



Lauder School
of Government,
Diplomacy & Strategy



The Ninth Annual
**Herzliya
Conference**
on the Balance of Israel's
National Security and Resilience

— *POLICY, STATECRAFT AND LEADERSHIP FOR TRYING TIMES* —

February 2-4, 2009

WORKING PAPER

Aspects of Modern Polemics
Between Neo-Wahhabis and
Post-Khomeinist Shiites

The Sunni-Shiite Rift

- First Draft -

Name of Author: **Isaac Hasson**

Project Leader: **Shmuel Bar**

Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya
Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy
Institute for Policy and Strategy

A. Background

Introduction

The subject we intend to deal with in this article requires that we delimit with the utmost precision the period we cover and the concepts we use; this delimitation is most important if we want to avoid many possible misunderstandings. As far as concepts are concerned, one is entitled to ask, for instance, to what extent is a Shiite living today identical to a Shiite who lived in the third and fourth centuries after the Hijra / ninth and tenth centuries A.D.? What is more, can we compare a present-day Shiite to one who lived at any time prior to the Iranian Revolution of 1979?

Similarly, in this article use will be made of a concept hitherto unused: Neo-Wahhabism. To what extent does this term reflect an exact and authentic appraisal of the facts? The various aspects raised by these questions will be discussed in the following two sections.

The revolution mounted in Iran in February 1979 by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini¹ (1902-1989) was an unprecedented success in bringing about the ouster of the Pahlavi Dynasty and the establishment of an Islamic republic. His repeated declarations and those of his followers regarding their desire to export the revolution to all the "downtrodden peoples" (*Al-Mustad'afun*) throughout the world in general and the Islamic world in particular² were to serve as an example and model for an Islamic regime led by the *'ulama* (religious sages). There was a Shiite awakening in those countries whose rulers did not allow them proper representation in government (Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates) and certain groups in neighboring countries expressed enthusiasm and admiration for Khomeini and his actions. Together with local internal reasons, this led to mounting fears among the governments of these countries that similar attempts might be made to topple them and have their countries taken over by Islamic regimes like that in Iran. Every government took the steps it deemed necessary to arrest the Khomeini influence at home. One such step not requiring expensive material means or unpopular actions was to revive the anti-Shiite controversy which flourished during certain periods in the Middle Ages and which seemed to be on the verge of decline and disappearance during the latter half of the twentieth century.³ The *'ulama* of the various Wahhabi sects rose to the Shiite-Iranian challenge. Hatred and fear of the Shi'a led to the merging of factions hostile to each other. Another group which participated in the offensive against the Shi'a was made up of the Iraqi *'ulama* under the orders of former Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein, who launched a bloody eight year war against Iran (1980-1988). Sunni reactions were not uniform: the Wahhabis, or as they prefer to be referred these days: Salafis (a term with a more positive connotation), lent more towards venting their view of the major part of the Shiite faith as meaningless, relying on the rulings of leading Sunni *'ulama*. These arguments crystallized in time and became second nature, accusing the Shiites of being too close to Judaism given that "their religion" was created by the Jews⁴ or the Zoroastrians (*Majus* in Arabic), the adherents of the religion which ruled Iran before and during the Muslim conquest. The Iraqi *'ulama* used some of the Wahhabi arguments and added new elements in giving the Iraqi campaign against the young Islamic republic the title *Qadisiyyat Saddam*. They preferred this title because *Al-Qadisiyya* battle of the year 637 was etched in the Muslim-Arab conscience as the decisive battle that led to the collapse of the Iranian Sasanid.⁵ This empire had ruled over what we call today Iraq and Iran and had augmented its reign in the years 601-629 to include parts of Greater Syria (i.e. Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Jordan). The same Iraqi clergymen did not suffice with these sectarian-religious arguments; they rather placed emphasis on the ancient ethnic-cultural argument which stemmed from the Arab controversy against the Persian Shu'ubiyya movement of the second and third centuries after the Hijra / the eighth and ninth centuries A.D.⁶ They stressed that Khomeinism was in fact the awakening of the Shu'ubiyya movement, or the revival of Persian nationalism, hostile to

* The section dealing with the Shi'a in the eyes of the Neo-Wahhabites has been published in French in *Arabica* LIII/3 (2006), pp. 299-330, under the title "Les Shiites vus par les Néo-Wahhabites".

¹ I preferred to use in this article (where possible) the common known spelling of names and terms rather than a precise transliteration of them.

² See David Menashri, *Iran in Revolution* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv: Kav Adom Library-Hakibbutz Hameuchad, second edition 1989, pp. 216-221.

³ Regarding the signs indicating that this controversy was on a decline by the sixties of the twentieth century see below, pp.10-12; Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: The Azhar and Shi'ism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, Leiden: Brill, 2004. I owe this last reference to my friend Professor Etan Kohlberg.

⁴ See below, pp. 28, 34-35.

⁵ Concerning this battle see Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 201-209.

⁶ The *Shu'ubiyya* was a socio-cultural protest movement that operated in the above mentioned period, led mainly by Persian Muslims who demanded full equality with the Arab Muslims and claimed that the Arabs had no right to preferential standing over non-Arabs. See *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), vol. XI p. 513 (s.v. "Shu'ubiyya", by S. Enderwitz). Regarding the revival of the term *Shu'ubiyya* during modern times, see A. Hanna and G. H. Gardner, "Al-Shu'ubiyya Updated: A Study of the 20th Century Revival of an 8th Century Concept", *Middle East Journal* XX (1966), pp. 335-352.

the Arabs. Such an accusation might have been expected from the Ba'ith party which ruled Iraq and which placed Arabism above all.⁷

It is the descriptive approach which guides us in this paper, since our purpose is to present matters as they appear to the Shiites and the Neo-Wahhabis of our time, giving mention to certain new aspects of the Wahhabi-Shiite controversy which has been intensively waged during the last three decades. We shall not discuss the worth of the mutual accusations. A check of the claims each side hurls against the other requires detailed research which we hope to present in the book we are currently working on regarding the modern Sunni-Shiite controversy.

Almost all of the material which served us in the preparation of this paper can be found on the Internet. This does not mean that relevant material cannot be found in books, booklets or magazines. But these are difficult to come by; moreover, almost everything that has recently been printed has also appeared on the Internet. This modern medium grants a number of advantages to those partaking in the debate, but it also has its disadvantages. Among the advantages one may mention the following: it allows a very quick response to the arguments of the other side; it enables photocopies to be made of articles, rare books, or events; it reaches all points on the earth in lightning time bypassing prohibition and censorship of religious leaders or regimes; it allows known people to express their opinions under assumed names without having to go public and face hostile reactions; it enables the raising of rumors and stories which were spread through a given area over generations but were never written down, only passed on by word of mouth, and were in danger of eventually being forgotten. As to the disadvantages of the Internet, we shall mention some which touch on the subject of this paper: there is no way to establish the true identity of the author; moreover, in certain cases the article is merely intended to provoke public opinion for or against an idea, a faith or a certain group; it is possible to forge material and accredit it to people who have no connection with it, especially if the person belongs to the opposing side; the denials, if any, of those connected with the issue will not necessarily appear in the same site and this prevents the reader from knowing of the existence of the denial; and there is partial or misquotation of the opponent's words on the assumption that the regular reader is unable or will not go to the source to find out the true quotation. The list of advantages and disadvantages is not complete and there are more pros and cons with regard to using the Internet for this type of research, but in our case, the pros outweigh the cons. In our opinion, it is unimportant whether the texts which appear in the Internet are true or not or whether they truly reflect what was said or authorized by the Shiite or Wahhabi leaderships. Their importance is in their being said and disseminated by Shiites and Wahhabis. It is worthwhile to mention that the Shiites are successful in convincing individuals or groups and in attracting them to the Shi'a, away from the Sunna. A clear example of this persuasion and its success may be seen in the Shiite communities which have sprung up in recent years in areas where there were no Shiites for hundreds of years. Although their numbers are few, the mere fact of their existence is proof of the success of the Shiite propaganda in our time.⁸

Choice of Period and Definition of Concepts

Regarding the Shi'a, this article (see section B) presents the arguments of the greater Shiite sect known as Imamate Shi'a (Al-Shi'a al-Ja'fariyya, named after Ja'far Al-Sadiq, the sixth Shiite Imam who died in the year 148/765), or Al-Shi'a al-Ithna 'Ashariyya (the Twelver Shi'a – because they believe in the existence of twelve Imams). We shall not cover the stands of the other Shiite factions such as the Isma'iliyya, the Zaydiyya or other groups which are in any case much smaller and less active. In some cases the arguments are those of Sunni groups which oppose the Wahhabiyya but which were adopted by the Shiite sites and serve them by adding to their claims in the struggle against the Wahhabiyya.

Before continuing, one should present a number of further definitions and necessary clarifications. First and foremost one must address the question: what is meant by post-Khomeinist Shi'a? Has the Shi'a changed in the wake of the Iranian revolution? The answer to this question is positive. How is this change expressed? The framework of this paper does not allow a discussion of the various aspects of this issue, and we shall make do with the controversial aspect only. As to the question itself, one can easily distinguish between the pre-Khomeinist and the post-Khomeinist

⁷ See, for example, the book written by the Ba'ith Party member Mundhir Al-Mawsili, *Qira'at fi Harb al-khalij: Arab wa-furs (Readings Regarding the Gulf War: Arabs and Persians)*, [Cairo]: Dar al-'Uruba, 1988; see also Dr. Bashshar Awwad Ma'arif, *Al-Islam wa-Mafhum al-Qiyada al-Aarabiyya li-al-Umma al-Islamiyya (Islam and the Concept of Arabic Leading of the Muslim Community)*, with an Introduction by Sa'id Hawwa [the radical Syrian Islamic leader], Baghdad (?), 1989.

⁸ Thus, a group of Sunni Muslims recently gathered in Daburiyya in the Galilee and declared their adoption of the Shi'a. They call themselves "Al-Ja'fariyya" (on this term see below in the following section). A number of religious intellectuals in the Palestinian Authority have also declared that they were leaving the Sunna for the Shi'a; they are very active in anti-Sunni public and written controversy. Prominent among them are As'ad Al-Qasim, Salah Al-Din Al-Husseini, Dr. Sa'id Ya'qub and Basil Muhammad Ibn Khadraa – each of them has written at least one book on the controversy discussed here.

