuals within society. The obligatory teaching of the Quran at all stages of school education had already begun in 1993 with the Faith Campaign, and at the end of the conference it was decided to extend it to universities and scientific colleges (*maʿāhid*) as well.⁹⁴⁸

While this religious rhetoric was still ambiguous enough that each person could attach whatever meaning he saw fit to those terms, ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm began to be more openly Sufi in September 1995. He opened the seventh International Popular Islamic Conference in Baghdad with an extensive introductory praise of God, the Prophet Muḥammad, and the other prophets and saints (*awliyāʾ*). Finally, while addressing the participants, he also eulogised the men of religion, shaykhs and their followers on the Sufi path:

Oh God give success to the active religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and the genuine shaykhs and those who follow them through beneficence (*iḥsān*) from among the people of the spiritual path and the truth (*ahl al-ṭarīqa wa-l-ḥaqīqa*), those for whom the best from Thou has gone before [Quran (21, 101)].⁹⁴⁹

As this speech was mainly concerned with Iraq’s battle against the “infidel” American and Zionist enemy under the international sanctions, ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm reminded the Sufi shaykhs here of their role in the anti-imperialist struggle. Ten years earlier, such a public embrace of the Sufis would have been unthinkable for a leading Baʿthist. ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm rhetorically embraced the Sufis here in an international context, in front of hundreds of foreign guests from across the Islamic world. He thereby gave the

⁹⁴⁸ *al-Jumhūrīya* 25./28.01.1995, 2, 4.

⁹⁴⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 05.09.1995, 3.

audience a clear signal that he and the Ba‘th supported this brand of Islam; the implicit opposition to Wahhābism signaled this sect as an enemy of the state.

Such statements and signals in support of Sufism continued until the fall of the regime in 2003. In March 2002, a newspaper article entitled “Before his Arrival in Beirut: Mr. ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm Visits Sites of Culture and Faith in Syria” appeared in *al-Thawra*. This article explicitly states that he stopped in Damascus during his foreign mission to Lebanon in order to visit the Umayyad mosque, including the shrine of “the glorious Arab (sic!) leader Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī” (Saladin) where he dedicated the opening sura (*al-fātiḥa*) of the Quran to the latter’s pure soul. At the shrine he renewed “the oath of the descendants for their noble forefathers” to defeat the modern Zionist and American crusaders, just like Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had done centuries before. At the end, he visited the shrine of “the greatest Sultan of the Sufis” (*sulṭān al-‘arīfīn al-akbar*) shaykh Muḥīy al-Dīn b. ‘Arabī and performed the sunset prayer (*ṣalāt al-maghrib*) there.⁹⁵⁰ Thus Ṣaddām’s right hand and leading Ba‘thist visited – as part of an official trip and in front of an international audience – the shrine of the most famous Sufi shaykh of Islamic history.

About five weeks later, he announced at the eleventh International Popular Islamic Conference in Baghdad:

Oh God take the hand of the religious scholars (*‘ulamā’*) and the genuine shaykhs and those who follow them through beneficence (*iḥsān*) from among the people of the *sharī‘a*, the spiritual path and the truth (*ahl al-sharī‘a wa-l-ṭarīqa wa-l-ḥaqīqa*), those for whom the best from Thou has gone before. Make us their followers and their beloved and gather us and them with the delegation of the most faithful beloved [Prophet], God bless him and grant him salvation, on the praiseworthy spiritual station (*maqam*) at the day [of judgement] when every soul will come and with it a driver (*sā‘iq*) and a witness (*shahīd*).⁹⁵¹

His public embrace of Sufism was not limited to an international context, as the following example shows. In 1996 at the birthday celebrations of Imam ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib in the Shī‘ī scholarly centre of Najaf, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm praised the Imam in his official speech with reference to ‘Alī’s ideal role, in his view, for Sufism and the Sufi orders:

As for the knowledge (*‘ilm*) of the path (*al-ṭarīqa*), the truth (*al-ḥaqīqa*), and the spiritual states of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), the masters of this faith and the spiritual rank (*maqam*), in all countries of Islam from the coast of the ocean to the borders of China, lead up to him [i.e. ‘Alī] in their paths. They drink from his sea [of knowledge], and they stand at his coast as the people learn the night prayer, the pursuance of the additional private prayers (*award*), and the execution of a supererogatory performance from him after the messenger of God, God bless him and grant him salvation. Part of his adherence to his private prayer (*wird*) was to unfold his mat between

⁹⁵⁰ *al-Thawra* 14.03.2002, 2.

⁹⁵¹ *al-Thawra* 23.04.2002, 6. The last sentence of his statement refers to Quran (50; 21).

the two lines in battle, and to pray the *wird* on it; the arrow would lie between his hands, the noise of the battle passing his ears to the right and the left, but he did not rise until his *wird* was finished.⁹⁵²

This Sufi rhetoric is remarkable, taking place during a celebration which is especially important for the Shīʿa and in a majority Shīʿa spiritual centre. Sunnīs also highly venerate Imam ʿAlī, although they do not attribute the same religious status as infallible imam to him as Shīʿīs do. Sufīs venerate him even more in this regard than other Sunnīs, whereas Salafīs and Wahhābīs do not venerate him at all. ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm’s praising of ʿAlī in Sufi terms – during this joint celebration of the imam’s birthday and under the auspices of the Baʿth – were a way to overcome these differences and to signal that they all venerate the same saints in the end. ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm used Imam ʿAlī’s role in Sufism and the Sufi veneration of him as a trans-sectarian bridge to Iraq’s Shīʿa community. Here Sufism, or more specifically the Sufi veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*, becomes a new dimension of the Baʿthist ecumenical Islam between Sunna and Shīʿa, with the shared love for the *ahl al-bayt* as the lowest common denominator. This emphasis on a shared love for the Prophet’s offspring among Sunnī Sufīs and Shīʿīs was articulated in the genealogical encyclopaedias of Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī in the 1980s.⁹⁵³ To what extent ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm’s attempt resonated among the Shīʿī scholarly circles remains an unanswered question. However, the fact that Sunnī Sufi orders in Iraq offer a certain ecumenical framework, as a result of a traditional and ritual closeness to the Shīʿa, could explain this political tactic. The last section (5.2.6) will analyse how close certain Sufīs actually came to the Shīʿa during the 1990s.

5.1.3. *Sunnī Sufi Scholars in Baʿthist Institutions during the Faith Campaign*

A further indicator of the regime’s official Sufi revival was the continued and ever-growing role of the religious Sufi scholars who entered the new Baʿthist religious institutes in the mid-1980s. The role of men of religion continued to be prominent during the 1990s, even though their coverage in the press saw a slight decrease in comparison with the propaganda during the Iran-Iraq War. They still made appearances as religious representatives at major occasions such as the celebration of

⁹⁵² *al-Thawra* 25.11.1996, 4.

⁹⁵³ See Section 4.2.5.

the new *hijra* year,⁹⁵⁴ the birthdays of the Prophet⁹⁵⁵ and the Shī‘ī Imams,⁹⁵⁶ Badr day,⁹⁵⁷ and the prayer for rain.⁹⁵⁸ The Popular Islamic Conferences also continued to take place in Baghdad during this decade.⁹⁵⁹ In the aftermath of the *intifāda* in 1991, which had dealt a massive blow to the regime’s legitimacy, men of religion – along with nearly all social groups of Iraqi society, including associations, unions, institutions, tribes and so forth – regularly appeared in the media giving oaths of allegiance to Ṣaddām Ḥusayn.⁹⁶⁰

Certain Sunnī religious scholars gained further prominence in higher positions, close to the leadership. A prime example is the Sufī scholar ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa‘dī (b. 1949) who, as graduate from the Fallūja and Ramādī Schools, had had quite a successful career under the Ba‘th. From 1967 to 1974 he had worked as a preacher in the *Dīwān al-Awqāf*, and from 1975 onwards as an imam and preacher in several mosques, for instance as a Friday preacher in the ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and Imam al-A‘ẓam mosques. From 1990 to 1995, he served as secretary general (*al-amīn al-‘āmm*) of the Popular Islamic Conferences’ organisational board.⁹⁶¹ In 1993, ‘Abd al-Razzāq became a member of the ‘Supreme Central Committee of the Faith Campaign for the Teaching of the Quran in Iraqi Schools’ within the Ministry of Education. Between 1995 and 2003, he served as advisor to the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs,⁹⁶² and from 1998 to 2003 as personal advisor to the presidential *dīwān* of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn.⁹⁶³ In early 2002, he received widespread publicity when he personally represented the president, heading a delegation to perform the ‘*umra* and *hajj* to Mecca on his behalf.⁹⁶⁴

⁹⁵⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 29.05.1995, 4.

⁹⁵⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 08.08.1995, 4; 13.08.1995, 4.

⁹⁵⁶ For the birthday of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, see *al-Thawra* 25.11.1996, 4; 22.09.2002, 6.

⁹⁵⁷ With ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa‘dī, *al-Thawra* 16.01.1998, 6.

⁹⁵⁸ ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sa‘dī gave the sermon (*al-Thawra* 03.12.1995, 4).

⁹⁵⁹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 10./11.01.1991, 6; The Eighth Popular Islamic Conference was held in 1998 (*al-Thawra* 26.01.1998, 1).

⁹⁶⁰ For the oath by Shī‘ī scholars, see *al-Thawra* 06./08.01.1999, 4; by Kurdish tribal leaders including Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī, see *al-Thawra* 12.03.1999, 3; by the servant and custodian of Imam al-Ghazzālī’s shrine, *al-Thawra* 14.05.2001, 4; by Kurdish shaykhs, 29.08.2002, 7; by „men or religion“, *al-Thawra* 28.09.2000, 4; 18.10.2001, 4.

⁹⁶¹ Qanā‘at Sāmarrā’ al-faḍā’īya, ‘Ḍayf Sāmarrā’’, pts 31:14-31:33.

⁹⁶² ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa‘dī’s most important teachers were Ṭaha ‘Alwān al-Sāmarrā’ī, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālīm al-Sāmarrā’ī, ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Dabbān al-Tikrītī (1910-1993), his brother ‘Abd al-Malik as well as the Pakistani scholar Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qādirī (Sa‘dī, ‘al-Sīra al-dhātīya’, 5 March 2009).

⁹⁶³ Sa‘dī.

⁹⁶⁴ *al-Thawra* 01.04.2002, 1.

Like ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa‘dī, many other Sunnī Sufī scholars from within the scholarly environment of the religious schools in Sāmarrā’, Ramādī, and Fallūja were recruited to the new Ba‘thist religious institutions in the 1990s. This recruitment constitutes a continuation of the practice in the Higher Islamic Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers, which had been in place since 1985. Here, I will mainly concentrate on the Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies and the Higher Institutes for the Study of the Blessed Quran and the Esteemed Sunna.

The Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies was the second and most prestigious project in the Ba‘thist higher religious education programme and had opened its doors in 1989. Originally, it was a joint Saudi-Iraqi project that had emerged from the Popular Islamic Conferences and heavily relied on financial aid from the other Gulf countries. However, all links to Saudi Arabia and its neighbours were cut after the Gulf War.⁹⁶⁵ It was officially designed to undermine sectarian fanaticism (*ta‘aṣṣub tā’ifi*),⁹⁶⁶ i.e. Shī‘ī Islamism and the growing Wahhābism in Iraq. Baram has described the elite character of this institution, the small numbers of its hand-picked staff and students, the high salaries for professional employees, and eventually the direct funding from the leadership.⁹⁶⁷ Initially the university was administered by an international board of trustees (*majlis al-umanā’*) from among “the most outstanding religious scholars of the Islamic *umma* and members of the organisation of the Popular Islamic Conference.”⁹⁶⁸ After the Gulf crisis, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn removed Saudi and other Gulf representatives from the board of trustees⁹⁶⁹ and made ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī its chairman.⁹⁷⁰ Its first president from 1989 to 1992, Dr. Bashār ‘Awād Ma‘rūf was directly appointed by the presidential office. Designed as an international university, students with a preparatory degree from all Muslim countries could enrol, but the proportion of Iraqi students was limited to fifty per cent. Upon successful completion

⁹⁶⁵ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 118–20.

⁹⁶⁶ Ḥusayn, Qānūn jāmi‘at Ṣaddām li-l-‘ulūm al-islāmīya raqm (10) li-sanat 1989, para. 3.

⁹⁶⁷ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 264–65.

⁹⁶⁸ Among the members of the trustee board were Dr. Ma‘rūf al-Dawālībī (Syrian who served in Saudi Arabia), ‘Abd al-Raḥman Sawār al-Dhahab (Khartūm), shaykh Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Abū Shaqrā (director of the al-Aqṣā mosque), ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Nimr (Egyptian minister of religious endowments), shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Walad ‘Adūd (Minister of religious endowments in Mauritania), shaykh Aḥmad Bazī‘ al-Yāsīn (Kuwait), shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nadwī (India), Mawlānā Shāh Aḥmad Nūrānī, Dr. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Muḥsin (Saudi Arabia, president of the Muḥammad b. Sa‘ūd University), Dr. Mūsā al-Mūsawī (president of the Islamic union in the East of the US), Muḥammad Riḍā Mujtahidī (Pakistan), Ṣāliḥ Kāmil Ṣāhib (Iqrā’ Association in Saudi Arabia), and others (see *al-Jumhūrīya* 02.04.1989, 2; 27.09.1989, 8).

⁹⁶⁹ Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 119.

⁹⁷⁰ Interview with Farḥān Kāzīm, a former Ba‘thist, 20.10.2015.

of an exam, and under the guidance by the organisation of the Popular Islamic Conference and the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs, the board of trustees also chose a number of graduates from religious schools. Students could graduate after four years with a bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies and Literature and continue with master's and doctoral theses. The state of Iraq also provided an annual stipend covering half of the university's average costs. The other half was provided by its endowment. The university encompassed three departments (*aqsām*), (1) one for language and studies of the Quran, (2) one for Islamic thinking, mission, and Islamic dogma (*al-fikr al-islāmī wa-l-da'wa wa-l-'aqīda al-islāmīya*), and (3) one for jurisprudence and its principles (*al-fiqh wa-uṣūluhu*).⁹⁷¹

Among the leading scholars at this university, again we find many graduates from the Ramādī and Fallūja Schools: in fact, the same scholars who had already worked in the Higher Islamic Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers. 'Abd al-Malik al-Sa'dī worked as a lecturer (*muḥāḍir*) at Ṣaddām University and even became a member of its trustees' board in 1992.⁹⁷² From among his brothers, 'Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Sa'dī (b. 1949) became a lecturer and dean of the Department of Islamic Thinking, Mission (*da'wa*) and Islamic Dogma (*'aqīda islāmīya*) from 1991 to 1995, as well as secretary to the university's director (*musā'id ra'īs*) and, for a certain time, deputy director (*ra'īs bi-l-wakāla*).⁹⁷³ In 1995, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Sa'dī took over as dean of the Department of Islamic Thinking, Mission and Islamic Dogma.⁹⁷⁴ 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Sa'dī was a member of the scholarly board (*majlis*) and trustees' board of Ṣaddām University from 1995 until 2003.⁹⁷⁵ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ānī lectured as a *muḥāḍir* at this university in 1993 and 1994, as well as between 1998 and 2003.⁹⁷⁶

My interviewees from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and from among the graduates of Ṣaddām University named two further academic luminaries, who actively promoted Sufism at that institution.⁹⁷⁷ The first was Dr.

⁹⁷¹ Ḥusayn, *Qānūn jāmi'* at Ṣaddām li-l-'ulūm al-islāmīya raqm (10) li-sanat 1989.

⁹⁷² In 1993, he also became a member in the Highest *Awqāf* Council (Sa'dī, 'al-Sīra al-dhātīya').

⁹⁷³ At that time he represented Dr. Muḥammad Majīd al-Sa'īd who served as the university's director from 1992-until 2003. Beforehand, 'Abd al-Ḥakīm had already been director of the Islamic college in Anbār (Ramādī) from 1975 to 1978 and lecturer as well as secretary to the dean at the Imam al-A'ẓam Faculty from 1986 to 1991 and also from 1996 to 1997 (Sa'dī, 'al-Sīra al-dhātīya', 6 August 2014).

⁹⁷⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya*, 14.03.1995, 4.

⁹⁷⁵ Sa'dī, 'al-Sīra al-dhātīya', 5 March 2009.

⁹⁷⁶ Ālūsī, 'al-Sīra al-dhātīya wa-l-'ilmīya li-l-duktūr 'Abd al-Qādir'. For his post as deputy *mufī* see my interview with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba'thist, 04.05.2016.

⁹⁷⁷ Interviews with Farḥān Kāẓim, a former Ba'thist, 20.10.2015; Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba'thist, 04.05.2016; and former Ba'thist D, 19.05.2016.

Ḥusayn Muṣṭafā Khudāyr al-Jubbūrī (d. 2010), about whom very little information is available. An imam and preacher in one of Baghdad's mosques and Rifā'ī Sufi, he was one of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's closest associates and became a lecturer at Ṣaddām University. According to my interviewees, he was the instigator of the Faith Campaign in 1993 and had allegedly approached 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī with this idea, who in turn convinced Ṣaddām to implement it.⁹⁷⁸ The second was Muḥammad Ramaḍān 'Abd Allāh al-Shawānī (1936-2014), a Kurdish professor from Kirkūk. Since the 1980s, he had pursued a successful career as head of the Department of the Foundations of Religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) at the Imam al-A'ẓam Faculty, in 1996 he became dean of the *Sharī'a* Faculty at Baghdad University, and later on dean at the Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies. In addition to these positions, he served as secretary general of the Highest Fatwa Organisation (*al-hay'a al-'alīyā li-l-iftā'*).⁹⁷⁹ At Ṣaddām University, he taught Islamic dogma (*'aqīda*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Quran, *ḥadīth*, the biography of the Prophet (*sīra*), and the method of awakening of fear and desire (*tarhīb wa-targhīb*) in proselytism (*da'wa*).⁹⁸⁰

Under the supervision of these and other lecturers, many master's and doctoral theses were written at Ṣaddām University, including on Sufism. However, the full list of theses shows a rather broad range of subjects, with Sufism as just one focus. Except for adhering to the regime's emphasis on a return to the Quran and *sunna*, the students' theses do not suggest a programmatic orientation towards or support of a specific branch of Islam such as Sufism. More important to the above-mentioned Sufi scholars than converting students to Sufism, was preventing their students from being attracted to radical religious ideas. From a total of 2,985 master's and doctoral theses which were submitted at the Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies between 1989 and 2003, only 99 (slightly more than 3 percent) cover topics with a clear link to Sufism. The majority deal with Quran exegesis (*tafsīr*), *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), dogma (*'aqīda*), proselytism (*da'wa*), grammar, philology, poetry, politics, history, geography, literature, education, agriculture, or economics. In terms of

⁹⁷⁸ Interviews with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba'thist, 04.05.2016 and Ḥasan 'Abd al-Karīm, a former Ba'thist 19.05.2016.

⁹⁷⁹ After a classical religious education under prominent Kurdish shaykhs such as Mullā Ridā al-Wā'iz and 'Abd al-Majīd al-Qutb, he had studied for several years in Egypt at al-Azhar and the 'Ayn Shams University. There, he wrote a master's thesis on the dogma according to Ibn Taymīya. Afterwards, he worked in Iraq for a few years as a teacher (*mudarris*) at the Imam al-A'ẓam Faculty and returned once more to Egypt for his doctoral thesis on the theology of Imam al-Bāqillānī between 1976 and 1978. After Egypt, he worked for a few years in the Emirates until the government ordered him to return to Iraq in 1983 (Zaydī, 'Liḳā' al-shaykh Muthannā al-Zaydī').

⁹⁸⁰ Interview with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba'thist, 04.05.2016. This Ba'thist was his student.

religions and sects, most theses focus on Sunnī and Shī‘ī Islam, but many others also cover Ibādism, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Some theses focused on sources for the intellectual authority of the modern Salafīya and Wahhābīya such as Ibn Taymīya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī, and Abū l-Thana’ al-Dīn al-Ālūsī. Studies were even carried out into the Ba‘th’s former arch-enemy the Muslim Brotherhood, looking for instance at thinkers like its Egyptian founder Ḥasan al-Bannā or the Syrian Sa‘īd Ḥawwā.⁹⁸¹ This last group of theses would be interesting to read, as the university was actually founded to undermine fundamentalist trends in Islam.⁹⁸²

In fact, the regime paid a lot of attention to university theses, particularly in cases where the students were Sufis, since ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī himself regularly attended vivas.⁹⁸³ Specific Sufi inclinations can be found not only among the Sufi scholars mentioned above but also among certain students. Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Samarra’ī, for instance, the aforementioned imam from the Ba‘th’s preparatory course for modern men of religion, specialised in Sufism and personally followed the Sufi path. He enrolled at this university after his graduation from the Higher Institute for the Preparation of Imams and Preachers, and wrote first his master’s thesis on “Companionship in Sufism”. Afterwards he enrolled in the university’s doctoral programme with a thesis about “The Foundations of Morality in Islamic Sufism” under the supervision of Muḥammad Ramaḍān ‘Abd Allāh.⁹⁸⁴ Regime luminaries, too, studied Sufism at Ṣaddām University. One of them was ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s son Ibrāhīm who wrote his master’s and doctoral theses on a manuscript of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Purification of the Mind (jalā’ al-khāṭir)*. This manuscript is an important text for the Kasnazānīya, as shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī had published an edition of it in 1989.⁹⁸⁵ Other students, of course, had Sufi leanings but did not specialise in this field. ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s daughter Hawāzin, for instance, wrote her thesis about the verses of the hypocrites in the Quran (*āyāt al-munāfiqīn fī al-Qur’ān al-karīm*).⁹⁸⁶ In all three cases, Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq, Ibrāhīm ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm,

⁹⁸¹ I received this list from Dr. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Ḥijjāj (see ‘Dalīl al-rasā’il al-jāmi‘īya’).

⁹⁸² Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to access most of the theses for this study.

⁹⁸³ See for instance the defence of the Qādirī and Rifā‘ī Sufi ‘Addāb al-Ḥamash al-Nu‘aymī at the Sharī‘a Faculty of Baghdad University in *al-Jumhūrīya* 04.12.1995, 4. For master’s and PhD vivas at Ṣaddām University, see *al-Thawra* 23.02.2000, 4 or the ninth al-Quds study course with 181 graduates in *al-Thawra* 27.06.2001, 4.

⁹⁸⁴ ‘Dalīl al-rasā’il al-jāmi‘īya’, 127; Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Ṣuḥba ‘inda al-ṣūfiya*; Sāmarrā’ī, *Qawā’id al-akhlāq*.

⁹⁸⁵ Jīlānī, *Purification of the Mind*, VII.

⁹⁸⁶ ‘Dalīl al-rasā’il al-jāmi‘īya’, 14, 37, 127.

and Hawāzin ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm were already Sufis before they enrolled at this university.⁹⁸⁷

In stark contrast, another – now famous – graduate from Ṣaddām University has made headlines since 2014 and indicates the equal presence of Salafī leanings among the students. The notorious Ibrāhīm ‘Awād Ibrāhīm al-Badrī aka Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, the leader of the so-called Islamic State, studied here as well and wrote his master’s thesis on Quran recitation.⁹⁸⁸ The information available about him suggests that, like some of his relatives including his father and one of his uncles, he already had Salafī leanings in those days and that he had joined the Muslim Brotherhood. Apart from such leanings and actions, two of his uncles served in the security services, two brothers served in the army, and some of his other family members were members of the Ba‘th Party. According to William McCants, these links to the regime undoubtedly helped Ibrāhīm to “get into the highly-selective graduate program.”⁹⁸⁹ The presence of such a figure proves that, despite its efforts to handpick the students for its elite university, the regime was not fully aware of their individual backgrounds. Representatives of Salafism and Wahhābism were able to make inroads into this institution as well – in Ibrāhīm’s case through family links to the party – even though Ṣaddām University was explicitly designed to undermine such extremist tendencies.

A third group of religious institutions, especially important for the Ba‘th Party itself, were the Higher Institutes for the Study of the Blessed Quran and the Esteemed Sunna. Here, too, religious Sufī scholars took responsibility for the religious education of senior Ba‘th cadres. One of them was the aforementioned Nizār ‘Abd al-Ghufār al-Nāṣirī, who became dean (*‘amīd*) of the Baghdad institute. In October 2001, *Al-Thawra* covered the institute’s celebrations for the opening of the seventh faith class, inaugurated by ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī and other regime figures. Nizār ‘Abd al-Ghufār al-Nāṣirī is cited in the article as giving the following address:

The entering, by the knights of the Ba‘th from the party’s senior basis, of the studies at the institute is in response to the mission (*risāla*) of the leader and object of self-sacrifice (*al-qā’id al-mafdiy*) [Ṣaddām Ḥusayn] to study of the holy Quran with understanding and reflection. Thus, they enter a glorious page in the book (*sijill*) of their heroic struggle [...] Clearly, the *jihād* of the soul (*nafs*) in the study of the religious sciences, the wisdom of faith, and their application, is to be considered a new type of struggle on the way to holy war (*al-jihād al-muqaddas*).⁹⁹⁰

⁹⁸⁷ As noted in Section 3.2.5, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm and his whole family were, according to Nehrū al-Kasnazānī, followers of the Kasnazānīya of shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kaszanānī.

⁹⁸⁸ His thesis was called *The Unique Pearls in the Explanation of the Shāṭibī Poem (al-lāli’ al-farīda fī sharḥ al-qaṣīda al-shāṭibīya)* (‘Dalīl al-rasā’il al-jāmi’īya’, 15, 123).

⁹⁸⁹ McCants, ‘The Believer’, 1 September 2015; McCants, *The Believer*, 2015.

⁹⁹⁰ *al-Thawra* 18.10.2001, 4.

Interestingly, he uses the word “*risāla*” for Ṣaddām’s order and compares it to the Ba‘th’s revolutionary, eternal mission (*risāla khālida*) in a lofty analogy to the heavenly message of the Prophet Muḥammad. He presents the whole educational effort in light of the spiritual *jihād* of the soul, with holy war as the ultimate aim. His usage of the term *jihād al-naḥs* does not appear to be obviously Sufi yet, but Nizār ‘Abd al-Ghufār’s later participation in the regime’s official promotion of Sufism does.⁹⁹¹ One year later, he gave a presentation about the soul and its secrets in Sufism during an international seminar to promote Sufism at Ṣaddām University.⁹⁹²

Another religious Sufi scholar at the institute was the aforementioned Ḥusayn Muṣṭafā Khuḍayr al-Jubbūrī. His case proves that senior Ba‘th cadres developed close personal relationships with their teachers in those religious classes. Ḥusayn Muṣṭafā Khuḍayr worked as a lecturer at the institute and taught the Quran. Two of my interviewees studied under him in the fourth Quran course (*dawra*) at the Baghdad institute in 1999. The course was attended by about twenty to thirty party functionaries, lasted one year, and ended with an exam (*imtiḥān*).⁹⁹³ For my interviewees these classes were not simply a tick-box exercise. They held Ḥusayn Muṣṭafā Khuḍayr in high esteem and commended him as a true Rifā‘ī Sufi in his morals (*akhlāq*) and his spiritual method (*manhaj*). Outside of their Quran classes, they even befriended Ḥusayn Muṣṭafā Khuḍayr and spent their free time with him. From time to time, they met in his or ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s house for the *dhikr* and eulogies about the Prophet and other saints (*madā’ih*).⁹⁹⁴

One of those interviewees, a member of the Ba‘th Party and a physicist who had worked in Iraq’s atomic programme, wrote his second doctoral thesis about the Sufi shaykh Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī under Ḥusayn Muṣṭafā Khuḍayr.⁹⁹⁵ He presented his thesis (*Imam al-Rifā‘ī, his Praiseworthy Qualities and his Noble Nature*) during a seminar on Sufism at Ṣaddām University in 1995. During our interviews, he differentiated between his “true Sufism”, which he mainly associated with the education of morals

⁹⁹¹ See the seminars on Sufism in the next section (5.1.4).

⁹⁹² See in Section 5.1.4.

⁹⁹³ Interviews with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba‘thist, 04.05.2016; Maḥmūd Shākīr, a personal advisor to the presidential *dīwān* of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, 18.05.2016; Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Karīm, a former Ba‘thist, 19.05.2016.

⁹⁹⁴ Interviews with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba‘thist, 04.05.2016 and Maḥmūd Shākīr, a personal advisor to the presidential *dīwān* of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, 19.05.2016.

⁹⁹⁵ The committee which examined his dissertation also included Muḥammad Ramaḍān ‘Abd Allāh and Nizār ‘Abd al-Ghufār al-Nāṣirī, the dean of the higher institute that taught Ba‘th cadres the Quran (Interview with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Ba‘thist, 04.05.2016).

and values, and mere “dervishism” (*darwasha*), which he characterised as containing all kinds of exaggerations like miracle performances, magic (*siḥr*) and wild dancing. According to him, “true Sufism” is based on moral education oriented towards the Quran and the *sunna* of the Prophet. He sees the life of Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī as an ideal expression of this.⁹⁹⁶ Examples like his make clear that, at least for certain senior members of the party, a *sharīʿa*-minded Sufism started to become attractive during the religious classes of the Faith Campaign. Religious Sufi scholars recruited by the regime, like those mentioned above, played a large role in this development.

Did this reflect a departure from Baʿthism towards Islamism? Giving Baʿth Party members religious immunity from radical Islam, through the obligatory study of Islamic principles according to the Quran and *sunna*, seems to contradict Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s stance during the Ninth Regional Party Congress in 1982. The congress resolutions put Baʿthist principles above everything else and left no room for a religious immunity from moral corruption or extremist religious tendencies, as was being argued for by the dismissed Ṭāhir al-ʿĀnī. However, the Baʿth was still secular and was certainly not interested in the establishment of an Islamic state. On the contrary, the religious education of Baʿth cadres was explicitly designed to prevent Baʿthists from drifting towards or being attracted to radical Islamist ideas. The religious Sufi scholars listed above were a reasonable choice for this task. The regime was well aware of the Islamic resurgence in the country and wanted to teach party members the right form of Baʿth-aligned Islam in accordance with Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s “mission” and the congress resolutions of 1982. Those resolutions still formed a central part of the curriculum.

5.1.4. *The Baʿthist Promotion of a Sharīʿa-Minded Sufism at Ṣaddām University*

The clearest expressions of the Baʿth advocating for Sufism can be found in the public activities of the Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies. While the university’s departments – and the master’s and doctoral theses written there – do not suggest a primary focus on Sufism beyond individual personal endeavours of the lecturers discussed above, the public activities of the university do. With the inauguration of the Faith Campaign in 1993, Ṣaddām University started to host annual public lectures,

⁹⁹⁶ Interviews with Ḥalīm Thāmir, a former Baʿthist, 11.11.2015 and 04.05.2016.

conferences, and seminars about various religious topics. Among the most prominent ones were annual seminars on, respectively, the Prophet Muḥammad,⁹⁹⁷ held on his birthday (*mawlid al-nabī*), and on Sufism. At that time the university's trustee and scholarly boards included, among their members, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, Minister of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-Tikrītī, and the three Sa'dī brothers, 'Abd al-Malik, 'Abd al-Ḥakīm, and 'Abd al-Razzāq. Their seminars (*nadawāt*) were broadly advertised throughout Iraqi media and broadcasted on Iraqi TV. Everyone from party members, to religious scholars and Sufī shaykhs could participate and make a presentation at these events. Afterwards, all contributions were collected, published in volumes and stored in the university's archives.⁹⁹⁸

Like all projects and initiatives during the Faith Campaign, these conferences and seminars also focused on the discussion about the moral religious education of the Iraqi people. According to 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ, these conferences were related to

the treatment of some negative phenomena [–] which emerged in our society due to the continual existence of the blockade (*ḥiṣār*) [–] such as inflicting usury (*ribā*), exploitation (*istighlāl*), theft (*sarqa*), and bribery (*rishwa*) on one another.⁹⁹⁹

Apart from moral issues and criminality, the seminars aimed to immunise the Iraqi people – and especially the youth – from radical forms of Islam.¹⁰⁰⁰ In fact, the Ba'ṯh, considered Sufism as a central means of such a moral education and immunisation. It is not clear how far this policy was influenced or instigated by 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, who was a well-known Sufī sympathiser and patron by then. As the highest-ranking Sufī within the Ba'ṯh Party, he was most probably behind it. This is further suggested by the fact that he always appeared as a key representative figure at these events.

Ṣaddām University held its first series of public lectures on Sufism in March 1993 with 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's son Ibrāhīm as a speaker.¹⁰⁰¹ In March 1995, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm personally introduced a public seminar (*nadwa*) on “The Islamic Sufism and Its Role in the Creation of a Balanced Islamic Personality” at Ṣaddām University. This

⁹⁹⁷ See for example the sixth seminar on the personality of the holy messenger Muḥammad in 2000 (*al-Thawra* 04.06.2000, 1). The events were usually attended by regime figures like 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī and 'Abd al-Bāqī 'Abd al-Karīm al-Sa'dūn. The latter was notably a Shī'ī (*al-Thawra* 04./05./06.06.2002, 6).

⁹⁹⁸ Interview with 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-Tikrītī, 12.05.2016.

⁹⁹⁹ *al-Thawra* 28.01.1995, 4.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Bengio, 'Iraq', 1995, 392–93.

¹⁰⁰¹ *al-Qādisīya* 16.03.1993 and *al-Thawra* 31.03.1993 mentioned by Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 397 Fn. 70, 407 Fn. 73.

title obviously highlights Sufism's role in moral education and the formation of the self. Other prominent co-organisers were the Minister 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ and the university's director Dr. Muḥammad Majīd al-Sa'īd.¹⁰⁰² Elsewhere in *al-Jumhūrīya*, the motto of the seminar was stated as "The All-knowing Sufism is the Ideal Way for the Realisation of the Pure and Humble Veneration of God, Lord of the Worlds". According to a statement by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Sa'dī, dean of the Department of Islamic Thinking, Mission and Islamic Dogma,

the seminar aims at the strengthening of the course of the great Faith Campaign, which the president and struggler Ṣaddām Ḥusayn guides, as well as at the presentation of Islamic Sufism in its capacity as knowledge (*'ilm*), manners (*sulūk*), and morality (*akhlāq*), which reach back into the depth of our Islamic history as an extension of that history itself.¹⁰⁰³

In this statement, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd stressed a historical continuity of Sufism which is definitively rooted in Islam. This was a rebuttal of widespread anti-Sufi polemics at that time. His brother, shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Sa'dī, head of the seminar's preparatory council, pointed out, with a quotation from the fifteenth-century shaykh Zakarīyā' al-Anṣārī, that "Sufism is the purification of the souls and of morality, and the life for the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*." With emphasis on both *ẓāhirī* and *bāṭinī* dimensions, here 'Abd al-Ḥakīm advocated the centrality of *sharī'a* in Sufism. This reflects the *sharī'a*-mindedness as expressed in Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī's 1970 book on Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī. Using the ultimate example of the Prophet Muḥammad, he went further, highlighting that

our lord and beloved of God, Muḥammad (ṣ) gathered with the Muslim believers through his saying (*qawl*): 'Come together, let's devote ourselves one hour to religious exercises for our Lord and seek His favour (or: come close to Him)' (*ta'ālū nataṣawwaf sā'a li-rabbīnā wa-nataqarrab ilayhī*). So, let us seek in these hours the favour of God and let us pray to Him for the lifting of the sanctions from our people.¹⁰⁰⁴

The authenticity of this alleged "quote" appears questionable. It is obviously intended to legitimise Sufism and its practices by establishing alleged roots in the Tradition of the Prophet, though the author of the article uses *qawl* and not *ḥadīth*. The source of this tradition is not given, nor is any *ḥadīth* collection stating the Prophet's use of the verb *taṣawwafa* known.

¹⁰⁰² According to one interviewee from the Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Research, Muḥammad Majīd al-Sa'īd was also privately attracted to Sufism (Interview with Farḥān Kāzim, a former Ba'thist, 24.01.2016). Originally from Tikrīt, he had previously served both as dean at Baṣra University and as director of Mosul University. In his academic research he specialised in Arabic poetry and in 2003 published a book about the Indian Sufi reformer Aḥmad Riḍā Khān al-Barīlwī (Sa'īd, *Shā'ir min al-Hind*).

¹⁰⁰³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 14.03.1995, 4.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 15.03.1995, 2.

