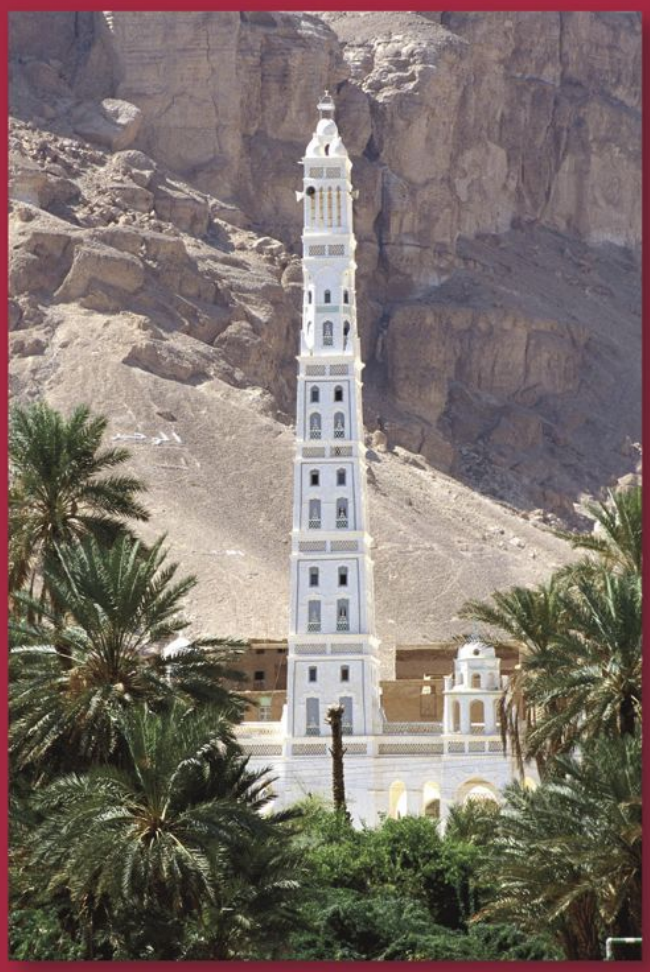
# The Bā ʿAlawī Sufis of the Hadhramawt Valley

## *A Premodern Intellectual and Social History (317–992/929–1583)*



OMAR EDAIBAT

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The Bā ʿAlawī Sufis of the Hadhramawt Valley

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*By*

Omar Edaibat

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أَوَمَا عَلِمْتَ بِأَنَّنَا أَهْلُ الوَفَا
ومُحِبُّنَا مَا زَالَ تَحْتَ لِوَانَا

نَحْنُ الكِرَامُ فَمَنْ أَتَانَا قَاصِدَا
نَالَ السَّعَادَةَ عِنْدَمَا يَلْقَانَا

Do you not know that we are people of honor,
and that the one who loves us will always be under our banner?

We are generous people so whoever comes to us
seeking will attain felicity when he meets us.

SHAYKH ABŪ BAKR B. SĀLIM

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# Contents

# Acknowledgements

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work, and to all my family, especially my parents, for their love and encouragement and for bearing my long absences and many shortcomings along the way. I certainly would not have made it this far without their unwavering love and prayers.

# Figures


FIGURE 1 Map of Yemen & Hadhramawt
SOURCE: NATIONS ONLINE PROJECT

# Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed a steady academic interest in the Bā ʿAlawī *sāda*[1] (sing. *sayyid*) of Yemen's Hadhramawt valley and their large diasporic communities across much of the Indian Ocean region, with a wealth of historical and anthropological studies focusing on the social and political history of Hadhramawt since the 19th century,[2] the Hadhrami system of social stratification,[3] and on various communities or figures within the well-established ʿAlawī diaspora.[4] While this is the case, the Banū ʿAlawīs' origins and their Sufi tradi-

1 The Banū ʿAlawīs are more commonly identified with the patronymic Bā ʿAlawī, where 'Bā' identifies the children of a common descendant in the Hadhrami colloquial. As for the title of *sayyid* (pl. *sāda*), or the less common *sharīf* (pl. *ashrāf*), these are typically used to distinguish the Ahl al-Bayt, the progeny of the two grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad (Ḥasan and Ḥusayn) through his daughter Fāṭima, from the remaining descendants of Imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who are collectively referred to as the ʿAlawīs or Ṭālibīs. While a further distinction was employed in later centuries in the Hejaz, with the *ashrāf* designating more specifically the descendants of Imam Ḥasan and the *sāda* referring to the descendants of Imam Ḥusayn, both titles continue to remain coterminous in other contexts. See van Arendonk, C. and W.A. Graham, "Sharīf," in *EI*[2], ix (1997), 329–337. As for the Banū ʿAlawīs of Hadhramawt, the patronymic ʿAlawī in this case refers back to the progenitor of the Bā ʿAlawī tribe, Imam ʿAlawī b. ʿAbdallāh (d. 412/1021?). For more on him and the *sāda*'s ancestral origins, see ch. 1.

2 For a representative body of scholarship on Hadhramawt's social and political transformations over the last two centuries, see Freitag, Ulrike, *Indian Ocean migrants and state formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the homeland*, Leiden: Brill, 2003; Hartwig, Friedhelm, "Expansion, state foundation and reform: The contest for power in Hadhramaut in the nineteenth century," in Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith (eds.), *Hadhrami traders, scholars, and statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 35–50; Boxberger, Linda, *On the edge of empire: Hadhramawt, emigration, and the Indian Ocean, 1880s–1930s*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002; Brehony, Noel (ed.), *Hadhramaut and its diaspora: Yemeni politics, identity and migration*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2017; Lekon, Christian, *Time, space and globalization: Hadhramaut and the Indian Ocean rim 1863–1967*, Gleichen: Muster-Schmidt, 2014; Collins, Brinston B., *Ḥaḍramawt: Crisis and intervention, 1866–1881*, Princeton (PhD Diss.): Princeton University, 1969.