Shiites. The former felt a moral superiority over other Muslims since they were certain of the truth of the path chosen by their ancestors, and as a result the truth of their own path with regard to religious or political issues. They viewed themselves as the only group representing the true tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, "the elite" (*al-khassa*), but they were persecuted by many Islamic regimes throughout the ages. They referred to the Sunnis, by word of mouth and in their writings, as "the masses" (*Al-'amma*). Despite this feeling they stood in defense against the wave of accusations aimed at them, both with regard to the rights of Ali Ibn Abu Talib and his offspring to govern,⁹ and also with regard to other issues: the status of the graves of Ali, of his son Hussein and of the other Shiite Imams, and the importance of the pilgrimage (*ziyara*) to these graves (which in the Shiites' view was more important than the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *hajj*); the infallibility of the Imams; the appeal to them to serve as advocates with Allah (*shafa'a*); the absence of the twelve Shiite Imam (*ghayba*) who is to reappear in the future (*ra'ja*) as a sort of messiah (*Mahdj*); the obligation to curse most of the companions of the Prophet (*sabb al-Sahaba*) and the enemies of the Shi'a,¹⁰ to reject them (*bara'a*) and to acknowledge the right of the Prophet's descendants (*Al-Sada*) to claim a fifth of the war's bounty (*khums*).¹¹ However, when the Shiites attacked their Sunni enemies, it was felt that their words were intended mainly for internal consumption, designed to prevent a Shiite drain towards the Sunna in general, and towards one of the outspoken Sunni schools of thought hostile to the Shiites in particular. Prior to Khomeini's revolution, the connecting pieces of the Shiite controversies were characterized by the fact that they were written in response to the Sunni controversies.¹² In other words, the Shiite material in the Sunni-Shiite controversy prior to Khomeini's revolution was in the main defensive and not "missionary". Of course from time to time there appeared a Shiite author whose writings were of the opposite trend, meant for the Sunnis with the purpose of winning them over to the Shi'a. During certain periods the Shiites busied themselves with missionary activity (*da'wa*), whether with the assistance of Shiite regimes (the Isma'ili Fatimids in North Africa and Egypt, or the Safavids in Iran beginning in the sixteenth century), or whether without them, with the purpose of attracting as many as possible adherents to their camp. But in the last three decades, the Shiites have adopted a far more militant position and do not just make do with protecting their faith and their leaders. Rather they attack their enemies on all possible fronts: the major part of the Sunnites' faith, their commentary on the Qur'an, the contradictions in the traditions (*Hadith*) attributed to Muhammad and his Companions, the apostatizing from Islam (*ridda*) of most of the Prophet's Companions, the different explanations given to history, and also the "psychological warfare" the purpose of which is to scorn the enemy and even demonize it.

The above ostensibly does not tie in with Khomeini's declared policy of exporting his revolution to the Muslim world in particular and to all the "downtrodden peoples" throughout the world in general. He refused to view his movement as "Iranian" or "Shiite", but rather as "Islamic".¹³ Thus, the major effort in the controversy was directed at the Wahhabis and the Wahhabiyya, and not against the Sunnis as such. On the contrary: many Shiite propagandists motivated by the Iranian establishment have tried to soften the harsh Shiite claims originating from the Middle-Ages and to concentrate rather on the offensive against the Wahhabiyya-Salafiyya. Conservative Shiites, like Ayatollah al-'Uzma 'Ali Sistani and his followers, refused to accept this change inspired by political reasons and continued with their polemical works.

As to the Wahhabis, the intention is to all those who follow the doctrine of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), founder of the Wahhabi movement and the indirect but most loyal and most radical disciple of Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), known by his followers as the greatest of the Islamic sages (*Shaykh al-Islam*).¹⁴ The first principle in the doctrine developed by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was the total opposition to the belief that people, who are seen as saints by certain groups of believers can, after their death, champion their rights with Allah. Ibn 'Abd al-

⁹ Ali Ibn Abu Talib was the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son in law and was the fourth "righteous" Caliph after Muhammad. The Shi'a movement sprang from his and his offspring's supporters (*Shi'at Ali* = Ali's faction), who claimed that he and his descendants are the sole legal inheritors of the Prophet. In the Shiite view, the legitimacy of Ali's and his descendants' rule is ordained by Allah; thus, the three first Caliphs (preceding Ali) changed the will of Allah by preventing Ali's rule.

¹⁰ The attitude of the Shiites concerning the majority of the Prophet's companions has been thoroughly studied by E. Kohlberg in his typed thesis, *The Attitude of the Imami-Shi'is to the Companions of the Prophet*, Oxford 1971; *id.* "Some Imami Shii views on the *Sahaba*", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 5 (1984), pp. 143-175.

¹¹ According to the Qur'an (see sura 8: 41), a fifth of the booty belongs to Allah, to the Apostle, to the nearest ones [to him], to the orphans and to the voyager. The Shiite Imams are considered by the Shiites as the sole heirs of the Prophet, and thus have the right to collect certain taxes imposed by Allah, the *Khums* being one of them.

¹² See Abd Al-Aziz Al-Sabsaba'i, *Mawqif al-shi'a min hajamat al-khusum wa-khulasa 'an kitab abiqat al-anwar (The Shi'a's Stand vis-à-vis the Attacks of the Enemies and the Choice Part of the Book 'The Scents of the Lights)*, especially p. 4, in www.agaed.com/shalib/books/04/mawqef/index.html.

¹³ See David Menashri, *Iran in Revolution*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁴ Ibn Taymiyya was a Syrian religious sage of the fourteenth century who had radical opinions in all matters such as religious innovations (*Bida*); visits to holy graves (*Ziyarat*); the attitude towards Shiites, Sufis (Muslim mystics), and anything he viewed as a deviation from the path of the Prophet and the "righteous forefathers" (*Al-Salaf al-Salih*). On Ibn Taymiyya see *EI2*, vol. III pp. 951-955 (s.v. "Ibn Taymiyya", by H. Laoust). Regarding his influence among the militant movements of our day, see E. Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv: Am Oved, second edition, 1986, pp. 103-110; E. Sivan, G. A. Almond and R. S. Appleby, *Modern Religious Extremism: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv: Yediot Acharonot, 2004, pp. 68-69.

Wahhab objected to raising beautiful buildings on the graves of these saints, holding ceremonies around these graves, saying special prayers, or making sacrifices to them.¹⁵ As far as the Wahhabis were concerned, according to this principle the Shiites and the Sufis, two very important but not dominant Muslim groups, were seen as polytheists (*Mushrikun*), or were considered heretics who must be fought against in a holy war (*jiḥād*). The Wahhabis did not make do with vocal declarations alone. They also went on militant missions from the moment that the movement's founder joined Ibn Sa'ud, ruler of Dar'iyya (in the Najd area, the central plateau in the Arabian Peninsula). In other words, the Wahhabis began using the force of arms against their ideological enemies and also against those who did not accept their religious way from the time that their ideologue joined up with the Saud dynasty which gave him the military strength and the governing framework as practiced according to his way. The Shiites preserve and nurture the memory of the bloody raids accompanied by the destruction of holy sites in southern Iraq, especially in the case of the 1802 events, when the Wahhabis occupied Karbala, a city most holy to the Shiites.¹⁶ The most important martyr of the Shiites and grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, Imam Hussein Ibn 'Ali, was buried there, and the Wahhabis desecrated his grave, destroyed it, pilfered the treasures buried there, torched the place and the entire city, killing more than 4000 local inhabitants.¹⁷

Similar to any radical militant group, the Wahhabis suffered, as they do even more so to this day, from factionalism. In the third decade of the last century, the founder of the current Saudi monarchy, 'Abd al-'Aziz Ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sa'ud (i.e. of the Sa'ud family, died 1953), was forced to fight groups of some of his most loyal followers (the *Ikhwan*) when they rebelled against him, demanding that the Shiites living in the Al-Ahsa' region in the eastern part of the monarchy adopt the Wahhabiyya, otherwise he should kill them.¹⁸ They also demanded of him to stop cooperating with the heretics (the British). They opposed Al-Saud's conciliatory policy which encouraged the pilgrimage to Mecca of all Muslim factions. Additional schism began to appear in the Wahhabiyya towards the latter stages of the war in Afghanistan, producing Wahhabis who claimed that the Wahhabi regime in Saudi Arabia was heretic and must be fought. Amongst the leaders of such groups, one may mention Juhayman Al-'Utaybi and Muhammad Ibn 'Abd Allah Al-Qahtani, who led the group which in 1979 occupied the Ka'ba and the entire holy place.¹⁹ The crushing of their rebellion (with the assistance of French officers) left several hundreds dead. Later, those who would eventually call themselves Al-Qa'ida split off from the Saudis: they consider the Saudi family as heretics holding power contrary to Islam. Such attitude forms the difference between Wahhabis and Neo-Wahhabis: Al-Qa'ida for example and the groups that support it and mimic it – whether inside Saudi Arabia or outside the country, such as the sheikhs Safar al-Hawali, Salman al-'Awda, Nasir Ibn Hamid al-Fahd, and many others who fought for a fundamentalist Islamic regime are the spiritual disciples of the Wahhabis; from the other side, we called Neo-Wahhabis those groups loyal to the administration and the Saudi royal court, given that they follow the path of the Wahhabi "founding fathers" who threw in their lot with the Saudi dynasty and supplied it with religious legitimacy and backing. Inside the Saudi family there are also ideological splits as to how to address the radical oppositionist groups.²⁰ In addition to all of the above, one should mention here that many Wahhabi groups are active in all Muslim communities throughout the world thanks to the actions of Faisal Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz (murdered in 1975), first as the Saudi crown prince, later as acting king (as of 1964), and finally as king. He founded the World Muslim League through which he established mosques and Islamic centers wherever possible throughout the world. Sheikhs, teachers, preachers and religious personnel in these centers were graduates of the Saudi "academic" institutes or such that were under Saudi-Wahhabi influence. In other words, they were Wahhabis; yet given the opposition among many Sunni circles to the Wahhabiyya, the adherents of the latter preferred to operate under the name of Salafiyya (those who act according to the "Righteous Forefathers", *Al-Salaf al-Salih* – the Prophet Muhammad, the four first Caliphs and other Companions of the Prophet). This name was accepted by many. King Fahd continued along the path of his brother Faisal and, under the Salafi guise, strengthened the spread of the Wahhabiyya throughout the world.

Vocal Shiite attacks are directed against every Wahhabi, no matter what group he belongs to or the name he cares to choose. There is no connection between the Shiite controversy and the political stands adopted, from time to time, by the Iranian government towards this group or that, in the service of its political interests.

¹⁵ See *El2*, vol. XI pp. 39-47, (s.v. "Wahhabiyya", by Esther Peskes and C. Holes); *ibid.* vol. III, pp. 677-679, (s.v. "Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab", by H. Laoust).