The participants of the seminar discussed Sufism under four different headings: 1) the growth and development of Sufi thinking; 2) the pedagogical and behavioural aspects of Islamic Sufism; 3) the great personalities of Sufism; and 4) contemporary Sufism.¹⁰⁰⁵ Within these headings, specific topics included:

- The Imams in Sufism are Imams of Knowledge;
- The Purification of Souls is a Fundament that the Prophet (ﷺ) Revived (*ba'atha*);
- Imam al-Rifā'ī, his Praiseworthy Qualities and his Noble Nature;
- The Growth and Development of Sufi *tafsīr*;
- The Role of the Educating Shaykh (*al-shaykh al-murabbī*) on the Path to God, the Sublime;
- The Role of Sufism in Holy War (*jihad*) and Conquest;
- The Meaning of the Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).¹⁰⁰⁶

These topics reflect the aforementioned *sharī'a*-minded Sufism, or moral-ethical mysticism, with its strong orientation towards the Prophet, Sufi Quranic interpretation and Sufi moral education (*tarbiya*). A topic such as Sufism and holy war is typical for that time, under the sanctions during which the regime sought to strengthen and mobilise the population against its western enemies with holy war rhetoric. Regarding the unity of being, it would be interesting to see how critical the contributions on this topic were. With respect to the scholarly background of central organisers and participants at these events, like the Sa'dī brothers, it is quite likely that they shared Ibn Taymīya's and Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī's reformist position. All in all, the topics fit well within the general framework of the Faith Campaign with its emphatic return to the Quran and *sunna*.

These seminars were further extended to an international level in April 2001. At that time, Şaddām University hosted the first international seminar (lasting over three days) on "The Truth of Sufism and its Growth", attended by shaykhs, researchers and religious scholars from various Muslim countries. The title of the event and the organisers' public statements illustrate once more that these were not religiously neutral study groups but rather platforms to promote Sufism as the true form of Islam. According to Muḥammad Majīd al-Sa'īd,

the harbingers of Sufism appeared with the dawn of the Islamic mission (*da'wa*) and began to grow with the exaltedness of Islam and the spread of its tolerant dogma, because Sufism means purity (*naqā'*), clarity (*ṣafā'*), and purification of the self (*dhāt*) from faults. Sufism is inborn

¹⁰⁰⁵ *al-Jumhūrīya* 14.03.1995, 4.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 15.03.1995, 2.

and emanates from the depths of the human, from the bottom of the mind (*damīr*) and sentiment (*wijḍān*) and is in harmony with the clarity of Islam's essence, its purity and simplicity.¹⁰⁰⁷

The head of the preparatory council of this seminar, Dr. 'Abd al-Ghafūr al-Qaysī, confirmed that the ultimate aim was the re-emergence of a purified (i.e. reformed) Sufism in Ba'ṭhist Iraq.

In the days of the 'Abbāsids, Baghdad had been the capital of Islamic thinking and its fortified castle. It had also been the capital of Sufism and its centre, and today – God willing – will the movement of virtuous and pure Islamic Sufism once more emanate purified from corruption and forgery.¹⁰⁰⁸

'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī contributed to the seminar with a speech about the relationship between shaykh and *murīd* among the Sufi orders. According to the journalist who reported on the event, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm allegedly “tried to revive what was at his disposal in this matter as rumour has it that Dūrī has a *takīya* in a quarter of Baghdad in which he meets shaykhs of the *ṭarīqa* and dervishes (*darāwīsh*) every week”. Furthermore, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm is quoted as follows:

The seeker of happiness and of the ranks of perfection must be bound by the oath (*'ahd*) between himself and his shaykh. This oath is built on the means the shaykh has at his disposal, like wisdom, knowledge, and consciousness (*rushd*), which the novice (*murid*) does not have. [This applies] even if the novice possesses the means to observe the precepts of religion (*taklīf*) [–] precedence (*afḍaliyya*), knowledge (*'ilm*), and stations of closeness [to God] (*maqāmāt al-qurb*) [–] to a greater extend than the shaykh does.¹⁰⁰⁹

Why would a novice need a shaykh who is less religiously observant and less close to God than himself? This was most likely intended to illustrate the absolute nature of the oath of allegiance between shaykh and *murīd*. It seems unlikely that 'Izzat Ibrāhīm would suggest that a shaykh could have spiritual wisdom, knowledge and consciousness at his disposal even without being a more devout Muslim than his followers as regards the *zāhirī shar'ī* dimension of Islam, i.e. the observation of the divine law. This would be contrary to the *sharī'a*-minded Sufism of the other participating scholars.

Among the other contributions to the seminar was a lecture by shaykh Akram 'Abd al-Wahhāb¹⁰¹⁰ on “The Sufi Touch in *sūrat al-Kahf*.” Rasūl Ḥammūd emphasised in his study on the truth of the human in the light of the Quranic verses, the worth of

¹⁰⁰⁷ 'Abd al-Amīr, 'Nadwa 'an al-taṣawwuf'.

¹⁰⁰⁸ 'Abd al-Amīr.

¹⁰⁰⁹ 'Abd al-Amīr.

¹⁰¹⁰ He graduated from the Islamic institute in Mosul in 1974, the Imam al-A'ẓam Faculty in Baghdad in 1978, as well as Baghdad University with a master's in 1992 and a doctorate in 1996, both in Islamic philosophy. In 1976, he had already been initiated into the Qādirīya of shaykh shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Brīfkānī (Ḥasanī, 'Tarjamat majīznā').

beneficence (*ihsān*) against infamy and misdeeds, which is mentioned over 200 times in the Quran. ‘Abd al-Sattār Ḥāmid al-Dabbāgh¹⁰¹¹, in his contribution “The Benefits of Sufism among the Rightly Guided Califs”, argued against those who claim that the origin of Sufism is not Islamic. The Jordanian shaykh Ḥāzim Nāyif Abū Ghazāla gave his lecture on “Sufism in the Epoch of the Companions” a rather political tone. He argued that “the apex of Sufism is holy war, and this is the path of the companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and those who follow in their footsteps until the liberation of our sanctuaries from the filth of the hateful Zionist occupation.” Shaykh Usāma ‘Abd al-Fatāḥ al-‘Ānī spoke in his presentation “Sufism in the States of the Former Soviet Union” about the strong role of Sufi orders in the Islamic awakening there. Other topics dealt with “The Participation of the shaykhs of the Qādirīya order in the spread of the Islamic mission (*da‘wa*) in India” by the Pakistani scholar Muḥammad Ḥusayn Azādī al-Qādirī; or “The Truth of Sufism in the Quran and the Pure Prophetic Sunna” by the Jordanian shaykh ‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Abd al-Raḥīm; or “The Shaykhs of the Suhrawardīya and their Role in the Spread of the Call for Islam and Holy War (*jihad*)” by the Pakistani Muḥammad Sharīf al-Sayyālīwī.¹⁰¹² While moral education prevailed as a focus in the previous seminars, the contributions at an international level obviously reveal a more politically activist stance of Sufism, stressing missionary activity and holy war.

A final international seminar was held in May 2002, attended by further regime luminaries from the RL, ‘Azīz Ṣālīḥ Nūmān and the Shī‘ī ‘Abd al-Bāqī ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Sa‘dūn.¹⁰¹³ The participants discussed similar topics to those at the previous seminars such as “The Struggle of the Soul, its Roots, Limits, Varieties, and Results”, “Private Worship (*wird*) among the Sufis”, “The Oath of Allegiance (*bay‘a*) among the Sufis and its Roots in the Quran and the Sunna”, “Place and Time among the Sufis”, and finally “Shaykh and *Murīd*”. The various sessions were directed by regime associates such as Ḥusayn Muṣṭafā Khudāyr al-Jubbūrī or the Naqshbandī shaykh Ḥamad al-Zawbi‘ī. The dean of the Ṣaddām Higher Institute for the Study of the Holy Quran and the Esteemed Sunna, Nizār ‘Abd al-Ghufār al-Nāṣirī, gave his aforementioned talk about the soul and her secrets in Sufism.¹⁰¹⁴ Speaking about the aims of the seminar, Muḥammad Majīd al-Sa‘īd again demanded the revival of Sufism

¹⁰¹¹ From 1995 until 2001, he was dean of the Islamic Studies Faculty at Baghdad University (see *Wizārat al-ta‘līm al-‘ālī wa-l-baḥṭh al-‘ilmī*, ‘Asmā’ ‘umadā’).

¹⁰¹² ‘Abd al-Amīr, ‘Nadwa ‘an al-taṣawwuf’.

¹⁰¹³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 08.05.2002, 1,2; *al-Thawra* 07.-09.05.2002, 6.

¹⁰¹⁴ *al-Thawra* 18.10.2001, 4.

as the essence of true Islam.¹⁰¹⁵ He pointed out that Sufism is not an ideology which came from outside of Islam but emerged from within Islam itself. It is “the manners and thinking of the bearers of the heavenly message of our Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ).” He described Sufism as a knowledge (*‘ilm*) that leads to the purification of the soul, transparency of the mind, exaltedness of man, clarification of mental perception, freedom (*tajarrud*), abstinence (*ta‘affuf*), and truthfulness with the self (*dhāt*) following truthfulness with God.

It is not as some assume full seclusion or renunciation from life and society, from the people and their problems and from their efforts. It is neither abstruseness nor withdrawal into oneself nor ecstasy, nor as some describe it, jugglery, trickery, feeble mindedness, and filthiness which has no foundation in the true Islamic religion.

In contrast to that, he associated Sufism with struggle (*kifāh*), interaction with life (*tafā‘ul ma‘a al-ḥayāh*), hope (*amal*), openness (*tafattuḥ*), cooperation (*ta‘āwun*) and purification of the human self.¹⁰¹⁶ As usual, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī addressed the participants with a truly remarkable speech that would have simply been impossible for the Ba‘th regime’s second-in-command about ten years earlier:

The religious scholars and professors of Islamic studies must work with seriousness and sincere devotion to uncover the fraud that harms the path of the true Islamic religion: the purification (*tanqīya*) of the dogma (*‘aqīda*) and of the method (*manhaj*) of Sufism [–] as well as connecting (*rabṭ*) that to its true place in religion [–] is their fundamental duty. This means the reinstatement of the dogma and the Islamic and faithful path to what it was under the first of our beloved and righteous forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) [–] God bless them, their people, their companions and grant them salvation [–] because Sufism is Islam, faith (*īmān*), beneficence (*iḥsān*), *sharī‘a*, spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*), and truth (*ḥaqīqa*). The Sufi is one who takes the whole religion with profundity and strength to embody the saying of the Sublime: “Hold firmly to what we have given you” [Quran (2, 63)]. He believes in taking religion with profundity and does not stop at the exterior dimension of the *sharī‘a*. This leads him to the highest and unending degrees of beneficence (*iḥsān*). Sufism is not a state or a part of religion, Sufism rather is the whole of religion, i.e. the Book and the *sunna*, and he who deviates from the Book and the *sunna*, deviates from Sufism. The goal of the Sufis is to seek God’s, the Sublime and Praiseworthy’s, favour (or: to come close to him) through struggles, private worship (*awrad*), and morality (*akhlāq*), which they take on as a path for their life just as it is described in the holy saying of the Prophet (*ḥadīth qudsī*) “My servant continues to seek my favour through supererogatory performances until I love him”. [...] The aim of these seminars [...] is the return of an Iraq of glory and of fighters as it was in earlier times: the international centre for the spread of knowledge, faith, and true and right guidance, as well as the centre for the spread of the true religious, Islamic, faithful path; this is true Sufism based on the Book and the *sunna*. Iraq is qualified for all this, especially today under the guidance of the leader of the caravan of faith, the caravan of the righteous and fighters, the scion of their pure offspring [i.e. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn], because we began, thanks to God and his sacred and faithful guiding forces, with the right steps and we must reach this goal, God willing. The true Sufis are those who follow in the footsteps of the beloved [Prophet], bless him and grant salvation to him, to the people of his house, and to his noble companions (*ṣaḥāba*). [...] True Islam urges struggle (*jihad*), renunciation (*zuhd*), repentance (*tawba*) and a strengthening of the heart (*ribāṭ*)¹⁰¹⁷ in the

¹⁰¹⁵ *al-Thawra* 08.05.2002, 1.

¹⁰¹⁶ *al-Thawra* 08.05.2002, 6.

¹⁰¹⁷ The term *ribāṭ* is difficult to define. It could be interpreted as above with regard to its Quranic origin. In a *ḥadīth* transmitted by Mālik, true *ribāṭ* is used as scrupulous piety, meaning ablutions, mosque attendance and the continual observance of prayer. Furthermore it has a military connotation from the

performance of virtuous deeds in all [battle-] fields of life, to populate the land and to build civilisations. The holy Quran mentions all these stations (*maqāmāt*) and spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) and the honourable companions [of the Prophet] (*ṣaḥāba*) held fast to them and interacted with them, starting with Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and up to the righteous forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*)”.¹⁰¹⁸

This is one of the clearest expressions of the leadership’s aim to revive a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism as the true form of Islam and to re-establish Iraq as the spiritual centre of Sufism worldwide. In 1982, when the leadership had dismissed four members from the RCC and the RL for their Sufi religiosity, such a statement by a leading Ba‘thist would have been unthinkable. The Ba‘th would never have publicly advocated a specific Islamic current like Sufism solely due to the implicit danger of sectarianism. This was a further contradiction to the previous policies in the 1980s, since ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm gives the impression less of being the deputy chairman of the RCC and more of being a Sufi shaykh. Nonetheless, the regime stuck to the core of its secular Ba‘thism and was still very cautious with these Sufi policies. Cautious inasmuch as overtly advocating for Sufism in this way remained the foremost prerogative of ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī alone. Nowhere, in the huge number of Ba‘thist statements which I collected throughout my research, could I find another leading regime member uttering such words. It seems that not even all Ba‘th members agreed with ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s appearances, as one of my Ba‘thist interviewees reported that the former was criticised for his Sufism during party congresses during the 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁰¹⁹ Eventually, it seems that he had the consent of the president and continued this policy freely until 2003 and even beyond.

The spread of ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s true Sufism at Ṣaddām University was portrayed, as usual, under the auspices of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, the leader of the caravan of faith (i.e. Sufism) and foremost descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad. The final emphasis on Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq as first Sufi authority after the Prophet is a classic tenet of the Naqshbandīya and could hint at ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s dubious affiliation with this order. From the perspective of his equating Sufism with the whole of religion (i.e. the Quran

time of the Islamic conquests as “those who dwell on the frontier,” referring to some sort of ascetic monk-warriors or Sufi-warriors who would even have been considered as saints. Early sources refer to them as *ṣāliḥīn* who practise true renunciation (*zuhd*). ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm could have intended such a militarised meaning, too, as his promotion of Sufism was presented in the Ba‘thist ideological framework of a fight against the United States and Zionism. Apart from this connotation, the term later became linked to a symbolic representation of *jihād*, namely the spiritual *jihād* against the self, for instance in the treatise of the Iraqi Sufi Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī, the *Kitāb ‘awārif al-ma‘ārif* in the thirteenth century (Chabbi, ‘Ribāt’, especially 495, 498, 506). Compare this use of *ribāt* with a speech by Fayḍī al-Fayḍī in Section 5.2.5.

¹⁰¹⁸ *al-Thawra* 09.05.2002, 6.

¹⁰¹⁹ Interview with Farḥān Kāzīm, a former Ba‘thist, 20.10.2015.

and *sunna*) the Faith Campaign can easily be interpreted as a “Sufi Campaign”. ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī and his associates from among the shaykhs and religious scholars certainly understood it as such. While the religious Sufi scholars discussed above were deeply involved as leading teachers and lecturers in all of the aforementioned institutions of higher religious education from the late 1980s, they only began labelling – or were allowed to label – their Islam publicly as Sufism during the Faith Campaign. In a later section of this study, we will see that some of those scholars began to foster and defend Sufism in other official settings during the 1990s.¹⁰²⁰

5.1.5. *Mosque Building and Restorations of Shrines and Takāyā*

As yet a further dimension of the Faith Campaign and the official revival of Sufism, the Ba‘th regime continued, despite the severe economic crisis, with the large-scale building and restoration projects for mosques, shrines, and *takāyā* that had begun in the 1980s. This section will show that Sufi institutions in the Arab regions of Iraq¹⁰²¹ benefitted, now more than ever, from this policy. When the regime itself began to promote a revival of Sufism as the true Islam in Iraq, it simultaneously invested huge amounts of money into the building and restoration of Sufi mosques, shrines, and *takāyā*. Previous studies on the Faith Campaign have mainly focused on mosque building, including the sectarian balance in this building policy, and have shown that the regime concentrated its building efforts almost exclusively on the construction of new mosques in Sunnī areas, while restorations of shrines went on as usual.

Ofra Bengio mentions that in this decade the mosque regained a central role in society for the Ba‘th. In October 1995, the regime hosted the first conference for mosques under the slogan “The Mosque is a School Sponsoring Religious and Earthly Affairs” to discuss “its role in guiding society and moulding the personality of the Muslim.” A key focus was the mosque’s restoration to its “original” place as in early Islam, as well as on the qualifications of its religious servants.¹⁰²² In view of the country’s economic crisis under the UN sanctions, Baram argues that while the regime did invest much more in the construction of new Sunnī mosques than Shī‘ī ones, he assumes that even in Sunnī areas lots more mosques were publicly promised than were actually been

¹⁰²⁰ See Section 5.2.5.

¹⁰²¹ The regime had lost control of the autonomous Kurdish provinces of Sulaymānīya, Arbīl, and Dohūk in 1991 (Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1995, 467–74).

¹⁰²² Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1996, 337.

built.¹⁰²³ Elsewhere, he presents a mosque per people ratio in Iraq's Sunnī areas of 1:3,253 in the second half of the 1980s, in comparison to a ratio of 1:8,854 in Shī'ī areas.¹⁰²⁴ By comparison, Faleh Abdul Jabar estimates, in mid-century Iraq, a mosque per people ratio of 1:37,000 in the Shī'ī provinces, and during the 1990s a ratio of 1:3,500 nation wide.¹⁰²⁵ It is not clear if these numbers are reliable. None of the authors gives information as to who conducted such a survey in the first place. Since Iraq's provinces are often mixed Sunnī and Shī'ī it would be important to know if the mosques counted in the "Shī'ī areas" also include the Sunnī mosques there and vice versa. Perhaps those numbers represent instead a regional imbalance? More information would be needed to answer this question. Nevertheless, the regime itself admitted a continued imbalance, for 'Uday Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself publicly pointed to it and criticised this unfair practice of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs as late as 2001.¹⁰²⁶

Complementing these findings, my own research will show: that the Ba'ṯh was, despite its own religious policies, still careful to avoid an uncontrolled spread of mosques in Iraq; that shrines of saints and their visitation gained an increasing national importance in opposition to Wahhābism and Salafism, which condemn such a form of saint veneration; and finally that the regime implemented the deliberate sponsorship of Sufi institutions as a further dimension of its revival of Sufism as the true form of Islam.

While the Ba'ṯh did indeed assign a more central role to the mosque in society during the 1990s, there are also hints that it was still careful not to lose control of the spread of these religious institutions across Iraq. The continuing mistrust towards the power of independent religious institutions is reflected in a law for the building of religious and charitable institutions from 1995. This law stipulates that in all settlements of 150 houses and upwards where a mosque is required, the plot of land for a new mosque must be at least one and a half kilometres away from any existing mosque. The ministry even formed a special committee to implement this regulation in all provinces.¹⁰²⁷ With the general religious revival in Iraq at that time, mosque-building by religious associations other than the state itself had probably also seen a

¹⁰²³ For more details on the most ambitious mosque projects and further details, see: Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 262–63.

¹⁰²⁴ His source is *al-Quds al-'Arabī* (Baram, 96).

¹⁰²⁵ Abdul-Jabar, 'al-Ṣu'ūd al-shī'ī', 89.

¹⁰²⁶ Baram gives further details on the kinds of expenditure (Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 96).

¹⁰²⁷ Tikrītī, *Inshā' al-mu'assasāt al-dīniya al-khayriya*.

considerable increase. Otherwise, what would be the point in implementing such a law?

With regard to shrines and the sectarian balance in the construction and restoration campaign, the Ba‘th officially promoted the support of all major religions and sects in Iraq throughout its three decades of rule, be they Sunnī, Shī‘ī, or Christian.¹⁰²⁸ The Iraqi newspapers from 1968 to 2003 clearly indicate that restoration projects of the main Shī‘ī shrines, the ‘*atabāt* – especially of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Najaf, al-Ḥusayn, and al-‘Abbās in Karbalā’, Mūsā al-Kāzim in Baghdad, and ‘Alī al-Hādī in Sāmarrā’ – were given more prominent coverage and received the most attention.¹⁰²⁹ Material support of these shrines was always the main concern of the regime’s overall sponsorship of religious sites. While this clearly reflects the aim of appeasing the Shī‘ī community which venerates the *ahl al-bayt* in particular, it has also a strong national significance in the sense that they are also the most important Muslim saints in Iraq. As the closest descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad and having been buried in Iraqi soil, they are, of course, also highly respected in the Sunnī community. Beginning with the National Faith Campaign in 1993, shrines to these – but also many other – saints gained even more propagandist and nationalist importance in the rhetoric of Ba‘thist politicians. In 1995, the representative of Iraq’s Islamic charity associations, Dr. ‘Abd al-Ghafūr al-Qaysī, publicly praised the president’s sponsorship of Iraq’s holy shrines as proof of his endeavour to anchor religious values in society.¹⁰³⁰ Major Iraqi cities were now publicly referred to by the most famous saints who are buried in their soil, e.g. Karbalā’ of al-Ḥusayn, Najaf of ‘Alī, Baṣra of the Sufī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, as well as of the Prophet’s companions Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, Mosul of the prophet Yūnus and so forth.¹⁰³¹

On the occasion of Ṣaddām’s birthday in 2002, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī announced that

the Iraq of the prophets and messengers – the Iraq of the pure people of the house of the Prophet (*āl al-bayt*) and their holy gardens – the Iraq of the saints (*awliya*) and the virtuous (*ṣāliḥīn*), gives expression of him (i.e. Ṣaddām) in as much as the province Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn raised him, from the sights of Ashūr castle, the walls of Tikrīt, and the shrine of the forty (*mazār al-arba‘īn*) in Tikrīt – [the city] which witnessed the historical births of the two Arab [sic!] leaders Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī and Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, the descendant of the Muḥammadan family tree – as a

¹⁰²⁸ The newspaper analysis as part of this study did not reveal information about the support of other religious groups in Iraq. The case of the Yazīdī community can illustrate that the reality behind official claims of equality more often than not looked very different (Dulz, *Die Yaziden im Irak*).

¹⁰²⁹ From the huge number of articles on this matter, only one from each decade will be mentioned here: *al-Jumhūrīya* 28.08.1968, 4; 30.09.1975, 5; 09.05.1981, 7; *al-Thawra* 15.11.1995, 7; 24.01.2002, 5. A lot has been written about regime support for Shī‘ī shrines or confiscations. As the focus in this study is mainly on Sunnī Sufi shrines, I will only refer to other studies about the Shī‘ī side, for example Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 96, 188–89, 270–71; Abdul-Jabar, *The Shi‘ite Movement*, 202–4, 214.

¹⁰³⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 13.08.1995, 4.

¹⁰³¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 05.09.1995, 3; *al-Thawra* 25.11.1996, 4; 23.04.2002, 6.

grace to the gardens of the two Imams ‘Alī al-Hādī and al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, peace be upon them, in Sāmarrā’, Imam Muḥammad al-Durrī, God grant him salvation, in Dūr district, and Imam sayyid Muḥammad, peace be upon him, in Balad district.¹⁰³²

The regime not only emphasised Iraq’s religious and spiritual roots through reference to the numerous resting places of saints on the national territory, it also started to defend the right of Iraqīs to visit these shrines in public.

In 2002, *Al-Thawra* published a speech by Ṣaddām in which he publicly defended the right of Iraqis to visit shrines all over the country, albeit within certain limits:

If our people wants to visit shrines (*marāqīd*) in any place, then this is its right – and it acts freely according to this right – it is neither our competence nor our work to interfere with such particularities which are not thought about as long as they are not harmful to the collective situation or the state of the citizen – [our people] has the right to visit whichever shrine it wants, to visit the shrines of our lord al-‘Abbās or our lord al-Ḥusayn or our lord ‘Alī (may God be pleased with them). But it has to act in a way that is conceived of as simple and harmless, and this way is indeed simple and harmless if the matter is only limited to [this right of shrine visits]. But as soon as the opportunity for something bad is given through this way, then it turns into a harmful situation.¹⁰³³

Shrine visitations have been a major issue of contention for centuries, since on the one hand ultra-conservative reformists like Wahhābīs or many Salafis consider it a form of worship which is not directed towards God but a towards deceased human being, and hence see it as a harmful innovation (*bid‘a*). On the other hand, supporters of this practice, including Sufis, Shī‘īs, and others, visit these shrines for various reasons such as the receiving of God’s blessing through the intermediation of a saint, or for the invocation of the saint as an intercessor before God on their behalf. When the Ba‘th officially took the side of the supporters of this practice, which was also in accordance with its previous religious propaganda, it thereby clearly dissociated itself from Wahhābīs and Salafis. However, the regime supported this practice only insofar as it remained religiously, and not politically, motivated. After all, mass gatherings during shrine visitations at major occasions like the Shī‘ī ‘*āshūrā*’ or *arba‘īn* festivities had, in the 1970s, turned into anti-regime protests which could barely be controlled by the security services.

In this speech, Ṣaddām obviously refers to all kinds of shrines across Iraq, not just Shī‘ī ones; reducing the importance of the three shrines mentioned to the Iraqi Shī‘ī community alone would mean, again, to underestimate those saints’ traditional importance for Sunnīs. However, Ṣaddām’s direct reference to the three Shī‘ī

¹⁰³² *al-Thawra* 29.04.2002, 6.

¹⁰³³ Bakā’, ‘al-Qā’id at-tārīkhī’, 26. The quotation is from one of Ṣaddām’s speeches printed in *al-Thawra*, 23.06.2002.

sanctuaries in relation to “a harmful situation” can be considered as hinting to previous Shī‘ī mass protests. More important in this context, however, is the president’s general support of shrine visits. In a further essay about Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and the religious question in the periodical *Āfāq ‘arabīya* (Arabic Horizons) from 2002, the author Muḥammad al-Bakā’ uses this quotation in particular to clearly distinguish the Ba‘thist emphasis on heritage (*turāth*) from Salafism, which would, according to him, tear society apart with its emphasis on religious differences.¹⁰³⁴

Against the background of this new ideological and pragmatic stance, the regime continued to sponsor, first of all the Shī‘ī *‘atabāt*, but also the shrines of famous Sunnī scholars such as the founders of the Ḥanafī and Ḥanbalī schools of law respectively: Imam Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān in 1995; and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal in 2001.¹⁰³⁵ They also restored shrines to companions of the Prophet (*ṣaḥāba*) such as Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān in Salmān Bāk and Jābir al-Anṣārī in Madā’in in 1998,¹⁰³⁶ or Anas b. Mālīk in Baṣra in 1999 and 2000.¹⁰³⁷ The regime even built shrines for members of the presidential family, such as Ṣaddām’s cousin General ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh Ṭīlfāḥ, who died 1989 in a helicopter crash, or Ṣaddām’s father, Ḥusayn al-Majīd.¹⁰³⁸ Aside from these shrines, during the Faith Campaign Sufī institutions, mosques, shrines, and *takāyā* alike, all received particular attention from the regime. In contrast to the 1980s, when the regime supported these institutions merely in order to show religiosity and to buy loyalty, it now sponsored the Sufī institutions explicitly for their Sufism to counteract the aforementioned “deviating trends”. According to Sassoon, the Ba‘th Party records, collected by the Iraqi Memory Foundation, include regular internal reviews of the regime’s support for Sufī *takāyā* in Iraq in this period.¹⁰³⁹ These regular reviews should be seen in light of the regime’s official Sufī revival.

‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī also played a major role in this context and established himself as the paramount patron of Sufīs in Iraq. During the National Faith Campaign, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm regularly toured mosques and Sufī shrines to inspect them and to open new construction and restoration projects. In August 1995, on the Prophet’s birthday, he attended the laying of the foundation stone of a grand Ṣaddām mosque in Ḥilla and

¹⁰³⁴ Bakā’, 26.

¹⁰³⁵ ‘Āmirī, *Mu‘jam al-marāqīd*, 52–53. Also *al-Thawra* 14.05.2001, 4.

¹⁰³⁶ *al-Jumhūrīya* 15.01.1998, 4.

¹⁰³⁷ ‘Āmirī, *Mu‘jam al-marāqīd*, 87–88.

¹⁰³⁸ For ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh, see *al-Jumhūrīya* 06.05.1995, 1–6; 28.02.1995, 4. For Ḥusayn al-Majīd, see *al-Jumhūrīya* 02.11.1995, 4.

¹⁰³⁹ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party*, 263.

praised the president's efforts to spread Islam and to build houses of God, invoking the Lord that Ṣaddām's spiritual rank (*maqām*) may be raised up.¹⁰⁴⁰ In the same month, he opened the sayyid Ṣāliḥ Ibrāhīm al-Nu'aymī mosque in the village al-Bū Hiyāza', a settlement of the Āl Nāṣir in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn province. The saint to whom this mosque was dedicated is related to the local Rifā'iya order and his shrine is located in 'Izzat Ibrāhīm's hometown Dūr, where the latter had already ordered the restoration of a shrine in 1976. Interestingly, the mosque was planned and constructed by the Ministry of the Interior.¹⁰⁴¹ The following table provides a selection of restoration projects of Sufi sites which could be found in the press and the literature.

Year of Restoration	Shrine and Name of the Saint
1994	al-shaykh Jamīl b. Darrāj b. 'Abd Allāh in Dujail is a founding figure of the Āl al-Mashāyikh Sufi clan representing the Rifā'iya in Iraq. ¹⁰⁴²
1993-1994	Sayyid Muḥammad al-Durrī in Dūr is believed to be a descendant of Mūsā al-Kāẓim. ¹⁰⁴³ He is related to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī as his son Yaḥiyā is considered a nephew of the latter. Yaḥiyā's shrine is also in Dūr and was restored in 1976 on the order of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī. ¹⁰⁴⁴
1995 and 2002	The shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī in Maysān province.
1991, 1993, 1994-2003	The shrine of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Baghdad. ¹⁰⁴⁵
1997-2000	The Ma'rūf al-Karkhī mosque in Baghdad, named after a famous Sufi shaykh from the ninth century, and the shrine of al-shaykh Mashiyūḥ. The latter's real name was 'Abd Allāh b. 'Asāf b. Khalaf b. Ujayl b. 'Īthā al-Saghīr from the al-Bū 'Īthā. Related to the Rifā'iya-Qādirīya of shaykh 'Alī Abū Khumra in Jabal Ḥamrīn, he was a leading Sufi in Baghdad known as Nāṭūr al-'Irāq. ¹⁰⁴⁶
1999	The Sulṭān 'Alī mosque including the shrines of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī's father, Sulṭān 'Alī and shaykh Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Rudaynī, known as al-Rawwās. The restoration encompassed the old mosque, the shrines, and the <i>takīya</i> , alongside the building of a second mosque. ¹⁰⁴⁷
1990s	The shrine of Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 922) in Baghdad.
2000	The shrine of Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191) in Baghdad. ¹⁰⁴⁸
2001	The shrine of the famous Sufi scholar and Imam Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī in Baghdad. ¹⁰⁴⁹

Table 8: Restorations of Sufi Shrines during the 1990s and 2000s

¹⁰⁴⁰ *al-Jumhūrīya* 09.08.1995, 1, 2. Early in the same year he had already opened another Ṣaddām mosque in Tikrīt as well as one in memory of the late general and minister of defense, 'Adnān Khayr Allāh in Baghdad (*al-Thawra* 27./28.02.1995, 4).

¹⁰⁴¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 26.08.1995, 4.

¹⁰⁴² 'Āmirī, *Mu'jam al-marāqīd*, 119–20.

¹⁰⁴³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 30.04.1995, 6. 'Āmirī questions that he could be a son of Mūsā al-Kāẓim ('Āmirī, 371–72).

¹⁰⁴⁴ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh al-Dūr*, 25–26. For 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's order to restore the shrine, see Section 3.2.5.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 189; 'Abd Allāh, *Dalīl al-ḥaḍra al-qādirīya*, 175; Gailani, 'The Shrine of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī', 379–84. See also *al-Thawra* 16.11.2001, 4.

¹⁰⁴⁶ 'Āmirī, *Mu'jam al-marāqīd*, 380.

¹⁰⁴⁷ 'Āmirī, 269–72.

¹⁰⁴⁸ For this and the previous shrine, see Gailani, 'The Shrine of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī', 370.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *al-Thawra* 14.05.2001, 4.

Noorah al-Gailani offers an account of the regime's restoration of the Kīlānīya from among the shrines in the table and points to its negative effects. She shows that in this specific case, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself developed a particular interest in this shrine and personally ordered its restoration through the architectural office of the presidential palace. Without prior consultation of the custodians of the shrine, and against their wishes, from 1994 onwards the regime began carrying out restoration and expansion plans, which eventually resulted in the partial loss of the shrine's historical architecture. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's patronage of the Sufīs in this context is evident in the examples of two other Sufī *takāyā* next to the Kīlānīya, namely the *takāyat* Abū Khumra and the *takāyat* al-Ṭayyār. Both of them were located within the boundaries of the government's expansion plans for the Kīlānīya and were threatened by demolition. Gailani suggests that Ṣaddām and the architects of the presidential palace might not even have been aware of the existence of these two minor *takāyā*. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, by contrast, knew of them and even had blood relations in the Abū Khumra clan. Both *takāyā* only survived through his personal protection and his intervention in Ṣaddām's expansion plans.¹⁰⁵⁰

In 1999, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm inspected the restoration and expansion projects of the Sulṭān 'Alī mosque and the Ma'rūf al-Karkhī mosque in Baghdad, as well as a number of shrines to other saints (*awlīyā*). As noted previously, the Sulṭān 'Alī, under the custodianship of the Rāwī family, is the second most important mosque of the Rifā'īya in Iraq and contains the shrines of two saints: Sulṭān 'Alī, the father of the order's founding figure; and Muḥammad Mahdī b. Nūr al-Dīn al-Rifā'ī, known as al-Rawwās. With regard to the Ma'rūf al-Karkhī mosque, Gailani notes a widespread rumour that the presidential family ordered its restoration as a form of thanksgiving after a failed assassination attempt against Ṣaddām's son 'Uday in 1996.¹⁰⁵¹ It is remarkable that the Ba'thist president would express his thankfulness for 'Uday's survival through support of a famous Sufī site. The Ma'rūf al-Karkhī mosque, with a large cemetery attached to it, is an important centre for the Rifā'īya and the Naqshbandīya and houses the shrine of the famous Sufī shaykh Ma'rūf, who is venerated by all Sufī orders and included in most spiritual lineages (*salāsil*). Additionally, the site also includes the shrines of the Naqshbandī and Salafī Abū l-Tha'nā' al-Ālūsī and the Rifā'ī shaykh Mashīyūḥ al-

¹⁰⁵⁰ Gailani, 'The Shrine of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī', 375–85.

¹⁰⁵¹ Gailani, 370–71.

‘Īthāwī, known as Nāṭūr al-‘Irāq.¹⁰⁵² The latter shaykh in particular is venerated among Rifā‘ī Sufis in the region of Tikrīt and is related to the order of the Abū Khumra clan. The shrine of the Rifā‘īya’s founding figure, Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī, received extensive regime support during the second half of the 1990s. A complete refurbishing of the shrine, including the renewal of Islamic ornaments and inscriptions at the outer walls, commenced in 1995 at a cost of 5,750,000 Iraqi dinars (\$20,209,149). Two months later, Ṣaddām ordered the afforestation of the desert area surrounding the shrine and the highway leading to it.¹⁰⁵³ A further irrigation project along another highway leading to the shrine followed in 1999.¹⁰⁵⁴ In 2001, Ṣaddām received tribal leaders from Baṣra and Maysān provinces. When one of the shaykhs from Maysān asked him to order development projects for the area (*nāḥīya*) of Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī, the president declined in order to give the impression that his treatment of all Iraqi citizens was just and equal. He cautioned his guests that someone might ask why he supports one province, such as Maysān, more than others. His answer would be that he would only order or carry out activities of which he is really convinced. If that is not the case, he would not be able to do anything. He gave the financial support of Baṣra as an example: if someone were to ask why Baṣra receives more subsidies than Maysān, he would answer that both provinces suffered as battlefields during the war, but that Baṣra suffered more destruction. Therefore, the latter province receives more aid even though the citizens of Baṣra and Maysān should be considered equally as Iraqis. In the end, he makes clear that he would only give information about the development of Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī’s area, since pilgrims who come from outside of Iraq to visit the place were affected. In order to show that Iraqis know how to treat people with dignity, these pilgrims should always be provided with certain services at the shrine, such as a place to wash themselves and a place to rest.¹⁰⁵⁵ Two months later, in February 2002, the complete restoration of the shrine began under the “special custody” of Ṣaddām, including the renovation of its outer walls, its dome, its portico (*īwān*) and the addition of side wings to the building for additional services.¹⁰⁵⁶ This incident underlines once again the regime’s priority of promoting saint veneration and shrine visitations as an important part of Iraqi religiosity, and of Sufi religiosity in particular.

¹⁰⁵² *al-Thawra* 24.12.1999, 3.

¹⁰⁵³ *al-Jumhūrīya* 31.05.1995, 2; 17.07.1995, 5.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *al-Jumhūrīya* 17.11.1999, 4.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *al-Thawra* 04.12.2001, 1.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *al-Thawra* 19.02.2002, 7.

The buildings belonging to Sufi institutions had always been maintained and restored by the regime, to a minor extent during the 1970s and then much more widely as the general support for religious institutions grew as part of the war propaganda during the 1980s. During the Faith Campaign in the 1990s, however, this support of Sufi institutions reached a new level when the regime propagated Sufism as the true form of Islam. The regime explicitly stressed saint veneration and shrine visitations – which are so widespread among Sufis, Shī'īs, and all Iraqis generally – as part of not only Islam but also national culture in Iraq. This emphasis, and the many restorations of Sufi shrines of the Rifā'īya and Qādirīya under 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī's official patronage, were on the one hand a clear attempt to articulate, define and differentiate Sufism against the threat of Wāhhabism and Salafism. On the other hand, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself ordered some restorations for personal reasons, as in the case of the Ma'rūf al-Karkhī mosque and the Kīlānīya. The reasons behind this personal interest are not entirely clear, but the links between the presidential clan and the Rifā'īya could have played a role here. The restoration of the Kīlānīya was even planned by the architectural office of the presidential palace rather than by the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs. This case also demonstrates that such projects were not always to the advantage of or in the interest of the Sufis but could actually mean the loss of valuable historical architecture. On the whole, however, the regime invested a lot in a renaissance of the Sufi architectural landscape in Iraq and the ritual Sufi culture surrounding them.

5.1.6. *Ṣaddām as the Leading Sayyid and the Revival of the Niqābat al-Ashrāf*

At a rather late stage of the Faith Campaign and the Ba'th leadership's support for Sufism, the regime tried, in another unprecedented step, to institutionalise Ṣaddām's own claim to be a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad. This step has to be seen as part of the sponsorship of Sufism as well, since Sufi genealogists came to play a central role in it. The Ba'th started to revive Iraq's old institution of the *niqābat al-ashrāf*, the official legal and administrative representation of *al-sāda al-ashrāf*, which had lapsed in 1962 after the death of Baghdad's last *naqīb* Ibrāhīm Saif al-Dīn b. Muṣṭafā b. Salmān al-Gailānī. This was a further attempt to create an ecumenical Islam, with the aim of creating an official state-controlled institution for Prophetic descendants of both Sunna and Shī'a and assigning them a new moral and religious role in society. This

newly revived *niqāba* was thereby not only intended to promote Iraq's Sufi clans, but these clans formed an essential part of this new institution, as the regime relied here on the traditional closeness of the Sufis to the Shī'a via their shared love of the *ahl al-bayt*. The idea of sharīfism as an ecumenical force to unite Iraq's communities was similarly formulated by Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī in the mid-1980s (4.2.5). Up to late Ottoman times, most of the Sunnī representatives in the *niqābat al-ashrāf* had been members of Iraq's Sufi clans such as the Rāwīs, the Gailānīs, or even the Āl Nāṣir. With this new policy, the Ba'th turned to the very same Sufi clans which had been traditional representatives of the Ottoman *niqāba* a century earlier. The whole project was, furthermore, a way to bolster the regime's own tribal and religious legitimacy and in this regard overlaps with the revival of tribalism and Ṣaddām's constant use of his sharīfian descent at the political level. Ṣaddām's sharīfian descent was part of his self-styled identity as the paramount tribal shaykh; this reflected a reality in Iraqi society, since numerous Sunnī *ashrāf* are at the same time both Sufi shaykhs and tribal shaykhs. In this section, I will provide an overview of the political development that led to this late institutionalisation of sharīfism, beginning with Ṣaddām's sharīfian *nasab* as a political tool during the 1990s.

Several studies of the Ba'th regime in the 1990s have provided evidence which clearly indicates the constant use of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's sharīfian descent at a political level. Considered together as a whole and within the larger political context, they illustrate a new stage in the development of this kind of political propaganda, beginning with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. In this context, the use of Ṣaddām's noble descent was taken further, beyond the context of confrontations with the Iraqi and Iranian Shī'a. The UN Security Council and the members of the Arab League, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia, heavily condemned the occupation of Kuwait and its annexation as the nineteenth Iraqi province. Facing Iraqi troops at its own border, the Saudi kingdom feared a further invasion on its own soil and asked the United States for military support. After many Arab states had given their consent, in the following six months the US dispatched half a million ground troops to Saudi Arabia in preparation for a military intervention.¹⁰⁵⁷ Facing this US military coalition, the Iraqi regime immediately began an ideological attack against the Saudi rulers and Egypt's

¹⁰⁵⁷ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 239–44. The Egyptian president Mubarak, however, explicitly rejected any foreign military intervention by the Americans (Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 173).

president Mubarak in order to gain more international support from among Muslim communities.

This attack was aimed, first of all, at the religious legitimacy of the Saudi crown prince Fahd b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as the servant of the two most important Islamic sanctuaries (*khādim al-ḥaramayn*) in Mecca and Medina. Ṣaddām used the presence of half a million non-Muslim soldiers on Saudi soil to charge Fahd with the desecration of these sanctuaries. The Iraqi president thereby denied him his religious legitimacy and eventually presented himself as the one true *khādim al-ḥaramayn*.¹⁰⁵⁸ According to Jerry Long, on 11 August the Iraqi National Council proclaimed metaphorically that “Saddam the Qurayshi [...] was confronting the ‘Tatar invasion’ to rescue ‘the tomb of the Qurashite Hashimite Arab Prophet Muhammad bin Abdullah from the filth of the invaders.’”¹⁰⁵⁹ A little later, on 23 August 1990, Ṣaddām sent an open letter to Egyptian president Mubarak which was also broadcasted by the Iraqi radio. In Ofra Bengio’s translation, part of the letter reads as follows:

This speaker (Saddam Husayn), the slave of God, was the son of a peasant who died months before his (Saddam Husayn’s) mother gave birth to him. He is from an honorable family whose honor is basically derived from its labor and from being a descendant of the Muhammadist Qurayshi family (the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad), as his family’s lineage goes back to our master and forefather, al-Husayn, who is the son of ‘Alī Bin Abī Talīb [...]. To the best of my knowledge, you, Mr. President, have come of an Egyptian family that has nothing to do with the princes and kings who ruled before the July 1952 revolution.¹⁰⁶⁰

Even though this tactic did not resonate as well as was intended within the international Muslim community, it clearly shows the intention to elevate Ṣaddām, with his alleged noble descent from the Prophet, above other (Sunnī) heads of states like Fahd b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz or Mubarak. The emphasis on Ṣaddām’s orphanage in the letter constitutes an additional attempt to draw a line between his and the Prophet’s life stories, since Muḥammad, as is well known, was an orphan, too. The Iraqi media continued to use this rhetoric throughout the 1990s on both the domestic and international fronts, as can be seen in an address by RCC deputy chairman ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī at the seventh International Popular Islamic Conference in Baghdad in 1995, where he refers to the Kuwait crisis:

It was during the glorious mother of all battles when all the faith attacked all the unbelief. Your brethren were defeated on this holy soil, the soil of the belligerent lionhood (*ḥaydarat al-karrār*) [a reference to Imam ‘Alī], the soil of the prophets...Ibrāhīm, Ayyūb, Yūnis, Ādam,

¹⁰⁵⁸ The case has even more historical significance considering the fact that it was Fahd’s father, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who expelled Sharīf Ḥusayn, father of the later Iraqi king Faiṣal and himself claimant of the sharīfian descent, from Mecca (Long, *Saddam’s War of Words*, 107).

¹⁰⁵⁹ Long, 108.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Bengio, *Saddam Speaks on the Gulf Crisis*, 128.

and Nūḥ. They drove out their tyrannical thirty enemies through the leadership of the Arab Hashimite hero, the scion of the pure offspring (*al-‘itra al-ṭāhira*), and the spring of the bright Prophetic tree, the leader and fighter Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, may God protect him.¹⁰⁶¹

Depending on the occasion – such as the Prophet’s birthday, International Popular Islamic Conferences, or other projects in the course of the Faith Campaign – Ṣaddām was now increasingly presented as a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, in contrast to the earlier emphasis on the Imams ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn.¹⁰⁶²

In the aftermath of the Kuwait crisis, the regime fully incorporated religion and tribalism into its government system. Similar to the embracing of Sufism, the embracing of tribalism included the public support of tribal values and traditional tribal law, as well as tribal autonomy in rural regions. Certain tribes were now hired as subcontractors of the state and received heavy weaponry in order to guard their regions.¹⁰⁶³ This recruitment of tribes to protect the state and the regime had been going on in the Kurdish regions since the 1970s with the National Defence Battalions, as noted previously. During the 1990s, this recruitment tactic was simply applied to the Arab regions as well. At the same time, Baram points to the fact that Ṣaddām began to present himself to the public as Iraq’s highest shaykh (*shaykh al-mashāyikh*), even going as far as describing the Ba‘th Party as the tribe of all tribes (*‘ashīrat kull al-‘ashā’ir*).¹⁰⁶⁴ He also observes the latter’s intention to justify his long-practised nepotism in a royal manner through his noble descent and in analogy to the prophets Muḥammad and Moses. In an address on the occasion of the Prophet’s birthday in September 1991, Ṣaddām argued that God chose the Prophet because of his family origin in Mecca from the house of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim, “Guardian of the Ka‘ba and Master of the Quraysh” and that Muḥammad’s qualities resulted from “the qualities and features inherited from the Prophet’s... family affiliation.” In the same way, Moses received God’s consent to appoint his brother Hārūn as his spokesman. Therefore, “Ṣaddām declared, ‘no one should be allowed to emerge in the links of leadership’ if he does not come ‘from a good origin’, if he is not ‘the branch of a tree that bears good fruit.’”¹⁰⁶⁵ Baram interprets this as a farewell to Ba‘thism, socialism,

¹⁰⁶¹ *al-Jumhūrīya* 05.09.1995, 3.

¹⁰⁶² *al-Thawra* 04.06.2000, 1; 23.04.2002, 6; 26.05.2002, 6. Nevertheless, references in the press to his descent from other Imams such as ‘Alī al-Ḥādī and al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (buried in Sāmarrā’) continued until 2003 (*al-Thawra* 09.07.2002, 6).

¹⁰⁶³ This practice often backfired when tribes used those weapons for banditry, intra- or inter-tribal feuds or even turned them against the government (Abdul-Jabar, ‘Sheikhs and Ideologues’, 95–100; Baram, ‘Neo-Tribalism’; Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, 58–59).

¹⁰⁶⁴ Baram, ‘Neo-Tribalism’, 10–12, 18.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 261. The original source is *al-Jumhūrīya*, 21.09.1991.

and even modernity and notes that there was no response from the rest of the leadership, “none of whom had a Prophetic pedigree or even a shaykhly one.”¹⁰⁶⁶ The latter statement, however, is not entirely correct, since at least ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm a-Dūrī claimed Prophetic descent as well.

As early as 1995, Ṣaddām praised efforts of “placing the ties of kinship in the service of Islam”,¹⁰⁶⁷ but the institutionalisation of this policy only began in 2000 with Regional Command Council (RCC) decision 206. According to this decision, everyone who wrongly traces his ancestry to the lineage (*nasab*) of the *sāda* from Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s offspring, who is wrongly included in their pedigree (*shajara*), and wrongly claims affiliation with one of their tribes or uses their family names or their pedigrees, will be sentenced to up to seven years in prison and his property will be confiscated. The accused was obliged to officially verify his descent and tribe with his documents within a period of six months. The decision additionally included a paragraph according to which every person who reported a fraudulent claim of Prophetic descendancy by a third party is guaranteed fifty percent of the third party’s confiscated property.¹⁰⁶⁸

Joseph Sassoon interprets decision 206 in the following way: “[b]ecause of anxieties about the power of the Shi‘i religious establishment in Najaf and Karbala, the RCC decided that anyone, apart from Saddam Hussein, who claimed that his roots were from the family of Imam ‘Ali would receive a seven year term of imprisonment.”¹⁰⁶⁹ Ṣaddām’s aforementioned justification of those with a noble descent ascending in the leadership, in combination with this interpretation of RCC decision 206, seems absurd given that Iraq is full of sharīfian clans and, according to the regime’s own narrative, every member of the Āl Nāṣir is a *sayyid*. The RCC decision does not state that anyone apart from Ṣaddām would be prohibited to claim sharīfian descent from ‘Alī, nor was this implied. Given the huge number of *al-sādat al-ashrāf* among both the Sunnī and Shī‘ī population across Iraq, this would not really make sense: on the contrary, it would even have offended large parts of Iraq’s tribal elites. One could argue that it aimed especially to weaken the Shī‘ī religious establishment as *sāda* enjoy a higher status

¹⁰⁶⁶ Baram, 261.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Bengio, ‘A Republican Turning Royalist’, 647.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ḥusayn, ‘‘Uqūbat al-ḥabs’.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba’th Party*, 264. This interpretation was repeated in Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 102.

among the Shī‘ī community with their share in the one-fifth tax (*khums*).¹⁰⁷⁰ This, however, is questionable as well. Given the need to weaken the Shī‘ī religious establishment, for example the Ṣadr family, why not cut or confiscate their material power base for reasons that are less humiliating instead of depriving them of an essential part of their Shī‘ī identity, i.e. their sharīfian status? This could only add to the existing conflict.

Apart from the potential reasons given above, what further intention could the Ba‘th regime have had? Decision 206 might have been a measure taken by the regime against a growing trend among Iraqis since the 1990s to forge sharīfian pedigrees. In this case, it would have buttressed Ṣaddām’s own claim by showing that he took the whole issue seriously and would not allow anyone to adorn himself with borrowed plumes. The wording of the decision makes clear that it was giving the Ba‘th a method (albeit limited in scope) to determine who belonged to *al-sādat al-ashrāf* in Iraq and who did not. In this regard, the decision appears to have been a preparatory legal step for an event that occurred six months later. On 28 May 2001, *al-Thawra* reported, next to an oath of allegiance for Ṣaddām by *al-sādat al-ashrāf*, that ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī officially met their representatives from all over Iraq “for their organisation in order to pursue their missionary (*risālī*) role in the purification of society and its return to the source of the eternal Islamic message (*al-risāla al-islāmīya al-khālida*)”. ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm announced that it was the first meeting of this kind in contemporary Iraqi history. He continued,

we have just begun a project to assemble the *ashrāf* in order to organise a programme, necessary steps, and funding for their [i.e. the *ashrāf*’s] sponsorship, for the protection of their rights and their sacredness (*ḥurma*) in society as the people of the beloved house of Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him salvation), who saved mankind from darkness and [showed us] into the light and [saved us] from infidelity and [other] traps [and delivered us] towards faith, as there is not a single city in Iraq that is not inhabited by *al-sādat al-ashrāf*. [...] The basic aim is to assemble this noble [...] part of society, made up of the people of the holy Quran and the esteemed Prophetic *sunna*, since they are the choice of the choice of the choice [or: the best of the best of the best] (*khiyār min khiyār min khiyār*), whom the beloved, chosen Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him salvation) represented in his saying / *God created mankind and He chose from among them the Arabs* / since the Arabs are the chosen *umma* which God selected. It has been the authorised *umma*, since the time when God created man up to this day of ours, for the revelation (*tablīq*) of the messages (*risālāt*) of heaven to the people of the earth. It is the last *umma* (*al-umma al-khātima*), the seal of nations (*khātimat al-umam*) for carrying God’s message to the nations (*umam*) until the [final] hour begins. They [read: These] are *al-sādat al-ashrāf*, the chosen of the chosen in adhering to the values of belief (*īmān*) and

¹⁰⁷⁰ The *khums* is levied in Shī‘ism on different kinds of net income and is spent on the Prophet, the near relatives of his family, orphans, the needy and travellers (Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 179–80; Gleave and Zysow, ‘Khums’).

the morals of their greatest forefather (God bless him and grant him salvation), [God's] holy book and the method (*manhaj*) of His messenger, our lord Muḥammad (ṣ).¹⁰⁷¹

‘Izzat Ibrāhīm closed with the statement that “it is our duty to purify the pedigrees (*ansāb*) of *al-sādat al-ashrāf*”, which offers a definitive explanation for RCC decision 206.¹⁰⁷² they intended to assign *al-sādat al-ashrāf* a new role in society and needed, therefore, to control who belonged to them and who did not.

This passage strikingly embodies the Ba‘th Party’s obvious deviation from the early egalitarian party line, which in the 1970s officially claimed to fight phenomena such as nobility of origin. Back in the 1940s, the idea of God’s choosing the Arabs for the revelation of his message (*ikhtiyār al-‘arab li-tablīgh risālat al-Islam*) became a central pillar of Michel ‘Aflaq’s Ba‘thist Arabism with its ambiguity between secularism and Islam. However, ‘Aflaq understood Islam primarily as an Arabic movement (*ḥaraka ‘arabīya*) and considered the role of the Prophet and the Arabs in his *Memory of the Arabic Messenger (Dhikrā l-rasūl al-‘arabī)* as a historical ideal to emulate.¹⁰⁷³ The circumstances from the 1990s to 2001 obviously led the leadership to reconsider its former policies and ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm reverted to *ḥadīth* instead of ‘Aflaq in his statement above.

The notion that God chose the best of the best as Muḥammad’s forefathers from among humankind (i.e. from the humans the Arabs, from among the Arabs the Quraysh, from among Quraysh the tribe of Hāshim, and so forth) is expressed differently in various *ḥadīth* collections of Tirmidhī, Ibn Sa‘d, or Bukhārī. The *ḥadīth* closest to ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s formulation above seems to appear only in Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī’s *Amount of Desire in the Glory of the Arabs (Mablagh al-arab fī fakhṛ al-‘arab)*.¹⁰⁷⁴ Reverting in this way to traditional Quranic and Prophetic notions and interpretations, which are widespread among Iraq’s Shī‘a as well as Sunnī Sufi communities, the Ba‘th obviously envisaged a leading missionary role for *al-sādat al-ashrāf* in society, though under the control of the state. In analogy to the seal of prophets (*khātim al-anbiyā’*), Muḥammad, their missionary role was envisaged as being his living representatives and bearers of his message on earth, and, by implication, with Ṣaddām as their leading *sayyid*.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Al-Thawra*, 28.05.2001, 4.

¹⁰⁷² *Al-Thawra*, 28.05.2001, 4.

¹⁰⁷³ ‘Aflaq, *Fī sabīl al-Ba‘th*, 145.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Haytamī (d. 1565), *Mablagh al-arab*, 21. Haytamī himself took it from the fourth-century traditionist al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (933-1014), *al-Mustadrak*, 4:86). Both quote the *ḥadīth* starting with *la-mā* instead of *inna*.

Further religious justifications for Ṣaddām's position as leading sayyid occurred frequently, for instance in the public appearances of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, who regularly quoted part of the aforementioned Quranic verse (42, 23) referring to the Prophet and his descendants including Ṣaddām: "Say, I do not ask you for any recompense except the love for near kinship (*al-mawaddata fī l-qurbā*; interpreted as the *ahl al-bayt*)."¹⁰⁷⁵ We have seen (in 4.2.5) that this verse is central for the spiritual authority of the Sufī shaykhs and Shī'ī scholars as descendants of Muḥammad. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm used the ambiguous verse here with the same intention, ultimately affording Ṣaddām, as the *sayyid* leader, additional Quranic legitimacy.

In the end, the Ba'ṯ did not succeed with the establishment of its programme for *al-sādat al-ashrāf* before the occupation in 2003. According to a later statement in the press by association member Nājiḥ Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Faḥām al-A'rajī, the regime had only managed to establish the basis for the so-called *niqāba* and its leading council, the *lajnat al-ansāb*, headed by 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, by the time of the invasion.¹⁰⁷⁶ Referring to A'rajī's statement, this whole project can be interpreted as an attempt to create a Ba'ṯist brand of the old historical institution of the *niqābat al-ashrāf*, which was originally established in the 'Abbāssid Empire and lapsed after the fall of the Iraqi monarchy. Remarkably, it was in the context of the *niqāba* that the Āl Nāṣir appeared for the first time as *sāda* with Aḥmad Ḥamdī b. 'Alī Āl Nāṣir as *naqīb al-ashrāf* of Tikrīt. Back then the *niqāba* was closely connected to Iraq's Sufī orders, like the Rifā'īya, and strongly influenced by its leading shaykh in Istanbul Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī. The *nuqabā'* Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī, his son Ismā'īl, or Aḥmad Ḥamdī and others clearly reflect this influence.

The Ba'ṯist council for genealogies (*lajnat al-ansāb*) seems to have revived the very same family structures among its Sunnī and Shī'ī members. Among the genealogists who authenticated Ṣaddām's *nasab*, we find not only the aforementioned genealogist and author of *Mawsū'at al-'ashā'ir al-'irāqīya*, Thāmir al-'Āmirī, but once again Jamāl al-Rāwī, son of Ismā'īl al-Rāwī, as well as Jamāl al-Dīn Kāmil Ḥasan al-Nāṣirī, a second cousin of Ṣaddām.¹⁰⁷⁷ The *sāda* of the Rifā'īya thus gained official representation on this council, with Ṣaddām at the top. With this act, the Sufī clans in Iraq would have regained an important official institution of representation.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *al-Thawra* 15.12.1996, 4; 23.04.2002, 6; 26.05.2002, 6.

¹⁰⁷⁶ AFP, 'Saddam's Name'; AFP, 'Saddam Hussein'; AFP, 'Niqābat al-ashrāf'.

¹⁰⁷⁷ For the background of these figures, see Sections 2.1, 3.2.4, and 5.2.1.

Interestingly, certain Sufi orders began to establish their own *niqābat al-ashrāf* after the fall of the regime in 2003: for instance, the Kasnazāniya.¹⁰⁷⁸ In the end, this whole endeavour is a rather surprising phenomenon for an originally secular party and further underlines its deviation from egalitarianism for the sake of controlling Iraq's religious landscape. The perception of *al-sādat al-ashrāf* as a noble and moral elite in Iraqi society simply by virtue of lineage certainly contradicts Ṣaddām's previous coinage of secular meanings for the terms "*sharaf*" and "*karāma*" in 1980.

5.1.7. Conclusion

After the secular 1970s – which benefitted Sufis in only a limited way – and the religious war propaganda of the 1980s – which initiated a gradual rise of Sufis in Iraq – the Ba'ṯh regime officially commenced a targeted revival of Sufism with the implementation of the National Faith Campaign from 1993 to 2003. This Ba'ṯhist embracing of Sufism resulted from the regime's need to restore morality and order in a crisis-ridden society through the spread of what it considered correct Islamic principles, from the growing threat of radical Wahhābism and Salafism, and from the need to overcome sectarianism. The Sufis offered a perfect Islamic middle path to counteract these societal problems. For the revival of Sufism, the Ba'ṯh was even willing to deviate from some of its former principles and policies but remained at its core secular. It did not become an Islamist party. 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī outed himself as the leading and only Ba'ṯhist Sufi advocate in the public political discourse. With the help of the religious Sufi scholars who had worked for the Ba'ṯh since the mid-1980s, he promoted a *sharī'a*-minded Sufism as the true form of Islam during annual events at Ṣaddām University. Sufi scholars even taught Islam to Ba'ṯh Party members and cultivated, in some cases, close personal relationships with them. In front of a Shī'ī audience, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm praised Imam 'Alī in Sufi terms, hinting at the common Sufi and Shī'ī veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*. Saint veneration and shrine visitations, which are so typical among Sufis and Shī'īs, gained increasing salience in the Ba'ṯh's national political discourse as a way to clearly distinguish themselves from radical Wahhābism and Salafism. This new emphasis accompanied a particular focus on the restoration of Sufi shrines across Iraq. At a later stage, the regime even attempted to revive the historically Sufi-dominated *niqābat al-ashrāf*, to institutionalise sharīfism

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ḥadīthī, 'al-Ribaṭ al-ṣūfiya', 158.

and Ṣaddām's own noble origin, and to promote and control the *sāda* in the country. All these efforts had the objective of reviving Sufism and traditional aspects of Sufi culture as part a Ba'th-aligned Islam against moral decay, radical Islamism, and sectarianism in Iraq. In the next chapter, we will turn to the impact which this policy had on Iraq's Sufis themselves.

5.2. The New Prominence of Sufis under Ba‘thist Patronage

The state’s overt promotion of a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism and the revival of Sufi culture enhanced the situation of loyal Sufis throughout the 1990s until 2003. Despite the hardships of this era, the pro-Sufi political atmosphere created new opportunities to express and promote Sufism in Iraq. Amatzia Baram has already pointed to a growing number of newspaper articles about the main Sufi orders in the country, as well as announcements with regard to certain local Sufi shaykhs, during the 1990s.¹⁰⁷⁹ In the course of my research, I could not find one single article of that kind in issues of *al-Jumhūrīya* and *al-Thawra* from the 1970s and 1980s. This was an entirely new phenomenon and it was not an exception. To what extent the Ba‘th’s official revival of Sufism increased the memberships of Sufi orders and the numbers of visitors to their *takāyā* and shrines is impossible to say on the basis of my sources. Yet, the material shows that many loyal Sufis gained considerable prominence during those years. Sufis established close personal links to the presidential family and expanded their Sufism even among the state and military elite. Several orders became part of ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s patronage network and probably also of his closer circle and family. Rumour has it that he established himself as a Sufi shaykh with his own followers, but clear evidence for this is still lacking. Moreover, these Sufi-Ba‘thist relations and the services provided by many Sufi clans for the state were immortalised in the genealogical literature as part of Iraq’s historiography. The Kasnazānīya adopted a blatant political rhetoric and advocated Sufism as the essential link between Islam and Arab nationalism in the newspaper. As late as the 1980s, this would have meant crossing a red line. The Ba‘th’s loyal Sufi scholars publicly advocated for and defended a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism and Sufi practices from an Islamic legal point of view. Finally, the Kasnazānīya further increased its literary promotional campaign, adding many new publications, and successfully transgressed Sunnī-Shī‘ī boundaries in the course of its successful expansion and rise all over Iraq. All of this should have been welcome for the state and shows how active certain Sufis became under its supporting umbrella.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 311–13.

5.2.1. *The Relationship between Sufis and the Presidential Clan*

In the period between the late 1980s and 2003, we find several traces that the official state support for Sufism during the Faith Campaign was in fact preceded by (and accompanied) a rather intimate and personal relationship between certain shaykhs and Ba‘thist politicians and even the presidential family. The findings in this section suggest not only that from the 1980s on certain Sufis cultivated closer relations to members of the Ba‘th leadership and the presidential clan, and vice versa, but that some members of the latter might even have become active Sufis. The evidence which will be presented here focuses mainly on the role of Sufi ritual performances during this period, such as the *dhikr*, the recitation of panegyric poems (*madā’ih*) and certain miracle performances such as the famous *dirbāsha* or *darb al-shīsh*, i.e. the perforation of the human body with swords and skewers. Whereas Ṣaddām Ḥusayn had heavily criticised regular visits to Sufi *takāyā* and participation in Sufi rituals by senior Ba‘th Party members and the leadership in 1982, by 1989 these Sufi rituals had reached his own clan and wider family.

The first instance which suggests a close relationship between the presidential clan and certain Sufi *takāyā* is a huge event organised by the presidential family in memory of Ṣaddām’s late cousin, General ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh Ṭilfāḥ. As former commander-in-chief of the armed forces and minister of defense, ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh was considered a war hero and one of the most powerful figures from among the presidential clan until he died unexpected in a helicopter crash in May 1989.¹⁰⁸⁰ The event most probably took place in 1989 and was attended by numerous members of the al-Bū Nāṣir tribe and the military. One of my interviewees reported that it marked the end of the presidential family’s forty days of mourning after ‘Adnān’s death.¹⁰⁸¹ The exact date and location are not entirely clear, but one source claims that the venue was al-Khuld Hall in the heart of Baghdad, close to the presidential palace.¹⁰⁸² It is also not certain if the event took place annually, such as a regular *mawlid* (in Iraqi vernacular *mawlūd*) celebration, or only once. It must have occurred between 1989 and 1995 since one of the attending guests, Ḥusayn Kāmil was killed during an internal family vendetta in

¹⁰⁸⁰ Many suspect that he was assassinated on the Ṣaddām’s orders because he had gained too much popularity and influence at the end of the war (Baram, ‘The Iraqi Armed Forces’, 216).

¹⁰⁸¹ Interview with Farḥān Kāzīm, a former Ba‘thist, 24.01.2016. Another interviewee thought the event occurred traditionally on the third day after ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’s death (Interview with ‘Isām al-Rāwī, 05.05.2016).

¹⁰⁸² al-Sāda al-Ḥayyālīyīn, ‘Mawlūd wafāt al-shahīd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’.

1996.¹⁰⁸³ During my research, I gathered eighty-one minutes and forty-three seconds of video recordings of the event. The recordings can be found in the form of at least eight different videos on YouTube channels of Iraqi Sufis and Sufi orders, such as the Rifā'īya. Some of them title the event as “*mawlūd al-shahīd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh al-Ṭilfāh’*”.¹⁰⁸⁴

The following analysis is largely based on these videos, which offer a unique window into the past. They depict an evening scene on a huge green courtyard, most probably outside al-Khuld Hall, surrounded by an outer wall and festively decorated and illuminated. Coming from the entrance of the plot next to the main building, the courtyard was filled on one side with several rows of garden chairs and more comfortable sofas for the attending guests. Additional rows of chairs have been placed at a right angle to the first rows at the end of the courtyard. These were reserved for the presidential family and formed the high point of the whole scene. Opposite the audience of guests, large crowds of Sufis were sitting on carpets on the ground and performed the *dhikr*, recited poems (*madā'ih*) amplified through loudspeakers and supported by the beat of drums, and practised the *dirbāsha* for the audience. The videos show a huge crowd of a few hundred guests including members of the presidential family, the extended Bayjāt¹⁰⁸⁵ clan of the Āl Nāṣir, leading members of the army, and several religious scholars such as Sāmarrā’'s *muftī* Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb.¹⁰⁸⁶ In the top row of the presidential clan, Ṣaddām's sons ‘Uday and Quṣay sat in between several tribal shaykhs of the Bayjāt who were dressed in traditional tribal garb. Other family members next to them included cousins of the president, namely Ḥusayn Kāmil, who was Ṣaddām's son-in-law, and Ṣaddām Kāmil.

On the opposite side, about a hundred Sufis from different orders and *takāyā* gathered in small groups on the carpets for their performances. The numerous Sufi shaykhs who could be identified in the videos were mainly Rifā'ī Sufis from the president's home region around the village al-‘Awja, Tikrīt, or Sāmarrā’ in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn province. These Sufis also reflect the president's Āl Nāṣir tribal background. Yet Sufis of the

¹⁰⁸³ The event has to be dated after ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh's death in 1989 and the fallout between Ṣaddām and his son-in-law Ḥusayn Kāmil after the latter defected with his wife Raghda to Jordan in 1995. Ḥusayn Kāmil was killed shortly after his return to Iraq in February 1996.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Mawqī‘ al-ṭarīqa al-rifā'īya, ‘Mawlūd al-shahīd’; al-Sāda al-Ḥayyālīyīn, ‘Mawlūd wafāt al-shahīd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’; Ṭarbūlī, ‘Mawlūd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’, 20 January 2018; Ṭarbūlī, ‘Mawlūd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’, 27 March 2018.

¹⁰⁸⁵ The branch of the tribe from which Ṣaddām Ḥusayn hailed is also pronounced as al-Baykāṭ.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ṭarbūlī, ‘Mawlūd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’, 27 March 2018, pts 25:40-25:48.

Kasnazānīya also appeared during the event. Among the Rifāʿī Sufis, shaykh Amjad al-Ghulām al-Rifāʿī from the Mullīs clan in Sāmarrāʾ recited *madāʾih* of the Rifāʿīya with his followers.¹⁰⁸⁷ Sayyid ʿAlī b. Šābir al-Rifāʿī, son of the leading Rifāʿī shaykh from the Āl Khalaf al-Rifāʿī in Tikrīt, performed one of the most dangerous forms of the *dibrāsha*. In front of the audience, ʿAlī shot himself with a revolver through the edge of his abdomen. Performances like this are intended to embody a Sufi's elevated spiritual state and spiritual strength which allow him to overcome even this sort of bodily harm without any serious damage through God's protection.¹⁰⁸⁸ When ʿAlī broke down for a moment, other attendants, including Quṣay Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, hurried to help him get back on his feet. Quṣay and the others exclaimed repeatedly "There is no God but Allāh!" (*lā ilaha illā Allāh*). Seemingly suffering from horrible pain, ʿAlī shouted "Help, oh Rifāʿī!" (*madad yā Rifāʿī*). Afterwards, he was brought back to the chairs of the presidential family, clothed in tribal garb, and takes a seat next to Quṣay and ʿUday.¹⁰⁸⁹

Numerous other Sufis performed similar forms of the *dirbāsha* non-stop throughout the whole event. They perforated parts of their bodies (often areas around the abdomen) with long skewers and swords. Others lied on the ground while the spiritual deputies (*khulafāʾ*) of the shaykhs cut their skin forcefully with swords without injuring them. They even perforate the body of a seven or eight-year-old boy in front of the audience. The boy, seemingly stunned and confused but not crying, was brought to the presidential family where he received kissed from Quṣay and the other tribal shaykhs. Afterwards, he was paraded in front of the rest of the audience and across the courtyard.¹⁰⁹⁰ One large group of Sufis who perforated their bodies were the followers of the Abū ʿAjja clan from Dūr, al-ʿAwja, and Tikrīt. Among them appeared the old shaykh Maḥmūd Abū ʿAjja, as well as sayyid ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū ʿAjja.¹⁰⁹¹ Both are *sāda rifāʿīya* from the Ṭarābila clan in Tikrīt who also runs a *takīya* of the Rifāʿīya in the eastern part of Dūr close to the shrine of Imam Muḥammad al-Durrī.¹⁰⁹² Maḥmūd Abū ʿAjja in particular, known for his yellow turban (*imāma*), was – and still is, posthumously – highly venerated as a Sufi among the Āl Nāṣir in al-ʿAwja and

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ṭarbūlī, pts 0-6:14.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Paulo Pinto offers one analysis of such performances in a Syrian Sufi context (Pinto, 'The Sufi Ritual of the Darb Al-Shish').

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ṭarbūlī, 'Mawlūd ʿAdnān Khayr Allāh', 27 March 2018, pts 6:42-10:20.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Mawqīʿ al-ṭarīqa al-rifāʿīya, 'Mawlūd al-shahīd', pts 0:00-1:20.

¹⁰⁹¹ Ṭarbūlī, 'Mawlūd ʿAdnān Khayr Allāh', 20 January 2018, pts 3:20-3:35.

¹⁰⁹² Sāmarrāʾī, *Tāʾrīkh al-Dūr*, 23; Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Qabāʾil wa-l-buyūtāt al-hāshimīya*, 1986, 55.

Tikrīt.¹⁰⁹³ When they performed the *dirbāsha* with skewers and swords, they constantly exclaimed “*yā Abū ‘Ajja!*”. Interestingly, the video recordings exhibit a rather close and intimate relationship between the Abū ‘Ajja Sufis, the security guards present, and the presidential family. After the performance, Quṣay and the Abū ‘Ajja *khulafā*’ hugged and kissed each other intensively and give the impression that they knew each other very well.¹⁰⁹⁴ In another scene, ‘Uday was given the honour of pulling out the sword from the belly of a young Sufi *murīd*, which is usually only done by a shaykh or one of his deputies (*khulafā*’).¹⁰⁹⁵

Finally, a group of Kasnazānī Sufis recited *madā’ih* and practised the *dirbāsha*. The leader among them was the *khalīfa* of the shaykh, Aḥmad Jāsim, who is also known as Aḥmad the Shī‘ī (Aḥmad al-Shī‘ī) from Yūsufīya south of Baghdad. He is an example of a Shī‘ī member of the Sunnī Kasnazānīya and appears quite prominently on photos and video recordings of the *dhikr* ceremonies in the main *takīya* in Baghdad. In the video, he led the other Kasnazānī Sufis, probably of his own *takīya*, and hammered a dagger into his eye socket: a practice which is mainly popular among Kasnazānī Sufis.¹⁰⁹⁶

From the impression of a close and intimate relationship between Ṣaddām’s sons and the Sufis in the video recordings, we still cannot deduce any Sufi spirituality or Sufi affiliation on the part of ‘Uday or Quṣay. However, the recordings prove that at least by 1989 the presidential family had cultivated closer personal relationships with certain Sufi orders, particularly those of its home region. As representatives of a secular party they could have celebrated the end of their mourning over the loss of their family member and minister of defence in a number of ways, but they specifically chose a *mawlūd* celebration and invited many Sufi *takāyā* to attend. According to one of my interviewees, the *mawlūd* as a religious occasion is not only celebrated to remember the birth of a famous person such as the *mawlid* of the Prophet. It can also be celebrated in memory of the death of a person, with the intention that the dead receives a benefit (*fā’ida*) as a result.¹⁰⁹⁷ In this interpretation, the whole Sufi *dhikr*, *madā’ih*, and *dirbāsha* would have been intended to ask God for ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’s

¹⁰⁹³ Emarat albegat, ‘al-Marḥūm al-sayyid Maḥmūd Abū ‘Ajja’.