¹⁶ The Shiite Research Center, set up and run by Ayatollah Al-Umma (a higher rank than that of a regular Ayatollah) Ali Al-Sistani, emphasizes the following: "The Shī'ites, relying on the traditions of the Prophet's descendants, prefer Karbala over other parts of the world (Tafḍīl karbala ala baqīyyat biqa' al- Alam)", in a reply from 16.2.03 to a question in questions@agaed.com. The significance of this is that Karbala is considered among the Shiites to be holier than the Kaaba in Mecca and the prophet's grave in Medina. Many classical Shiite sources confirm this stand.

¹⁷ See www.alrakiza.com/Forum, message page asp...ForumNo=1&MessageNo=1138 (18.09.2002).

¹⁸ Guido Steiberg, "The Shiites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (Al-Ahsa'), 1913-1953", in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende (eds.), *The Twelver Shi'a in Modern Times: Religious, Cultural and Political History*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 257-259; Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism*, Washington: Regnery pub., 2003, pp. 49-50.

¹⁹ Regarding this event and the background of those who were behind it, see Dore Gold, *Hatred's Kingdom*, pp. 106-108.

²⁰ See the excellent article of M. S. Doran, "The Saudi Paradox", *Foreign Affairs* 83 (2004/1), pp. 35-51.

The Sunna-Shi'a Controversy up to the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

The controversy between the followers of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib and the followers of each of the first three "righteous" Caliphs broke to the open very early in Islam. The transformation of the Shi'a into a political party and then into a sect gave a great boost to these debates which constitute a prolific literature, of great value for whoever wants to study Islam, particularly the legitimization of power and the development of this religion's theology. This controversy has had its ups and downs. In the second half of the twentieth century, a number of signs emerged which seem to have indicated, as we have already mentioned, that the Sunna-Shi'a controversy had been consigned to the past. Among these signs, let us mention the following ones:

- 1- The trend known as "the rapprochement between the various religious legal schools" (*al-taqrib bayna al-madhahib*),²¹ aiming at minimizing the differences between these religious legal schools. It seems to have been set off by distinguished Salafis who were followers of Rashid Rida (died 1935). Rida was a modernist at the start of his career and then became a Salafi, thus moving closer to the Wahhabiyya.²² Among his followers, or those who maintain that they are his followers, who are in favor of a conciliatory attitude towards the Shi'a, one can mention Yusuf al-Qaradawi who often quotes the following sentence attributed to Rida: "let us cooperate [with the different sects of Islam, including the Shiites] on all subjects we all agree upon... and let us forgive ourselves for the disagreements that keep us apart (*nata'awanu fima ltafaqna 'alayhi... wa-ya'EURu ba'duna ba'dan fima ikhtalafna fih*)".²³
- 2- The fact that the Ja'farite religious legal school has been recognized by al-Azhar in 1959 as the fifth legal *madhhab* in Islam, following the *fatwa* of Shaykh al-Azhar, Mahmud Shaltut, which allows Sunni Muslims to pray with Shiites.²⁴
- 3- Shiite books are being taught in al-Azhar after having been banned for centuries.

As far as the Shiites are concerned, they have also undertaken to have some of their dogma legitimized by the Sunnites. Thus the religious high authorities of Shiite Iran have established in Cairo – a traditional Sunni center of fighting against the Shi'a – an institution called Dar al-Taqrib bayna al-Madhahib, aiming at bringing closer the religious legal schools. This institution is very active and succeeds in publishing in Egypt many Shiite or pro-Shiite works.²⁵ On the other hand, the Shiites have started to publish in 1949 a periodical named *Risalat al-Islam*, which contains articles written by Sunni Doctors side by side with articles written by their Shiite colleagues. This project originated in an ecumenical vision aiming at creating a harmony between the two principal schools of Islam. In order to preserve this harmony, thorny questions and differences of opinion were put aside to be dealt with in a brighter future. The two movements had no major difficulties in agreeing upon questions of ritual since on that particular subject they converge more than they diverge. This is why the Shiite center in Cairo chose to deal with these questions rather than to tackle subjects related to dogma, where the disagreements are much stronger. This is not surprising: a great number of these articles deal with problems of ritual, where the differences between Sunnites and Shiites are minimal, as compared to problems of dogma on which they sharply diverge. In the sixties of the last Century, at the time when the monumental work of Shiite Islam by al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* was published anew,²⁶ the publishers abstained from including certain chapters of Volume VIII of the original lithographic edition. The reason is not hard to guess: since these chapters contain grave insults against the great figures of Sunni Islam (*sabb al-Sahaba*), the publishers did not want to revive old quarrels and aggravate antagonisms. However, the victory of Khomeini in Iran, his declarations concerning the need to export the revolution all through the Islamic world and the presence of Shiite communities in many Arab and Islamic countries rekindled the Sunni-Shiite polemics. A warning

²¹ Concerning this subject, see the excellent survey of Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*.

²² Among the most important representatives of modern Sunni anti-Wahhabi movements, we shall mention Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Muhammad al-Ghazali, Ramadan Sa'id al-Buti and others who declare they belong to the "centrist stream" (*al-tayyar al-wasati*). Concerning this stream, see S. Polka, "The Centrist Stream in Egypt and its Role in the Public Discourse Surrounding the Shaping of the Country's Cultural Identity", *Middle East Studies* 39 (2003), pp. 39-64; idem, *Between Liberalism and Fundamentalism: the Political Thought of Mainstream Islam (wasatiyya) in Contemporary Egypt* (in Hebrew), a thesis submitted to the Senate of the Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan 2000.

²³ Al-Qaradawi in his CD *al-Fiqh wa-usuluhu*; Muhammad MAI Allah, *Ayaltaqi al-naqidani? Hiwar ma'a fadilat al-shayh Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, www.khayma.com/fnoor/fn0990.htm; Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Humum d'AYiya*, al-Dawha 1985, p. 278.

²⁴ See Wilfrid Buchta, "Teheran Ecumenical Society (Majma' al-taqrib): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran?", in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds.), *The Twelver Shi'a in Modern Times: Religious, Cultural and Political History*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 336. A photocopy of this *Fatwa* can be found on the Fnoor website.

²⁵ The anti-Shiite website fnoor.com published two lists of Shiite or pro-Shiite books that were published in Egypt either by Dar al-taqrib or by other publishers. The first list is sloppy, since it never indicates the author, or the year of publication; in the second list, the name of the author appears together with his religious or political views, but it also contains anti-Shiite books. W. Buchta (see "Teheran Ecumenical Society", pp. 334-335) mentions that all through Khomeini's era, the Iranian official Islamic propaganda took no interest whatsoever in this institution and its ecumenical role.

²⁶ Concerning this work and its author, see *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, *** vol. pp. (s.v. "Behar al-anwar", by E. Kohlberg).

sign was given in 1991/1412 when Shaykh 'Abd al-Zahra al-'Alawi published in Beirut volumes 29-34 that are part of the eighth volume of the *Bihar al-Anwar*, with an introduction attacking the **taqrib** when it is inconsistent with truth.²⁷

The two camps seem to have perfectly understood the need to make the best use of modern technology so as to reach out to the greatest numbers, skirting borders, censorship, police, and secret services. The computer offered a myriad of possibilities and they did not hesitate to use it. The first to do so were probably the Wahhabi followers of the Taliban who seized power in Afghanistan in 1996. In 1998, they inaugurated the first dialog website in Arabic which they named *Al-Sahat al-'Arabiyya (The Arab Arenas)*.²⁸ Yet the administrators of anti-Shiite websites complain that the Shiite websites offer more serious material because great Ayatollahs actively participate in the writing.²⁹

²⁷ Vol. 29, pp. 11-46.

²⁸ See al-Amili, *al-Intisar: ahammu munazarat al-Shi'a fi-al-internet*, ed. Markaz al-abhath al-Aqa'idiyya, series of the *kutub al-munauarat*, no. 7, 37 in www.aqaed.files/shi'alib/index.htm, where the Shiite author reviews the first stages of the Sunni-Shiite polemics on the Internet.

²⁹ *Al-Malak al-Ta'ir*, www.fnoor.com/fn0315.htm, 27.02.01.

B. The Post Khomeini Shiites' View of the Wahhabis

In controversies between rival or hostile groups it is accepted that one group may make use of another's material which supports the stand of the opposite side, confirming its claims. Throughout the hundreds of years of the Shiite-Sunni controversy the former made much use of this method, bringing materials originating from definite Sunni sources and accepted by most of the Sunni factions to denigrate them and to counter their claims. In fact this method constitutes the password to one of the important Shiite sites.³⁰ In this specific case the Shiites had a host of Sunni anti-Wahhabi material from all hues of the rainbow. This stemmed from the fact that the Wahhabis, from the time they first appeared until this very day, attacked – both verbally and by the sword – any person who did not accept their principles and beliefs, declaring him a heretic who must be fought against unto the end. It was thus that many Sunni groups sprang up against them. One of the Shiite members states that all Muslim legal schools, whether Sunni or Shiite, wrote articles against the Wahhabis. Among the Sunnis mention may be made of the Ash'aris, led by the Hanbalis to whom the Wahhabis themselves belong and who claim to follow Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (founder of the Hanbali religious legal school), while followers of this school deny that Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's (false) claims tie in with the opinions of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal or of the sages of other legal schools – the Hanafis, Shafi'is and Malikis; The Sufi orders such as Al-Rifa'iyya and the Naqshabandiyya; the Zaydis (Shiites) and even the Ibadis (Kharijis) in Amman.³¹ In order to illustrate this point there are a number of prominent and important examples in Sunni articles which rejected outright the Wahhabiyya. The Shiites make extensive use of these in their struggle against the Wahhabis:

1. The article "The Godly Lightning in Response to the Wahhabiyya" (*Al-Sawa'i'q al-Ilahiyya fi-al-Radd 'ala al-Wahhabiyya*) by Sulayman Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, brother of the founder of the Wahhabiyya and the first to come out categorically against this movement. This book witnessed great circulation among the enemies of the Wahhabiyya, particularly the Shiites.³² This article attacks every strict Wahhabi approach with regard to Muslims who follow flawed customs and who Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab considers to be heretics. Sulayman adopts Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's approach that rejects these customs but he does not consider those who follow them as heretics.

2. The article "The Wahhabiyya Civil War" (*Fitnat al-Wahhabiyya*)³³ was written by the nineteenth century Shafi'i Mufti of Mecca Ahmad Ibn Zayni Dahlan (1817-1886), known as the author of one of the comprehensive biographies of the Prophet (*Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya*). This article was in fact a chapter out of his book titled "History of the Islamic Conquests" (*Al-Futuh al-Islamiyya*). Despite this author's opposition to the Shiites,³⁴ the Shiites on a number of separate occasions publicized this chapter of the book in various publications and even translated it into Persian in order to embarrass the Wahhabis. The author covers the Wahhabi advent from its beginning until his time with practical description of the destruction and horror wreaked upon the local inhabitants of Medina, Al-Ta'if, and other places. He attacks the **takfir** approach (declaring people or groups as heretics) used by the Wahhabis indiscriminately, stating that whoever considers most of the Muslims as heretics is himself a heretic.³⁵ Dahlan quotes the Meccan and Medinan sages who tried to discuss the principles of Wahhabiyya with Wahhabi emissaries, and it dawned on them that the very same emissaries were "funny clowns as though they were frightened asses who fled from a lion" (*wajaduhum duhaka wa-sukhara ka-humur mustanfara farat min qaswara*; see the Kur'an, Sura 51, Al-Muddathir: 74).