¹⁰⁹⁴ See Ṭarbūlī, ‘Mawlūd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’, 27 March 2018, pts 16:20-17:00; Ṭarbūlī, ‘Mawlūd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh’, 20 January 2018; Mawqī‘ al-ṭarīqa al-rifā‘īya, ‘Mawlūd al-shahīd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh 2’, pts 2:00-2:28.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Mawqī‘ al-ṭarīqa al-rifā‘īya, ‘Mawlūd al-shahīd ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh 2’, pts 1:30-1:45.

¹⁰⁹⁶ El Sayed, ‘Ḥaḍra ‘irāqīya nādīra juz’ 3’, pts 0:00-1:40.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Correspondence with Louay Fatoohi, 29.05.2018.

well-being in the afterlife. Why would the presidential family organise something like this *mawlūd* if these Sufi traditions did not mean anything to them? I argue instead that the whole event should be considered rather as an expression of a popular Sufi culture which was widespread in central and northern Iraq. This Sufi culture was familiar to the presidential family. As Fanar Haddad rightly observed, the Iraqi state is not composed of autonomous or alien actors, but of Iraqi individuals who reflect their societal background.¹⁰⁹⁸ In this instance, the presidential family turned back to the popular Sufi culture of their home region. This had already been reflected in the official religious war propaganda of the 1980s when Sufi scholars of the same region, such as Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb who also attended the *mawlūd*, began to play more prominent roles in the public sphere. In turn that means that, for certain Sufi orders at least, the presidential family and probably also the Ba‘th leadership were not merely atheist, repressive politicians. Both, pious Sufis and Ba‘thist politicians were not at all unfamiliar to each other. On the contrary, the evidence in this section suggests that they actually cultivated closer personal relationships. The event itself was not open to the wider public, but the video recordings were perhaps intended for later distribution or broadcasting.

In addition to the material on the *mawlūd* celebration above, my interviews with former Ba‘th Party members suggest further traces of a developing Sufi inclination in the presidential family during the 1990s. One clan member who practised the Sufism of the Rifā‘īya was another of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s cousins and brother of the aforementioned Ḥusayn Kāmil and Ṣaddām Kāmil, namely Jamāl al-Dīn Kāmil Ḥasan al-Nāṣirī. According to a former personal advisor to the president, Jamāl al-Dīn Kāmil followed the “method” (*manhaj*) of the Rifā‘īya and advanced to the rank of shaykh. Reportedly, he tried to open his own *takīya* for his adherents, but it was soon closed on Ṣaddām’s orders, who feared that someone might take personal advantage of the shaykh’s close relationship with the presidential family. A similar attempt to open his own Sufi *takīya* was undertaken by one of Ṣaddām’s leading bodyguards (*murāfiq*) but failed as a result of a presidential objection for the same reasons.¹⁰⁹⁹

The Sufi *dhikr* enjoyed increasing popularity during the 1990s and seems to have transformed, at least partially, into a sort of entertainment for the wider population. In one study, Jean-Claude Chabrier describes his own eye-witness account of a huge

¹⁰⁹⁸ Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 7.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Interview with Maḥmūd Shākir, a personal advisor to the presidential *dīwān*, 19.05.2016.

Kasnazānī *dhikr* in Baghdad as part of a Babylon Festival in 1997. Supported by the rhythm of drums, they performed the *dirbāsha* in the presence of an Italian film crew. Chabrier concluded that this order was obviously tolerated by – and the whole event approved by – the authorities. He even notes the unusual intermingling of officials in this environment.¹¹⁰⁰ Almost all interviewees in this study, too – Sufis and non-Sufis, with or without a genealogical Sufi connection, Sunnīs or Shīʿīs, party member or not – often visited *dhikr* performances in the 1980s and, to a greater extent, in the 1990s. One leading party member from Baghdad reported that he regularly visited Sufi *dhikr* of all orders mentioned above. In his opinion, this was a normal activity and these performances, according to him, were quite popular and almost everyone would visit them once in a while.¹¹⁰¹

This is only one way in which the Sufi *dhikr* became a vital part of Iraqi social life during the 1990s. In many cases Sufism was more than mere entertainment. The evidence found during my research suggests that, in this partly tribal and partly Sufi environment, members of the presidential clan, the military leadership, the secret services and some party members became involved in Sufi circles and joined an order. Beside the Rifāʿīya, there is evidence that the Kasnazānīya, with its enormously successful expansion throughout Iraq, reached regime circles beyond ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, especially Bayjāt members many of whom worked in the secret services and presidential guards.

One member of the presidential family, who regularly attended the Kasnazānī *dhikr* in Baghdad, was Arshad Yāsīn al-Rashīd, senior bodyguard and brother-in-law to Ṣaddām.¹¹⁰² Eyewitnesses were not sure if he was interested in Sufism or was personally spying on the order and the shaykh. One witness claimed that he might have pressed some members of the order for money.¹¹⁰³ Yet, the mere fact that Arshad Yāsīn appears on photos in the order's literature sitting next to the shaykh during the *dhikr* suggests he was more than an unwelcome guest, not to mention a spy.¹¹⁰⁴ In 1992, Arshad Yāsīn was officially sent to represent the regime and convey the president's condolence at the funeral of the late shaykh ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī's wife in Kirkūk.¹¹⁰⁵ Such an honour was certainly not bestowed upon every Sufi family.

¹¹⁰⁰ Chabrier, 'Une séance de dhikr de la Qādiriyya-Kasnazāniyya à Bagdad en 1997'.

¹¹⁰¹ Interview with Maḥmūd Shākir, a personal advisor to the presidential *dīwān*, 05.05.2016.

¹¹⁰² More on Arshad's biography in Ḥasan, *Ḥukūmat al-qariya*, 328–30.

¹¹⁰³ Interview with Bakr ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Baghdad, 25.10.2014.

¹¹⁰⁴ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-ʿalīya*, 146, 158–59.

¹¹⁰⁵ *al-Thawra* 07.09.1992 mentioned in Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 311, Fn. 69.

In 2000, further video material shows the euphoric performance of the Kasnazānī *dhikr* in one of the presidential villas in Tikrīt. Directly under a huge painting of Ṣaddām, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya led the *dhikr* including *dirbāsha* among a large group of Bayjāt members including the tribal shaykh Aḥmad Khaṭṭāb al-‘Umar, an officer from Ṣaddām’s guards (*himāya*), Sa‘d Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Nāṣirī and his son, and a relative of General ‘Alī Ḥasan al-Majīd.¹¹⁰⁶ Thus, the Kasnazānīya had reached the innermost circle of the regime and in fact Ṣaddām’s own family. State support for Sufism may only have been tactical, but for many members of the Ba‘th, the military, and the security services, over time it became more than that.

5.2.2. ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s Sufi Networks: A Sufi shaykh in the Ba‘th?

During the 1990s, we witness not only a personal intermingling of certain Sufi networks with the presidential clan – an intermingling that went beyond the official religious propaganda – but also with the vice-chairman of the RCC, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī. By that time, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm was widely known to be the Sufi patron within the Ba‘th and gave the impression of being a very pious Muslim. Since the early 2000s – and more clearly after the fall of the regime in 2003 – a widespread rumour claimed that he was not only a practising Sufi but was in fact a Sufi shaykh with his own followers. Journalists and political analysts present him sometimes as a shaykh of the

¹¹⁰⁶ Dulaymī, ‘Abṭāl al-Kasnazān’. This late evidence of a Kasnazānī fellowship within Ṣaddām’s clan and closest associates is even more remarkable as a certain estrangement had reportedly occurred between the president and shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī. Between 1998 and 1999, three of the shaykh’s sons were arrested and sentenced to death on charges of having forged Ṣaddām’s signature for an illegal oil deal to the Kurdish enclaves. They had reportedly acted as mediators for the president and his sons in such oil deals since the mid 1990s. Only after an intervention by the shaykh, a prominent Kurdish communist politician and, allegedly, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm, were they pardoned and allowed to flee to Sulaymānīya, then already beyond regime control and protected by Jalāl Ṭālabānī. The shaykh himself seems to have left Baghdad for Sulaymānīya along with them in 2000 but even then was able to move freely across the whole of the north. This estrangement worsened further in the final years of the regime with a story that nowadays widely circulates among Iraqis. In April 2003, American troops uncovered a mass grave in the ground of the Abu Ghraib prison outside of Baghdad with the corpses of men executed by the regime. The victims were among dozens arrested during raids on Baghdad’s Sufi mosques and *takāyā* since the start of the war, in the course of which at least forty men of the Kasnazān mosque had been taken to the prison. These raids on Sufi mosques began after the uncovering of a plot by the Kasnazānīs and other groups in the Kurdish-controlled north to overthrow the regime. Those arrested were found in possession of thuraya satellite phones with which they had contacted their allies in the north in order to communicate intelligence on Ṣaddām’s whereabouts (Catherine Philp, ‘Mass Grave’; The event is also mentioned in Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 313). According to further journalistic accounts, the shaykh and his sons are said to have cooperated with the CIA to prepare the regime’s downfall, with their valuable Sufi network providing informants in sensitive positions inside the military and security services close to Ṣaddām and his family after their escape to Sulaymānīya (Woodward, *Plan of Attack*).

Qādirīya,¹¹⁰⁷ sometimes of the Rifāʿīya,¹¹⁰⁸ and sometimes of the Naqshbandīya.¹¹⁰⁹ However, the information and hard evidence we have on his private Sufi life is rather scant and most accounts are merely anecdotal. Even though he was the most prominent Sufi within the regime, he left very few traces of his Sufi life, at least in the material which was available for my research. The pages that follow will present the picture of his Sufism which emerged from my collected sources, in combination with the evaluation of the interviews I conducted. The sources suggest that he did not become more than a *murīd* in the Kasnazānīya at an early stage of his life and that he kept an active interest in Sufism throughout his career. That he actually became a Sufi shaykh of one order or another cannot be proven with certainty.

The only convincing traces of a real Sufi affiliation lead to the Kasnazānīya. Since his youth in Dūr, ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm has been a novice (*murīd*) in this order, which back then had already established *takāyā* in neighboring Sāmarrāʾ and Tikrīt. His membership of this order was affirmed after 2003 in an official statement by Dr. Nehrū al-Kasnazānī, son of shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī and head of their political party “National Alliance” (*al-taḥāluf al-waṭanī*). He confirmed that ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm and his whole family had already been novices (*murīdūn*) of the Kasnazānīya before the beginning of his political career and his ascension within the Baʿth Party. One of his uncles from his mother’s side was a spiritual guide (*murshid*) of the Kasnazānīya, i.e. a *khalīfa*, and had introduced him to the order. ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm had personally sworn the oath of allegiance to the former shaykh ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī in Kirkūk.¹¹¹⁰ The previous findings in this study support this affiliation and suggest that his children also became followers of the order. After all, his son Ibrāhīm has written a PhD thesis on a manuscript of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī which was in the possession of and edited by shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī in the late 1980s.¹¹¹¹

Aside from the Kasnazānīya, there are other accounts referring to his frequenting of other orders too, yet it seems unlikely that he was also an active follower of these other orders. These visits were probably more political and intended to cultivate good relations in exchange for support. According to Sami Shourush, from the 1980s on he

¹¹⁰⁷ Ali, ‘Sufi Insurgent Groups’.

¹¹⁰⁸ Shahzad, ‘Al-Qaeda’.

¹¹⁰⁹ Knights, ‘The JRTN Movement’, 2.

¹¹¹⁰ ʿḤiwār al-amīn al-ʿāmm’.

¹¹¹¹ See Section 5.1.3.

was known to be an adherent and regular attendant at the *takīya* of shaykh Ibrāhīm Jaw'īsa (or Jawīsa or Chaw'īsa) in Qādir Karam near Kirkūk.¹¹¹² Yet there is no information available about the nature of these visits. It is not clear whether they were simply political, to seek blessing, or whether he followed the Sufi path of this shaykh. The Kurdish Jaw'īsa clan, as a whole, traces its *nasab* back to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and has a strong presence in Sulaymānīya province with many *takāyā* inside and outside of Iraqī Kurdistan. The clan's most famous Sufi shaykh and *murshid* of the Qādirīya is shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jawīsa (1920-1992), who had a large following in northern Iraq as well as in Iranian Kurdistan and sided with the Ba'th regime against Khomeynī during the Iran-Iraq War.¹¹¹³ As minister of the interior in the 1970s and head of the Northern Affairs Committee in the 1980s, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm's relationship with this clan could have been primarily political.

Rāfid Fāḍil 'Alī notes another affiliation to the Qādirī shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥallāb, whom his followers allegedly criticised heavily and removed from the post of shaykh after 2003 for his hasty promotion of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm on the spiritual path without an adequate preparation.¹¹¹⁴ The story of the shaykh's removal seems less convincing, since shaykh is not a position one is appointed to but rather a function which one develops over years, but 'Izzat Ibrāhīm may have frequented this *takīya* as well. Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥallāb is a descendant of the Syrian-born shaykh Muḥammad Ramaḍān al-Ḥallāb al-Nu'aymī (d. 1972), who had immigrated into Iraq as a youngster and gradually advanced through several *ijāzas* on the Qādirī path to the level of shaykh. This Arab clan maintains *takāyā* in Fallūja and Baghdad, where the *takīyat al-Ḥallāb* is run today by shaykh 'Ādil, a descendant of shaykh Aḥmad al-Ḥallāb.¹¹¹⁵ One wife of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm notably hails from the Nu'aym tribe: it is possible that he also shared kinship links with this Nu'aymī family.

Finally, the most obscure Sufi affiliation of 'Izzat Ibrāhīm leads to the Naqshbandīya. According to security analyst Michael Knights, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm built up his own patronage network among the Arab strand of the Naqshbandīya order from which the pro-Ba'th insurgency group "Army of the Men of the Naqshbandī Path" (*Jaysh rijāl al-ṭarīqa al-naqshbandīya*: JRTN) later emerged in 2006. He claims that 'Izzat Ibrāhīm and other members have also used this network as a political and business

¹¹¹² McDowall, *A Modern History*, 355; Shourush, 'The Religious Composition', 119.

¹¹¹³ Tavakkulī, *Tārīkh-i taṣavvuf*, 194. See also the official Facebook page of the clan (Jawīsa, 'Jawīsa').

¹¹¹⁴ Ali, 'Sufi Insurgent Groups'; 'Ba'd khashīyat al-ghadar al-shī'ī'.

¹¹¹⁵ Ḥammūd, 'al-Ṭuruq', 109.

fellowship.¹¹¹⁶ Some of my interviewees (both Ba‘thist and non-Ba‘thist) confirmed that he also supported and visited the Naqshbandīya in Iraq. Yet no one could specify further in terms of the details of this support or the visits. They merely mentioned that the Naqshbandīya prospered through ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s patronage in Dūr, Tikrīt, Sāmarrā’, and Kirkūk. However, no clear proof could be found as to which shaykhs he promoted and included in this Sufi network. A name frequently mentioned during the interviews and also in the Arabic press is shaykh Maḥmūd al-Nu‘aymī. He allegedly became an influential Naqshbandī shaykh in Kirkūk, visited frequently by ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm. This shaykh is considered a key figure as regards Naqshandī relations with the regime.¹¹¹⁷ Another Naqshbandī shaykh frequently named as being close to the regime was ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Nu‘aymī al-Naqshbandī, who is regarded as the founder and leading shaykh of JRTN from 2006 onwards. Unfortunately, further details were not available on either of these shaykhs. The Members of JRTN refer to them in their war poems and songs (*anāshīd*) only as “al-shaykh al-Nu‘aymī” or “shaykh al-Naqshbandīya ‘Abd al-Raḥman”.¹¹¹⁸

Previous accounts which claim that ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm “was rushed through the process of confirmation as a Naqshbandi shaykh”¹¹¹⁹ or that the Kasnazānīya “agreed to make ‘Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri one of their shaykhs as a gesture to the regime”¹¹²⁰ are somewhat misleading. As noted above, Sufi shaykh is not a rank which one assumes following a kind of standard process but rather a function one fulfils, namely to guide others spiritually. It is a function that grows over time along with a general acknowledgment from the community. Theoretically, he could have received permission (*ijāza*) to introduce new members to the Sufi path in all aforementioned orders, either as a follower of an order or as a sort of honorary title given to an important political personality. His becoming a “shaykh” in the Kasnazānīya is impossible. The Kasnazānīya has only one leading shaykh, namely shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm, who will probably be succeeded eventually by his eldest son. The highest function one can reach in this order is that of a deputy (*khalīfa*), a role which includes, for example, the leadership of one’s own *takīya*, the right to initiate others into the order through

¹¹¹⁶ Knights, ‘Saddam Hussein’s Faithful Friend, the King of Clubs, Might Be the Key to Saving Iraq’; Knights, ‘The JRTN Movement’.

¹¹¹⁷ Interviews with Farḥān Kāzīm, a former Ba‘thist, 20.10.2015; Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Karīm, a former Ba‘thist, 11.11.2015; Ḥaytham ‘Abd al-Qādir, a former Ba‘thist, 18.05.2016. See also Khalaf, ‘Maṣḍar maṭla’.

¹¹¹⁸ ‘Ubaydī, *Dhabū hā l-‘agal*, 111, 116–17, 119–20, 123, 147, 152.

¹¹¹⁹ Knights, ‘The JRTN Movement’, 2.

¹¹²⁰ Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 311.

the oath of allegiance, and the right to give permission for the practice of the *dirbāsha* (perforating the body with swords as a miracle performance). Yet this right – or rather qualification – is only possible through a spiritual link to the central shaykh: the organisation of the order therefore remains centralised. According to Nehrū al-Kasnazānī, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s uncle was such a deputy, but he himself was only a *murīd*.

Most of my interviewees did not independently mention that he rose to the rank of shaykh in any of the Sufi orders. These interviewees were all either part of the same Sufi milieu or were his party colleagues, some knew him well and two had even met him on a weekly basis in the past. When explicitly asked if he rose to the rank of a Sufi shaykh, most of them said no, stressing that he is a Ba‘thist politician, not a Sufi shaykh, and only privately and intellectually interested in Sufism. Only two interviewees from among his closer associates, themselves high-ranking Ba‘th Party members, claimed that ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm had memorised the Quran and became a shaykh of the Rifā‘īya¹¹²¹ spiritually guiding his own followers (*murīdūn*). They confirmed that he also gave permission for the *dirbāsha* and had his own *takāyā* (in this case small mosques) attached to his houses in Baghdad, Dūr, and Tikrīt. There he performed his daily prayers and allegedly received his followers, including Ṣaddām’s sons and some Sufi shaykhs from time to time.¹¹²² On the one hand, such a scenario is not impossible, but could he, on the other hand, really have had the time to fulfil such a spiritual role as a full-time politician and vice-chairman of the RCC? Probably not, since he was the state’s second-in-command after Ṣaddām and would certainly have been preoccupied with political tasks and obligations.

His hosting of *dhikr* ceremonies, however, seems quite likely. A third Ba‘thist, who had often attended these gatherings, reported that ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s closest associate was the imam and Rifā‘ī Sufi Ḥusayn Muṣṭafā Khuḍayr al-Jubbūrī. He visited ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s house every Thursday evening for the *dhikr*. According to the Ba‘thist interviewee, they performed the *dhikr* together and listened to eulogies (*madā’ih*) on the Prophet and other saints. There were no performances of the *dirbāsha* in his

¹¹²¹ As noted earlier, ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm had tribal ties to the Abū Khumra clan who represent a branch of the Rifā‘īya in Iraq. More details about this tribal bond follow in the next section.

¹¹²² Interviews with Farḥān Kāzīm, a former Ba‘thist, 24.01.2016 and Ḥusayn ‘Abd al-Salām, a former Ba‘thist, 14.05.2016. The journalist Nicolas Pelham mentions in one of his books that before and after the war street traders peddled CD’s of ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī and Quṣay Ṣaddām Ḥusayn chanting at a *takīya* of the Rifā‘īya in western Baghdad (Pelham, *A New Muslim Order*, 119). However, I did not come across such material except for a famous video of the presidential family’s mourning gathering with Rifā‘ī Sufis mentioned in the next section.

presence.¹¹²³ ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s hosting of such *dhikr* ceremonies were also mentioned in the interviews conducted by Noorah al-Gailani. She discovered that he has even authored a book allegedly on Sufism, titled *The Ḥadīth of the Two on the Guidance of the Master of the Messengers (Ḥadīth al-ithnayn ‘an hadī sayyid al-mursalīn)*.¹¹²⁴ This book could be an invaluable source for understanding this Ba‘thist figure’s Sufism. Unfortunately, it seems to have been lost.

Finally, in contrast to the previous statements, one regular attendant of the Kasnazānī *dhikr* in Baghdad recalled that ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm rarely visited other *dhikr* sessions publicly. The interviewee never saw him with other members of the order during the *dhikr* performances. He visited the shaykh only in the private rooms on the second floor of the *takīya*.¹¹²⁵ Another Ba‘thist comrade similarly reported that he once met ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm when he was invited to a Naqshbandī *dhikr* in Baghdad during the 1990s. They had dinner together in the *takīya* but ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm left the event shortly before the *dhikr* began. This Ba‘thist mentioned that more secular party members used to criticise the vice-chairman of the RCC for such attendances and his Sufi religiosity, for instance, even as late as during a party congress in 2000 when the Faith Campaign reached its seventh year.¹¹²⁶

In conclusion, no hard evidence in this study can confirm that he was, from his youth onwards, more than a *murīd* in the Kasnazānīya. He did indeed maintain an active interest in Sufism throughout his career and was well-versed in religious rhetoric, as could be seen in his speeches. The purposes of his various visits to different Sufi shaykhs of all orders remain obscure. He certainly had some spiritual interest, but the use of his Sufi background for the establishment of networks among the orders in the previous cases above had a more significant political dimension. We should not forget that in the late 1980s ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm headed the RCC’s Northern Affairs Committee (*lajnat shu’ūn al-shimāl*)¹¹²⁷ where he had to mobilise Kurdish civilian support for the

¹¹²³ Interview with Maḥmūd Shākir, a personal advisor to the presidential *dīwān*, 19.05.2016.

¹¹²⁴ Gailani, ‘The Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’, 368. Gailani mentions that she could not get hold on this book and it is not available any more in the Iraqi National Library.

¹¹²⁵ Interview with Bakr ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Baghdad, 15.10.2014.

¹¹²⁶ Interview with Farḥān Kāzīm, a former Ba‘thist, 20.10.2015.

¹¹²⁷ Originally established in 1970, the whole committee included the ministers of defense, of interior, of planning, the secretary of the Northern Organization Office, the heads of the legislative and executive councils in the Kurdistan area, heads of security systems, the security director, the general intelligence system director, the general military intelligence director, and the army chief of staff (van Heugten and Tofan, *The Saddam Hussein Trial*, 388; McDowall, *A Modern History*, 326).

regime. The secretary of this body in 1987, Ṭāhir al-‘Ānī, explicitly reported that their task was

to take care of social figures and Sheikh’s and occasionally request[s] for formations of national defense regiments were submitted to the committee when there [was] a need by the army, then the matter [was] reviewed after the approval of the security authorities and then formations [took] place.¹¹²⁸

The fact that Kurdish Sufi clans like the Kasnazānīs and the Jaw’īsas had supported the regime during the war should certainly be considered in this context. His relationship to the Ḥallāb clan is not clear, but, as briefly stated, his Nu‘aymī tribal links via one of his wives could have played a role here. Ultimately, he remained the central broker between the regime and the Sufi networks, as well as their most important political patron.

5.2.3. *Iraq’s Sharīfian Unity II: The Ba‘th Leaders and the Sufi Clans*

While the presidential family and ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī had, by the late 1980s, cultivated closer personal relations with certain Sufi orders, these relations were further consolidated through the publication of their genealogical links in further books about *ansāb* in Iraq. The revival of genealogical literature about Iraqi tribes which began in the 1980s, and the revival of sharīfism related to it, now reached its apex during the 1990s. Just like the earlier books, the genealogical literature of the 1990s promoted the idea of a huge genealogical network of *sāda* and *ashrāf* in Iraq which converged and originated in the *ahl al-bayt* who are buried in Iraqi soil. This literary genre delivered a popular – and to a certain extent genealogical-scientific – foundation for the Ba‘th’s aforementioned revival of the *niqābat al-ashrāf* later in 2001. Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī’s encyclopaedic books already promoted the genealogical history and unity of Iraq’s *sāda* clans and presented the presidential family and ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī as the politically leading representatives within a genealogical Sufi context. The new publications about tribal genealogies in the 1990s continued this endeavour but in a much more detailed and elaborate way and with a much stronger religious tone. More than before, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s and ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s clans and tribes appeared in the context of a sharīfian Sufi and tribal culture which so many of Iraq’s tribal elites shared. Their direct genealogical connection to the Arab Sufi clans meant they were much more closely associated with the Sufi orders which the

¹¹²⁸ van Heugten and Tofan, *The Saddam Hussein Trial*, 388.

state officially supported during the Faith Campaign. In addition, the sharīfian Sufi tribal culture was a common element which the leading Ba‘thists shared with several of their Kurdish political allies and which could be upheld as part of the narrative of the national unity or brotherhood between them. Two noteworthy authors who represent this trend are Khāshi‘ al-Mu‘āḍidī and Thāmir al-‘Āmirī. With their encyclopaedias, both writers created a new standard for this kind of literature in Iraq and the latter eventually became a member of the Ba‘th’s genealogical council (*lajnat al-ansāb*) in 2001.¹¹²⁹

Khāshi‘ al-Mu‘āḍidī published the second volume of his *About Some Genealogies of the Arabs* (*Min ba‘ḍ ansāb al-‘arab*) in 1990, concentrating on Prophetic descendants in central Iraq. The book begins with background information about the forefathers of the Arabs as well as the *ahl al-bayt*, i.e. the descendants of al-Ḥasan, mainly of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, and the descendants of al-Ḥusayn. The major part of the book is dedicated to the Rifā‘ian tribes such as the Rāwīs, Ṣumayda‘, Ḥadīdīyīn, Āl Nāṣir, and al-Nu‘aym and explicitly mentions their respective genealogical links.¹¹³⁰ Mu‘āḍidī reserved the largest part of the book for the Āl Nāṣir, whom he introduced as representing partially a kinship group with a common *nasab*, and partially a local alliance (*ḥilf*) of tribes which had settled in Tikrīt over time. Interestingly, he explicitly defended his interest in this tribe and listed three points which made him hesitant to write about them: first, this noble family was not in need of further written coverage as they were already frequently mentioned by their – and Iraq’s – leader Ṣaddām Ḥusayn; second, some might believe that the ruling government had suggested that the author write about them and dictated the content according to its will; third, others could argue that the noble family should remain above the sphere of investigation. In the end, he refuted all objections with four arguments that are related to the completeness and consistency of his project.¹¹³¹ He even discussed his doubts as to whether he should write with or without the consent of the tribe and mentioned a meeting with one of their representatives whose positive answer he quoted.

As you and everybody knows, we do not need what is written about us: we know ourselves, and the people know us as well. Our pedigree (*nasab*) is confirmed and clear, but we bless this endeavour of yours, for we wish [the best] for you and your scientific reputation as we wish [the best] for ourselves and our reputation. We want to protect you from the rumours from those among the people biased against us and against you. Therefore, we will provide you with the original document, which confirms our origin from the family of the house of the noble

¹¹²⁹ See Section 5.1.6.

¹¹³⁰ Mu‘āḍidī, *‘Ālī al-rāḥidayn*, 1990.

¹¹³¹ Mu‘āḍidī, 2:208–9.

Prophet (ṣ). You can copy parts of it or copy it completely, photograph it or photograph a part of it, and you include it in your scientific book so that the truth, your protection, and the encouragement of scientific and objective writing may prevail.¹¹³²

Mu‘aḏḏī confirmed that he had access to the named document, which was reportedly authenticated by a lot of *al-sāda al-ashrāf* and *nuqabā’* in Iraq, Syria, and former Constantinople (*Qusṭanṭīniya*). It dated back to the year 1660, measured twelve metres in length, thirty centimetres in width, and was of a dark brown colour with beautiful handwriting. Nizār al-Nāṣirī, who had inherited it from his father, the *nassāba* ‘Abd al-Ghufār al-Nāṣirī, reportedly kept it in his house.¹¹³³ The author also gained access to a second *nasab* document that was authored “about a hundred years ago” on behalf of Ḥasan b. ‘Umar Bē al-Nāṣirī in Constantinople. This document measured one metre in length, thirty-centimetres in width, and was preserved by former major general (*liwā’*) Fāliḥ Ḥamūd al-Nāṣirī, who brought a copy of it to Baghdad on 1st September 1989. Mu‘aḏḏī copied the second document by hand and signed it at the end twice, confirming its authenticity. A third signature in between Mu‘aḏḏī’s reads “Amīr Tikrīt al-sayyid ‘Umar”. According to Mu‘aḏḏī, Ḥasan b. ‘Umar Bē al-Nāṣirī had travelled to Istanbul during a quarrel about the leadership of the *niqābat al-ashrāf* in Tikrīt. He wrote that the date of the document “undoubtedly predates the First World War”. Ḥasan returned with this *nasab* document as proof of the descent of the al-Baykāṭ,¹¹³⁴ which Mu‘aḏḏī identified in brackets with the Āl Nāṣir, from the Prophet Muḥammad. The document itself described the Āl Nāṣir *nasab* from Ḥasan b. ‘Umar Bē to the Prophet including the matrilineal branch to

The lord of the poles...the Imam of the saints and highborn...the greatest succour close to the hand of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation...the crown of the knowing and possessor of the two wisdoms, the sultan of men, our master (*mawlānā*) and lord, *sayyid* Aḥmad Muḥy al-Dīn al-Kabīr al-Ḥusaynī al-Rifā‘ī, may God be pleased with him.¹¹³⁵

The next four pages of Mu‘aḏḏī’s book exhibit a handwritten genealogy of Ṣaddām to the Prophet, largely in accordance with Rujaybī’s *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*,¹¹³⁶ followed

¹¹³² Mu‘aḏḏī, 2:209–10.

¹¹³³ Mu‘aḏḏī, 2:210. Nizār and ‘Abd al-Ghufār are members of the *fakhidh* Āl Fayāḏ (Mu‘aḏḏī, 2:251). For ‘Abd al-Ghufār’s biography, Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rikh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 399.

¹¹³⁴ The name al-Baykāṭ is probably a derivation from ‘Umar’s Ottoman title Bē or Bey written in Arabic „Bak“.

¹¹³⁵ Mu‘aḏḏī, *A ‘ālī al-rāfiḏayn*, 1990, 2:211–12.

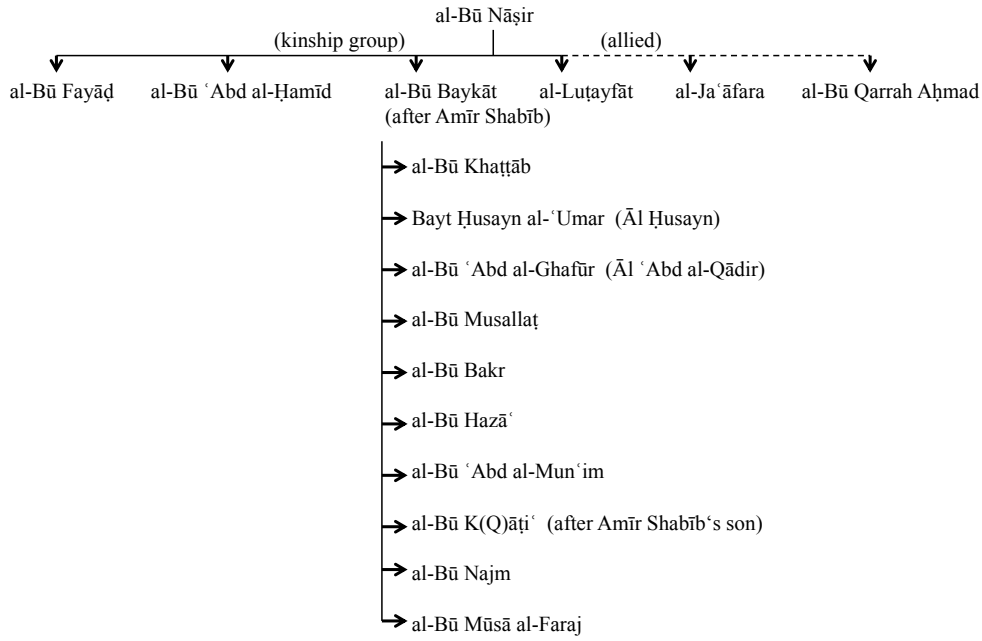
¹¹³⁶ Remarkably, a variation from Rujaybī becomes evident in Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s *nasab* of all *ansāb*, where a new name appears in the fourth generation of his forefathers. There, the *nasab* reads “Ṣaddām b. Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Majīd b. ‘Abd al-Ghafūr b. Sulaymān [sic!] b. ‘Abd al-Qādir” (Mu‘aḏḏī, 2:229). The genealogy of the president would have received special attention by religious scholars and the public: such an alteration in the fourth generation must have appeared conspicuous and would certainly have called the genealogy even further into question.

by biographical annotations from Amīr Nāṣir to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Here the author placed particular emphasis on the branch of Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī from which he traced one generation after the other to Ṣaddām. The founding figure of the tribe in particular is written about in an obviously religious tone, particularly when compared to Rujaybī’s earlier portrayal of him. Amīr Nāṣir was referred to from now on as *sayyid* Aḥmad Nāṣir al-Dīn. The Ottoman Sultan Salīm Khān al-Ghāzī (1512-1520) had allegedly bestowed the title “Nāṣir al-Dīn” upon him for his services in the propagation of justice, wisdom, and politics in the service of Islam in Aleppo, as well as for his conduct according to the muḥammadan *sharī‘a*.¹¹³⁷

The most detailed series on Iraqi tribes appeared in 1992 and 1993 with Thāmir al-‘Āmirī’s nine-volume work *Encyclopaedia of Iraqi Tribes (Mawsū‘at al-‘ashā‘ir al-‘irāqīya)*. Iraq’s Sufī clans, and the Āl Nāṣir in between, also figure prominently here, with extensive chapters in several volumes (particularly volumes one and five). In contrast to previous books, ‘Āmirī provided much more historical and biographical data and presented photos of the most important shaykhs of each clan. Volume one is more regionally oriented and presents the Āl Nāṣir, similar to Mu‘āḍidī, as the leading tribe of Tikrīt, composed of the kinship group and the locally allied tribes which are also counted as Āl Nāṣir. The structure of the tribe is a bit different from Rujaybī’s, since some subunits are now named after younger ancestors and new families and clans have emerged in the meantime.¹¹³⁸

¹¹³⁷ Mu‘āḍidī, 2:218.

¹¹³⁸ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1992, 1:204–16.



F-11

Figure 11: Genealogy of the Āl Nāṣir - 'Āmirī

'Āmirī stressed from the beginning that there are no contradictions at all between the old and modern sources about the history and descent of this noble tribe from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and hence no room for other interpretations. He resumed Mu'āḍidī's religious tone when speaking of Amīr Aḥmad Nāṣir al-Dīn, introduced the tribe as *sāda rifā'īya*, and relied on the same aforementioned *nasab* document from 1660. Mu'āḍidī's copies of Ḥasan b. 'Umar Bē al-Nāṣirī's genealogy reappear in both volumes (one and five).¹¹³⁹

Volume five dedicates a long chapter to *al-sāda al-rifā'īya* in Iraq, focusing particularly on the clans in Tikrīt. Here, we also find the Āl Nāṣir genealogically in the company of the Rifā'ī Sufi clans, who attended the *mawlūd* for 'Adnān Khayr Allāh presumably in 1989. 'Āmirī sketched the lineage of the *ahl al-bayt* from 'Alī to Mūsā al-Kāẓim and then outlined the Rifā'ī *nasab* over thirty-nine generations, with biographical annotations, to Maḥdī al-Rifā'ī b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Rajab, the eighteenth-century *naqīb al-ashrāf* of Baṣra from the Āl al-Naqīb. 'Āmirī also presented a short copy of the *nasab* document of the Āl Khalaf al-Rifā'ī in Tikrīt, who are the descendants of the Āl al-Naqīb. He received this copy from sayyid Badr b.

¹¹³⁹ 'Āmirī, 1:204–6; 'Āmirī, *Mawsū'a*, 1993, 5:53–54.

Şābir b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Khalaf al-Rifā‘ī and mentioned that his descendants currently hold the shaykhdom (*mashyakha*) of Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī’s shrine in the south.¹¹⁴⁰ The Āl Khalaf al-Rifā‘ī, with whom the presidential family had celebrated the *mawlūd*, appear here as the leading Rifā‘ī shaykhs of Iraq. They and most other *ṭuruq* of the Rifā‘īya are said to be able to trace their lineage back to shaykh Rajab al-Naqīb from Baṣra. Afterwards, ‘Āmirī listed *al-sāda al-rifā‘īya* in Baṣra (Āl Naqīb), Baghdad (Āl Qumar, Mullā Ḥuwaysh, Ṭabaqjalī), Tikrīt, (Āl al-shaykh Khalaf, Āl Nāṣir), Rāwa (Āl Rāwī), Maḥāwīl (Muṣṭafā al-Khalīl), Sāmarrā’ (Āl Mullīs), Mandalī (Āl Naqīb), ‘Aqra, and in Kuwait.¹¹⁴¹ Information about the tribes of Sāmarrā’ with the Āl Mullīs followed in separate chapters.¹¹⁴² Here ‘Āmirī presented largely the same genealogical Rifā‘īya network that can be found in *al-Nujūm al-zawāhir*, only much more elaborate. In this way the Sufi links of the presidential tribe were further established as a fact in the historiography of Iraq’s tribal society.

‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī’s Ḥarb tribe and his genealogical link to the Abū Khumra¹¹⁴³ al-Rifā‘ī clan is introduced a few pages after the presidential tribe.¹¹⁴⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, the Abū Khumra are also *sāda* but not descendants of Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī, and they count several Sufi shaykhs, who combine the Rifā‘īya and Qādirīya, among their members with several *takāyā* across Iraq and in Syria.¹¹⁴⁵ One of their most outstanding shaykhs, and custodian (*mutawallī*) of the *takāyā* in Baghdad, was ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Ibrāhīm Abū Khumra whose influence stretched through his tribal network beyond Baghdad to Jabal Ḥamrīn as well as to his birthplace Ḥawīja.¹¹⁴⁶ In the late 1980s, he was succeeded by his son Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Abū Khumra, who today is the leading shaykh in Baghdad.¹¹⁴⁷

¹¹⁴⁰ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 5:49–50.

¹¹⁴¹ ‘Āmirī, 5:49–52.

¹¹⁴² ‘Āmirī, 5:166–94.

¹¹⁴³ The byname “Abū Khumra” refers to a miracle of one of the clan’s founding figures, ‘Alī Abū Khumra, in the eighteenth century. Once shaykh ‘Alī had many guests and produced a huge amount of bread from only a small piece of yeast (*khumrat al-‘ajīn*) (Sāmarrā’ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī*, 97–99).

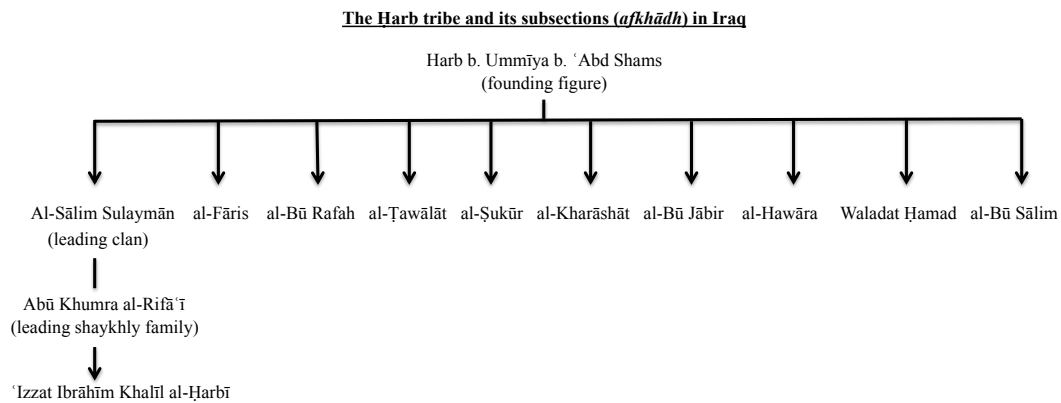
¹¹⁴⁴ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 5:78–80.

¹¹⁴⁵ In Iraq they run five *takāyā* in their main settlement Sarḥa, a village south of Kirkūk in the area of Jabal Ḥamrīn, one in each city of Mosul, Tikrīt, Sāmarrā’, as well as in Jalawlā’ and Ba‘qūba in Diyāla province, and two in Baghdad. In Syria they have *takāyā* in Qāmishlī, Dayr al-Zūr, and Aleppo (A‘ḥamī, *Tārīkh jāmi‘ al-Imām al-A‘ḥamī*, 1964, 2:178).

¹¹⁴⁶ A‘ḥamī, 2:183–84. The author Hāshim al-A‘ḥamī, imam and preacher (*khaṭīb*) in the Abū Ḥanīfa as well as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī mosques, was a follower of shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.

¹¹⁴⁷ Noorah al-Gailani offers some information about the clan and its *takāyā* in Baghdad. She mentions the other important founding figure of the clan, Muḥammad al-Hindī, who was a Qādirī Sufi at the Kīlānīya, but wrongly identifies him as his brother ‘Alī Abū Khumra (Gailani, ‘The Shrine of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’, 213, 375).

‘Izzat b. Ibrāhīm b. Khalīl b. Raḥīm b. Amīn al-Ḥarbī is here presented as a member of the Ḥarb tribal section (*fakhidh*) al-Sālim Sulaymān or al-Bū Sulaymān (often also Salmān), which simultaneously forms a sub-branch in the Mawāshiṭ¹¹⁴⁸ local tribal confederation in Dūr.¹¹⁴⁹ The Abū Khumra are portrayed not only as a Sufi shaykh clan of the Rifā‘īya but also as chiefs of the Ḥarb tribe in Iraq (See the following graph).



F-12

Figure 12: Genealogy of the Ḥarb Tribe

Similar to Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, 'Āmirī highlighted the geographical dispersion of all the tribes, which was intended to overcome regional differences, both through a common tribal bond and tribal cohesion and also through a sharīfian unity, as can be seen in the Ba'th's attempt to revive the *niqābat al-ashrāf* in 2001. Again, 'Āmirī did this in much more detail than Sāmarrā'ī, as can be exemplified by his list of Ḥarb tribal leaders from northern provinces such as Nīnawā to southern ones such as Najaf and Maysān.

¹¹⁴⁸ Such a tribal overlap, as in the case of the Ḥarb and the Mawāshiṭ, is not uncommon as tribes are not rigid entities but are more fluid, with continuously changing borders and allegiances over time as regards political and social circumstances. In the case of this overlap, the Ḥarb should at best be considered as the “genealogical tribe” whose sections in Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia share one alleged founding figure, whereas the Mawāshiṭ is more a pragmatic and regional alliance of different “genealogical tribal sections” sharing the same area of settlement, namely Dūr and Sāmarrā'.

¹¹⁴⁹ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Qabā'il al-'irāqīya*, 2:165; 'Āmirī, *Mawsū'a*, 1993, 5:75–80.

Province	Tribal leader
Nīnawā	Ḥusayn Aḥmad al-Ṭu‘ma and
	Ṭaha ‘Amīr al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥarbī
Diyālā	Maḥmūd al-Shaykh Muḥammad Abū Khumra
Tā‘mīm	‘Alī al-Shaykh Muḥammad Abū Khumra
Baghdad/Madā‘in	Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Waḥhāb Abū Khumra
Dūr	Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl al-Ḥarbāwī
Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn	Ṣāliḥ al-Shaykh Muḥammad Abū Khumra
Najaf	al-Ḥājī Nājī al-Ḥāris and Raḥīm Majīd al-I‘sam
Maysān	al-Ḥājī Jarī Abū ‘Askar al-Ḥarbī

Table 9: Ḥarb Tribal Leaders¹¹⁵⁰

Even more telling than the Abū Khumra’s obvious dominance of the Ḥarb tribal leadership and their dispersion, is the fact that, in between the major Iraqi provinces, the author explicitly referred to the tribal leadership of the small Dūr district in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Here, shaykh Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl appears to be none other than a brother of ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm, who obviously managed to ascend from a humble peasant family to a shaykh position in the Ḥarb tribe.

Finally ‘Āmirī’s sixth volume was reserved for the Kurdish tribes and built strongly on Arab-Kurdish brotherhood (*al-ikhwa al-‘arabīya al-kurdīya*) in times of an actual Kurdish autonomy and separatism from the central government in the 1990s.¹¹⁵¹ This brotherhood was understood as one in religion (*dīn*), fatherland (*waṭan*), and history (*tārīkh*),¹¹⁵² whereby the brotherhood in religion referred primarily to the Islamic message under the flag of the greatest messenger Muḥammad.¹¹⁵³ In this and the following volumes, the main emphasis is not on Prophetic descent or Sufi clans as in Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī’s books, but on the above mentioned brotherhood between Arabs and Kurds in religion, fatherland, and history which is, in numerous instances, manifested in the Sufi background and Sufi history of the different Kurdish tribes. This is particularly evident with regard to the Kurdish tribes which supported the central government over decades, for instance in the National Defence Battalions (*afwāj al-difā‘ al-waṭanī*). In several instances ‘Āmirī underlined the loyalty of these tribes – such as the Jāf, Zībārīs, Hīrkīs, Barzinjīs, and Sūrjīs – by referring to their historical services for the Iraqi nation, their love for the fatherland, or the fact that they

¹¹⁵⁰ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 5:77–78.

¹¹⁵¹ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 6:6.

¹¹⁵² ‘Āmirī, 6:12.

¹¹⁵³ ‘Āmirī, 6:14. He refers to a Prophetic saying “There is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab except in piety”.

never participated in any uprisings against the state.¹¹⁵⁴ The most prominent of these tribes also happened to be representatives of Sufism in the Kurdish regions. These were once again part of the Jāf, the Sūrjīs, Khūshnāw, al-Sādāt (Zāhidīya), Hāwramān, the Kasnazānīya, the Barzinja, the Barādūst, and finally the Brīfkānīs. Interestingly, ‘Āmirī even listed the Naqshbandīya order with all its different shaykhs as a tribe, “‘*ashīrat al-Naqshbandīya*”. Even though this Sufi order has no single tribal bond, as its members hail from various Kurdish and Arab tribes, he stated that today they are widely considered as a sort of a tribe in Iraq.¹¹⁵⁵ Table 10 at the end of this section provides more detailed information about the respective Sufi backgrounds of the above-mentioned Kurdish tribes which were loyal to the regime.

During the 1990s, these Kurdish tribal elites were especially important allies of the central government in Baghdad. After the 1991 *intifāda*, in the course of which many former Kurdish supporters of the regime had changed sides, the separatist Kurdish parties successfully established their own autonomous Kurdish Regional Government to replace the former Ba‘thist executive and legislative institutions.¹¹⁵⁶ Even though the central government had effectively lost control of the Kurdish north, formally it still kept its political administrative bodies for this region and relied heavily on the aforementioned tribal structures. When ‘Āmirī wrote this book, the paramount shaykh of the Barzinja, Ja‘far b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Barzinjī, served as the president of the Ba‘th’s Executive Council (*al-majlis al-tanfīdhī*) of the Kurdish region.¹¹⁵⁷

The key point in my presentation of all these genealogical Sufi histories is neither that Sufism was in fact the decisive element that connected the Ba‘th leaders and those tribes, nor that it was a feature common to those tribes alone. Of course we also find representatives with a Sufi history among the Kurdish opposition such as the Bārzānīs of the KDP and the Ṭālabānīs of the PUK. However, the fact that so many government supporters happened to have a Sufi history made it possible to highlight Sufism’s important historical contribution to the Iraqi – and even the wider Arabic – nation. The genealogical literature of ‘Āmirī, Mu‘āḍidī, and Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī presented the Sufism of those tribes as one important part of a unity and brotherhood in

¹¹⁵⁴ ‘Āmirī, 6:32-36,66-68, 72, 129, 182-88.

¹¹⁵⁵ ‘Āmirī, 6:189-91. He mentions, for instance, shaykh Ṭāhir al-Naqshbandī in ‘Amādīya, the shaykhs in Bāmarnī, Mosul, Arbīl, Baghdad, Baṣra and even in Syrian Dayr al-Zūr.

¹¹⁵⁶ McDowall, *A Modern History*, 379-82.

¹¹⁵⁷ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 6:187.

religion.¹¹⁵⁸ Against this backdrop, the next section will provide an example of how Sufism was explicitly framed as the central link between Islam and Arabic nationalism, around one year before ‘Āmirī’s encyclopaedia was published.

Tribe	Sufi background mentioned by ‘Āmirī
The Mikāyilī branch of the Jāf tribe	It has a long history with the Naqshbandīya, as it is the tribe of the Naqshbandīya-Mujaddidīya’s founding figure, shaykh Khālīd al-Shahrazūrī. During the 1990s, its leading shaykh was Khālīd al-Naqshbandī. ¹¹⁵⁹
The Sūrjīya tribe	It has Sufī links with one of their leading shaykhs, Aḥmad al-Sūrjī, being a Sufī <i>murshid</i> with a <i>takīya</i> in Kūy Lān. ¹¹⁶⁰
The Khūshnāw	This tribe in Arbīl and ‘Aqra is religiously divided between one part which follows the Qādirīya and one part which follows the Naqshbandīya. ¹¹⁶¹
The al-Sādāt (Zāhidīya)	This tribe of <i>sāda</i> goes back to a Baghdadi Sufi Imām Muḥammad al-Zāhid and traditionally followed the Suhrawardīya. ¹¹⁶²
The Hāwramān tribe	This tribe in the Iraqī-Turkish and Iraqī-Iranian border regions partially follows the Kākā’īya, partially the Naqshbandīya, and partially the Qādirīya. ¹¹⁶³
The Kasnazānīya	The order receives their own chapter as representatives of the Qādirīya and a branch of the Barzinja tribe. ¹¹⁶⁴
The <i>Sāda</i> Barzinjīya	They are famous representatives of the Qādirīya in Sulaymānīya and Kirkūk, with numerous <i>takāyā</i> across Kurdistan. ‘Āmirī names Ja‘far b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Barzinjī as their paramount shaykh, who was the president of the Ba‘th’s Executive Council (<i>al-majlis al-tanfīdhī</i>) of the Kurdish region. Three other prominent shaykhs were Ibrāhīm Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Barzinjī, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī, and Kāk ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Barzinjī in Arbīl. ¹¹⁶⁵
The Barādūst	This tribe claims Arabic descent from the military commander and companion of the Prophet, Khālīd bin al-Walīd, and is widespread in Arbīl province. Its most famous and paramount tribal chief in the twentieth century was shaykh Rashīd Lawlān (d. 1964) who was also an influential shaykh of the Naqshbandīya. His descendants still run <i>takāyā</i> of the order in Kurdistan. ¹¹⁶⁶
The Mazūrī Zhīrī (Brīfkānī)	This tribe has settlements in Dohūk province down to the town of ‘Aqra and is headed by the Brīfkānī <i>sāda</i> clan which goes back to the Qādirī Sufi shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Brīfkānī. Its paramount shaykh, Nūrī ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Brīfkānī, was a shaykh of the Qādirīya and from 1944 onwards a member of parliament. His son Şiddīq (1926-2012) succeeded him as shaykh of the tribe and the order. ¹¹⁶⁷

Table 10: Kurdish Tribes Loyal to the Ba‘th

¹¹⁵⁸ Religion, here particularly the Sufi history and practices of these tribes, still played an important role in their tribal lives and identities. After all, during the 1990s these tribes were still willing to defend their traditional tribalism – of which the Sufi identity also formed a central part – when they formed their own Society of Kurdish Tribes in opposition to the established political parties of the KDP or PUK (McDowall, *A Modern History*, 380).

¹¹⁵⁹ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 6:137.

¹¹⁶⁰ ‘Āmirī, 6:66–68; ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 7:202–3.

¹¹⁶¹ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 6:91.

¹¹⁶² ‘Āmirī, 6:142–46.

¹¹⁶³ ‘Āmirī, 6:154.

¹¹⁶⁴ ‘Āmirī, 6:158–60.

¹¹⁶⁵ ‘Āmirī, 6:182–88.

¹¹⁶⁶ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 7:244–45.

¹¹⁶⁷ ‘Āmirī, *Mawsū‘a*, 1993, 6:45–50; Brīfkānī, ‘Shakhşīyāt Kürdīya: al-shaykh Şiddīq al-Brīfkānī’.

5.2.4. *The Role of Sufism in the Service of Arab Nationalism*

Shortly after the second Gulf War and before the start of the Faith Campaign in 1993, we witness in the Iraqi press an attempt to link Sufism in Iraq to Arabic nationalism and the struggle for the unity of Iraq. On 24 February 1992, the Iraqi newspaper *Bābil*¹¹⁶⁸ published, under the rubric “Free Opinions”, an article with the title “The Role of Sufism in the Service of Arab Nationalism”.¹¹⁶⁹ The author of the article was the physicist Jamāl Niṣṣār Ḥusayn,¹¹⁷⁰ a deputy (*khalīfa*) of shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī in Baghdad. This incident makes clear that this order could, for the first time, publicly articulate political claims in religious dress.

The author began the article with a short definition of Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf*) as the method (*nahj*) of the first companions of the Prophet (*al-ṣaḥāba al-awwalīn*). He understood this as a constant evoking (*istiḥdāran dā’imīyan*), as the companions followed the example of the Prophet in their biography (*sīratihim*) with regard to his principles (*mabādi’*), manners (*sulūk*), and as a model (*mathal*) to emulate. As a next step, by implication he located Sufism within the true Islam of these mentioned companions. He stated that true Islam (*al-Islām al-ṣaḥīḥ*) was built on a firm foundation, namely the love (*ḥubb*) of the Arabs, since they are the physical matter (*mādda*), i.e. the body of Islam and its fruit (*thamra*). Sufism, in turn, is the spirit (*rūḥ*) of Islam and its essence (*jawhar*) that will always preserve Islam’s purity and clarity. Sufism attained this essential truth in the form of an eternal (*azalī*) and dialectical (*jadalī*) connection between Arab nationalism (*al-qawmīya al-‘arabīya*) and true Islam (*al-Islām al-ḥaqīqī*). Jamāl Niṣṣār saw this connection exemplified in the magnificent role of the Arabs, particularly of the Arab Sufis, since they have special characteristics which God bestowed upon them. God allowed them to be entrusted with the eternal message (*al-risāla al-khālida*) for the salvation of all mankind, taking them from the shadows of the worship (*‘ubūdīya*) of anything other than God and towards the light of the worship of the one and only God.¹¹⁷¹

¹¹⁶⁸ Launched in the early 1990s, the newspaper was owned by ‘Uday Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and offered a diverse spectrum of often quite sensitive and critical topics (Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, 18). It seems unlikely that an article which formulated political ambitions of a religious group would have been published in the well-established *al-Jumhūrīya* or *al-Thawra* newspapers.

¹¹⁶⁹ *Bābil*, 24.02.1992. I am grateful to Achim Rohde who drew my attention to this article and provided me with a copy of it.

¹¹⁷⁰ He is an important author of the Kasnazānīya in the 1990s and has published his parapsychological research on the miracles of the order (Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *Al-Bārāsikūlūjīyā*).

¹¹⁷¹ *Bābil*, 24.02.1992, first column.

In this first passage, the author clearly drew on central ideas and concepts of Ba‘thism, since the Ba‘th’s Syrian founding figure Michel ‘Aflaq had already stressed the preeminent and leading role of the Arabs as bearers of the eternal message. Similar to the author’s statements above, ‘Aflaq considered the Arabs as the body (*jism*) or physical matter of Arabism and Islam as its spirit (*rūḥ*).¹¹⁷² Thus, Jamāl Niṣṣār Ḥusayn obviously framed his promotion of Sufism in Ba‘thist terms, reflecting, of course, the prevalent discourse in the Iraqi media at that time.

The Sufis (*al-muṣawwifūn*), the author continued, fought for the spread of the true Islam in every place which the hand of the Islamic and Arabic conquest (*al-futūḥāt al-‘arabīya al-islāmīya*) reached. At the same time, they called for Islam and for Arabism (*‘urūba*), which distinguished them from the calls of foreign missionaries (*mubashshirīn*) for Christianity. He recognised the doctrinal connection (*irtibāṭ ‘aqā’idī*) between Islam and Arab nationalism (*al-qawmīya al-‘arabīya*) in their shared desire that acts of devotion (*maslak ‘ibādāt*) among non-Arab Muslims should not differ in method from those among Arab Muslims. For instance, the prayer (*ṣalāt*), the reading of the Quran, the ritual performance during the *ḥajj*, *adhkār* (plural of *dhikr*), the invocations of God (*ad‘īya*), the glorifications of God (*tasābīḥ*), and the asking of the Prophet or saints for help (*istimdād*) all have to be in the Arabic language. The role of Sufism and the Sufis in the service of Arab nationalism, according to Jamāl Niṣṣār, aimed not at the elevation of the Arabs above the non-Arab Muslim peoples due to their Arabism alone. Rather it aimed at preventing the doctrine (*‘aqīda*) of the non-Arab Muslims from deviating from the straight path according to the Arab model. This desire among Sufis to emphasise the connection between true Islam and Arab nationalism bore inside it the mercy (*raḥma*) with which God sent “our Prophet Muḥammad” to all people.¹¹⁷³

In the second column of the article, Jamāl Niṣṣār argued further for the superiority of the Arabs. The Sufis felt that non-Arab Muslims would be only able to not deviate from the true Islam if they adhered to the Arabs as the masters (*asātidha*) of religion and to Arabic as the language of this religion. In the author’s as well as in ‘Aflaq’s view, through the revelation of the Quran God chose the Arabs as the leading nation among the peoples of the earth.¹¹⁷⁴ For Jamāl Niṣṣār, the Arabs lead the community of

¹¹⁷² See ‘Aflaq, *Fī sabīl al-Ba‘th*, 146.

¹¹⁷³ *Bābil*, 24.02.1992, first column to the start of the second column.

¹¹⁷⁴ In contrast to the author of the article, ‘Aflaq originally referred to the Prophet and Islam as purely historical role models for the ultimate goal of his own Ba‘thist revolutionary movement, namely Arab

believers. As proof of their superiority (*tafawwuq*), he named their entitlement (*istiḥqāquhum*) as bearers of the eternal message which they attained through their suitability (*ahlīyatihim*). They were the leaders (*qāda*), guides (*ruwwād*), and masters and all others asked for their guidance and became enlightened through their light. The uniqueness of the Arabs is expressed in their intellect (*‘aql*) and its achievements such as the tools of civilisation, its symbols, and its matter. These very achievements in turn gave expression to the being who developed them, namely the ideal and perfect human being (*al-insān al-amthal wa-l-kāmil*), the Arab. This perfect human being was the pinnacle of what mankind could achieve in the realm of devoutness to the service of God.¹¹⁷⁵

In the context of this perfect human being, Jamāl Niṣṣār turned to the Sufis again. The ranks of the Sufis (*marātib al-ṣūfīya*), he wrote, are only given to those who are entitled to them from among the masters of the acts of devotion (*‘ibādāt*), the spiritual exercises (*riyādāt*), the struggles (*mujāhadāt*), the seclusions (*khalawāt*), and the unveiling (*jalawāt*) of spiritual truths. They reach these ranks only with the greatest difficulty and the greatest struggle. Then, he emphasised “the truth” that the masters of Sufi belief (*asātidhat al-‘aqida al-ṣūfīya*) and the great Sufis were indeed all Arabs. He drew from all this the conclusion that the Arabs not only possess the characteristics which rendered them the masters of the greatest and most excellent civilisation “produced for mankind”,¹¹⁷⁶ they are also able to achieve what renders them the masters of the spiritual and divine leadership (*al-qiyaḍa al-rūḥīya wa-l-rūḥānīya*) in this world. With this conclusion, he stated that we have reached the demonstration of the wisdom of the leader (*al-qā’id*) and fighter (*al-mujāhid*) Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, that God rendered the Arabs the foundation (*malāk*) of the faithful leadership (*al-qiyaḍa al-mu’mina*) on earth.¹¹⁷⁷

In what follows, Jamāl Niṣṣār presented examples that are intended to show the central role of Sufism within this leadership. Everyone knows, he proceeded, that the first founders of Sufi belief (*al-‘aqida al-ṣūfīya*) and the famous masters of the Sufi schools (*al-madāris al-ṣūfīya*) were all from among the Arabs. The Arabness of the four poles

unity. Islam as a religion did not form part of his secular ideas (see for instance ‘Aflaq, *Fī sabīl al-Ba’th*, 143, 150).

¹¹⁷⁵ *Bābil*, 24.02.1992, first half of the second column.

¹¹⁷⁶ Jamāl Niṣṣār alludes here to Quran verse 110 from *sūrat* 3, *Āl ‘Imrān*.

¹¹⁷⁷ *Bābil*, 24.02.1992, from the middle of the second column to the first quarter of the third column.

(*aqṭāb*) of Sufism would testify this, namely ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī,¹¹⁷⁸ Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī, Aḥmad al-Badawī, and Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī. The Sufi belief stands out through the eminent love (*ḥubb*) of this existence (*wujūd*) (of being Arab) which connects, according to the author, the love of God with the love of the fatherland (*waṭan*). The masters of Sufism and the shaykhs of the *ṭarīqa* have therefore been leading fighters (*mujāhidīn*) and defenders (*mudāfi‘īn*) of the unity and independence of the fatherland. We all remember, according the author, the great fighting attitudes (*al-mawāqif al-jihādīya*) which characterised the biographies of all the men of Sufism and their service for Arab nationalism.

Sayyid and shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kīlānī, the founder of the belief of the Qādirīya *ṭarīqa*, pursued the opening of *zawāyā* and *takāyā* in the Iraq of the protector of God’s religion (Nāṣir li-dīn Allāh) Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn [al-Ayyūbī]. [He did this] in order to be able to take in the young Arab Muslims to prepare for a doctrinal fight (*i‘dād jihādī ‘aqā‘idī*) and afterwards to be able to dispatch them to the front lines to face the invading military expeditions sent from the Europe of the crusaders to invade Arabic Palestine.¹¹⁷⁹

According to Jamāl Niṣṣār, the *jihādī* training in the Qādirī *takāyā* demonstrated its greatest impact in the Islamic Arabic victory against the crusaders during the battle of Ḥaṭṭīn in 1187 and the subsequent liberation of Jerusalem. Apart from ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, he names further historical examples such as the Sufi shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā‘irī’s fight against the French colonial powers in Algeria, and the Syrian Sufi Abū Shāmāt’s influencing of the Ottoman sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II not to sell Palestine to the Zionists. Then, he finally turned to the shaykhs of the Kasnazānīya *ṭarīqa* who “stood with strength and true and sincere patriotism against the shameful British colonialism” in Iraqi Kurdistan at the beginning of the twentieth century. He placed particular emphasis on the *jihād* of Sulṭān ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kasnazānī and his son Sulṭān Ḥusayn al-Kasnazānī and their “great influence in preventing British colonialism from establishing a home for his hateful foot in our beloved north”. He explicitly emphasised the Kasnazānī shaykhs’ defence of the unity of the Iraqi land and its independence, from north to south, and related it to the Prophetic saying “Love for the fatherland is a part of faith” (*ḥubb al-waṭan min al-īmān*).¹¹⁸⁰

In the final part of the article, Jamāl Niṣṣār turned to contemporary Iraq under international sanctions. Here too, he took up a widespread narrative which dominated

¹¹⁷⁸ In his case, most authorities state that he was of Persian origin and born in Jīlān, south of the Caspian Sea (Braune, ‘‘Abd al-Qādir al-Djīlānī’). Yet the widespread belief, particularly among Sufis, that he was a descendant of the Prophet’s grandson al-Ḥasan renders him an Arab.

¹¹⁷⁹ *Bābil*, 24.02.1992, second half of the third column.

¹¹⁸⁰ *Bābil*, 24.02.1992, second half of the third column and first half of the fourth column.

the public discourse during the 1990s and which compared Iraqis as believers with the besieged Meccan Quraysh in the sixth century, surrounded by infidels. He wrote that

in these days, in which the absolute infidelity (*kufṛ*) lines up to face the absolute belief (*īmān*), the contemporary Sufi has to prove anew that he, as was always his concern, stands at the forefront of the fighters (*mujāhidīn*) and the defenders (*mudāfiʿīn*) of truth (*al-ḥaqq*), belief, and the true Islam, which relies on the truth that the Arabs are the foundation of its faithful leadership. [...] Just as our leader the fighter [Ṣaddām Ḥusayn] wrote with his blessed right hand (God is Great) (*Allāh akbar*) in between the green stars on the new flag of Iraq, we are all called to work together for the raising of the flag of *Allāh akbar* so that it becomes a reality between the stars of heaven. Nothing rises higher than this flag, no matter how much the Abraha¹¹⁸¹ of this time, [George] Bush, God curse him, acts tyrannically and displays arrogance.¹¹⁸²

On the one hand, the association of the US president with the Yemenite and pagan king Abraha – and hence of the Iraqi people with the besieged Quraysh – was part of the regime’s political propaganda to mobilise religious forces in society.¹¹⁸³ But on the other hand, it may also have been a way for the people psychologically and religiously to deal with the hardships of this era. This religious narrative was intended to draw strength in a hopeless situation and, as the author formulated it, to fight for a return to the superior position of the Arabs (the Iraqis in particular) as civilisational and spiritual leaders of mankind. The central role of Sufism and the Sufis in this Ba‘thist-inspired endeavour as the essential link between Islam and Arab nationalism is truly surprising. In this context the traditional Sufi institutions of education and spiritual training, the *takāyā* and *madāris*, become training camps for armed battle, and the Sufis themselves become combatants and patriotic defenders of the fatherland.

The reference to the anti-colonial *jihād* of the Kasnazānī shaykhs at the beginning of the twentieth century promoted, of course, the cause of this particular order. The genealogical encyclopaedias in the previous section have shown that many more examples of other Kurdish Sufi clans could have been mentioned as well. The mere fact that a Sufi order could express itself in such a political and ideological tone is unprecedented in the Iraqi media under the Ba‘th Party. Even as late as the 1980s this

¹¹⁸¹ Abraha, to whom Bush is compared, was a Yemenite king of the sixth century, who, according to a story in the Quranic *sūra* of the Elephant (*sūrat al-fīl*), laid siege to Mecca in order to destroy the Ka‘ba. As the story goes, Abraha attacked Mecca in the year of the Elephant – the same year in which the Prophet was born – with an elephant which refused to advance and instead kneeled down. Miraculously, a flight of birds came and dropped stones on the attackers who all eventually died (Beeston, ‘Abraha’; Beeston, ‘al-Fīl’).

¹¹⁸² *Bābil*, 24.02.1992, last column.

¹¹⁸³ The regime’s use of Abraha’s story had already begun during the Iran-Iraq War, but the association of Bush with Arbaha was initiated during the Kuwait crisis when the US dispatched its ground troops to Saudi Arabia in preparation for the following military intervention. The Iraqi regime interpreted this step in its propaganda as a new siege of Mecca by infidels. Later on, the Iraqis themselves became associated with the besieged Quraysh. For Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s use of the Arbaha-metaphor during the Kuwait crisis in 1990 see Bengio, *Saddam’s Word*, 199; Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam*, 332.

would have been almost impossible, but in 1992 ‘Uday Ṣaddām Ḥusayn’s own newspaper provided a platform for it. While an article like the one analysed here did certainly not endanger the regime, it nevertheless reflects a new scope of expression and action for religious representatives in Iraq.

The article largely promoted the cause of Sufism in general and could therefore be considered as an early forerunner of the official promotion of Sufism by the state that began later on with the Faith Campaign. However, the official Ba‘th propaganda never went as far as to consider Sufism as the essential link between Islam and Arab nationalism in a such political framing. Additionally, the author was a Kasnazānī *khalīfa* and this order ultimately stands at the centre of the article. Of all Sufis, why did a Kasnazānī articulate such a message at that particular time? The political promotion in this article of the Kasnazānīya as Sufi fighters for the fatherland reflects, moreover, an active, long-time involvement in politics that in 1992 apparently reached its apex. In the doctoral thesis of ‘Ādil ‘Allāwī al-Nu‘aymī, we read that shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm’s son, Nehrū al-Kasnazānī, founded the secret political party Coalition of Iraqi National Unity (*tajammu‘ al-waḥda al-waṭaniya al-‘irāqī*)¹¹⁸⁴ after the Gulf War in 1991. The aim of the party was, according to Nu‘aymī, the correction of the Ba‘th’s political course.¹¹⁸⁵ Jamāl Niṣṣār Ḥusayn’s article could, in this light, be considered as an indirect advertisement of such a risky political undertaking, concealed in the prevalent narratives of Arabism, Islam, and national unity.

Why did the Ba‘th regime tolerate such political articulations of a religious group shortly after the violent suppression of the 1991 *intifāda*? The answer is that the Kasnazānīs were trusted, long-time associates of the regime and knew the right people in high positions. At that time, the Ba‘th had reached its weakest point in history and had outsourced a lot of former state services to tribes and religious groups, but it had still enough strength to control the religious landscape and to prevent such political endeavours by Sufis. It could not be ascertained to what extent Nehrū’s secret party was in fact active during the 1990s. Yet, an internal report by the Ba‘th Party Secretariat, mentioned by Helfont, suggests that the party was well aware of the order’s political ambitions. The report was made six months after the appearance of the Bābil article above and assessed the Kasnazānīya as a “political movement under the cover

¹¹⁸⁴ The party also runs its own English and Arabic website (‘CINU’).

¹¹⁸⁵ Nu‘aymī, ‘al-Taṣawwuf al-islāmī’, 126.

of a Sufi order...” and Helfont reports that “the regime attempted to dissuade Iraqis from joining it”.¹¹⁸⁶ This incident demonstrates that, without exception, the party and security organs kept even long-time allies among the religious groups under surveillance and mistrusted them. Moreover, it may show that the “regime” and the “party” were obviously not homogeneous units of people who always acted in unison. The report, and the advice to dissuade people from the order, had no obvious ramifications. The Kasnazānīya kept on growing as the most influential order in Iraq. The labelling of the order as a political movement, too, should not have come as a surprise as the state had cultivated the Kasnazānīs as close allies for about twenty years by then.

We know that members of the Kasnazānī clan have, at least since shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm’s time in the 1970s and in the 1980s, been politically and even militarily very active as Ba‘th allies.¹¹⁸⁷ In 1996, when the elections for a new National Council (*al-majlis al-waṭanī*) took place in Iraq, the central government appointed thirty loyal members for the already autonomous provinces of Sulaymānīya, Arbīl, and Dohūk, most of whom hailed from the Kurdish tribes mentioned in the previous section. Among the members of the council in Sulaymānīya, Helkūrd ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī appears again, as well as another cousin, Ḥusayn Ṭāhir Ḥusayn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Kasnazānī.¹¹⁸⁸ In 1999 *Al-Thawra* published an open letter in which the very same Kurdish tribal shaykhs, including Ḥusayn Ṭāhir al-Kasnazānī and shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī, declared their support for Ṣaddām Ḥusayn.¹¹⁸⁹ This continuing political involvement of the Kasnazānīya is just one instance of many other Arab and Kurdish Sufi tribal clans¹¹⁹⁰ and we should not disregard the fact that such statements most probably appeared under enormous political pressure from the regime. Additionally, the Kurdish regions were under the control of Bārzanī and Ṭālabānī which meant that former Kurdish allies of Baghdad had to rely more than ever on the central government. Nevertheless, the record shows that their alliance with the Ba‘th has a much longer history. Despite the Party Secretariat’s mistrust, the order kept strong ties to leading Ba‘thists. After all, the

¹¹⁸⁶ The report is dated 1 August 1992 (Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion*, 260, Fn. 42).

¹¹⁸⁷ ‘al-Kurd al-mutawarrīṭīn bi-ḥamalāt al-anfāl’.

¹¹⁸⁸ Ḥusayn, ‘Raqm (66)’. The latter’s father was already a candidate of the National Assembly in 1980 (Section 4.2.2).