3. The article "The Response to Ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhab" (*Al-Radd 'ala Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab*) by the *Shaykh al-Islam* in Tunisia Isma'il al-Tamimi al-Malik (Died in 1832).

³⁰ "A legal school which proves its veracity through the writings of its opponents is more worthy of being followed; a school against which claims are raised through its own writings, and which will then turn to allegorical exegesis and will introduce innovations, is worthy of being turned away from"; See www.shiaweb.org. One cannot avoid mentioning in this connection that the Shi'a makes extensive use of allegorical commentary more than any other Muslim school of thought.

³¹ Abd Allah Muhammad Ali, *Mu'jam ma allafahu 'lama al-umma al-islamiyya li-al-radd ala khurafat al-d'Ywa al-wahhabiyya* (A List of Compositions by Sages of the Muslim Community who Respond to the Nonsense of the Wahhabiyya), aqaed.com/book-books3-wahabie3-index.html.

³² It appears in full in the publications of "The Center for Studies of Faith" (Markaz Al-Abhath Al-Aqa'id'iyya) which has been run for more than five years by Ayatollah Al-Sistani, www.aqaed.com/book/bookw3/sawaeq/sawaeq.html.

³³ www.aqaed.com/book/books3/fitne/index.htm.

³⁴ See, for example, his *Risala fi kayfiyyat al-munawara ma'a al-Shi'a wa-al-radd alayha* (A Treatise Regarding the Method by which to Debate with the Shi'a and Respond to it), Cairo 1905.

³⁵ *** Ibid***, p. 7: "The religious sages of Mecca and Medina studied the faith [of the Wahhabis] and found that they contained many statements regarding declarations of others as heretics... And wrote a report against them with the Shar'i Qadi of Mecca determining that they [the Wahhabis] are heretics because of their beliefs in those faiths [declaring others as heretics] (*wa-nazaru ila aqa'idihim fa-wajaduhu mushtamila ala kathir min al-mukaffirAt... wa-katabu alayhim hujja 'inda qadi al-shar' bi-makka tatadammanu al-hukm bi-kufrihim bi-tilka al-aqa'id*)".

In the framework of the struggle discussed here, the Shiite "Center for Studies of Faith" publicized Al-Sayyid 'Abd Allah Muhammad 'Ali's *Mu'jam ma Allafahu 'Ulama al-Umma al-Islamiyya li-al-Radd 'ala Khurafat al-Da'wa al-Wahhabiyya* ("A List of Compositions by Sages of the Muslim Community who Respond to the Nonsense of the Wahhabiyya"), containing 213 Sunni and Shiite compositions against the Wahhabiyya.³⁶ It is interesting to note that some of these compositions were again published by The Organization for Islamic Information in Tehran (**Munazzamat al-Islam al-Islami fi Tahrān**). This is an official Iranian organization, and this indicates the importance which the Iranian religious establishment attaches to the struggle against The Wahhabiyya.

The Shiite controversy of the Middle Ages against the Sunnis in general and the radicals among their enemies in particular centered mainly around the question of the legitimacy of the regime and its oppression of the "declared" candidates of the Prophet Muhammad, 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib and his descendants,³⁷ and all the secondary issues which developed through the ages as "accessories" to this claim. These included arguments and differences of opinion regarding almost every possible religious, political or historical subject. However, since the appearance of the Wahhabiyya, a new branch of Shiite claims developed, growing and receiving added importance with the establishment of the Iranian Islamic republic as mentioned above. Clearly most of these claims existed prior to the Khomeini revolution but were used only on a low scale, and in most cases only for internal Shiite consumption. After Khomeini, the reins were released and official institutions in Iran alongside non governmental public institutions participated very actively in spreading anti-Wahhabi material.

Following are the main points raised by the Shiites against the Wahhabis and their movement. These points constitute part of the Shiite struggle to denigrate the Wahhabis and present them in a ridiculous light as primitive, violent, intolerant, motivated by blind hatred of the Shi'a and the Shiites, the Sufis, and anyone else who does not accept their way. Their victory might take the Muslims back to the darkness of the Middle Ages (contrary to the image that the Muslim fundamentalists are trying to create regarding the state of the Muslims during the Middle Ages), thus serving the interests of western countries, their supporters from way back. The list below is only partial.

- The most common description that the Shiites attach to the Wahhabis is that of "the Khawarij of this age" (*Khawarij hadha al-'asr*).³⁸ In this connection one may add that the Khawarij were originally part of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib's camp when the latter was the fourth "righteous" Caliph after Muhammad and during his war in Siffin in the year 657 against Mu'awiya Ibn Abu Sufyan, who would later establish the Umayyad Caliphate. When 'Ali received Mu'awiya's proposal to arbitrate the dispute a group made up of Bedouin combatants left 'Ali's camp and demanded to continue fighting until Allah would decide the issue between the two enemies. 'Ali was forced to fight them but he did not manage to overcome them and they continued operating in various locations in the Muslim world breaking up into small factions and trying to impose the principles of their faith on those around them. Among their characteristics one may mention their puritanism and fanaticism, their strictness with themselves in matters of faith and observance of customs, their view of any non-Khariji Muslim as a heretic, and their inclusion of the holy war (Jihad) as one of the main pillars of Islam (*rukn*). They allowed the killing of Muslims, their wives and children, whom they considered heretics. They also took the Qur'an literally.³⁹ The term Khariji has a negative connotation for most Muslims, both Shiite and Sunni, given that the image of the Khawarij was and still is that of groups outside the consensus, always splitting, and made up of anarchists, zealots, impatient and intolerant. On more than one occasion the Shiite authors do not make do merely with attaching the "Khawarij" label to the Wahhabis. In fact they draw a parallelism between the two groups. Salih al-Wardani, an Egyptian Sunni fundamentalist who joined the Shi'a,⁴⁰ devoted several pages to describing details of this parallelism. Given that this description is the clearest one known to us, its main points are worthy of mention: "My attention was attracted by the streams of zealots [in Egypt], who just as they adopted the Wahhabi assumptions they also adopted the Wahhabi character which is characterized by rudeness, zealotry, and bloodletting of enemies... the phenomenon of the Khawarij, its stands and characteristics attracted my attention. I

³⁶ See above n. ; for another partial list of anti-Wahhabi, particularly Sunni, compositions, see in Sa'ib Abd Al-Hamid's article www.agaed.com/shialib/books/05/w-s-h/index, Paragraph 11.

³⁷ The Shiites relate to a number of traditions attributed to the Prophet in which he "determined" categorically that Ali and his descendants are his inheritors and that this is by the will of Allah. Following are two such traditions: (A) the tradition known as the hadith ("tradition") of Ghadir Khum (delivered near a stream known as Khum) which states that Ali's status in comparison with that of Muhammad is the same as that of Aaron compared to Moses, only that Ali cannot be a prophet (unlike Aaron who is considered a prophet in Islam) since Muhammad is the last of the prophets; (B) The tradition that holds that Muhammad, on his death bed, dictated a will mentioning the twelve Shiite Imams by their full names, stating that Ali and his descendants will serve in turn in his place (caliphs) over his people (the Muslims), see *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 36, p. 260.

³⁸ See al-Amili, *Kitab al-Intisar*, p. 1 and all of chapter 2, www.agaed.com/shialib/books/06/entent/html.

³⁹ For additional details about this group see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New edition), Vol. 4, p. 1074-1077 (s.v. "Kharidjites", by G. Levi Della Vida).

⁴⁰ He served in the past as the editor of an Egyptian Islamist publication *Al-Balagh*, and afterwards as a correspondent for the *Al-Risala* weekly. He abandoned this work when he found out that Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime funds the magazine. Following a lengthy incarnation in Egypt he adopted the Shi'a some ten years ago and became an active Shiite. He wrote a number of books, among them *Al-Shi'a fi misr* (*The Shi'a in Egypt*), *Firaq ahl al-sunna* (*The Sunni Sects*), and most important of all *Al-Khud'a: rihlati min al-sunna ila al-Shi'a* (*The Hoax: My Journey from the Sunna to the Shi'a*) publicized in the site www.shiaweb.org/shia/khedaa/index.html, as well as in Iran by the Ashura Institution.

was surprised to find out that the stands of these [Wahhabi] groups and their characteristics are identical with those of the Khawarij, concerning whom we have in our possession texts [by the Prophet Muhammad]⁴¹ that censure them and caution the Muslim world about them. The self image of the Khawarij and their theories accentuated their crooked character and bad behavior, just like the state of the [Wahhabi] streams. The Khawarij were markedly rude and stern and this term suits these streams [of Fundamentalists and Wahhabis]. The Khawarij swords were always drawn against the Muslims allowing their blood to be let and their property ravaged, and the same went for the fundamentalist Wahhabis. The Wahhabi stream from which these other streams drew satisfaction was founded by rude and ossified people who willed the rudeness and ossification to their followers who became the modern day copy of the Khawarij. They later split from the camp of the Imam Ali [Ibn] Abu Talib. The Wahhabi stream that emerged holds that all Muslims, who defy the Wahhabiyya, are polytheists (**Mushrikun**) and that they may be killed. This is the trend which this stream willed to the Islamic streams".⁴²

The Wahhabis view all Islamic states (*Al-Islamiyya* and not *Al-Muslima* as in the original) and all their leaders as heretics who must be executed according to the **Shari'a**. In their opinion there is no administration which applies the religious law anywhere in the world apart from the Taliban administration.⁴³ As far as the Wahhabis are concerned, all the Muslims are heretics because they declared a ceasefire (**hudna**) with their treacherous rulers (in Islam) and the heretics, and did not wage a holy war against them.⁴⁴ The conclusion therefore is: "the Wahhabis are worse than the Khawarij (*al-Wahhabiyya sharrun mina al-Khawarij*) since the Khawarij dealt with things that the Muslims unanimously declared to be very sinful (**kaba'ir**) and they determined that whoever commits one such act is a heretic, while the Wahhabis concentrate their attacks not only on those acts that are not considered as sins (**dhunub**) but that are desired (**mustahabbat**), acts that the Companions of the Prophet, their disciples and the following generations did without any disagreement".⁴⁵

- The Wahhabis are "rude/uncivil Bedouins" (**Arab ajlaf**). Beyond the mocking of the Bedouin by the townsman, this accusation implies many more negative aspects. In the Qur'an, the term **Arab** mostly is an adjective designating the heretic Bedouins (Sura 9: 97) whose faith is only outward and not internal (= **Munafiqun**, Sura 9: 101), or who refuse to assist the Prophet when at need (Sura 9: 120; Sura 11: 48). In addition, these accusations without doubt reflect the anti-Arab claims raised by the Persian **Shu'ubis** (see above p. 3) during the second and third centuries after the Hijra.