¹¹⁸⁹ *al-Thawra*, 12.03.1999, 3.

¹¹⁹⁰ Also Arab Sufi clans became politically active in the National Assembly during the 1980s, for instance Ṣāliḥ al-Shaykh Muḥammad Abū Khumra or Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Abū Khumra (*al-Jumhūrīya* 11.06.1980, 8; 17.03.1989, 10; 30.03.1989, 13).

article above appeared in the newspaper of ‘Uday Ṣaddām Ḥusayn. Kasnazānīs had taken part in the *mawlūd* for ‘Adnān Khayr Allāh in 1989 and figures such as ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī and Ṣaddām’s bodyguard Arshad Yāsīn al-Rashīd were deeply involved with the order.

Tactical alliances between not only Kurdish but also some Arab Sufi clans and the Ba‘th government have a long history, which dates back at least to the early 1970s. Until the end of the Iran-Iraq War, these alliances never surfaced as obviously as they did during the 1990s. Only then was it possible for a Sufi to advertise his own order in a clear ideological and political frame. In my collected Iraqi newspapers of the 1970s and 1980s, Sufism and its role in society and the state was never discussed publicly at all. As should be clear by now, Sufis and religious Sufi scholars often appeared in the media, but they never advertised their own Sufism in such a manner. Thus, Jamāl Niṣṣār Ḥusayn’s article shows that, in certain instances, the state’s Sufi patronage resulted in unprecedented freedoms of articulation in Ba‘thist Iraq.

5.2.5. *Sufi Jurists in Defence of a Sharī‘a-Minded Sufism*

In addition to the Kasnazānī plea for Sufism as the link between Islam and Arab Nationalism, throughout the 1990s we also find religious Sufi scholars publicly promoting and defending Sufism and Sufi practices from a legal perspective. These scholars stand for a *sharī‘a*-minded Sufism with a strong orientation towards the Quran and the *sunna* of the Prophet. Their defensive undertone is unmistakably directed at widespread anti-Sufi polemics for which Wahhābism and certain currents of Salafism had become so popular in history. With regard to the state’s official anti-Wahhābī campaign that commenced in 1990, we can assume that such circles had already gained considerable influence in Iraq. The Salafi-friendly political climate of the 1980s changed with Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, accompanied by the deterioration of its relationship with Saudi Arabia. The Ba‘th government henceforth considered all Salafi movements, especially the ones funded by Saudi Arabia, as a threat and as sick social phenomena and labelled them generally as Wahhābīs.¹¹⁹¹ As a result, these circles and their ideas became officially outlawed and the state took harsh measures to crack down on them. Yet, the parallel state-promotion of a general Islamic awareness and the greater freedom of action for religious groups during the Faith

¹¹⁹¹ Bengio, ‘Iraq’, 1996, 335–36; Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq*, 138.

Campaign provided enough channels also for these ultraconservative ideas to grow clandestinely¹¹⁹² and a rise of anti-Sufi polemics was most probably a result of this development. Anti-Sufi polemics against certain Sufi practices and teachings have existed almost as long as Sufism itself and certainly do not constitute a new development in Iraq during the 1990s. However, the background of the officially perceived threat of Wahhābism during this particular decade makes it likely that such polemics saw a significant upturn as well.

In this section, I will present three public statements of leading religious Sufi scholars in defence of a *sharīʿa*-minded Sufism from an Islamic legal perspective. These three scholars are the former *muftī* Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Mudarris, the head of the Baʿthist higher institute Fayḍī Muḥammad Amīn al-Fayḍī, and finally the *muftī* of Sāmarrāʾ Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb. All of them argued for the lawfulness of Sufism and its strong connection to *sharīʿa* law, for an orientation of this Sufism towards the Islam of the Prophet and his early companions (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), for the legitimacy of *takāyā* visitations, the active role of Sufis in military *jihād*, and finally, for the legitimacy of the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday (*mawlid al-nabī*), and the praying at shrines. Many of these topics are often brought forth in anti-Sufi polemics, especially – but not only – by Wahhābīs or certain Salafīs, but the reference to Sufi *jihād* specifically reflects the state propaganda and the current political situation during and after the second Gulf War.

The first instance is rather short but is nevertheless important from an Islamic legal perspective. This is the case of ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Mudarris, who went quite far in his advocacy of Sufi *takāyā* and obtained considerable fame for his public support of Sufism during the 1990s. Even though he had been officially retired since 1973, he was still one of Iraq’s most influential Sunnī scholars. According to Sarmad al-ʿUbaydī, he inherited the leadership of the Qādirīya order in Baghdad’s Kīlānīya mosque and presided over the religious scholars’ union of Iraq (*rābiṭat al-ʿulamāʾ*). The Gailānī *sāda* nominated him, furthermore, as the *muftī* of Iraq in the Ministry of *Awqāf* after the death of the former grand *muftī* Qāsim al-Qaysī in 1955. He was reportedly quite courageous in his legal opinions and is known as the first religious scholar in Iraq who permitted the visit to Sufi *takāyā* as a substitute for the prayer in

¹¹⁹² Rohde, *State-Society Relations*, 61–62.

mosques in one of his fatwas.¹¹⁹³ With this step, the shaykh officially sanctioned the visitation of *takāyā* and even provided a legal basis for it.

In the second case, shaykh Fayḍī Muḥammad Amīn al-Fayḍī made a plea to a huge audience in Mosul during the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, in which he stressed the *sharī'a*-mindedness of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and the Qādirī Sufis. In accordance with his understanding of a Salafī Sufism, Fayḍī tried to convince his audience of Jīlānī's true Islamic spirit and his adherence to Islamic law. In this context, Jīlānī's teaching according to the Ḥanbalī school of law received particular emphasis. In addition to that, he fell back on the *jihādī* narrative, which was also central to Jamāl Niṣṣār Ḥusayn's article in *Bābil* and presented Jīlānī's novices as combatants under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī. Further historical examples of a military Sufi *jihād* were given as well. Yet, in contrast to Jamāl Niṣṣār Ḥusayn, Fayḍī aimed less to present the Sufis as defenders of the fatherland than as fighters for the true Islam. His plea reads like a general defence of Sufism against an accusation of its being unlawful.

A video recording of this event shows him giving a speech in front of several hundred people. The exact date of this occasion is not clear. The shaykh is standing in front of a huge banner bearing the motto "Muḥammad, the Messenger of God and Those who Stand Firm with Him Against the Infidels (*kuffār*), Mercy Upon Them."¹¹⁹⁴ The motto is typical for Iraq during the 1990s when the Ba'ṯh regime labelled the instigators of the international sanctions amongst the Western powers, such as the US, as *kuffār*. Due to the prominent role of holy war (*jihād*) in Fayḍī's speech, it could either be dated to the Kuwait crisis when Iraq was defeated by US forces in 1991, or to the early 2000s when an invasion by coalition forces was imminent.

Despite the fact that the occasion was the Prophet's birthday, Fayḍī decided to speak rather about the Sufī shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.¹¹⁹⁵ Rhetorically he justified his choice with a reference to the Prophet Muḥammad and introduced Jīlānī as one of the greatest Muslims. "When I say this man was a student (*tilmīdh*) in the school (*madrasa*) of our beloved Muḥammad (ṣ), then I speak in fact about a teacher, about a master (*ustādh*), the master of the *umma*, about the Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessing be upon him."¹¹⁹⁶ He quoted a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet kissed his two

¹¹⁹³ 'Ubaydī, 'al-Ṭaṣawwuf fī l-'Irāq', 69. Unfortunately, the text of this fatwa was not available for my study.

¹¹⁹⁴ „Muḥammad rasūl Allāh wa-l-ladhīna ma'ahu ashiddā' 'alā al-kuffār ruḥamā' 'anhum“.

¹¹⁹⁵ He pronounces the name Gailānī.

¹¹⁹⁶ Khaleed, 'Khuṭba al-shaykh Fayḍī al-Fayḍī', pts 1:23-1:41.

grandsons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and added an interpretation by Imam Saʿīd al-Nursī whose essays he highly recommended. According to Nursī, this kiss from the Prophet was not only for al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn but also for their descendants (*dhurrīyatihimā*) among the saints (*awlīyāʾ*), the pious (*ṣāliḥīn*), and religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*). The shaykh Jīlānī had the greatest fortune (*al-ḥazz al-awfar*) of receiving this kiss. Upon the first mention of Jīlānī's name, the audience raised its voice, suggesting the presence of many Sufi followers.¹¹⁹⁷ At that point, Fayḍī proceeded with a short overview of Jīlānī's biography. Among the central points which he emphasised was, first of all, Jīlānī's study of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in Baghdad. He pointed out that the shaykh had originally taught his disciple and novice, the Ḥanbalī scholar Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāma (1147-1223),¹¹⁹⁸ the text of the latter's later, famous book *al-Mughnī*. According to Fayḍī, religious scholars say that no one should be allowed to give formal legal opinions in the *sharīʿa* if he has not read this book. Additionally, he mentioned how Jīlānī himself turned to the Ḥanbalī school of law during his years as a student in Baghdad. Originally, Fayḍī said, he had studied the Shāfiʿī school until the Prophet Muḥammad told him in a dream to turn to the school of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal. The next morning, he immediately started studying this school of law, which he later taught in his *madrassa* in Baghdad.¹¹⁹⁹ This *madrassa* for jurisprudence is a second important point in Fayḍī's speech. It had an attached *takīya* where the shaykh educated his novices (*murīdūn*) in the training of the soul (*tahdhīb al-naḥs*) and the purification of the heart (*taṣfīyat al-qalb*).

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir (may God sanctify his secret)¹²⁰⁰ chose the term “*ribāṭ*” for what in the language of the present era in Iraq we call “*takīya*”, in the north of Iraq “*khānaqah*”, in some African states “*zāwiya*”, in another place “*ḥaḍāʾir*”, and so forth in a variety of terms, and yet the meaning is one. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir (q.s.) chose the term “*ribāṭ*” since “*ribāṭ*” has a meaning which refers to worship (*maʿnā ʾibādī*) and a meaning which refers to holy war (*maʿnā jihādī*). The shaykh educated the people in the *ribāṭ*, or the *takīya* as we call it. He educated them according to the purification of the soul (*taṣfīyat al-naḥs*) and the training of the spirit (*tahdhīb al-rūḥ*). When he made faith (*īmān*), strength (*quwwa*), and firmness of the heart (*rabāʿa*) their duty for steadfastness [in religion], he sent them from *ribāṭ* to *ribāṭ*. From the *ribāṭ* of worship (*ʾibāda*) to the *ribāṭ* of holy war (*al-ribāṭ al-jihādī*), on the path of God.¹²⁰¹

¹¹⁹⁷ Khaleed, pts 1:41-2:45.

¹¹⁹⁸ Makdisi, ‘Ibn Qudāma’.

¹¹⁹⁹ Khaleed, ‘Khuṭba al-shaykh Fayḍī al-Fayḍī’, pts 5:28-6:30.

¹²⁰⁰ „*qaddas Allāh sirrahu*“ in the following abbreviated to (q.s.).

¹²⁰¹ For in another interview from the 1990s, he traced the origin of *takāyā* or *ribāṭāt* back to the gatherings of Muslims and fighters (*mujāhidūn*) in the mosque of the Prophet (*majlis al-ṣuffa*) in Medina where they studied (*yaṭlubūn al-ʿilm*), worshipped and performed the *dhikr* with him. When the Prophet called for *jihād*, they followed his call and went out for *jihād*. According to Fayḍī, places for such gatherings later became known as a *ribāṭ* where people trained themselves spiritually, worshipped God, and performed the *dhikr*. He then continues: “They went out of this building which is called *ribāṭ*. They went out of the *ribāṭ* to the *ribāṭ*, i.e. to the Thughūr [the marches in the frontier region with the

As for the flags which you keep in the *takīya* and the drums (*tubūl*) which you use during the *dhikr*, when the students of shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir went out to holy war (*jihād*), they took the drums with them, since they are symbols of battle. It is said in history, that the horses were neighing, drums were beaten, the flags hoisted, and they said, “God is great” (*Allāh akbar*) and attacked the enemy. Our lord Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, while he fought the crusaders, sought support from the students of shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Gailānī. On the day when the ‘Abbāsīd army fell facing the wave of the Tatars, when the latter reigned over Baghdad, when all came to an end, and when the last ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Musta‘īm Bi-llāh was slaughtered, the people recognised that they had no power and no strength when facing them. You know, oh brothers, who was able to introduce the Tatars into the religion of Islam? Who? The students of shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir were able to arouse the hearts of the Tatars and to introduce them to Islam. In this way, the Qādirī army (*al-jaysh al-qādirī*) was victorious at a time when the ‘Abbāsīd army was defeated. The Qādirī army was capable of doing what the ‘Abbāsīd army was not capable of doing. Without a doubt, it was this spirit (*rūḥ*) which our lord the shaykh spread among his students and which was transmitted from his students to the next generation, and so on up to this day of ours. Oh *sāda*, oh brothers, one shaykh of the shaykh [‘Abd al-Qādir] spoke to the shaykh and hear what he said: he said “Oh shaykh, oh ‘Abd al-Qādir, the cock will crow for you and will not stop except on judgment day, he will not stop except on judgement day”, and so, oh brothers, rises the *dhikr* of the shaykh. There comes no man after the prophets who became as great as shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir and for those students of the shaykh in Africa, Andalus, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, what was called the former Soviet Union, and in each place, the *ṭarīqa* al-Qādirīya does its work. It provides the best for religion just as the Muslims do so for the Lord of the worlds.¹²⁰²

This is a remarkable connection between Sufism and *jihād* which reflects an increasingly militant rhetoric in the public discourse at that time. Here Fayḍī offered Sufism as a solution in a hopeless situation under an international blockade and saw military combat as an essential part of it. Aside from that, he demanded the careful study of Jīlānī’s life and his teachings, especially his two books *al-Faṭḥ al-rabbānī* and *Futūḥ al-ghayb*. To buttress his demand, he quoted from a poem in memory of the shaykh, “I studied until I became a *quṭb*¹²⁰³ and I achieved happiness from the Lord of lords”. Then, he repeated the story of the shaykh’s turning to the Ḥanbalī school of law and declared the study of Islamic jurisprudence (*tafaqquh*) a legal (*shar‘ī*) obligation.¹²⁰⁴

Furthermore, he asked the audience who had faced colonialism when it threatened the Muslim countries. The following list of names which he presented is meant to show Muslim resistance fighters who stood in the Sufi tradition just like Jīlānī. These were: the Algerian ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī who fought the French colonial forces; the Palestinian nationalist ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ḥusaynī who participated in the coup of Rashīd A‘ālī al-Gailānī in 1941 against the British-backed Iraqi monarchy; ‘Umar al-Mukhtār who fought as a member of the Sanūsīya order in Libya against the Italians;

Byzantine Empire] where they fought (*yujāhidūn*) on the path of God” (WaqfNineveh, ‘Fīlm wathā’iqī ‘an al-shaykh Fayḍī’, 1:25-2:30).

¹²⁰² Khaleed, ‘Khuṭba al-shaykh Fayḍī al-Fayḍī’, pts 6:55-10:57.

¹²⁰³ A spiritual pole, i.e. a head of a spiritual hierarchy (DeJong, ‘Al-Ḳuṭb’).

¹²⁰⁴ „*ṭalabtu l-‘ilm ḥattā ṣirtu quṭban wa-niltu sa‘āda min mawlā l-mawālī*“.

Shāmil al-Naqshbandī who fought the Russians in Daghestan; and finally shaykh Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Naqshbandī who headed the secret *al-‘Ahd* society in Iraq during the anti-British revolt in 1920. He eventually reminded the audience that “Africa” did not enter Islam by way of the sword but through the missionary activity of Jīlānī’s students.¹²⁰⁵ Fayḍī’s historical instances of a Sufi *jihād*, beginning with ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, clearly resemble those of Jamāl Niṣṣār Ḥusayn in *Bābil*. Titles of presentations which suggest similar content had already been mentioned in the context of the Ba‘th’s annual seminars on Sufism. Thus, the Sufis themselves, as well as the state, fostered the use of this topos of military Sufi *jihād* in the public discourse during the 1990s.

After Sufism’s historical role in a holy war for God and the Muslim community, Fayḍī addressed a current problem in Mosul with regard to *takāyā*. He did not specify what the problem he refers to actually was, only that some people talk about and criticise the *takāyā* in the city.¹²⁰⁶ In what follows, Fayḍī explicitly argued for the lawfulness of the Sufi *takāyā*, suggesting that this talk and criticism aimed, on the contrary, at their unlawfulness from an Islamic point of view. He did not mention Wahhābīs or Salafīs as the source of this criticism but his insistence that *takāyā* are truly lawful, the general perception of a Wahhābī threat at that time, and the fact that Mosul had, during the twentieth century, gradually developed into a Salafī stronghold in Iraq make it very likely that it came from this direction. In this context, Fayḍī pointed to the need to unite knowledge (*‘ilm*) and *dhikr* and to study the biographies of the Prophet and his companions (*ṣaḥāba*). He wanted to renew the first era of Jīlānī and his students, i.e. their true Salafī Sufism.¹²⁰⁷ Two further anecdotes about Jīlānī were obviously intended to indicate his firm knowledge of dogma (*‘aqīda*) as well as his good deeds. In the first one, the shaykh cannot be fooled by a voice behind a light which claims to be God because of his firm knowledge that the Prophet Muḥammad was the last person who could directly communicate with God.¹²⁰⁸ In the second, he ordered his students to bring a beggar from the mud of the street into his religious school.¹²⁰⁹ Finally Fayḍī took up the rumours about the *takāyā* again and tried to convince the audience that a *takīya* is no different from a normal mosque where one can pray and study Islam.

¹²⁰⁵ Khaleed, ‘Khuṭba al-shaykh Fayḍī al-Fayḍī’, 13:12-13:40.

¹²⁰⁶ Khaleed, pts 14:16-14:30.

¹²⁰⁷ Khaleed, 14:30-15:14.

¹²⁰⁸ Reproaches against the direct communication, vision, and experience of God among Sufis is a classical part of anti-Sufi polemics (Radtke, ‘Anti-Sūfī Polemics’).

¹²⁰⁹ Khaleed, ‘Khuṭba al-shaykh Fayḍī al-Fayḍī’, 15:15-18:50.

In fact, I visited this *takīya* over several years and I saw with my own eyes that the call to prayer was raised in it, I heard with my ears and saw with my eyes the Friday prayer in it, I saw with my eyes and attended study lessons which were held in it and I say to you: Do not spread that talk! There are lawful (*sharʿīya*) *takāyā*, I also know here in Mosul in the Nūr quarter a lawful *takīya* in which they call to prayer, in which the Friday prayer (*jamāʿa*) is performed, and in which study lessons (*durūs al-ʿilm*) are held. Do not accuse the people falsely. I ask God, the Sublime and Praiseworthy, to cause joy in our hearts, to bring us back to harmony, and to enlighten us with knowledge, amen.¹²¹⁰

Fayḍī's main aim in this speech was a defence of and a plea for a *sharīʿa*-minded Sufism of the Qādirīya. He did this through several references to ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī's learning of Ḥanbalī jurisprudence, which had been ordered by the Prophet in a dream of his. Reflecting the current political conflicts and social hardships under international isolation, he further buttressed his argument by linking the *takāyā*'s role in spiritual Sufi training with the holy war against infidels and invaders, from the fight against the Byzantine Empire and the crusaders, up to the anti-colonial resistance. This was not only intended to indicate how, from the very beginning, Sufism contributed to the spread and defence of Islam and the Muslim community, but at the same time Fayḍī also followed the official rhetoric of the Iraqi state. This official state rhetoric described Iraq's conflict with the Western powers in an increasingly religious light – as the struggle of the Muslim community surrounded by invading infidels.

The third instance is the Sāmarrā' School's first teacher and *muftī* Ayyūb Tawfīq al-Khaṭīb. A video recording shows him during an interview with ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Saʿdī for the latter's monthly fatwa magazine (*majallat al-fatwā*) in July 1998. Apart from other topics, the interview touches mainly on three issues which are important in this context, namely *i*) the lawfulness of Sufism, *ii*) the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*al-mawlid al-nabawī*), and *iii*) the praying at shrines.

After a few introductory questions about Khaṭīb's origin and his religious education at the Sāmarrā' School, Saʿdī asked him about his stance on Sufism.

[Saʿdī]: We know that many religious scholars (*ʿulamāʿ*) have a particular method of Sufism (*nahaj fī al-taṣawwuf muʿayyan*) inasmuch as they have a certain *ṭarīqa*, certain manners (*sulūk*). Do you have such a tendency, that means, something such as a *ṭarīqa* or a favourite Sufi orientation (*al-tawajjuh al-ṣūfī*)? And that means: What is your opinion about the Sufi orientation? [Khaṭīb]: My brother, if you had read the *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*,¹²¹¹ you would have seen that the Sufis (*al-ṣūfiyya*) are chosen (*mukhtāra*) because they are sincere (*mukhlisūn*) in their deeds, they act in accordance with the most preferable and their morals (*akhlāq*) and their

¹²¹⁰ Khaleed, pts 18:52-19:38.

¹²¹¹ The famous Sufi treatise by the orthodox, strongly Quran- and *sunna*-oriented Sufi Abū Ḥafẓ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234) (see Gramlich's translation Suhrawardī, *Die Gaben der Erkenntnisse des ʿUmar as-Suhrawardī*).

truthfulness (*ṣidq*) are, furthermore, the highest. I sympathise with the Sufis (*al-ṣūfiyya*), frankly speaking. I sympathise with them and value them.¹²¹²

Praising the morals of both shaykh and novice (*ādāb al-shaykh wa-l-murīd*), he turned to *i*) the lawfulness of Sufism. To make his point, he referred to the stories of the Moroccan law expert (*shārīʿ*) and the mystic Ibn Abbād al-Nifzī al-Rundī (1333-1390)¹²¹³ as well as the Damascene *sharīʿa*-minded Khalwatī Sufi shaykh Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī (1688-1749).¹²¹⁴

During the sunset prayer (*maghrib*), Ibn ʿAbbād was at the grave (*maqām*) of Imam al-Shāfiʿī in Egypt. Ishāq al-Shāfiʿī [...] directed a question to Ibn ʿAbbād: Is the *ṭarīqa* necessary or studying? He said to him: As to the study of the judgments (*aḥkām*) of the *sharīʿa*, they are necessary [...] ¹²¹⁵ and you need to become perfect in them. Shaykh Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī (may God have mercy upon him) said: It is the duty of the master (*ustādh*) and teacher (*muʿallim*), first of all, to lead him in his good faith to the knowledge (*maʿrifā*) of the judgments of the *sharīʿa*. After [completing] his knowledge (*maʿrifā*) of its judgments (*aḥkām*) and its exactness (*iḥkām*), he will lead him to the truth (*ḥaqīqa*) and God grants him success as if he was a scholar (*ʿālim*) [...].¹²¹⁶

[Saʿdī]: Do you have a particular *ṭarīqa* as they are well-known, the orders (*ṭuruq*) and the shaykh of manners (*sulūk*). [Khaṭīb]: I love them [inaudible] [al-Saʿdī]: There is, for example, one who has the *ṭarīqa* al-Naqshbandīya, al-Qādirīya, that is, in the manners (*sulūk*)? [Khaṭīb]: No, I am with the Qādirīya. [Saʿdī]: With the Qādirīya. [Khaṭīb]: Yes. [al-Saʿdī]: Shaykh, now in this field and in these days... [in this moment, Khaṭīb feels the need to add more for explanation and interrupts Saʿdī]: The Sufis (*al-ṣūfiyya*) became distorted. They became distorted, did they not?! [Saʿdī]: Yes. [Khaṭīb]: The one who distorted them does not deserve to be associated with them. He adopts evil and arbitrariness. Because of this, he opened breaches that will not be filled. [Saʿdī]: The reason, oh shaykh, for that distortion? [Khaṭīb]: Ignorance (*al-jahl*).¹²¹⁷

In the following passage, Khaṭīb summed up that knowledge (*ʿilm*) of the *sharīʿa* is the fundament, and only after this knowledge comes action (*ʿamal*). In doing this, he too referred to aforementioned verse “I studied until I became a *quṭb* and I achieved happiness from the Lord of lords”.¹²¹⁸

Then, Saʿdī introduced the next issue, *ii*) the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday (*al-mawlid al-nabawī*):

[Saʿdī]: Now, on the seventh day of *rabīʿ al-awwāl*, especially for us in Iraq – God intended it so! – there are festivities whether on an official level, on a popular level, or in mosques. In fact, I want from your excellence the *sharīʿa* perspective on the topic of holding such festivities of the Prophetic birthday (*al-mawlid al-nabawī*). [Khaṭīb]: I approve of them and sympathise with them because I think the celebration is beneficial [...]. I do not know and will not sum up what [other] religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), preachers (*khuṭabāʾ*) and authors (*udabāʾ*) say. All this boast, no! With the knowledge that the aim of the *mawālīd* [plural of *mawlūd*] is devotion (*iftidāʾ*) for the messenger of God, this [boast] is mere talk without a benefit. There are many

¹²¹² ʿAbd al-Karīm, ‘Liḳāʾ maʿa al-shaykh Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb’, 11:48-12:41.

¹²¹³ Nwīya, ‘Ibn ʿAbbād’.

¹²¹⁴ Elger, *Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī*; Brockelmann, ‘al-Bakrī’.

¹²¹⁵ He repeats the same phrase.

¹²¹⁶ ʿAbd al-Karīm, ‘Liḳāʾ maʿa al-shaykh Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb’, secs 13:10-14:07.

¹²¹⁷ ʿAbd al-Karīm, secs 14:10-15:00.

¹²¹⁸ ʿAbd al-Karīm, secs 15:00-15:20.

of such books. [Sa‘dī]: So, they (the *mawālīd*) are from the legal (*shar‘ī*) side nothing of which one should beware? [Khaṭīb]: No, no, I sympathise with them and I approve of them. In Pakistan at the time of Ayyūb Khān,¹²¹⁹ may God have mercy upon him, they celebrated [the *mawlid*] thirty nights, in every night, from the first to the last of *rabī‘*. Now, only one time.¹²²⁰

At the end of the interview, Sa‘dī finally asked about *iii*) the praying at shrines.

[Sa‘dī]: Shaykh, in Sāmarrā’ there is, of course, the place of longing (*mahwā*) of our lord ‘Alī al-Hādī and all who are buried next to him. There is a mosque which is the grand mosque of Sāmarrā’ adjacent to this grave. Then, there are outcries which say “do not pray in a mosque in which graves (*qubūr*) are located” because it is inferred from the *ḥadīth* “God’s curse upon the Jews and Christians (*naṣārā*) who take the graves of their prophets as mosques”. How do we respond? Is the prayer there correct (*ṣaḥīḥa*) or not? [Khaṭīb]: Yes, we agree that the prayer is read at the graves. In the mosque of the messenger (*rasūl*), there are [the shrines of] our lord the messenger, Abū Bakr, and ‘Umar. Is this not the community of the Prophet (*mū jamā‘a*)?! Do we pray in this mosque or do we refrain from it? [Sa‘dī]: No, of course [we do not refrain from it]. [Khaṭīb]: No. Without a doubt, the reading of the prayer at the graves (*maqābir*) is not forbidden (*mū ḥarām*). No! It is neither forbidden nor do we take it [i.e. the grave] as a *qibla*¹²²¹ for us. In a mosque [for instance], when someone dies, what are we going to do with him [i.e. not burying him at the local mosque]? [Sa‘dī]: That means it is not a *qibla*. [Khaṭīb]: No, not a *qibla*. We do not take it as a *qibla*. [Sa‘dī]: But with respect to the taking of it [i.e. the grave] as a *qibla* [...] if it is located in a mosque either next to or behind the praying [interrupted by Khaṭīb]: They are all in the courtyard [*ḥawsh*] [inaudible]. It does not matter. [Sa‘dī] So it is not like that, but some say it is forbidden (*ḥarām*) and some say it is a heretical innovation (*bid‘a*). [Khaṭīb]: Oh brother, by God, these [i.e. the ones who consider it as forbidden] are strange people. We do not enter the door of heretical innovations.¹²²²

The stipulation of this kind of prayer as forbidden is, according to Khaṭīb, one of the strangest issues. He likened this position to the call to forbid the invocation of God (*du‘ā*) during the ritual washing, a practice which he considered positive. Khaṭīb rejected such thinking as inappropriate because it devalued the prayer or the invocation of God, placing it at the same level as major heretical innovations like immorality (*fujūr*), the unveiling of women (*sufūr*), or the drinking of liquor (*khumūr*). Khaṭīb and Sa‘dī end the dialogue with: “[Khaṭīb]: Seriously, oh brother, this is inappropriate. By God, it is strange. [Sa‘dī laughing]: I also believe the reason [for such a thinking] is ignorance (*jahl*). [Khaṭīb]: Of course.”¹²²³

Similar to other religious scholars presented in this study, such as Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī and Fayḍī al-Fayḍī, Khaṭīb’s approach to Sufism also begins with the study of the *sharī‘a* as the very basis for all further spiritual training. This is clear from his statements and his references to great Sufi authorities such as Suhrawardī, Nifzī, and

¹²¹⁹ Muḥammad Ayyūb Khan was president of Pakistan from 1958 until 1969.

¹²²⁰ ‘Abd al-Karīm, ‘Liqa’ ma‘a al-shaykh Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb’, secs 15:25-16:45. At this point, a third scholar in the video interrupts and mentions that in Iraq the *mawālīd* are celebrated continuously until the second *rabī‘*, i.e. the next month.

¹²²¹ The intended meaning here is the direction to which Muslims pray, namely the direction to the Kaaba in Mecca, not the direction of a shrine or grave.

¹²²² ‘Abd al-Karīm, ‘Liqa’ ma‘a al-shaykh Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb’, 21:20-23:00.

¹²²³ ‘Abd al-Karīm, secs 23:00-23:30.

Bakrī, all of whom had been legal scholars with a strong orientation towards the Quran and *sunna* in their Sufism. Khaṭīb acknowledged that Sufism has become distorted over the centuries but attributed this to the people's ignorance about *sharī'a*. Sa'dī's formulation of his questions already suggests a similar understanding of Sufism more as a legal and moral education (*tarbiya*) in Ibn Taymīya's moral-ethical sense of mysticism than as a spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*). Even though Sa'dī also spoke of *ṭarīqa*, he made his questions specific by using terms such as method (*nahaj*), orientation (*tawajjuh*) or manners (*sulūk*). Despite representing such a *sharī'a*-minded Sufism, Khaṭīb was quite outspoken in his rejection of typical Salafī and Wāḥḥābī criticism against *mawlid* celebrations or the prayer at shrines. Without explicitly naming the origin of such criticism, he denounced it as strange, boastful, and a result of ignorance. His *sharī'a*-minded Sufism, therefore, implicitly included a rejection of Saudi Arabia's Wāḥḥābism.

The three instances above represent further clear articulations in support of Sufism by regime-loyal religious scholars during the state's campaign to revive Sufism in Iraq. While the state itself officially promoted Sufism as true Islam, these scholars publicly advocated Sufism from an Islamic legal perspective. Further research is required to find out about the extent of such public statements about Sufism during major occasions or on television in this period. However, the three statements above are themselves telling for the purpose of this study, since they come from some of the leading Sunnī Sufi jurists of Iraq. Fayḍī al-Fayḍī was still a young religious scholar in Mosul but made a very successful career under the Ba'th and became dean of the Ṣaddām Faculty for the Preparation of Imams, Preachers, and Missionaries in the 1990s. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris was perhaps the leading and most famous Sufi jurist in Baghdad and head of Iraq's religious scholars' union. Ayyūb al-Khaṭīb was the *muftī* of Sāmarrā'. All of them regularly appeared in the official media as supporters of the Ba'th government. During speeches at *mawlid* festivities, in official fatwas, and during broadcasted interviews, they defended the lawfulness of a *sharī'a*-minded Sufism, the *takāyā*, the *mawlid* celebration, or the prayer at shrines. Thus, they provided these widespread practices with a legal basis and took a stand for their correctness. They accentuated this Sufi culture, implicitly creating a clear demarcation line between their Islam and Wāḥḥābism as the new enemy of the state. Fayḍī's emphasis on the Sufi *jihād* ultimately shows how they reflected the current political situation and the regime's official religious discourse.

5.2.6. *Sufism as Bridge between Sunna and Shī'a*

This final section will probe into another phenomenon of Sunnī Sufism which gained particular salience during the Ba'th's promotion of a Sufi revival in Iraq, namely its doctrinal and ritual closeness to the Shī'a. This closeness, which is strongly based on the shared veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*, has always existed in varying forms and Section 2.6 already provided an example of it in the Rifā'īya under Abū l-Hudā al-Şayyādī in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The respective sections¹²²⁴ about the political instrumentalisation of a sharīfian Rifā'ī *nasab* by Şaddām Ḥusayn in order to gain religious legitimacy and to address the Shī'a population have shown that he founded this policy on the traditional genealogical framework of the Rifā'īya – a framework that provided the ecumenical basis for such an endeavour. The aim of this section is to provide further evidence for such a transgression of sectarian boundaries within Iraq's Sufi communities, with a focus on the Sunnī Qādirīya-Kasnazānīya and with the addition of certain examples of the Rifā'īya.

A certain ecumenical approach has been a reality in the Kasnazānīya at least since shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī (1915-1978) and his predecessors expanded the order in Shī'ī dominated Iran.¹²²⁵ We can assume that this openness to the Shī'a was also a decisive factor in the order's spread in the Arab regions of Iraq during the 1980s, particularly in the south. Beginning in 1988 and throughout the 1990s it contributed heavily to the revival of Sufism in Iraq with an entirely new series of publications¹²²⁶ which quite prominently articulate a closeness to the Shī'a. At that time, due to the deterioration of the mutual relationship between Sunnīs and Shī'īs after the events of 1991, the Kasnazānīya's and other orders' ecumenical approaches gained particular salience for a national unity between both sects. The regime's violent suppression of the *intifāda* in the south had left the 'atabāt in Karbalā' and Najaf heavily damaged and resulted in a widespread climate of mutual sectarian alienation and suspicion.¹²²⁷ The state fought strongly to overcome these differences throughout the 1990s and the traditional sectarian rapprochements by Iraq's Sufis became a valuable contribution to this effort. Thus, the Sufi transgression of Sunnī-Shī'ī boundaries can be seen as another reason why the regime began to promote Sufism in this particular decade.

¹²²⁴ See Sections 3.1.3, 3.2.2, 4.1.5, 4.2.5, and 5.1.6.

¹²²⁵ Already Bruinessen observed pro-Shī'ī sympathies among the Kasnazānīs in Iranian Kurdistan (Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 217–18; Bruinessen, 'The Qadiriyya').

¹²²⁶ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taşawwuf*; Ḥusayn and Fattūhī, *Al-Bārāsīkūlūjīyā*; Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-'alīya*; Ḥusayn and Fattūhī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*.

¹²²⁷ Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, chap. 5 and 6.

Tellingly, even ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī himself addressed the Shī‘ī audience in Najaf at Imam ‘Alī’s birthday with a reference to the Imam’s central role in Sufism.¹²²⁸ The following analysis will show that Sunnī-Shī‘ī ecumenism became a central topic in the Kasnazānīya publications in particular during the 1990s, which once again explains the nationwide success of this order. This ecumenical approach can be witnessed in *i)* the Shī‘ī membership of the orders and their ritual practices, *ii)* the emphasis on *nasab* and *silsila*, and *iii)* the status of the *ahl al-bayt* in the Sufi literature.

i) Both the Kasnazānīya and the Rifā‘īya successfully attracted – and still attract – Shī‘ī members. Most outstanding in this regard is the Kasnazānīya, which expanded successfully among Shī‘īs in the south during the 1980s and 1990s. One of the most prominent Shī‘ī deputies of the order is the above-mentioned deputy Aḥmad Jāsim, who is known as Aḥmad the Shī‘ī and follows “the *ja‘farī* school of law (*madhhab*)”. Originally from al-Yūsufīya south of Baghdad, he heads his own *takīya* of the order.¹²²⁹ During my fieldwork in the Kasnazānī *takīya* in Amman, it was always stressed that the order treats Sunnīs and Shī‘īs equally, and in the *dhikr* sessions which I attended, Shī‘ī members of the order were always present.¹²³⁰ One evening, I met another Shī‘ī deputy (*khalīfa*) of the shaykh who leads his own Kasnazānī *takīya* in Ḥilla. Talking about his spiritual career, he reported that for a long time he had been a follower of the Rifā‘īya of a local shaykh of the Nu‘aym clan. After the local shaykh’s death, the Shī‘ī interviewee became a deputy of the Kasnazānīya.¹²³¹ A third popular Shī‘ī deputy in Karbalā’ is the religious scholar shaykh Muslim al-Zughaybī, who appears as a spokesman in many interviews and documentaries about the Kasnazānīya.¹²³²

The attraction of Shī‘īs to the Sunnī Kasnazānīya and to the Rifā‘īya can be explained through the orders’ ritual practice, where we find similarities to traditional Shī‘ī rituals with regard to shrine visitations and the celebration of annual occasions. It is quite common among Kasnazānīs, especially for the shaykh himself as a *sayyid*, to visit the shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* in Iraq. Video footage, which is available online, shows shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī performing a visitation (*ziyāra*) at Imam ‘Alī’s shrine in Najaf in 1994. Accompanied by a large entourage, including the custodian of the shrine, he kissed the holy doorsteps (*‘atabāt*) and prayed in front of

¹²²⁸ See Section 5.1.2.

¹²²⁹ I met Aḥmad in the *takīya* in Amman on 13.11.2015.

¹²³⁰ Interview with Dāwūd ‘Abd al-Razzāq, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Fallūja, 09.11.2015.

¹²³¹ Interview with Sa‘dī Ḥusayn, a Shī‘ī deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Ḥilla, 26.11.2015.

¹²³² During one interview with Alsumaria in 2011, he explained how he became interested in Sufism and joined the order (Dulaymī, ‘Taqrīr ḥawla al-ṭarīqa al-ksnazānīya’, pts 5:30-7:23).

the grave's golden cage.¹²³³ The scenes of this video material are reminiscent of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's official visitations at these shrines and his claim to be a descendant of the Imams with his Rifā'ī *nasab*. We need to bear in mind that this practice is not exclusive to the Kasnazānīya and the Sufis alone, but the Sufi communities are its foremost representatives and heavily contributed to the spread of this ecumenical culture. My interviewees from among the members of the Kasnazānīya, and those from the Rifā'īya too, affirmed that these shrine visitations are not only widespread among Shī'īs but also among Sunnīs in Iraq, particularly among Sufi communities. They constitute thereby a common feature of both sects for which Sufism provides a basis. The interviewees claimed that Shī'īs in the south visit the shrine of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī as regularly as Sunnīs do, even though most of them have no deeper connection to Sufism.¹²³⁴ Even in Fallūja, a traditional Sunnī stronghold in Anbār province with a strong Sufi influence, Kasnazānī Sufis but also non-Sufis reportedly visit the shrines of Imam 'Alī in Najaf and of al-Ḥusayn and al-'Abbās in Karbalā' throughout the year.¹²³⁵ Noorah al-Gailani, in her recent research, notes about the shrine of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in Baghdad that Shī'ī women are the most frequent visitors on a daily basis.¹²³⁶ Therefore, this culture is well established in Iraq.

Interestingly, such cross-confessional relations can also be witnessed on the level of custodianship (*sadna*) in relation to the shrines of the Imams 'Alī al-Ḥādī and al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī in Sāmarrā' and of Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī in the south near 'Amāra. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the custodians of the former traditionally came from the Sunnī Kalīdār clan,¹²³⁷ whereas the custodians of the latter were Shī'īs from the clan of Ḥasūn Gharīb al-Nu'aymī.¹²³⁸ My interviewees named the latter in particular as an example of the Rifā'īya's good relationship with the Shī'a.¹²³⁹ Thus,

¹²³³ Dulaymī, 'Sārat ilayk00'. Among the people of the entourage the shaykh's son Nehrū appears and, next to the shaykh, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's bodyguard Arshad Yāsīn al-Rashīd.

¹²³⁴ Interview with 'Iṣām al-Rāwī, 11.05.2016 and 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-Tikrītī, 12.05.2016.

¹²³⁵ Interview with Dāwūd 'Abd al-Razzāq, a deputy of the Kasnazānīya from Fallūja, 23.11.2015.

¹²³⁶ Gailani, 'The Shrines of the shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani', 73, 85.

¹²³⁷ Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, 24.

¹²³⁸ Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī*, 96–97.

¹²³⁹ Interviews with 'Iṣām al-Rāwī, 11.05.2016 and 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-Tikrītī, 12.05.2016. The holding of such a post by a Sunnī/Shī'ī in a Shī'ī/Sunnī institution should not be considered as an entirely positive example for cross-confessional relations. Oftentimes, such phenomena are the remnant of state policies. For as early as around 1900, the Ottoman government similarly aimed to appoint Sunnī *nuqabā' al-ashraf* in Shī'ī regions as a measure to oust local leaders in the context of their policy to halt the massive spread of Shī'ism in southern Iraq during the late nineteenth century (Litvak, *Shi'ī Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, 167). However, Eich shows that many of these *nuqabā'* actually came from the environment of the Rifā'īya and argues that the choice of Rifā'īs, with their traditional closeness to the Shī'a, for these posts was ultimately aimed at creating better integration of the latter into the Ottoman Empire (Eich, 'Abū l-Hudā, the Rifā'īya and Shiism').

these shrines provide an environment for such a transgression of sectarian boundaries through a shared ritual practice, and Sufis such as shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm actively fostered such efforts.

Many Sufi communities in Iraq not only visit the same shrines as Shī‘īs do, but also celebrate the same annual occasions such as the most important Shī‘ī commemoration of ‘*āshūrā*’ in memory of Imam al-Ḥusayn’s martyrdom.¹²⁴⁰ The Kasnazānīya organises annual celebrations to commemorate al-Ḥusayn’s fate¹²⁴¹ with large gatherings of Kasnazānī Sufis performing the *dhikr* and reciting eulogies in memory of the Imam. One later video recording shows the mourning performance (*majlis al-‘azā*) on ‘*āshūrā*’ in the *takīya* of the shaykh in the predominantly Sunnī environment of Amman, suggesting that this is not just a local tradition in Iraq. While one speaker introduced the event with a speech about al-Ḥusayn, shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī sitting next to a Shī‘ī guest begins to mourn and weep for the Imam.¹²⁴² Other videos document big celebrations on the occasions of ‘*āshūrā*’ in the central Kasnazānī *takīya* in Sulaymānīya, with crowds of weeping Sufis or Sufi mourning processions to Karbalā’ forty days after al-Ḥusayn’s death (*al-arba ‘īn*).¹²⁴³ Here, too, the Kasnazānīya is quite successful with this ecumenical effort, but it was not the only order with such features. Further video material shows that Shī‘īs and Rifā‘ī Sufis celebrated the Prophet’s birthday (*mawlid al-nabī*) together in Iraq under the Ba‘th Party. In a video recording of one such celebration in Diyālā on 22 August 1991, the Rifā‘ī shaykh ‘Abd al-Sattār al-Mufarri‘ al-Jannābī and other Sufis recited eulogies for the Prophet and performed the *dirbāsha* (perforation of the bodies with swords) in front of attending Shī‘ī scholars.¹²⁴⁴ This phenomenon may additionally be influenced by the fact that Diyālā is a mixed area where Sunnīs and Shī‘īs live in close proximity. Nevertheless, these examples of the Kasnazānīya and also the Rifā‘īya provide remarkable evidence of how Sunnī Sufis are indeed able to transgress sectarian borders through their traditional rituals in relation to the *ahl al-bayt*.

¹²⁴⁰ Video footage from the early 2000s gives proof that Rifā‘īya communities still celebrate ‘*āshūrā*’ with *dhikr* performances and recite eulogies of mourning for Imam al-Ḥusayn (al-Mawqī‘ al-ṭarīqa al-rifā‘īya, ‘Abad wa-llāh’).

¹²⁴¹ There are also official commemorations of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s death. One such celebration is documented in the *takīya* in Bābil attended by Shī‘ī members of the order (Qanāt al-masār al-fiḍā‘īya, ‘al-Masār barnāmij’).

¹²⁴² al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya al-qādirīya al-kasnazānīya, ‘Kalimat al-ṭarīqa al-‘alīya al-qādirīya al-kasnazānīya’.

¹²⁴³ al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya al-qādirīya al-kasnazānīya, ‘Manqaba nabawīya’; al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya al-qādirīya al-kasnazānīya, ‘Aqāmat al-ṭarīqa al-‘alīya al-qādirīya al-kasnazānīya’. As to the commemoration of Arba‘īn, see Ḥaydarī, *Trāḥidīyā Karbalā’*, 131–36.

¹²⁴⁴ al-Mawqī‘ al-ṭarīqa al-rifā‘īya, ‘Manqaba wa-dhikr’.

ii) According to the contemporary Sunnī Iraqi *ḥadīth* scholar Yāsir Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Badrī, the Imams of the *ahl al-bayt* are the basis of Sufism and its golden spiritual lineage (*silsilatihi al-dhahabīya*). Therefore, according to al-Badrī, the holy shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* in Sāmarrā', i.e. of the tenth Imam 'Alī al-Hādī and the eleventh al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, are one major reason for the permanent presence of Sufism in the city.¹²⁴⁵ This central role of the *ahl al-bayt* in Sufism, to which al-Badrī alludes, can be illustrated with an example from the Kasnazānīya. Most important in this context are the central symbols which reflect the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* and which constitute a medium for the approach to the Shī'a, namely genealogies (*ansāb*, *sing.*: *nasab*) and spiritual lineages (*salāsīl*, *sing.*: *silsila*). The *nasab* of shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī includes seven members of the *ahl al-bayt*, namely 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, his wife Fāṭima, al-Ḥusayn, 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, Ja'far al-Šādiq, and Mūsā al-Kāẓim. Except Fāṭima, they all appear – with the addition of the eighth Imam 'Alī al-Riḍā – also in the golden spiritual lineage (*al-silsila al-dhahabīya*) of the order.¹²⁴⁶

In fact, the Kasnazānīya strongly advertises both *nasab* and *silsila* as central pillars and figureheads of the order and, as I argue here, also as a means of approaching the Shī'a population. This promotion can, first of all, be witnessed in most of the order's publications during the 1990s. Interestingly, shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm's first publication in 1988 mentioned his *nasab* but only a one-branched spiritual lineage without the *ahl al-bayt*,¹²⁴⁷ whereas the two branched *silsila* with the golden lineage dominates in most later publications from the mid-1990s onwards.¹²⁴⁸ The *ahl al-bayt* are rather marginally mentioned in the book from 1988, whereas they receive much more attention in later publications during the 1990s. With regard to the aforementioned context of a considerable Sunnī-Shī'ī alienation in Iraqi society at that time, this seems not to be a mere coincidence but suggests a deliberate agenda of a rapprochement with the Shī'a. As mentioned above, the order successfully expanded among Shī'īs in southern Iraq during this period.

Furthermore, *Nasab* and *silsila* were depicted not only in the literature. Apart from the order's books, large wallpapers and inscriptions with the *nasab* and the spiritual

¹²⁴⁵ Badrī al-Ḥusaynī, 'al-Takāyā wa-l-ṭuruq', 127.

¹²⁴⁶ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-'alīya*, 374–76.

¹²⁴⁷ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 230.

¹²⁴⁸ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-'alīya*, 374; Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, chap. 3.7; Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *Al-Bārāsikūlūjīyā*, 156; Fattūḥī, *Karāmāt*, 4–5.

lineage usually embellish the interior of each Kasnazānī *takīya*.¹²⁴⁹ Since the 1990s, each new member receives a flyer and a small booklet following his swearing the oath of allegiance (*bay‘a*).¹²⁵⁰ Both contain the prayer formulas for the private prayers (*wird*) and the *dhikr* as well as the shaykh’s *nasab* and the complete *silsila*. The flyer and booklet are intended to be carried by the member in his or her daily life for committing to memory.¹²⁵¹ In this way, both are constantly present for the visitor of the *takīya*, the participant of the *dhikr*, and the member of the order generally. Thus, it should be clear by now that a *nasab* – which could be understood as a “descent doctrine” – and a spiritual *silsila* should not merely be considered as something that does “not exist in the minds of the people concerned” as Zoltán Szombathy puts it (with regard to the *nasab*), something that “does not exist at all (if not in an anthropological monograph!).”¹²⁵²

iii) The special veneration and status of the *ahl al-bayt* in the Kasnazānīya is explained more prominently and in more detail in its publications of the 1990s. These books present the *ahl al-bayt*, beginning with ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib as the first and foremost spiritual successors of the Prophet Muḥammad. Analogous to the Shī‘ī doctrine of ‘Alī as rightful successor of Muḥammad in the leadership of the Muslim community, he appears in this Sufi context as his primary successor in the spiritual guidance and as gate (*bāb*) through which the spiritual knowledge of the order was originally transmitted to his descendants. In their argumentation, the authors even relied on Shī‘ī sources and regularly referred to Prophetic Traditions (*aḥādīth*) which are acknowledged by both Sunnīs and Shī‘īs. Finally, we even find an allusion to the Shī‘ī belief in the Twelve Imams’ impeccability (*iṣma*), which marks one of the most prominent points of contention with Sunnī belief.

According to shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī, God chose ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, along with his wife Fāṭima and their two sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, as the people closest to Himself and to his messenger Muḥammad. He made ‘Alī and his two sons the Imams on earth and made the sons two lords of the juveniles of the people in paradise (*sayyiday shabāb ahl al-janna*). They are notably not only Imams for the Shī‘a but also for the Sunnī Kasnazānīya as well. How close the Kasnazānī understanding of their imamate comes to that of the Shī‘a will be elaborated in the

¹²⁴⁹ Bruinessen reported this also for the *khānaqāt* in Iran (Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh and State*, 216).

¹²⁵⁰ Correspondence with ‘Abd al-Salām al-Muḥammadī, 19.06.2018.

¹²⁵¹ Kasnazānī, *al-Awrād al-Kasnazānīya*.

¹²⁵² Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy*, 27.

following. The shaykh went on to say that God made their *wilāya*¹²⁵³ continuous within the lineage of their offspring.¹²⁵⁴ In Sufism, *wilāya* can be translated literary as “friendship of God”. That means in this context that ‘Alī and his descendants have been chosen by God to be close to Him, and thereby to be His friends (*awliyā’ Allāh*, sing. *walī Allāh*). According to classical Sufi belief, a *walī Allāh* is, by virtue of his closeness to God, gifted with special capacities such as inspiration, the ability to perform miracles (*karāmāt*), and a special knowledge about “the inner laws of creation and revelation which are hidden from normal consciousness.”¹²⁵⁵ Sunnī Sufis and Shī‘īs use the same term *‘ilm al-bāṭin* for the special knowledge of the Imams but the Sufi understanding differs from the Shī‘ī one. The latter is more an esoteric knowledge which helps the Imams as guardians of the Muslim community to understand and interpret the Quran and *sunna* in the divine way and to guide them towards enlightenment and progress.¹²⁵⁶ Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm did not elaborate further on the term but left it as it stands with a certain ambiguity as to what he actually meant. Importantly, the classical Sufi understanding of *wilāya* according to al-Tirmidhī (d. 869) is not necessarily related to the lineage of the *ahl al-bayt* as in Shī‘ism.¹²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm linked it firstly and explicitly to them.¹²⁵⁸

On the following pages, he listed numerous quotations by earlier Sufi authorities with the intention of proving the exalted position and closeness of the *ahl al-bayt* to God and the Prophet. This chapter mainly praises ‘Alī as “Imam of all the Muḥammadan friends/saints” (*imām al-awliyā’ al-muḥammadiyyīn kullahum*).¹²⁵⁹ Tellingly, the

¹²⁵³ In Shī‘ism this term designates the position of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his descendants as true successors of the Prophet in the guidance of the Muslim community, i.e. the imamate by virtue of birth (see Walker, ‘Wilāya’). They distinguish it from “*walāya*” which denotes the friendship and protection of an imam. In Sufism, both *wilāya* and *walāya* often refer interchangeably to the spiritual authority of saints or shaykhs, i.e. the state of sanctity which was bestowed upon them by God (Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 157; Masterton, ‘A Comparative Exploration’, 54–55).

¹²⁵⁴ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya*, 119. The title *sayyid shabāb ahl al-janna* goes back to a Prophetic *ḥadīth* which became a central justification for the Shī‘a about the right of ‘Alī’s descendants to succeed the Prophet in the imamate (Vaglieri, ‘Al-Ḥusayn’, 607).

¹²⁵⁵ Radtke, ‘The Concept of Wilāya’, 493.

¹²⁵⁶ Radtke, 491–93.

¹²⁵⁷ Radtke, 492.

¹²⁵⁸ The central role of the *ahl al-bayt* in Sufism is much older. al-Sulamī (d. 1021) counts them in his *Classes of the Sufis (Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya)* among the friends of God (*awliyā’*) (Reichmuth, ‘The Quest for Sufi Transmissions’, 75). Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), for instance, mentioned the mystical exertions of Muḥammad’s companions Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Alī in his *Muqaddima* (Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3:81–82). Yet, he is quite critical in this regard and questions this view elsewhere (Ibn Khaldūn, 3:94). For their incorporation into Sufi *salāsīl* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Halm, *Die Schia*, 93.

¹²⁵⁹ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya*, 119–28.

shaykh also referred to Shī'ī sources¹²⁶⁰ to support his argumentation, like *The Unveiling of Grief in the Wisdom of the Imams (Kashf al-ghumma fī ma'rifat al-a'imma)* by the thirteenth-century scholar 'Alī b. Īsā al-Irbīlī. From this source he quoted, among others, the *ḥadīth* about the Prophet's advocacy on judgement day for the venerator, supporter, messenger, and lover of the *ahl al-bayt*, cited in Section 4.2.5. Here and in the following books, the Kasnazānīs regularly refer to the very same sources and *aḥādīth* which Shī'īs use to justify the imamate of the Twelve Imams. Without making a clear transgression to Shī'ī doctrine, the authors often left a glaring ambiguity at crucial points and thus avoided a sectarian demarcation.

In another Kasnazānī publication by two other deputies of the shaykh, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib is again presented as the closest companion to the Prophet Muḥammad. The Prophet grew up in Abū Ṭālib's house and is said to have taken care of 'Alī and taught and educated him since he was nine years old. 'Alī never worshiped idols but only the one God. According to the authors, these are merits which distinguish him from all other Muslims who accepted the new faith after the revelation of the Quran. 'Alī accompanied the Prophet during his seclusions to worship God (*khalawāt ta'abbudīya*), was the first to accept Islam, and the first to pray. He even became his deputy when he was only thirteen years of age¹²⁶¹ and remained in Mecca after the Prophet's emigration to Medina (*hijra*). In this context, it is said that 'Alī loved the Prophet so much that he was willing to sacrifice himself for him, sleeping in Muḥammad's bed during the night of the *hijra* to deceive the Meccans who tried to kill him.¹²⁶² The authors highlighted that the Prophet, eventually, chose 'Alī as a husband for his daughter Fāṭima. Later on, 'Alī took part in each battle with the Prophet and always carried his banner, except during the battle of Tabūk when Muḥammad left him in charge of Medina with his family. The episode refers to the *ḥadīth* of the rank of Aaron (*manzilat Hārūn*),¹²⁶³ in which the Prophet reportedly said to the complaining 'Alī: "Will you not be content to be to me as Hārūn (Aaron) was to

¹²⁶⁰ Morimoto Kazuo observed a similar tradition of trans-sectarian references in Shī'ī collections of dream accounts about the *ahl al-bayt*. In these collections, too, Shī'ī authors use Sunnī sources much more than Shī'ī ones (Morimoto, 'How to Behave Toward Sayyids and Sharīfs'). This phenomenon provides, once again, evidence of the ecumenical potential in the veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*.

¹²⁶¹ For the background of this story which is accepted by both Sunnīs and Shī'īs see Momen, *Shi'ī Islam*, 12.

¹²⁶² Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 34–35. The authors take the information from a version of the *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* by Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd al-Baṣrī from 1904.

¹²⁶³ According to Shī'ī tradition, this *ḥadīth* proves 'Alī's position as Muḥammad's chief assistant and successor (Momen, *Shi'ī Islam*, 13).

Mūsā (Moses)? With the exception that there shall be no Prophet after me.”¹²⁶⁴ According to Shī‘ī tradition, this *ḥadīth* proves ‘Alī’s position as Muḥammad’s chief assistant and successor.¹²⁶⁵ The present book does not comment on it in this regard but uses it to explicate ‘Alī’s exceptional position as closest companion to the Prophet before all others.

‘Alī’s main distinguishing quality in spiritual matters is related to his knowledge. Here, Sufi and Shī‘ī beliefs overlap to a great extent. As mentioned before, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib is considered to be the origin of most Sufi orders and known as the sea of spiritual paths (*baḥr al-ṭarā’iq*). According to the Moroccan Darqāwīya Sufi Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajība (d. 1809), through the angel Jibrīl God revealed first the *sharī‘a* to Muḥammad and, afterwards, the spiritual truth (*ḥaqīqa*). However, Muḥammad bestowed this spiritual truth only upon certain members of his people and it was allegedly Imam ‘Alī who first talked about it and revealed it.¹²⁶⁶ According to the Sufi narrative which we find in the books of the Kasnazānīya, Muḥammad generally taught all of his companions (*ṣaḥāba*) about the revelation and commented on *sharī‘a* rules through his sayings and deeds. The physical closeness of the companions to the Prophet allowed them to gather and keep his sayings and deeds after his death in the form of *aḥādīth*. Yet, this knowledge of *sharī‘a* law – i.e. the knowledge of the exoteric dimension (*al-‘ulūm al-zāhirīya*) in contrast to the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) dimension – which was taught to the common people is considered merely “a small part” (*juz’ basīṭ*) of God’s revelation. Besides this, during his seclusions Muḥammad is also said to have received knowledge about the revelation’s esoteric dimension (*bāṭin*), which he revealed neither to the majority of his companions nor to the common people. The Kasnazānī authors find in the following *aḥādīth* clear proof of the existence of such a spiritual knowledge:

If you knew what I know, you would laugh little, weep much, go out to the heights, and become silent on the rugs.

The knowledge of the *bāṭin* is a secret of God, the Almighty and Sublime’s secrets and wisdom from God’s wisdoms, which he drops into the hearts of whomever he wishes from among his worshippers.¹²⁶⁷

¹²⁶⁴ „*A mā tarqā an takūn minnī bi-manzilat Hārūn min Mūsā illā annahu lā nabī ba’dī*“ (Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 35–36). Ibn Sa’d 1904, 15.

¹²⁶⁵ Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 13.

¹²⁶⁶ Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Ṭarīqa al-‘alīya*, 120.

¹²⁶⁷ Arabic: „*‘Ilm al-bāṭin sirr min asrār Allāh azz wa-jall wa-ḥikam min ḥikam Allāh yaqdhifuhu fī qulūb man yashā’ min ‘ubādihi*“.

It is a knowledge like the condition of the hidden. No one knows it except the people of wisdom, for, if they utter it, only the ones misled by God deny it.¹²⁶⁸

This spiritual knowledge is further characterised as being revealed by God only to His upright saints through ways other than mere listening or studying and is only passed on to people of distinction.¹²⁶⁹

Here, the authors referred to shaykh Ibn ‘Abbād al-Nifzī (d. 1390), according to whom God commanded the religious scholars (‘*ulamā*’) not to conceal the knowledge from the people who are qualified for it and, further, to keep it from the people who are not qualified for it. Muḥammad only taught this spiritual knowledge to his companion ‘Alī and commanded him similarly not to pass it on to people who were not qualified for it. The Sufis substantiate this view with the following quotation from ‘Alī: “People talk according to the scope of their understanding. Do you wish to disbelieve God and his messenger?”¹²⁷⁰ as well as a few lines by the fourth Imam ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn:

Oh Lord, the essence of knowledge, if I reveal it, for Him – They tell me: you are from the ones who worship an idol. Pious men regard my blood as easy prey – They see the ugliest, they do not bring it any good.¹²⁷¹

Other *aḥādīth*, too, according to the authors, prove that the Prophet conferred distinction upon ‘Alī by granting to him the “gates” (*abwāb*) to his secret spiritual knowledge. Most famous among these in a Sufi and Shī‘ī context are the Prophet’s words “I am the city of knowledge and ‘Alī is its gate, whoever wants the city shall come to the gate.”¹²⁷²

In accordance with Shī‘ī belief, we read that ‘Alī bequeathed his spiritual knowledge, first of all, to his children and further descendants from the people of the Prophetic house (*āl bayt al-nubuwwa*). Only then, according to the Kasnazānīs, did he teach it to selected companions in the religious school of the Prophet in Medina.¹²⁷³

¹²⁶⁸ Arabic: „*Inna min al-‘ilm k-hay’at al-maknūn lā ya‘lamuhu illā ahl al-ma‘rifa fa-idhā naṭaqū bihi lam yankarhu illā ahl al-ghirra bi-llāh*“.

¹²⁶⁹ All the aforementioned *aḥādīth* can be found in Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 37.

¹²⁷⁰ Arabic: „*Haddathū al-nās ‘alā qadr ‘uqūlihīm. A tuḥibbūn an yukadhdhib Allāh wa-rasūlahu?*“ (Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, 37–38).

¹²⁷¹ Arabic: „*Yā rabba jawhari ‘ilmin law abūḥu lahu – la-qīla lī anta mimman ya‘budu al-wathanā. Wa-la-staḥalla rijālun ṣāliḥūn dammī – yarawna aqbaḥa mā yā‘tūnahu ḥasanan*“ (Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, 38).

¹²⁷² Arabic: „*Ana madīnat al-‘ilm wa-‘Alī bābuhā fa-man arād al-madīna fa-li-yā‘ti al-bāb*“ (Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, 38). For the Shī‘ī tradition, see Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 14.

¹²⁷³ As is widely believed today among Sufi communities, early ascetics (*zuhhād*) gathered and studied under the Prophet in this school until ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib became its second imam on the spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*) after him. Among ‘Alī’s first students on the path they count Abū Dharr al-Ghufārī, Abū Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ, Salmān al-Fārisī from among the companions (*ṣaḥāba*), and Sa‘īd b. al-Musīb, Sālim b. ‘Abd Allāh from the followers (*tābi‘ūn*) (Kasnazānī al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Taṣawwuf*, 73–74).

With this [first bequeathing to his descendants], they took the place of the messenger (God the most High bless him and grant him salvation) among the Muslims after his passing away [lit.: his leaving the house of vanishing (*dār al-fanā*)] and [this occurs] likewise in his noble *ḥadīth* (God the Most High bless him and grant him salvation) in which it is announced that the great Quran and the pure people of his house are the sublime heritage that he left behind and both have impeccability from error (*‘iṣmatuhum min al-ḍalāl*).¹²⁷⁴

In the last line of the quotation above, the authors of the Kasnazānīya obviously believe in the impeccability from error of the “pure people of his house”, i.e. ‘Alī and his descendants, and they explicitly used the disputed term *‘iṣma*, something which is otherwise only done by Shī‘īs. Yet, it remains obscure as to whether they really intended a transgression to Shī‘ī doctrine here, as further details are missing. The above-mentioned “noble *ḥadīth*” is the one of Two Weighty Things (*al-thaqalayn*)¹²⁷⁵ which emphasises the missionary role of the *ahl al-bayt* as bearers of the Islamic message in society after the Prophet’s passing away. The Kasnazānī authors mainly cited a short version of it:¹²⁷⁶

I am about to be called [by the Lord to die] so I have to respond, I left two weighty things with you: the book of God and my people (*‘itratī*). The book of God is a rope stretched from heaven to earth and my people are the people of my house. The Kind [God] informed me that both of them will not be separated from each other until they return back to me by the pond [of abundance in paradise]. For, I watch how you stay behind and act towards them after my departure.¹²⁷⁷

The Kasnazānīs take this *ḥadīth* as an assurance of the human need for a spiritual guide (*murshid*) who lives according to the model of the Quran.¹²⁷⁸ For Shī‘īs, the aforementioned traditions prove not only ‘Alī’s (and his descendants’) spiritual guidance but also their succeeding the Prophet politically, which is not acknowledged by Sunnīs. Yet, the Sufī idea of this spiritual guidance comes quite close to the Shī‘ī one. Sunnī and Shī‘ī theologians would disagree at this point, but among non-theologians, the ecumenical attempt to identify the common denominators and traditions between Sunna and Shī‘a serves a purpose. The Kasnazānīs communicate that, practically speaking, these two communities still have a lot in common.

As to the question of who should be the spiritual guide after the Prophet, the Kasnazānīs again referred to a famous episode which is central to Shī‘ism, namely the

¹²⁷⁴ Husayn and Fattūhī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 39.

¹²⁷⁵ Husayn and Fattūhī, 39.

¹²⁷⁶ For the translation of another complete version in the *ḥadīth* collection of Ibn Ḥanbal see Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 16.

¹²⁷⁷ „*Innī awshak an du ‘ā fa-ajīb, wa-innī tārik fikum al-thaqalayn: kitāb Allāh wa-‘itratī. Kitāb Allāh ḥabl mamdūd min al-samā’ ilā l-arḍ, wa-‘itratī ahl baytī, wa-inna al-laṭīf akhbaranī innahumā lan yaftariqā ḥattā yaruddā ‘alayya al-ḥawḍ, fa-anzur bima takhlufūnī fīhimā*“ (Husayn and Fattūhī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 39).

¹²⁷⁸ Momen, *Shi‘i Islam*, 148.

episode at the pond of Khumm (*Ghadīr Khumm*). During the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage about two months before his death, he stopped with his entourage at this place and addressed the Muslims from an improvised pulpit. In the Shī'ī narrative, in his address Muḥammad invested 'Alī as his official successor.¹²⁷⁹ According to the Kasnazānīs, the Prophet informed them that "Imam 'Alī is their spiritual guide (*murshiduhum*) who will take his place among them after he had left them". As proof, they cited the Prophet's famous saying, "To whomever I am master, 'Alī is his master"¹²⁸⁰ and the words which he assigned to 'Alī, namely "God, most certainly, is the supporter of whoever supports him and the enemy of whoever treats him as an enemy."¹²⁸¹ Thus the Prophet made the *wilāyā* of Imam 'Alī universal (*'āmma*), complete (*shāmila*), and absolute (*muṭlaqa*) to all Muslims. The Prophet invested 'Alī with his pure Prophetic morals (*akhlāq*), his qualities as divine guide (*murshid*), as well as with his pure spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) through which he purified his soul. In another *ḥadīth* Muḥammad said of him, "Looking at the face of 'Alī is a religious obligation".¹²⁸² In this view, 'Alī is, metaphorically speaking, the only "gate" (*bāb*) which leads to the Prophet. Whoever wants to follow the way of Muḥammad has to follow 'Alī and his descendants. He is the heir of Muḥammad's spiritual knowledge (*'ulūmihi al-rūḥiyya*) and his pure spiritual states (*aḥwāl zakīya*), and is his deputy (*khalīfā*) in the spiritual guidance of Muslims. The continuation of this spiritual deputyship through the ages (*niyāba rūḥiyya*) is described as "one of the most important pillars of the *ṭarīqa* and is known under the term 'spiritual lineage of the shaykhs of the *ṭarīqa*'" (*silsilat mashāyikh al-ṭarīqa*).¹²⁸³

This section has demonstrated that the Kasnazānīya's attempts to approach the Shī'a increased considerably in number during the 1990s. The strong reference to Shī'ī traditions and sources, the Shī'ī members of the order, the intensive use of *nasab* and *silsila*, and the central role of the *ahl al-bayt* in the transmission of spiritual knowledge in Sufism constitute a common ground for the two communities. Sufi orders like the Kasnazānīya indeed offer an ecumenical framework for the transgression of sectarian boundaries between Sunna and Shī'a in Iraq and for attracting Shī'ī members. Admittedly, neither the Kasnazānīya nor the Rifā'īya order attract large numbers of

¹²⁷⁹ Momen, 15; Vaglieri, 'Ghadīr Khumm'.

¹²⁸⁰ „Man kunt mawlāhu fa- 'Alī mawlāhu“.

¹²⁸¹ „Allāhuma wāl man wālāhu wa- 'ād man 'ādāhu“.

¹²⁸² „al-Nazar ilā wajh 'Alī 'ibāda“.

¹²⁸³ All the aforementioned quotations appear in Ḥusayn and Fattūḥī, *al-Ṭarīq ilā l-ṭarīqa*, 40–41.

people from among the Shī'a in Iraq, but the examples above show that several Shī'ī deputies of the shaykh successfully established *takāyā* in the south with considerable numbers of followers. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon did not escape the attention of the Ba'th regime which promoted a revival of Sufism and propagated its own Sunnī-Shī'ī ecumenical Islam. Thus, the ecumenical framework of Sufi orders such as the Kasnazānīya provide another reason for the official support of Sufism during the 1990s. They could complement and support the official state policies.

5.2.7. Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, Sufis gained a new level of prominence and prestige from at least 1989 onwards and even more so with the Ba'th's official revival of Sufism during the Faith Campaign. Certain Sufi orders of the Rifā'īya and the Kasnazānīya expanded their traditions and rituals and hence their influence on the state elites of the presidential family, the Ba'th Party, the military, and security services. In 1982, Ṣaddām Ḥusayn had heavily criticised party members for frequenting Sufi *takāyā*, but by 1989 his own family invited several orders to the *mawlūd* of 'Adnān Khayr Allāh. Throughout the 1990s and up until 2003, many members of his family and tribe practised the Rifā'ī and Kasnazānī *dhikr* and also joined one of these orders. Similarly, other Sufi shaykhs cultivated 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī as their patron. He is even said to be a Sufi shaykh himself but hard evidence for such a role could not be found. Additionally Iraq's Sufi clans became part of the emerging national genealogical historiography. The new *nasab*-encyclopaedias showed them in the genealogical company of the president and their sharīfian pedigree became a central element of a national narrative of Iraq's unity in religion and brotherhood. Their sharīfism was emphasised as a genealogical bond to overcome ethnic and sectarian differences by the tribal elite's common ancestry from the *ahl al-bayt*. The Kasnazānīya gained such influence that it could articulate its Sufism, unhindered and in a clear political light, as the essential link between Islam and Arabism. The most prominent religious Sufi scholars who were recruited by the Ba'th regime emphatically promoted and advocated their Sufism from a legal perspective. They contributed, thereby, to a growing public awareness of Sufism and to the state's promotion of Sufi culture in an obvious demarcation against radical and sectarian Wahhābism and Salafism. The final case of the Kasnazānīya has shown that this order enhanced its publication efforts and its promotional activities tremendously. The order's expansion

activities and the content of its books reveal a strong ecumenical approach to the Shī‘a, which was to a considerable degree successful, though still not a mass phenomenon. Despite the mistrust of the Party Secretariat against the Kasnazānīya as a political movement, the order’s pro-Shī‘a outlook undoubtedly suited the regime’s ecumenical aspirations at that time. From all this, we can infer that the Ba‘th’s official revival of Sufism enhanced the prominence and status of Sufis in Iraq considerably. Since membership numbers are not available, it is hard to say to what extent the orders grew during the 1990s, but the new publicity and backing by the state certainly contributed to their proliferation.

6. Conclusion

In this study, I have investigated in depth the relationship between the state and Sufism in Iraq under the Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party from 1968 to 2003. It became evident that the Ba‘th regime and Sufism were much more intertwined than previously thought, given the lack of attention the existing literature has paid to Iraq’s Sufi traditions in relation to politics. The central objective was to discover how the Ba‘th regime gradually incorporated Sufism and the Sufis into its policies and how this in turn contributed to a revival of Sufism in the country. This was accomplished through a twofold approach. Firstly, the study concentrated on a close, diachronic investigation of Ba‘th religious politics, and secondly it went on to focus on the history of Sufism under the Ba‘thist policies, both in the Arab and the Kurdish regions.

In order to answer the research questions outlined in the introduction, I will summarise and discuss the findings of this thesis in five sections, each relating to one of the central topics that emerged from this study: 1) In line with the chronological order of my investigation, this summary begins with a discussion of the historical decline of Sufism from the late Ottoman period until the 1960s; 2) afterwards, the circumstances of the Ba‘th regime’s growing incorporation of Islam into politics and its official revival of Sufism during the 1990s will be summarised; 3) the reasons for this course of actions will be set in relation to similar policies of other states in the MENA region; 4) on the basis of these findings, the assumption of the Ba‘th regime’s Islamisation will be discussed; and 5) the consequences of its policies for the Sufis themselves will be

outlined. The findings show that the Ba‘thist promotion of Sufism in Iraq was part of a wider phenomenon and reflects a widespread political strategy to counteract the emergence of Islamist mass movements in many other MENA countries. The Iraqi Ba‘th regime, however, pursued its own strategy to reverse what had been perceived as a decline of Sufism and thereby created new opportunities and impulses for Sufi life in Iraq.