- The Wahhabi doctrine is "corrupt and anti-Islamist, and is similar to a wayward faction" ("*** *al-lana da'watahu* *** *al-lal-Islamiyya al-fasida ka-hizb shadh*h").⁴⁶

- The Wahhabis are violent. Their movement's history is riddled with acts of violence against all, even Muslims who did not accept their way. In fact their movement spread only as a result of military power and acts of cruelty committed anywhere they met with resistance. Today they make extensive use of cash to spread their faith. "The Najd [Wahhabi] hegemony rests on two clear arguments... the cutting sword and the dirham and dinAr, the sword and pointed spear and the resounding gold" ("sultan najd lahu hujjatani qati'atani... al-Husam al-battar wa-al-dirham wa-al-dinar, al-sayf wa-al-sinan wa-al-ahmar al-rannan").⁴⁷

- The Wahhabi ideology is full of internal contradictions. The Wahhabis claim that they base their faith and habits on two types of sources: (A) the rules categorically laid down in the Qur'an and the Prophet's **Sunna**, and in such cases the Wahhabis are not prepared to accept any other interpretation (**ijtihad**) of the Prophet's Companions (**Al-Sahaba**), their disciples (**Al-Tabi'un**) or of the greatest Imams; (B) where there is no specific mention in the Qur'an and **Sunna**, they make do with the provision laid down by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya (see above, p. 6). And indeed, according to the Shiite source, the Wahhabis failed, became entangled and their way was full of contradictions: their thought is frozen, they act contrary to the stands of Ibn Hanbal (who never declared any Muslim to be a heretic, apart from those who refuse to pray) and contrary to Ibn Taymiyya's specific provision to the effect that: "Those who cause a split in the Muslim community and determine that their opponents in matters of thought (*ara' wa-ijtihadat*) are

⁴¹ The Khawarij appeared for the first time some 20 years after the Prophet Muhammad's death, but in the framework of the struggle against them, traditions attributed to the Prophet were invented in which he foresaw the appearance of the Khawarij and cautioned the Muslim people about them, calling them "deviants from Islam (**Mariqun**) who are doomed to hell".

⁴² *Al-Khud'a*, www.shiaweb.org/shia/khedaa/index.html, p. 16; Sa'ib Abd al-Hamid, *Al-Wahhabiyya fi Suratihā al-Aqdiyya*, *** www.aqaed.com/shialib/books/05/w-s-h/index, quoted in whole in a Sunni site, without mentioning the author's name or the source, see the Shiite-Sunni free discussion forum (*Muntada al-Hiwar al-shii al-sunni al-Hurr*), www.alrakiz...ForumMessagePage ***.

⁴³ Al-Amili, *Kitab al-Intisar*, p. 100.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

⁴⁵ Sa'ib Abd al-Hamid, see above note (*asl al-wahhabiyya*).

⁴⁶ Abd Allah Muhammad Ali, *Mu'jam*, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Muhammad al-Kuthayri, *Al-Salafiyya bayna ahl al-sunna wa-l-imamiyya* (*The Salafi Movement between Sunnis and Shiites*), www.aqaed.com, in the series *Al-Radd ala ibn taymiyya wa-l-wahhabiyya*, essay number 16, pp. 465-466.

heretics, and the person who allows to wage war against them, are themselves traitors to Islamic unity".⁴⁸ Given the above, the Shiite author (he does not identify himself) concludes that the Wahhabis, according to the rules laid down by their spiritual father Ibn Taymiyya, are "the people behind factionalism and differences of opinion [inside the Islamic community]" ("*hum min ahl al-tafarruq wa-al-ikhtilaf*").⁴⁹

- The Wahhabis live in a "bubble", or to be more precise: "in the darkness of the cave and they are ossified". This is the description given by the Al-Kawthar Institute in the Iranian city of Qumm (Mu'assasat al-Kawthar li-al-Ma'arif al-Islamiyya) in the introduction to the book *The New and Correct Way for a Dialogue with the Wahhabis (Al-Minhaj al-Jadid wa-al-Sahih fi-al-Hiwar ma'a al-Wahhabiyyina)* by Dr. 'Isam al-Ahmad, a former Wahhabi from Yemen who became a Shiite ("*taharrara min kahf al-Wahhabiyya bi-kull ma yahmiluhu al-kahf min ma'ani al-'ulma wa-l-hajariyya*").⁵⁰

- The Wahhabis are now in fact radicals (**ghulat**) in their uncompromising stand in all matters that have to do with the attributes of Allah (**al-sifat al-ilahiyya**) and their accusation of anyone who upholds views others than theirs as heretics. The term **ghulat** is somewhat exceptional given that it was used in medieval polemical literature to designate extreme Shiite groups who, for example, deified Ali.⁵¹

- The Wahhabis, in particular the Salafis, allow themselves to lie when they argue with opponents, and to falsify early sources to tie in with their stand ("*tahrif al-turath... wa-istihlal al-kadhib 'ala al-khusus*"). Muhammad al-Kuthayri claims that Ibn Taymiyya was not the inventor of this method. Rather he mimicked the Hanbalis who came before him and willed it to the Wahhabis who turned it into a rule which they follow.⁵² By the same token, they knowingly falsified Muslim history to align it with their stands.⁵³

- The Wahhabiyya and the false prophets: the Shiites claim that in his youth the founder of the Wahhabiyya, Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, was very fond of reading the stories about the false prophets. These prophets appeared during the early period of Islam, prophets such as Maslama Ibn Habib or Ibn Thumama, known in Muslim sources as *Musaylima al-Kadhhab* ("Maslama the poor liar"), who appeared among the tribe of Hanifa in the Najd area; Sajjah Bint al-Harith, the "prophet" of the tribe of Tamim; Al-Aswad al-Anasi in Yemen; and others.⁵⁴ Indeed, the Shiite author Sa'ib 'Abd al-Hamid stresses this fact yet does not mention its source;⁵⁵ his intention is clear and transparent: Ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhab is a cheat who is no different from the false prophets.

- The placards carried by Hezbollah people in Lebanon following the Al-Ta'if agreement of 1989 that put a stop to the civil war in Lebanon, read: "The Wahhabis are the filthy work of Satan" ("*al-wahhabiyyun rijs min 'amal al-shaytan*").⁵⁶ In this case the word "Wahhabis" replaced the words "wine, gambling, the altars and the arrows [used to distribute the meat of animals slaughtered on the altar as a custom practiced by Arab idol worshippers]", see Qur'an, Sura 5: 90.

- Shiite publications refer to the Wahhabis as superficial and of limited intelligence. They are unable to go deeply into the finer details, especially regarding their adversaries. They want to understand everything at the simplest level (*al-fahm al-sathi li-afkar al-mukhalafin*).⁵⁷ One of the "*mustabsirun*" who went over to the Shi'a while studying for a doctorate at the Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud University in Mecca wrote a book at the end of which he described how to debate with the Wahhabis: "The Wahhabis are not the enemies of this wonderful school of thought [the Shi'a], and as soon as they familiarize themselves well with it they will not hesitate to adopt it, **but we must descend to the intellectual level of the Wahhabi**, when we present to them the exclusive, noble and deep characteristics of the Twelver Shi'a school of thought **so that we may elevate them to the intellectual level of the Twelver Shi'a**".⁵⁸

- The Wahhabis have always served "Western imperialism in the Islamic countries... what did these countries do in order to withstand the Crusader and Zionist influence? They always opened their gates to the West so that it could

⁴⁸ Sa'ib Abd al-Hamid (see above n.), *masadir al-fikr al-wahhabi (The Sources of Wahhabi Thought)*.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ www.aqaed.com, in the series *Al-Radd ala ibn taymiyya wa-l-wahhabiyya*, essay number 28, in the Introduction.

⁵¹ See Goldziher, *Lectures on Islam* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem: 1951, pp. 150-151.

⁵² *Al-Salafiyya bayna ahl al-sunna wa-l-imamiyya*, p. 482.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 473.

⁵⁴ This phenomenon is known in Muslim historiography as **Al-Ridda** (apostasy from Islam). For the large part this was an attempt to break away from the reign of Muhammad and his inheritors, see H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: the Islamic Near East from the sixth to the eleventh Century* (in Hebrew, translated by Emmanuel Kopelevich), Jerusalem: 1998, pp. 48-51; Ella Landau-Tasseron, *Aspects of the Ridda War*, PhD thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 1981, Introduction, pp. 2-6.

⁵⁵ Sa'ib Abd al-Hamid (see above n.), *Al-Wahhabiyya wa-mu'assisuha (The Wahhabiyya and its Founder)*.

⁵⁶ Abd al-Mun'im Shafiq, *haqiqat al-muqawama: qira'a fi awrAQ al-Haraka al-siyasiyya al-shiyya fi lubnan*, www.fnoor.com/books.htm.

⁵⁷ Al-Kuthayri, *Al-Salafiyya bayna ahl al-sunna wa-l-imamiyya*, p. 480.

⁵⁸ Isam Al-Imad, *Al-Minhaj al-jadid wa-al-sahih fi-al-hiwar ma'a al-wahhabiyyina*, www.aqaed.com/shialib/books/03/manhaj-jadid, p. 179.

take control of the Muslim countries and their sovereignty and honor".⁵⁹ 'Abd al-'Aziz, the founder of the (current) third Wahhabi state, is described as having warmly supported the "handover of Palestine to the Jews". Shiite sources show a photograph of a document written by 'Abd al-'Aziz in which he declared to Percy Cook, Britain's emissary to Saudi Arabia, that his country (Saudi Arabia) "has no objection to presenting Palestine to the Jews or to others, as Britain sees fit". Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Sa'ud, even before declaring himself King of Saudi Arabia, declared that he would never "until Judgment Day" disobey Britain.⁶⁰ The Shiite author did not disclose the identity of the source for the document's photocopy, nor where it originated from. Unfortunately I have no way to check its authenticity, but it is highly likely that it may be forged (see appendix at the end of the article).

- "The Wahhabis are the malignant bacteria that prepared the ground for the West to plant Israel in the heart of the Islamic nation. And they are the malignant bacteria working still today to strengthen the West's hold on the heart of the Muslim world... Theirs are the cursed hands that the West motivates in order to suppress the Islamic awakening and to support the two-faced regimes, the agents of the West who oppress the awakening with blood and fire".⁶¹

- "The Wahhabis believe themselves to be the only ones who totally serve Allah. The other Muslims worship Gods other than Allah (**Mushrikun**) and their lives, descendants and properties are not immune, their land must be fought against (**Dar Harb**)... In point of fact they, the Wahhabis, brought a despicable innovation to the world (**bid'a kubra**)".⁶²

In conclusion it may be said that the Post Khomeinist Shiites have been trying these past twenty five years to wage a savage war against the Wahhabis, their most serious enemy for over two hundred years, who denigrated them and desecrated their holy sites and fought a terrible war against them – a quite successful war in various Islamic countries and among the Muslim diaspora in various locations throughout the world. To this end the Shiites have acted methodically, as they do still now, with the aid of Islamic history, comparing the Wahhabis with the false prophets who appeared early on in Islamic history such as Musaylima, or groups such as the Khawarij, whose doctrine and way of life the Islamic consensus rejected. The Shiites make use of classical Sunni writings to denigrate all Wahhabi factions, presenting them as false and lacking in intellect, as misled and misleading heretics, servants of the West. Their purpose is only to prevent a true Islamic awakening. This Shiite campaign long ago transgressed the accepted limits of inter-religious or more correctly inter-sectarian controversy: the Shiites demonize the Wahhabis, comparing them to malignant bacteria that must be exorcised from the Islamic body.

⁵⁹ Sa'ib Abd al-Hamid (see above n.), *Al-Wahhabiyya fi khidmat man? (In Whose Service Does the Wahhabiyya Operate?)*.

⁶⁰ See www.aqaed.com, *** (*Suspicious [Regarding] the Salafiyya*) by Jawad Hussayn Al-Daylami, the series *Al-Radd ala ibn Taymiyya wa-l-wahhabiyya*, essay number 33.

⁶¹ ***

⁶² *** *The Great Wahhabi Censured Innovation*.

C. The Neo-Wahhabis' View of the Shi'a

Sources

The number of texts produced by the Neo-Wahhabis and the Salafis in the past few decades is impressive. Certain works are the continuation of the medieval controversy: the authors quote Shiite arguments and refute them one by one, by comparing them either to other Shiite texts, or to verses from the Qur'an, or by means of the traditions attributed to the Prophet. All this is done while following the centuries-old method of arguments and counter-arguments typical of medieval texts. Let us mention the following publications as examples:

1. The series called *Silsilat al-Haqa'iq al-Gha'iba* (*The Chain/Series of Hidden Truths*) whose author is probably Faysal Nur⁶³ and which comprises the following works: 1) *Naqd 'Aqidat al-'Isma* (*Criticism of the Dogma of [the Imams'] Infallibility*); 2) *Al-Khums wa-Sahm al-Imam* (*The Fifth and the Share of the Imam*, see above footnote 11); 3) *Al-Imama wa-al-Nass* (*The Imamate and the Textual Determination [of the heir who should rule after the death of the Prophet]*); 4) *Al-Taqiyya, al-Wajh al-Akhar* (*Taqiyya: the Hidden Side*);⁶⁴ 5) *Ayat al-Tathir wa-Hadi al-Thaqalayn* (*The Verse Declaring that [the Descendants of the Prophet] Are Pure and the Tradition Attributed to the Prophet Concerning the Thaqalayn*);⁶⁵ 6) *Riwayat al-Tasadduq bi-al-Khatam* (*The Traditions Telling that [Ali] Gave [his] Ring as Charity*); 7) *Mawqif al-Shi'a mina al-Sahaba* (*The Attitude of the Shiites towards the Companions of the Prophet*). All these treatises were published on the Internet (www.khayma.com/fnoor/index2.htm).
2. The series called *Shubuhāt wa-Rudud* (*Suspensions and Retorts*) which appears without signature on the same website (...fnoor/shubuhat.htm) and which consists of more than a hundred articles copiously annotated, aiming first of all at defending the **Sahaba** (the Companions of the Prophet) and the "righteous" Caliphs.
3. The series bearing the title *Tanbih al-Kha'ir ila Mawadi' al-Malak al-Ta'ir* (*The Calling to Arms of the Perplexed Concerning the Subjects of the Flying Angel*). This series is also copiously annotated but has no qualms about telling saucy stories (...fnoor/almalak1.htm).⁶⁶

The other texts related to the controversy are mediocre, despite the fact that they have been written by 'ulama or "Professors". In fact, these shallow texts are aimed at a public which feels the need to be reassured that it possesses the truth, at the exclusion of others.

One should mention that many of these texts are published anonymously. Sometimes, their authors use deceptive pseudonyms, as in the case of *Li-Allah thumma li-al-Ta'rikh* (*For Allah and for History*) attributed to an imaginary Shiite scholar of Najaf who calls himself Hussein al-Musawi. The manager of the publishing house which published the article was condemned by the Court of Appeal in Beirut to two years of prison and to a fine of 50 million Lebanese pounds. The reason for such a heavy sentence was that, according to the Court, the author, a "repentant Shiite", i.e. who converted to Sunnism and was assassinated by his former Shiite coreligionists, in fact never existed (alrakiza.com/forumNo1=1&MessageNo=594, 23.05.2002).⁶⁷ Another work with the title *Fada'ih al-Hawza al-Ilmiyya fi-al-Najaf, Siyaha fi Alam al-Tashayyu'*, *al-Hawza al-Ilmiyya*, or *Asrar wa-Khafaya* (*The Scandals of the Religious College [which prepares the Shiite 'ulama] in Najaf, A Voyage in the World of the Shi'a, the 'ulama College, or Secrets and Hidden Facts*) is said to have been written by an author whose name is Muhibb al-Din 'Abbas al-Kauimi (www.albrhn.com, 19.06.2002); the Shiites dispute the fact that he belonged to their faith. He is presumably a disguised Wahhabi (id. 24.04.2002).

Sometimes these forgeries – for these are plainly forgeries – are so blatant that even the most naive reader understands the falsification and has no difficulty in restoring the truth. These worthless texts are nevertheless quite

⁶³ His website bearing his name, www.fnoor.com, has provided us with a great deal of anti-Shiite material. The treatises published on this website, with the exception of the discussions of the *munṭada al-Hiwar al-shii al-sunni al-Hurr* (*The Forum of Free Dialogue between Shiites and Sunnites*), are as a general rule well documented and draw their material from classical Shiite texts.

⁶⁴ This is the Shiite legal permission not to say the truth concerning one's faith and religious beliefs in order to evade the repressions of the non-Shiites, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), vol. X p. 134-136 (s.v. "Taqiyya", by R. Strothmann and Moktar Djebli).

⁶⁵ In *khutbat al-wada'* (the Prophet's sermon of farewell), the sources attribute to the Prophet this statement: "I have bequeathed two authorities – **thaqalan** – to the faithful that will protect them from all error: the Qur'an and the Sunna", according to the Sunnites, or "the Qur'an and the members of the Prophet's family", according to the Shiite sources.

⁶⁶ This series has disappeared from its original website, without any explanation given. Some articles belonging to the series continue to appear on other websites, such as *munṭada al-Hiwar al-shii al-sunni al-Hurr* in fnoor.com.

⁶⁷ This book attacks the Shiites, asserting that the Shi'a is nothing but a Jewish **Bid'a** (innovation). It blames the Shiites for practicing certain rites termed **qabahat mushina** (abominable and shameful actions). Some Sunnites reacted to this sentence by saying that this judicial decision is not surprising since "a third of the court was Shiite, and the remaining two thirds were Christians".

spicy and have a certain charm emanating from their bawdy and direct allusions to the *mut'a* (temporary marriage) and the sodomy of women, considered permissible by the Shiites though inadvisable (*makruha*). A perfect example is given by "Ayatullah al-Umma wa-Hujjatullah al-Baligha Abu Ishaq Ya'qub Ezra al-Amili" of Qumm. It appears that the latter was in Dearborn (Michigan), where he answered during two evenings questions put to him by Shiite students. All the questions concerned the *mut'a* (alrakiza.../forum messagepage.asp?userNo489, 05.05.2002). The real authors did not refrain from quoting at length obscene details bordering on pornography. Obviously, when reading the name Ya'qub Ezra, it is easy to guess the real objective of these falsifications: to show that Shiites and Jews are one and the same and that the Shiites, just like their brethren Jews, didn't spare any effort in disseminating hedonism, licentiousness and debauchery.

Another example is to be found on the same anti-Shiite website (fnoor) under two different names: 1) *Brutukulat Ayat Qumm hawla al-Haramayn al-Muqaddasayn (The Protocols of the Ayat of Qumm Concerning the Two Holy Cities [Mecca and Medina])*, whose author is Dr. 'Abd Allah al-Ghifari (www.layma.com/fnoor/fn0300.htm, 06.01.2002); 2) *Al-Khutba al-Sirriyya li-Ayat al-Shi'a fi Iran (The Secret Plan of the Shi'a Ayat in Iran)* with an introduction by Doctor 'Abd Al-Rahim Al-Balushi (www.fnoor/book13, 28.01.2002). This document is sometimes referred to as the "Protocol", a name which the readers or listeners will immediately associate with the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. No need to be particularly shrewd to guess that the same methods are attributed to Shiites and Jews in their plot to dominate the world. However, the above-mentioned *Khutba* is rather lenient with the Shiites. The latter considered that if you dominate the Muslim oil-producing countries, you in fact dominate half the world. This document lists the methods to be used in order to attain this objective: appear to be harmless and moderate and even willing to engage in dialogue; and at the same time do not spare your efforts to sow discord between those in power and the religious leaders. The Shiites should also use all the means at their disposal to undermine the economic stability and upset the social order of the countries they have set their eyes on, while encouraging the inhabitants of these countries to revel in debauchery, pornography and sexual pleasures. Finally, the Iranian masses should be incited to emigrate and work in these countries, thereby infiltrating subversive agents who would integrate into the various sectors of activity and buy real estate and commercial establishments for the use of Shiites who will immigrate to these countries in the future. The document describes in detail every clause and insists on the following point: fifty years are but a very short, and therefore insignificant, period in the history of peoples and religions. One should not forget that present-day Shiites assert that they are "the descendants of millions of martyrs who were assassinated by the sons of Satan disguised as Muslims" ("*nahnu warathat malayin al-shuhada'i lladhna qutilu bi-yad al-shayatin al-mut'aslimuna* (sic) *I-Sunna*", www.fnoor/book13, 28.01.02).