1) The Decline of Sufism in Iraq between the Ottoman Period (under ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II) and the 1960s

This dissertation has analysed Sufism in Iraq from the perspectives of Sufi orders and their shaykh clans, Sufi genealogies (*ansāb*) and the institution of the *niqābat al-ashrāf*, Sufis among the religious scholars (‘*ulamā*’), and Sufi rapprochements with the Shī‘a in traditions, rituals, and teachings. Attributing a decline to phenomena such as these always depends on different perspectives, the time frame, and the analytical categories one considers. As noted in the introduction (1.4), many studies have challenged the long-prevailing paradigm of the gradual disappearance of religious phenomena such as Sufism by virtue of a growing secularisation and modernisation of societies. In contrast to the fundamental decline of Sufism’s societal importance, recent scholarship has emphasised that Sufi communities themselves have experienced enormous social-structural changes and have successfully adapted themselves to the new circumstances in a modern society. This undoubtedly applies to Iraq too. The period under investigation from 1876 to the 1960s (Chapter 2) was characterised by profound political and social transformations. The most profound of which were, among others, the demise of the Ottoman administration, the emergence and expansion of a modern Iraqi nation state, the ascendancy of a new secular-oriented state elite, the spread of secular education and sciences, and the rise of nationalist and socialist ideologies. However, despite this wide-ranging process of modernisation throughout the twentieth century, Sufism has not vanished to this day, as has been affirmed once again by this study. Notwithstanding Sufism’s continued presence and importance, I argue that it did experience a considerable decline after the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the modern Iraqi nation state. As outlined in Chapter 2, this decline can mainly be attributed to structural developments, changing institutions, and the demise of establishments of Sufism. The consequences of these developments

could be detected Iraq-wide throughout the specified period of time. These included: the loss of the former Ottoman state support and, thereby, privileged social and political status; the gradual disappearance of Sufis from leading political positions during the 1920s and 1930s; the threat of rising communist forces, whose attacks caused a (temporary) exodus of many Kurdish Sufi shaykhs in the late 1950s; the loss of the prestigious and representative institution of the *niqābat al-ashrāf* in 1962; the decay and demolition of important spiritual centres in the course of modernisation projects; and dropping student numbers in religious schools, the threat of their closure and their subordination to the secular Ministry of Education. Finally, the case of shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī's family has demonstrated how the members of the leading Rifā'ī clan in Iraq began to pursue secular careers in the state and the military, abandoning their former *ṭarīqa*-Sufism. In the early 1970s, Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī complained in his books about the widespread ignorance of Iraq's Sufi saints among the population: the twentieth century undoubtedly brought about a decline of prestige, status, influence, and popularity for Iraq's Sufis. It certainly forced them to seek new areas of influence in a changing modern society. As the historic investigation has shown and as will be summarised in the following pages, such new areas have gradually emerged under the Ba'ṭh rule from the 1980s onwards.

2) The Ba'ṭh Regime's Incorporation of Sufism and the Sufis into Politics and its Official Revival of Sufism

The Ba'ṭh regime's support of Sufism was a gradual process which steadily increased between 1968 and 2003. It began with strong material support for Kurdish Sufis in the north during the 1970s, then the additional incorporation of Sufis, Sufi institutions and traditions into the religious war propaganda during the 1980s, and culminated with the official revival of Sufism during the Faith Campaign in the 1990s. The political interest in Sufism itself developed, notably, in this latter period, but only among a certain group of the leadership clearly dominated by 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī. Previous scholarship has entirely overlooked this development due to its strong focus on Ba'ṭh-Shī'a relations and researchers' neglect of Sunnī Islam in Iraq. Recent studies deal with the regime's moulding and propagation of its own Ba'ṭhist Islam from the 1980s onwards, yet in a rather vague and abstract way without sufficiently reflecting the specific Iraqi context. The contribution of this thesis complements previous approaches and

demonstrates that plans to mould a Ba‘th-aligned Islam had commenced as early as 1976 and that Sufism was gradually incorporated as a central part of it.

As explained in Chapter 3, the Ba‘th regime was not particularly interested in Sufism as such during the 1970s, but pursued its secular policies directed against the influence of all oppositional religious forces in Iraq, including that of Sufis. Consolidating its political power, the regime soon clashed with an Islamist opposition and strove to nationalise and control Iraq’s religious landscape through repression and coercion. As a consequence, prominent Sufi representatives, too, were removed from the cabinet and others lost their lives due to their opposition. Only Sufi clans in the Kurdish north received increasing material subsidies in exchange for their loyalty in the conflict between Baghdad and Kurdish separatists led by Bārzanī and Ṭālabānī. These Sufi clans, in turn, entered long-term political alliances with the Ba‘th, made careers in the state service, and even formed armed militias as part of the National Defense Battalions. Furthermore, this policy in particular constituted a continuation of a political practice that had already begun under the Ottomans with the Ḥamīdīya regiments.

In the 1980s, as outlined in Chapter 4, the Ba‘th regime began an unprecedented religious propaganda campaign in answer to Ayatollah Khomeynī’s Islamist rhetoric during the Iran-Iraq War and the Islamist uprising within Iraq. This propaganda and further religious policies heavily employed Sufis, Sufi institutions and traditions, with the result that they gradually rose to prominence in the public sphere. This was not an Iraq-specific move and, in fact, was not dissimilar to Syria, where the Asad regime formed alliances at this time with loyal Sufi shaykhs after the violent crackdown on the Islamist uprising in the early 1980s. In Iraq, Sufi shaykhs and scholars stepped out from the shadows of their previous marginalisation into the spotlight of war propaganda and gained increasing publicity. Many of them occupied leading positions in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and Religious Affairs and headed the Committees for the Raising of Religious Awareness. From 1985, the Ba‘th regime recruited particularly loyal Sufi scholars to leading teaching positions in its newly founded institutes for higher religious education and tasked them with the moulding of ‘a new and modern man of religion.’ Moreover, the state began restoring shrines and mosques all over Iraq to an unparalleled extent. The previous decay of Sufi shrines and *takāyā*, particularly in the Arab regions, was turned into a full renaissance of Iraq’s architectural Sufi heritage. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn himself made his descent from ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn an

essential element of the religious war propaganda, and this was also crucial to his approaching the Shīʿa community, and notably based this on a Rifāʿī Sufi genealogy. Finally, state patronage of Kurdish Sufi clans further increased during the Iran-Iraq War.

Chapter 5 analysed the National Faith Campaign beginning in 1993. During this campaign, the regime fully reverted to the active spread of its own Baʿth-aligned Islam through all strata of society, including the Baʿth Party itself. Vice-chairman of the RCC, ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī revealed, for the first time, his Sufi identity in the public media, praised the Sufi shaykhs in his speeches, and publicly toured Sufi shrines. At the same time, the Baʿth created additional institutions for religious education and again recruited the above-mentioned Sufi scholars into leading positions. The first of these institutions was the Ṣaddām University for Islamic Studies where they organised annual seminars, together with ʿIzzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, to encourage the study of a *sharīʿa*-minded Sufism as the true form of Islam in Iraq. These seminars promoted the idea that Baghdad should re-emerge as the global capital of Sufism. Other institutions included the Higher Institutes for the Study of the Blessed Quran and the Esteemed Sunna where Sufi scholars taught Baʿth Party members the Quran and the Prophetic Traditions. The restoration of Sufi shrines and *takāyā* increased further and the state additionally promoted saint veneration and shrine visitations, which are popular practices among Sufis and Shīʿīs and closely tied to national religious identity as distinct from Wahhābism and Salafism. In 2001, the Baʿth even attempted to revive its own version of the *niqābat al-ashrāf* with the aim of assigning Iraq’s *al-sāda al-ashrāf* a new leading role in society. Looking at the history of Iraq, all these policies bear a strong resemblance to Ottoman state patronage of Sufism and contributed to a reversal of the previously identified decline which took place until the 1960s. I will now summarise the reasons underlying the Baʿth regime’s turn towards Sufism.

3) Reasons for the Baʿth Regime’s Promotion of Sufis and the Ultimate Revival of Sufism

Many of the key factors I found for the Baʿth’s promotion of Sufis and Sufism are the same as those which political science research (for instance Werenfels) classifies as regime top-down revival efforts of Sufis in Middle Eastern and North African countries. In summary, these include the emergence of Islamist mass movements in

the 1970s and 1980s, legitimization of policies, demobilisation of social and political oppositional actors, identity politics, national unity and reconciliation, and the provision of state services.

In Iraq, state support of Kurdish Sufis since the 1970s had been a purely tactical move to buy loyalty. The regime sought to divide the Kurdish opposition by recruiting loyal tribes and orders as partners against the nationalist separatists. This policy was not aimed specifically at Sufis but many of these Kurdish clans did in fact practise Sufism and their *takāyā* benefitted henceforward from this alliance. The religious war propaganda during the 1980s was merely intended to improve the Ba‘th’s religious image and to counter Iran’s Islamist rhetoric. Here too Sufism itself was not the main focus, but many Sufis were co-opted as trusted and loyal supporters of this campaign. Additionally, the allied Kurdish Sufi clans, with their orders, provided important networks reaching into Iran and many supported the Iraqi army with their paramilitary forces during the war. The top-down revival of Sufism only became a priority in the 1990s. Then, the regime aimed to field it as an educational tool against the perceived moral decay in Iraq’s crisis-ridden society, as a national Islam to stand against the spread of radical Wahhābism and Salafism, and to counteract sectarianism. Thus, the Iraqi Ba‘th’s policies correspond largely with those of other regimes in the same periods.

The spread of radical Islamism at a grassroots level gained momentum in many MENA countries during the 1990s, as for instance in Syria and even Saudi Arabia. In Syria, according to Thomas Pierret (2013), official policies to suppress it resulted less from security concerns within the regime than from pressure from the established religious scholars themselves. The Syrian Ba‘th regime only began visible promotion of Sufism against radical Wahhābism and Salafism after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in 2001. Interestingly, even the Saudi regime tolerated a certain Sufi revival as competition for radical Islamism in the heartland of Wahhābism during the 1990s (Lacroix, 2011). In contrast to the latter two cases, the growing Islamism or ‘Wahhābism’ posed a much greater threat to Iraq’s regime and society, which was suffering under extreme hardships. Moreover, the Iraqi leadership was much more closely entangled with the Sufis and articulated its support of Sufism more directly than the ‘Alawite-dominated Syrian Ba‘th or the generally anti-Sufi regime in Saudi Arabia.

A further important reason for state promotion of Sufism identified in this study was its political role in overcoming sectarian and ethnic boundaries. This aspect has not yet received sufficient scholarly attention. In the Iraqi context, ecumenical Sufi rapprochements with the Shī'a gained increasing salience and surfaced continuously under Ba'thist rule. This was fully in line with the Ba'thist aim to mould an ecumenical Sunnī-Shī'ī Arab Islam. Research has largely overlooked Fred De Jong's suggestion (1985) that Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's claim to have descended from the Shī'ī Imams was founded on a Rifā'ī genealogy. This study has demonstrated that the Sufi and genealogical tradition of the Rifā'īya and its closeness to the Shī'a provided the perfect basis for this political, ecumenical move. The Ba'thist media never mentioned the Rifā'ī link but Sufis authenticated it in the early 1970s and the growing *nasab*-literature in the 1980s and 1990s advertised it prominently. In the 1990s, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī praised Imam 'Alī in front of a Shī'a audience in Sufi terms, highlighting the shared veneration of the *ahl al-bayt*. Sufis themselves showed ecumenical engagement in two directions. Fayḍī al-Fayḍī's project of a Salafi Sufism was intended to overcome sectarian tensions with Wahhābis and Salafis, whereas Yūnus Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī advocated a sharīfian unity in Iraq among Arab, Kurdish, Sunnī, and Shī'ī *sāda*, with a strong emphasis on Sufi clans. Finally, the Kasnazānīya is a paramount example of how a Sufi order successfully attracted Shī'īs in Iraq.

Another point explored in this study is that as well as strategic considerations, personal relations, networks and religious preferences of leading political figures played an influential role as well. The personal Sufi links of leading politicians over the past decades have mainly been explored in the Maghreb states such as Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Research on Iraq, by contrast, has almost entirely concentrated on Ṣaddām Ḥusayn alone and portrayed the Ba'th's secularism as if party members had mostly been atheists without any link to religion at all. The focus on several other leading Ba'thists and their Sufi religiosity and Sufi backgrounds in this study has illustrated that they, too, influenced state policies in their own way. As early as the 1970s, several leading Sunnī Ba'thists had close links – and in some instances family relations too – to Sufi scholars and shaykhs in central Iraq and in Kurdistan. The most prominent, 'Izzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī, had been an adherent of shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Kasnazānī in Kirkūk since his youth and knew the Sufi networks in Kurdistan well. His personal Sufi ambitions seem to have influenced the regime's official revival of Sufism in the 1990s strongly. Many of the Sufi scholars the Ba'th recruited also shared

the same regional and tribal origin with leading Ba‘thists, reflecting a decisive role of kinship relations at this level. ‘Izzat Ibrāhīm’s Mawāshiṭ tribe and Minister ‘Abd Allāh Fāḍil’s al-Bū ‘Abbās figured quite prominently here. Thus, with the regime’s increasing usage of Islam in politics, the Ba‘th leaders turned to religious Sufi circles which were familiar to them and which reflected their own societal, regional, and tribal background. The spiritual activities of these circles, in turn, expanded their influence to even more members of the state elite as Sufi *dhikr* gatherings and rituals gained growing popularity among the presidential clan, members of the military, and the security services. My interviewees from among the Ba‘th’s senior cadre also reported that they developed close relationships with their Sufi teachers during the official Quran courses and in their own way became attracted to Sufi religiosity.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I asked what a leading Ba‘thist politician might have to do with Sufism and why a Ba‘thist insurgency group would choose a Naqshbandī Sufi label. The Ba‘thist revival of Sufism I have scrutinised, and along with it the close involvement of the regime with Sufi circles, makes this phenomenon easier to comprehend. Apparently, Sufism gained such a strong influence among a section of the Ba‘th cadres, the military, and security services, that they chose the Naqshbandī label for their resistance in post-2003 Iraq. This leads to the next question about the nature of the Ba‘th regime’s religious evolution.

4) Did the Ba‘th regime become Islamist?

The results of this thesis suggest that it did not. It heavily instrumentalised Islam for political ends, but maintained at its core a secular outlook until 2003 and beyond. The Ninth Regional Party Congress in 1982, analysed in 4.1.1, makes this clear. By then, four leading party members had attracted suspicion by virtue of their Sufi religiosity and their frequenting of *takāyā*. At a time when the regime had to cope with an Islamist uprising and the war against Iran, the leadership deemed any religiosity within the party as unacceptable and purged these four Ba‘thists. The congress resolutions, which clearly articulated a refutation of any intermingling of religion and politics, were made public afterwards. They remained a standard text in the curricula for the education of imams from 1985 onwards, as well as for the Quran courses for Ba‘th Party members during the 1990s. Additionally, the Ba‘th’s heavy reliance on and promotion of Sufis and Sufism has shown that its religious policies had nothing to do with the

establishment of an Islamic state and the barbaric ideology of IS. In my view, drawing a direct association between the spread of Sunnī Islamic education in Iraqi society and a susceptibility of Iraqi Sunnīs to al-Qāʿida and IS is a gross mistake and utterly misleading. On the contrary, the regime's employment of Sufis and its revival of Sufism was aimed explicitly against radical Islamism. This, is not to say that Sufis were not militant or that they refrained from *jihād*. The Kurdish Sufi militias, the *jihād*-rhetoric of Fayḍī al-Fayḍī, and the founding of JRTN in 2006 are cases in point, but this militancy is still far removed from the ideology and atrocities of IS which notably destroyed many Baʿth-restored Sufi shrines in 2014 and 2015. The Baʿth regime clearly fuelled the general resurgence of Islam in Iraq during the 1980s and 1990s, but its aim was to direct the course of this resurgence in the opposite direction to a radical Islamism or terrorism. However, this study has aimed not only to look at the state perspective, but also to consider the Sufi side, which shall now be addressed.

5) The Baʿthist Revival of Sufism and the New Opportunities for Sufis

The study of the Sufi revival under the Baʿth has aimed to highlight that Sufi culture encompasses more than the Sufi orders in this country. In Baʿthist Iraq, not only certain orders but also certain Sufi scholars, Sufi shrines and *takāyā*, Sufi genealogies (*ansāb*), as well as ecumenical rapprochements between Sufis and the Shīʿa in rituals and traditions gained increasing salience and prominence in society. In this respect, the 1990s in particular brought a resurgence of Sufism. However, this development should not be represented in an entirely positive light, as it was constantly overshadowed by the regime's repression and coercion. Further research is needed to ascertain more clearly how Baʿthist politics altered the power structures within Iraq's Sufi landscape by supporting certain Sufi shaykhs and suppressing the activities of others. The analysis of Baʿthist repression during the 1970s and 1980s in this thesis made clear that Sufis whom the regime considered as a threat to its rule were removed from influential positions. In extreme cases, the regime even assassinated oppositional Sufis such as ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Badrī in 1969 or Nāẓim al-ʿĀṣī in 1983. This makes an evaluation of the Baʿth's recruitment of Sufis and the Sufi support of the regime difficult. So, was the Sufi support mere compulsion, compliance, or at times true conviction?

Certainly, this question must be clarified in each individual case on the basis of more information, but we can deduce a general pattern from the findings in this dissertation. While the Ba‘th sought to form strategic alliances with loyal Sufis in a top-down approach, many Sufis, in turn, actively sought to form strategic alliances with the regime in order to pursue their own bottom-up interests. Kurdish Sufi support for the Ba‘th against Bārzānī was also a result of inner-Kurdish tribal rivalries. Influential Kurdish Sufi and tribal clans which sided with Baghdad often did not acknowledge the supremacy of the rival Bārzānī clan and aimed to enhance their own position. The alliances with Baghdad made them important mediators for the distribution of power and resources between the people and the state. Other Sufi shaykhs in neighbouring states suffered from political persecution, but found a safe haven in Baghdad and could establish new centres for their activities there. Sufi scholars, too, made successful careers within Ba‘th institutions and in this way gained prestige, influence, popularity, and certain privileges. The rise of the Kasnazānīya, with the help of state patronage, to the most influential Sufi order in Iraq is a prime example for how state support could serve the spiritual aims of an order. Yet, to explain its success through state support alone would be too simplistic, but the long-time alliance and active political engagement of Kasnazānī members contributed to it heavily. The Ba‘th regime’s targeted revival of Sufism brought with it new opportunities which were seized by many Sufis in order to actively pursue their own spiritual and social interests in Iraq and navigate through processes of change.

7. Appendices

7.1. The Naqshbandīya Networks in the Arab-Dominated Regions of Iraq

In the Arab-dominated regions of Iraq, many Naqshbandī shaykhs trace their spiritual lineage back to the Sirāj al-Dīn clan.¹²⁸⁴ Their networks were initially established by ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn I and they are still active today:

One of ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn I’s deputies was Abū Bakr Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Harshamī al-Naqshbandī (d. 1911), whose descendants became the most influential Naqshbandī shaykhs in northern and central Iraq. He had studied under shaykh ‘Uthmān in Ṭawīla and returned as religious scholar and spiritual guide of the Naqshbandīya to his home village Harsham in Arbīl province. Later on, he moved with his son to Arbīl city to teach and spiritually guide in the ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Ziyārī mosque – also known as shaykh Abū Bakr al-Naqshbandī mosque. His son Muṣṭafā (1888-1986) studied religious sciences and Sufism under his father and received the general scholarly permission to teach and to spiritually guide on the Naqshbandī path around 1908. He continued the tradition of their family’s religious school in the mosque and became a popular scholar and Sufi shaykh in Iraq. He only gave two full permissions for spiritual guidance (*irshād*), one to a Turkish scholar and the other to his son and successor, ‘Abd Allāh b. Muṣṭafā al-Naqshbandī (1924-2000). Shaykh Muṣṭafā also gave partial permissions for the Naqshbandī path, for instance to the following shaykhs:

- Shaykh ‘Abbās Fāḍil ‘Alī al-Sāmarrā’ī (b. 1951) is a graduate of the religious school (*al-madrasa al-‘ilmīya al-dīnīya*) in Sāmarrā’ of shaykh Aḥmad Muḥammad Amīn al-Rāwī and received his scholarly and spiritual permissions from shaykh Muṣṭafā b. Abū Bakr respectively in 1978 and in 1980. He established one of the first Naqshbandī *takāyā* in Sāmarrā’ in the 1980s. In 1991, he became additionally a full deputy (*khalīfa*) of shaykh ‘Abd Allāh b. Muṣṭafā.¹²⁸⁵

¹²⁸⁴ I only focus on the network of the Sirāj al-Dīn shaykhs and only on the small part that could be reconstructed from the sources. There were and still are also other networks of further deputies of shaykh Khālīd al-Naqshbandī in the Arab regions. A descendant of Khālīd, Najm al-Dīn Afandī passed on the order to Dāwūd b. Sulaymān al-Naqshbandī whose descendants, too, became Naqshbandī shaykhs (Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 187–89; Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 2:310–12). A deputy of Khālīd in Dūr was Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Suwaydī (b. 1766). From among Muḥammad’s family, Muḥammad Amīn al-Suwaydī (b. 1786), his son Mullā Nu‘mān al-Suwaydī (d. 1882), and his grandson Yūsuf al-Suwaydī also kept the Naqshbandī tradition (Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh al-Dūr*, 67–69, 73–74). For Yūsuf’s role in the Rifā‘īya and the 1920 revolt, see Eich, ‘Patterns of the 1920 Rising’.

¹²⁸⁵ Ḥasanī, ‘al-Sīra al-dhātīya li-ḥaḍrat al-shaykh ‘Abbās Fāḍil’.

- Shaykh ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Rāwī al-Naqshbandī received also a partial permission from shaykh Muṣṭafā b. Abū Bakr and founded his own branch of the Naqshbandīya. He and his deputy ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Nu‘aymī reportedly met for the *dhikr* in the ‘Assāf mosque in Baghdad’s A‘zamīya quarter. A second deputy of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, Mūsā Āl Yāsīn Āl ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Ḥusaynī established the second Naqshbandī *takīya* in Sāmarrā’ in the 1980s.¹²⁸⁶
- Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wudūd al-Mashhadānī (b. 1927) hailed originally from ‘Amāra in southern Mīsān province and worked as imam and preacher (*khaṭīb*) in Baghdad’s Dahhān, Madanī, and Mudallil mosques in 1951. He joined the Naqshbandīya of shaykh Muṣṭafā b. Abū Bakr and of Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn II.¹²⁸⁷
- Shaykh Khalīl b. Muḥammad al-Fayāḍ al-Kubaysī was a novice of shaykh Muṣṭafā b. Abū Bakr and was known as religious scholar and Naqshbandī Sufi in Ramādī. He stood in the scholarly Sufi tradition of the religious school in Sāmarrā’ as a former student of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālīm al-Sāmarrā’ī who had founded his own school in Fallūja. Later on, Khalīl al-Fayāḍ himself headed the Fallūja school and the religious school in Rāwa.¹²⁸⁸
- ‘Abd Allāh b. Muṣṭafā al-Naqshbandī studied under his father Quran, *sunna*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), *ḥadīth*, and interpretation of the Quran (*tafsīr*). In 1948, he went to Cairo to study law at the Azhar University for several years. After a short stay back in Iraq, he wrote his doctoral thesis in the same field in London between 1953 and 1959. Later on, he worked for the royal ceremonial office (*dīwān al-tashrīfāt al-malakīya*), as director of general finance (*mudīr li-l-mālīya al-‘amma*) in 1959, as inspector of general bookkeeping (*murāqib li-l-ḥisābāt al-‘amma*) in 1963, and as minister of finance (*wazīr li-l-mālīya*) in 1965. When the Ba‘th Party came to power in 1968, he served for a very short period as minister of economy (*wazīr li-l-iqtisād*). Between 1968 and 1969, he founded and headed Iraq’s first Supreme Accounting Institute (*ma‘had al-muḥāsaba al-‘ālī*) as part of the Office of Financial Control (*dīwān al-raqāba al-mālīya*). Additionally, he

¹²⁸⁶ Muḥīy al-Dīn, ‘Mashāyikh al-Naqshbandīya’; Badrī al-Ḥusaynī, ‘al-Takāyā wa-l-ṭuruq’, 138.

¹²⁸⁷ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 463.

¹²⁸⁸ Muḥīy al-Dīn, ‘Mashāyikh al-Naqshbandīya’; ‘Ba‘dan min al-ṣura al-takfīriya li-l-Fallūja’; ‘al-Shaykh Khalīl al-Fayāḍ’. His positions in the mentioned schools were mentioned in an interview with ‘Iṣām al-Rāwī, 11.05.2016.

taught law and accounting at Baghdad and al-Mustanşiriya Universities until 1976. Upon his retirement in 1977, he relocated with part of his family to Europe inter alia for medical treatment. In 1996, he finally returned to Arbīl for the spiritual guidance of his novices (*murīdīn*) and followers (*attibā'*) in his father's mosque until his death in 2000.¹²⁸⁹ During his lifetime, shaykh 'Abd Allāh b. Muṣṭafā gave six full permissions for guidance in the Naqshbandīya:

- Two of them received his sons Fā'iq and Muḥammad, both of whom became physicians. Shaykh and Dr. Fā'iq b. 'Abd Allāh al-Harshamī is nowadays the most influential Naqshbandī shaykh of the family.
- Shaykh Muḥammad al-Turjānī, a religious scholar in Arbīl.
- Shaykh Ḥamad al-Zawbī'ī.
- Shaykh Ṭāriq al-Sāmarrā'ī worked as imam and Friday preacher (*khaṭīb*) in the Ma'rūf al-Karkhī mosque in Baghdad.¹²⁹⁰
- Shaykh Sa'd Allāh Aḥmad 'Arif al-Barzinjī (b. 1956) was a student of religious sciences under the Naqshbandī scholar 'Abd al-Karīm al-Dabbān al-Tikrītī and since 1978 worked as imam and preacher (*khaṭīb*) in Baghdad, in the administration of the Ma'rūf al-Karkhī mosque, as well as in the Sunnī Imām al-A'ẓam Faculty. After 2003, he emigrated to Jordan, Abū Ḥabī, and Baḥrayn.¹²⁹¹

The Deputies of Shaykh 'Umar Ḍiyā' al-Dīn from Biyāra:

- Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Naqshbandī (1860-1920) traced back three initiating lineages to shaykh Khālīd al-Shahrazūrī, the first via Dāwūd b. Sulaymān al-Nashbandī and Najm al-Dīn Afandī, the second via Aḥmad al-Siyāḥ to Khālīd's deputy Aḥmad Khāṭīb al-Arbalī, and the third with a full permission to 'Umar Ḍiyā' al-Dīn. He was the most famous Arab Naqshbandī shaykh of his time and became the first teacher (*mudarris*) at the Sāmarrā' school in 1889 where he offered daily lectures on jurisprudence (*fiqh*), sermons, spiritual guidance (*irshād*), *dhikr* and *awrād* (private and silent worship) performances at night. In 1898, he moved to Baghdad to teach at the Imam al-A'ẓam mosque

¹²⁸⁹ Ṣāliḥ, *al-Duktūr 'Abdallāh Muṣṭafā*, 5–18.

¹²⁹⁰ Muḥīy al-Dīn, 'Mashāyikh al-Naqshbandīya'.

¹²⁹¹ Barzinjī, 'al-Shaykh al-Duktūr Sa'd Allāh'.

and became shaykh and spiritual guide at the Khālīdīya *takīya* in 1914.¹²⁹² His son, Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī (1896-1949) succeeded him as teacher at the Imam al-A'ẓam mosque. The latter received his religious education from his father and studied history in France. He was again succeeded as religious teacher by his son Sa'īd. It is not mentioned if both became Sufi shaykhs as well.¹²⁹³

- Qāsim al-Qaysī (1876-1955) became a deputy of 'Umar Ḍiyā' al-Dīn in Biyāra in 1896. He had received his religious education at the Kīlānīya and worked throughout his life as teacher and *muftī* in Khānaqayn and Ṣuwayra. After several posts in the scholarly councils in the Ministry of *Awqāf* and the court of cassation until 1928, he finally became grand *muftī* of Baghdad and teacher in the religious school of the Kīlānīya.¹²⁹⁴

The Deputies of Shaykh Muḥammad 'Alā' al-Dīn from Biyāra:

- Muḥammad 'Umar al-'Izzī al-Naqshbandī (b. 1917/21) hailed from a scholarly Sufi family of al-Bū Najm tribe near Kirkūk. His father Aḥmad relocated to the Syrian town Dayr al-Zūr and successfully established a *takīya* of the Naqshbandīya and the Qādirīya. Muḥammad 'Umar al-'Izzī initially studied under his father and moved for a further religious education under teachers like Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris, Mullā Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī or 'Abd al-Qādir al-Muhājirī to Biyāra until 1938. Shaykh Muḥammad 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī initiated him to the Naqshbandīya and Qādirīya. In 1939, he returned to Dayr al-Zūr as teacher (*mudarris*), imam, and preacher (*khaṭīb*) in the *takīya* and mosque of his father. In 1942 followed his appointment as *muftī* of al-Bū Kamāl, and in 1954 a position as *muftī* of Ḥasaka and Dayr al-Zūr provinces. One year later, he settled down in Dayr al-Zūr and made a quite successful religious and political career. By the 1940s, he supported the Syrian independence movement within the army and entered the Syrian parliament representing Dayr al-Zūr in 1970. Time and again, he clashed with the authorities which led to his imprisonment under Ḥusnī al-Za'īm in 1949 and

¹²⁹² Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Sāmarrā'*, 46–53; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 210–11.

¹²⁹³ A'ẓamī, *Tārīkh jāmi' al-Imām al-A'ẓam*, 1964, 1:101–2.

¹²⁹⁴ Suhrawardī, *Lubb al-albāb*, 1933, 2:312–25; Sāmarrā'ī, *Tā'rīkh 'ulamā' Baghdād*, 544–45.

his final emigration from Syria to Baghdad during Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad's crack down of the Sunnī Islamist opposition of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1980.¹²⁹⁵

- Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris (1901-2005) hailed from the Kurdish district of Ḥalabja and visited the religious school in the Muḥammad Amīn al-Qārah Dāghī mosque in Sulaymānīya. He studied under several Kurdish shaykhs in Barzanja, Abī ‘Ubayda and Ṭawīla where he lived in the *khānqāh* of shaykh ‘Alī Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī and continued his education afterwards in several religious Sufi schools. Among them were the school of Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn b. ‘Umar Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī in Biyāra, the school of Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Naqshbandī in Abī ‘Ubayda, and the school of shaykh ‘Umar Muḥammad Amīn al-Qārah Dāghī in the Mawlānā Khālīd *khānqāh* in Sulaymānīya. After several teaching posts in religious schools in Sulaymānīya and Ḥalabja district, shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī ordered him to teach in his Naqshbandī school in 1927. There he served as teacher and preacher until he relocated for further teaching posts to Sulaymānīya in 1951, to Kirkūk as teacher in the Ṭālabānī *takīya* in 1954, and to Baghdad where he became imam and preacher in the Aḥmadī mosque and teacher in the Kīlānīya school in 1960. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm officially retired in 1973 but kept on teaching in the Kīlānīya until his death in 2005. Throughout his life, he remained a follower of the Qādirīya and Naqshbandīya in the tradition of shaykh Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn from Biyāra.¹²⁹⁶

¹²⁹⁵ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 497–99; Sāmarrā’ī, *Majālis Baghdād*, 98–100; ‘Izzī al-A‘rajī, ‘al-Sayyid al-shaykh Muḥammad ‘Umar’.

¹²⁹⁶ Sāmarrā’ī, *Tā’rīkh ‘ulamā’ Baghdād*, 442–45.

7.2. Summaries

7.2.1. *English Summary*

This study probes into the relationship between the state and Sufism in Iraq under the Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party from 1968 to 2003. It investigates the gradual evolution of secular Ba‘thist politics, from a stricter separation of religion and politics towards the increasing political incorporation of Islam with a strong and direct patronage of Sufism and Sufis in Iraq. On the basis of sources ranging from Iraqi daily newspapers, party publications, laws, biographies, *ansāb* literature, Sufi publications, and qualitative expert interviews, the thesis discovers how the Ba‘th regime incorporated Sufism and the Sufis into its policies and how, in this way, it contributed to a revival of Sufism in the country. This is accomplished through a twofold approach, firstly, concentrating on a close, diachronic investigation of Ba‘th religious politics, and secondly, focussing on the history of Sufism before and under the Ba‘thist policies, both in the Arab and the Kurdish regions. First of all, I argue that the social and political transformations in Iraq between the Ottoman era of the late nineteenth century and the 1960s brought about a considerable decline of Sufism through the loss of status, influence, and popularity for Iraq’s Sufis, and the demise of Sufi institutions. Afterwards, the analysis of Ba‘thist politics shows how the state gradually contributed to the reversal of the previous decline: this began with strong material support for Kurdish Sufis in the north during the 1970s, then the nationwide support for Sufis, Sufi institutions and traditions and their incorporation into the religious propaganda during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, and culminated with the official revival of Sufism during the Faith Campaign in the 1990s. Despite the Ba‘th’s intensive usage of Islam in politics, this thesis argues that the regime did not become Islamist. On the contrary, it deliberately promoted Sufism as an educational tool against the perceived moral decay in Iraq’s crisis-ridden society, as a national Islam to stand against the spread of radical Wahhābism and Salafism, and to counteract sectarianism during the 1990s. While the Ba‘th sought to form strategic alliances with loyal Sufis in a top-down approach, many Sufis, in turn, actively sought to form strategic alliances with the regime in order to pursue their own bottom-up interests. In spite of the Ba‘th regime’s severe repression, its targeted revival of Sufism brought with it new opportunities which were seized by many Sufis in order to actively pursue their own spiritual and social interests in Iraq and navigate through processes of change.

7.2.2. *German Summary*

Diese Studie erforscht das Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Sufismus im Irak unter der Arabischen Sozialistischen Ba‘th-Partei von 1968 bis 2003. Untersucht wird die schrittweise Entwicklung der säkularen Ba‘th-Politik von der strikten Trennung von Religion und Politik hin zur politischen Einbindung des Islam mit starker Unterstützung von Sufismus und Sufis im Irak. Basierend auf der Analyse von irakischen Tageszeitungen, Parteiveröffentlichungen, Gesetzen, Biographien, *ansāb*-Literatur, Sufipublikationen, und qualitativen Experteninterviews, erforscht die Arbeit, wie das Ba‘th-Regime Sufismus und Sufis in seine Politik integrierte und so zu einem Wiederaufleben des Sufismus im Land beitrug. Die Analyse folgt hierbei einem zweifachen Ansatz, der erstens auf eine diachrone Untersuchung von ba‘thistischer Religionspolitik fokussiert und zweitens auf die Geschichte des Sufismus vor und unter der Ba‘th-Herrschaft in den arabisch und kurdisch dominierten Regionen. Es wird zunächst argumentiert, dass die sozialen und politischen Transformationsprozesse im Irak zwischen der osmanischen Ära des späten neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und den 1960er Jahren einen beachtlichen Niedergang des Sufismus zur Folge hatten. Dieser Niedergang äußerte sich vor allem im Verlust von Status, Einfluss, und Popularität vieler Sufis im Irak, sowie durch den Niedergang und Verlust von Sufi-Institutionen. Die anschließende Analyse der Ba‘th-Politik zeigt, wie der Staat schrittweise zu einer Umkehrung dieses Niedergangsprozesses beitrug: Dies begann mit starker materieller Unterstützung für kurdische Sufis im Norden während der 1970er Jahre, gefolgt von der landesweiten Unterstützung von Sufis, ihren Institutionen und Traditionen, und deren Einbindung in die religiöse Propaganda während des Iran-Irak Krieges in den 1980ern, und gipfelte in der offiziellen Wiederbelebung des Sufismus während der staatlichen Glaubenskampagne der 1990er Jahre. Die Studie argumentiert, dass das Ba‘th-Regime, trotz des intensiven politischen Gebrauchs von Islam, selbst nicht islamistisch wurde. Im Gegenteil förderte das Regime während der 1990er vielmehr gezielt den Sufismus als moderates Erziehungsmittel gegen den wahrgenommenen moralischen Verfall der krisengeschüttelten irakischen Gesellschaft, als nationalen Islam gegen die Verbreitung von radikalem Wahhabismus und Salafismus, sowie als Gegenkraft gegen die konfessionelle und ethnische Spaltung der Nation. Während die Ba‘th danach strebte für ihre politischen Zwecke strategische Allianzen mit loyalen Sufis zu bilden, suchten viele Sufis wiederum für ihre eigenen Interessen und Ziele aktiv strategische

Allianzen mit dem Regime. Trotz der schweren Repression durch den Staat brachte die gezielte Wiederbelebung des Sufismus so neue Möglichkeiten und Spielräume, die viele Sufis aktiv nutzten, um ihre eigenen spirituellen und sozialen Interessen zu verfolgen und erfolgreich durch Prozesse des Wandels hindurch zu navigieren.

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