Finally, we have left for the end the richest and most scathing anti-Shiite source: the discussion forums on the Internet (*muntadayat*), held by activist Neo-Wahhabis. Among these, *Shabakat al-Difa' 'an al-Sunna (The Network for the Defense of the Sunna)* deserves to be mentioned: it has provided us with quite a lot of material for this article. These *muntadayat* report in detail real or fictitious accusations, complete or partial quotations, serious or vain discussions; everything goes, everything is permissible: the end justifies the means. These forums give unqualified or even ignorant people the occasion to participate in such polemics. They may thus express their opinions and disseminate ideas which have been widely held by the Sunni population, perhaps for centuries. Mockery is always present, since many of these arguments aim at ridiculing the Shiites. The Internet has thus succeeded in introducing into this controversy arguments pertaining to the local collective folklore of the Muslim world, rendering the negative and ridiculous characteristics of the Shi'a and the Shiites all the more prominent.

The Arguments against the Shiites

Certain formulas used by the Neo-Wahhabis to define the Shiites are utterly offensive, the Shiites being always the butt of mockery and described as odious creatures. We shall list in the following section the various accusations leveled against the Shiites or the Shi'a.

- "*Al-Shi'a hiya badhra nasraniyya gharasatha al-yahudiyya fi ard majusiyya*" ("The Shi'a is a Christian seed planted by Judaism on Zoroastrian land", islamicweb.com/arabic/shia/shia-jews-christians.htm). This definition constitutes the preamble to an article titled *Mushabahat al-Shi'a li-al-Yahud wa li-al-Nasara (The Resemblance between Shiites, Jews and Christians)*. The author explains this definition as follows: the founder of the Shi'a is a Jew: 'Abd Allah Ibn Saba' al-Yahudi;⁶⁸ he used the authority of 'Ali in his undertaking to falsify the Qur'an, just as Bulus (St. Paul) al-

⁶⁸ Concerning the historicity of this figure and the declaration attributed to him, according to which Ali b. Abu Talib is God, see al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa-l-nihal*, ed. Abd Al-Aziz al-Wakil, Cairo: 1968, vol. I, p. 174; *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), vol. I p. 51 (s.v. "Abd Allah b.

Yahudi used the authority of Jesus to alter Christianity.⁶⁹ The followers (Shi'a) of Ibn Saba' are the Persian Magi/Zoroastrians who hate Islam because it has destroyed their State. The author then quotes freely from the sayings of Ibn Taymiyya on the role of Ibn Saba' in the development of the Shi'a, in his work *Minhaj al-Sunna*. The **Husseiniyya** is considered by the Neo-Wahhabis as a church. The **Husseiniyya**, let us remind the reader, is an establishment where the Shiites' various religious and social activities take place, in particular the ceremonies of the **ta'ziya** in the '**Ashura**, i.e. the mourning celebrations for the killing of the Imam Hussein b. Ali in Karbala in 61/680. The reasons for associating it with a Church are the following rites, to mention only the most important ones:

- * The walls of these two types of buildings are decorated with images and paintings (icons).
- * That both churches and **Husseiniyyat** use choirs on various occasions shows well where the **Husseiniyyat** took their inspiration from;⁷⁰
- * The **Sayyids** (those whose genealogy is supposedly traced back to the Prophet Muhammad) perform in the **Husseiniyyat** certain tasks similar to those of the members of the clergy in a Church (www.alrakiza.com/ForumMessagePage.asp?UserNo=489..., 04.04.02).

Very often, the titles of the works or articles indicate that Shiites, Jews and Christians are one and the same. The sermon of the Shaykh 'Ali Ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayfi, the official orator of the Medina Mosque, on 15 Dhu al-Qa'da 1418 / 14.03.1998, when the **Hujjat al-Islam** 'Ali Akbar Hashimi Rafsanjani was present among the faithful, quoted the famous tradition: "*Akhriju al-Yahud wa-al-Nasara min jazirat al-'Arab*" ("expel all the Jews and Christians from Arabia"), attributed to the Prophet on his deathbed.⁷¹ On this particular occasion, this tradition was modified on the Internet by adding the term "*wa-al-Rawafid*" ("and the Shiites").⁷² The version obtained was the following: "*akhriju al-Yahud wa-al-Nasara wa-al-Rawafid min jazirat al-'Arab*". Thus, the **Rawafid** were transformed into **Dhimmi** (Jews and Christians) or into **Mushrikun** (polytheists),⁷³ and were excluded from Islam.

Regarding the third term of the above definition, i.e. the relations of the Shi'a with Zoroastrianism, let us mention only that certain writers, as well as the authors writing for the Internet, do not always make the distinction between the terms **Zandaqa**⁷⁴ and **Majusiyya – Zaradushtiyya**. Many articles and even booklets have been published to prove that such relations do indeed exist.⁷⁵ The same circles insist also on the connection between the **rafd** (the refutation of the legitimacy of the first three righteous Caliphs) and the **Zandaqa**. These accusations are commonly used in the various Islamic controversies against those who, on the face of it, appear to belong to the faithful but who in reality are infidels.⁷⁶ The Neo-Wahhabis often claim that even today the **Zanadiqa** use the **rafd** to disseminate their ideas and carry out their programs.⁷⁷ This accusation (Shi'a = **Zandaqa**) probably originates in the **Hadith** which is approved by Sunni scholars and which states: "Whoever assails the Companions of the Prophet is a **zindiq**" ("*idha ra'ayta al-rajul yatanaqqasu ahad min ashab al-rasul fa-a'lam annahu zindiq*").⁷⁸

One should note in this regard that the modern texts which establish links between the Shi'a and Zoroastrianism are very superficial and repeat the same attacks put forth in the Middle Ages, without providing any convincing material. The arguments most commonly used are the following:

- * The Imam Hussein Ibn 'Ali married a Persian princess. This marriage explains why the Shiites worship the descendants of al-Hussein only, and not those of his elder brother al-Hasan ("*Intisab al-rafida li-al-majus al-furs*").⁷⁹ Some Neo-Wahhabi activists quote experienced specialists of the Shi'a to give their accusations and the assimilation

Saba", by M.C.S. Hodgson). Nowadays, these discussions continue to be a focus of interest, see for example Salah al-din al-munajjid, *al-Sharq al-awsat* (London), 13.05.85 and the reply of Qasim al-Zuhayri, published in the same journal on 07.06.85.

⁶⁹ See also www.khayma.com/fnoor/fn0441.htm.

⁷⁰ One should not forget, in this respect, that the Wahhabiyya rejects categorically all pictorial representations of persons or living creatures, as well as music and songs.

⁷¹ See Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'ummal*, Hyderabad: 1953, vol. IV, p. 323, number 2409.

⁷² It should be noted that in his sermon, Al-Hudhayfi had mentioned the tradition without any addition. The adding of the term "al-rawafid" was decided by the administrators of the Salafi website who gave Rafsanjani the title "**Imam al-Adalala**" ("the imam of deviation").

⁷³ A more general version of this tradition calls for the expulsion of all polytheists from Arabia ("*akhriju al-mushrikun min jazirat al-'Arab*"), *Musnad Abu Ya'la al-Mawili*, ed. Hussein Salim Asad, Damascus-Beirut : 1985, vol. I p. 298, number 2409.

⁷⁴ Concerning the different meanings of this term and its use through the ages, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), vol. p. (s.v. "Zindi", by F. C. de Blois).

⁷⁵ See, for example, Abd Allah Al-Gharib, *Wa-ja'a dawr al-majus (At Last, the Turn of the Zoroastrians Has Come)*, or the article "al-Shi'a... al-furs... al-majus... hal hunaka alaq?" ("The Shiites... The Persians... The Zoroastrians... Is There a Connection?"), at www.fnoor/fn0226. The adjective **al-majus** is often added to the noun **al-rafida**, see www.khayma.com/fnoor/fn0336, 20.06.02.

⁷⁶ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), vol. V pp. 1110-1117 (s.v. "Madjus", by M. Morony).

⁷⁷ www.khayma.com/fnoor/fn0441, 08.05.02.

⁷⁸ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *al-Isaba fi tamyiz al-Sahaba*, ed. Adil Ahmad Abd Al-Mawjud and others, Beirut: 1995, vol. I, p. 22, quoting Abu Zur'a Al-Razi.

⁷⁹ islamicweb.com/arabic/shia/shia_R-persians.

Shiites/ Persian Zoroastrians a semblance of legitimacy. Thus, for example, the anonymous author mentioned above quotes A. Amir-Moezzi,⁸⁰ and adds the paraphrase of Verse 26 of Sura 12 (Yusuf): "*Hadhihi shahadatu shahidin min ahliha*" ("and here is the testimony of a witness from her family"), an expression usually used to indicate that these words are pronounced by opponents who condemn ***him***;

* The Shiites celebrate the **Nowruz** (the New Year for the Persians, in Arabic **Nayruz**);

* Even today, The Shiites still celebrate the murder of the Caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab in the year 23/644 by a **mawla** (a client) of Al-Mughira Ibn Shu'ba, of Persian descent, known under the name of Abu Lu'lu';⁸¹ Some Shiites confer him the title of Baba Shuja' al-Din.⁸² All this goes to "prove" the existence of a Zoroastrian "conspiracy" aimed at avenging the destruction of the Sassanid Empire.

The clauses of these polemics are manifold; all are meant to lead the reader to one obvious conclusion: the Shiites are either renegades (**kuffar**), or heretical innovators (**ashab bid'a, mubtadi'un**). The Neo-Wahhabis like to repeat that "whoever claims that the Vulgate – the present version of the Qur'an – has been altered (*muharrat*) or that the Companions of the Prophet, who are praised in the Qur'an (*al-Sahaba al-ladhina zakkahum al-Qur'an*), are renegades – whoever claims that is himself a renegade". The Neo-Wahhabis base their arguments on traditions attributed to the Prophet or on opinions expressed by many Hanbali and Wahhabi Doctors and exegetes. They often quote Ibn Taymiyya, but also other authors from the Middle Ages and from modern times who belong to all the legal schools (without mentioning the sources) such as Malik b. Anas, Ahmad b. Hanbal, Al-Bukhari, Ibn Qutayba, Ibn Hazm, Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, al-Qadi Ilyad, 'Ali al-Qari, Ibn Kathir, Al-Sam'ani, Bahjat al-Bitar, Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Mustafa al-Siba'i, Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, Rashid Rida, etc.⁸³

Having reached this point, the Sunni polemics raise the problem of the Shiites' status. The question many Sunni authors ask is the following: should all Shiites be considered as **kuffar** or should not one rather accept the position of the moderate Sunni authors who consider that only the Shiite *'ulama* are **kuffar**, while an ordinary Shiite (*a'wammuhum*) is simply a heretical innovator (**mubtadi'**)?⁸⁴

To sum up, we should note that the question of the Imamate has also been addressed in these polemics: according to the Wahhabis, the Shiites have committed perjury because they have endowed Ali and the other Imams with supernatural, almost divine faculties, as guides in the path of rectitude. Literally, "they are polytheists and total apostates who deserve to be executed" ("*hadha shirk akbaru wa-ridda 'an al-Islam yastahiqquna al-qatl 'alayha*").⁸⁵

- Finally, the members of this Community are the target of other grave accusations, every possible sin on earth being dumped on them. The Neo-Wahhabis do not fail to point out that certain proverbs related to treachery, avarice and lying refer to the Shiites ("*madrib al-mathal fi-al-ghadr wa-al-bukhl wa-al-kadhib*"). They base their arguments on stories told by the traditional adversaries of the Shi'a. We shall mention some of them:

* The Shiites are the biggest liars on earth, according to Ibn Taymiyya. The Neo-Wahhabis often quote the following sentence, which they attribute to Ibn Taymiyya, without even bothering to indicate an exact source: "*subhana man khalaqa al-kadhib wa-a'ta tis'at a'sharihi li-al-Rawafida*" ("blessed be He who created lying and who gave the Rafida nine tenths of it").⁸⁶ To illustrate this accusation, they recount the following anecdote: Muhammad Ibn Idris, the **warraq** (librarian) of al-Humaydi (died 219/834) tells, following the traditionalists of Medina: "We have fabricated 70 traditions to put to test the Iraqi traditionalists. We sent them to Kufa and to Basra. The traditionalists of Basra sent them back to us, refusing them point-blank because all were faked; the Kufites sent them back after fabricating an **isnad** (transmission chain) for each tradition".⁸⁷ Let us point out in this regard that Basra was a Sunni center of intense intellectual activity while the activity in Kufa was more monolithic and Shiite-oriented.

⁸⁰ The author did not mention any specific research work by Mr. Amir-Moezzi. Perhaps he refers to his article "Shahrbanu, Dame du pays d'Iran et mère des imams", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), pp. 497-549.

⁸¹ Muhammad Mal Allah, *Yawm al-ghufran, ihtifal al-rafida bi-maqtal Omar b. al-Khattab (The Day of Atonement, the Celebration of the Murder of Omar b. al-Khayttab by the Rafida)*, www.khayma.com/fnoor/fn0936.htm, 11.11.01.

⁸² islamicweb.com/arabic/shia/shia_R_persians.htm, 06.10.02; www.pureislam.org/montada/showthread.php?s=86d7a3944c22cbc, 28.03.04.

⁸³ arabic.islamicweb.com/shia/dialog.htm, 25.12.2001; for a partial but well annotated survey comprising the opinions of certain Muslim doctors, see. E. Kohlberg, "Some Imami Shii views on the Sahaba", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), pp. 143-175 (particularly pp. 143-144, 171-175).

⁸⁴ khayma.com/fnoor/fn0189, 26.05.1999; see also the article "Hal nukaffiru Umum al-Shi'a? " ("Do We Consider all Shiites to be renegades?"), www.fnoor/fno0148, where the author quotes Abu Mansur Al-Baghdadi, *Al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, p. 37.

⁸⁵ khayma.com/fnoor/fn0417, 16.06.99.

⁸⁶ www.d-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?s, 08.07.03.

⁸⁷ www.d-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?s, 08.07.03, quoting al-Hafiz Al-Haliki, *al-Irshad*, vol. I, p. 421; al-Humaydi was well known for his hostility towards the 'Ulamas of Iraq, see Al-Hafiz Al-Humaydi, *al-Musnad*, ed. Habib al-Rahman al-Azami, Beirut: 1382/1962, p. 7 of the publisher's introduction.

* The Shiites have become masters in the art of treachery (*ghadr*). Their ancestors betrayed the following great figures: (1) Al-Hasan Ibn 'Ali in Sabat al-Mada'in just before the battle against the Syrian army of Mu'awiya Ibn Abu Sufyan in 40/661; (2) Al-Hussein Ibn 'Ali was invited by them to Kufa to rebel against the Caliph Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya (reigned 60-64/680-683); they sided however with the Umayyad force, resulting in his martyrdom at Karbala in 61/680; (3) Zayd Ibn 'Ali Ibn al-Hussein was abandoned by his troops and then crucified by the Umayyad governor Yusuf b. Omar in 122/740.⁸⁸ Using the pseudonym "Khalid Ahl al-Sunna", the inspector of the "Islamic Dialog" on the website *Al-Difa' 'an al-Sunna (The Defense of the Sunna)* adds: "such were the ancestors of the Shiites, how spiteful they are and how spiteful their descendants are!" ("*ha'ula'i kanu al-Shi'a al-aslaf, fa-bi'sa al-salaf salafuhum wa-bi'sa al-khalaf khalafuhum*").

* The Shiites work hand in hand with the Freemasons when occupied with arms and narcotics deals.⁸⁹ In their internal fights, the Shiites themselves accuse their opponents of being members of Freemasons' lodges. Thus, the sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadl Allah, one of the most notorious Lebanese Shiite leaders, is described by his ideological enemies as a "well-implanted agent of the British Intelligence Service and a veteran of the Freemasons' lodges" ("*amma Fadlullah fa-'amil mu'attaq li-al-mukhabarat al-Baritaniyya wa-'unsur asil fi-al-Masuniyya*").⁹⁰ In the eyes of the Islamic fundamentalist circles, this accusation is very serious indeed since the Freemasons have been considered by these circles, for more than half a century, as the agents of "world Judaism" and as bitter enemies of Islam.⁹¹

The Mutual Relations between the Shi'a and Judaism

The relations between certain Shiite traditions and Judaism have not yet been thoroughly studied: Israel Friedlander,⁹² Georges Vajda,⁹³ and Shlomo Pines⁹⁴ have touched the topic without analyzing it in depth. More recently, Meir Bar-Asher has published two important articles on the place occupied by Jews and Judaism in the religious literature of the ancient Shi'a.⁹⁵ In this presentation, we intend to examine this question from another angle, that of the anti-Shiite polemics.

The Shiites are accused by the Neo-Wahhabis of having been influenced by the Jews or of behaving like Jews. The question of the authenticity of these accusations will not be examined: they have been uttered by doctors who went no further than simply mentioning the insulting attribute of Jew. We know that since the dawn of Islam, one of the most humiliating insults consisted in calling a Muslim a Jew.⁹⁶

This insult is legitimized when referring to the literature of the exegesis where it is said that being a Jew means belonging to the category of the *maghdub 'alayhim*, who are the objects of Allah's wrath (Qur'an 1: 7), and to that of the *al-mufsiduna fi-al-ard* – those who do their utmost to sow scandal on earth (5:64; 17:4). Moreover, say the Neo-Wahhabis in this context, this accusation is plainly justified since the Shiites, so they claim, belong to a heretic sect founded by a former Jew, Ibn Saba'. These are trivial and threadbare arguments which have been used for ages. However, we would like to draw the attention to an original contribution from modern times which has been enthusiastically endorsed by the Neo-Wahhabis: the Hebraic title *Hakham* (Rabbi, especially among Oriental Jews) is now being used to designate the great leaders of the Shi'a. It seems that the term has been accepted by certain Salafi, anti-Shiite activists. One can thus find on the forums of the Internet the following word combinations: "*kibar Hakhamat al-Shi'a*" or "*Hakhamatum al-ma'suma*" ("the great Rabbis of the Shiites", or "their infallible Rabbis").^{***}

⁸⁸ www.d-sunnah.net/forum: *Rawafid al-kufa madrib al-mathal fi al-ghadr*, 28.03.03.

⁸⁹ *IqA'U* (bulletin published in London by a group calling itself *Rabitat ahl al-sunna fi Iran*, *** of the Sunnite Iranians), 03.05.2002: *Al-Masuniyya fi khidmat dawlat al-tashayyu' wa-wilayat al-faqih (Freemasonry at the Service of the Shi'a State and of the Government of the Doctors of Religious Law)*.

⁹⁰ fnoor/fn0051, 29.01.2002. This accusation is quoted on an anti-Shiite website, but one needs only to read what is written against Fadl Allah on the websites close to Ayatollah Al-Uzma Al-Sistani, the great Shiite religious leader of Iraq, to get an idea of the internal struggles within the Shi'a.

⁹¹ See for example, the additions by one of the translators in Arabic of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Ajaj Nuwayhid, (no place of publication specified), 1967, vol. I, p. 22, explaining that the "Jews consist of Kabalists, Talmudists, Freemasons, and Zionists who are all made of the same stuff". See also the pamphlets of the Turkish general JawAd Rif'at Atilhan that have been widely translated and distributed among Islamist circles; the article: "Hum al-Yaduww fa-Hdharuhum – al-masuniyya", in *Filastin al-muslima*, Manchester: February 1986, pp. 21-23.

⁹² "The Heterodoxies of the Shiites according to Ibn Hazm", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 28 (1907), *** pp. 1-80 and 29 (1908), pp. 1-183***; idem, "Jewish Arabic Studies", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 2 (1912), pp. 481-561 and 3 (1912), pp. 235-300.

⁹³ "De quelques emprunts d'origine juive dans le Hadith Shiite", in *Studies in Judaism and Islam* (ed. S. Morag and others), Jerusalem: 1981, pp. 45-53.

⁹⁴ "Shiite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's Kuzari", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* II (1980), pp. 165-251.

⁹⁵ "The Place of Judaism and Jews in the Religious Literature of the Ancient Shi'a" (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry*, Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1993, pp. 16-36; "Banu Isra'il ka-anmat awwaliyya li-al-Shi'a" ("The Children of Israel as Prototypes of the Shiites"), *al-Karnil: studies in Arabic Language and Literature*, Haifa: University of Haifa, vol. 18-19 (1997-8), pp. 49-61.

⁹⁶ The Ummayyads and their auxiliaries called the *Ansar* Jews, see for example the letter of Mu'awiya b. Abu Sufyan to the chief ansari Qays b. Sa'd b. 'Ubada in al-Baladhuri, *Ansab al-ashraf*, ed. M. Schloessinger and M.J. Kister, Jerusalem: 1971, vol. IVa, p. 26.

Finally, concerning Jews and Shiites, one should mention a detail from the Imamate eschatology which is derided by these same circles: it is said that the Twelfth Imam will appear before the end of time to take his revenge on all those who have maltreated 'Ali, his descendents and his followers. He is described as "*kalb Yahudi ibn Yyahudi*".***

Appendix

In the name of Allah, the Merciful and the Compassionate,
I, Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz Ibn 'Abd al-Rahman of the House of Faisal of the House of Saud, acknowledge and admit a thousand times to Sir Percy Cook, representative of Great Britain, that I have no objection to giving Palestine to the Jews or to others, as Britain sees fit. I will never disobey Britain until Judgment Day.