3 Aside from the insightful introductory essay by Serjeant, Robert B., *The saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt*, London: SOAS, University of London, 1957, a pioneering work on the Hadhrami system of social stratification can be found in Bujra, Abdalla S., *The politics of stratification: A study of political change in a South Arabian town*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. Bujra's findings on the rigidity of the social system in the valley are more recently questioned in Camelin, Sylvaine, "Reflections on the system of social stratification in Hadhramawt," in Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith (eds.), *Hadhrami traders, scholars, and statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 147–156. See discussion in ch. 3.

4 For two seminal studies concerning the ʿAlawī diaspora, see Bang, Anne K., *Sufis and scholars of the sea: Family networks in East Africa, 1860–1925*, London: Routledge, 2003; Ho, Engseng,

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tion in Hadhramawt, which constitutes the largest and most influential spiritual tradition in the valley today, remains poorly understood, and a more comprehensive premodern history focusing on their major contributions to Hadhrami Sufism remains to be written, a lacuna that this work hopes to address.

As such, this study aims to provide a comprehensive account of the relatively neglected premodern social and intellectual history of the Banū ʿAlawīs in Hadhramawt from the migration of their ancestor Imam Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā (d. 345/956) to the valley in the early 10th century up to the life and legacy of their major saintly authority of the 16th century Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). As perhaps the *sāda*'s greatest exponent of philosophical Sufism (*ḥaqāʾiq* ), Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim in many ways represents a high point in the evolution of the *sāda*'s intellectual Sufi tradition, which begins to undergo some significant adaptations throughout the 17th and early 18th centuries under the leadership of their celebrated scholarly authority Imam ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1132/1720),[5] largely in response to renewed social, political, and intellectual challenges.

As a prolific author whose towering intellectual and spiritual legacy marks him as perhaps the most significant reviver (*mujaddid*) and reformer of the Bā ʿAlawī tradition of the last three centuries, Imam ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥaddād marks a new phase in the evolution of Hadhrami Sufism, anticipating the seismic transformations of colonial modernity and the internal challenge of Wahhabism, with the emergence of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792) in the Arabian Peninsula during his lifetime. While his spiritual and intellectual contributions remain generally understudied within the academe, his exclusion from this broad historical survey seems justified by the more basic and preliminary objectives of this study, which are to revisit and interrogate our academic understanding of the early *sāda* and offer a more comprehensive account of their origins and premodern social and intellectual history within the valley.

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*The graves of Tarim: Genealogy and mobility across the Indian Ocean*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. See also the essays in Freitag, Ulrike and William G. Clarence-Smith (eds.), *Hadhrami traders, scholars, and statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s*, Leiden: Brill, 1997; Abushouk, Ahmed Ibrahim and Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim (eds.), *The Hadhrami diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity maintenance or assimilation?*, Leiden: Brill, 2009.

5 For more on this major Hadhrami Sufi authority, whose impact on the intellectual and spiritual legacy of Yemeni and Hadhrami Sufism remains markedly understudied, see these English and Arabic works by one of the *sāda*'s most distinguished contemporary disciples: al-Badawi, Mostafa, *Sufi sage of Arabia: Imam ʿAbdallah ibn ʿAlawi al-Haddad*, Louisville, MD: Fons Vitae, 2005; al-Badawī, Muṣṭafā Ḥasan, *al-Imām al-Ḥaddād: Mujaddid al-qarn al-thānī ʿashar al-hijrī*, n.p.: Dār al-Ḥāwī, 1994. See also the relatively recent doctoral study of Elmasry, Shadee Mohamed, *Daʿwa in Islamic thought: The work of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād*, London (PhD Diss.): SOAS, University of London, 2017.

Given the dearth of scholarly engagements on their premodern history, and on Hadhramawt's scholarly tradition more generally, this contribution aims to offer a more complete appraisal of the *sāda*'s intellectual Sufi tradition, situating it within the wider intellectual and scholarly currents of Yemen and the Hejaz. Successfully attempting such a premodern historical account of the *sāda*'s spiritual tradition would thus necessitate contextualizing the origins of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa* within the broader historical emergence of organized Sufism in the 12th century, while also accounting for the social, economic, and political forces that have informed its evolution as a distinctly Hadhrami Sufi tradition.

Indeed, the tendency to study Islamic intellectual history in isolation from the wider social and political forces that serve to constrain and inform the textual genealogies and evolution of diverse Muslim scholarly traditions remains a recurring concern within the field of Islamic historiography. As R.S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke observe, for many "scholars of classical and medieval Islam, Sufism is studied as mystical philosophy," while "in modern Islamic historiography, Sufism is used *de facto* either as a synonym for popular Islam or for its organizational manifestations in the brotherhoods." As they therefore suggest, to move beyond this narrow dichotomy requires "a greater degree of scholarly convergence between text and context,"[6] or in other words, striking a delicate balance between the historiographical desiderata of intellectual and social history.

This recurring concern is further echoed by Erik S. Ohlander in his rich contextualized study of the major Sufi authority Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) and his contributions to the emergence of organized Sufism in the 12th/13th century. As he argues in his observations on Hodgson's and Trimingham's historical accounts on the rise and evolution of the early *ṭarīqa* lineages, both influential accounts overlook a number of important sociopolitical forces at play, "among others the systematic patronage of the ruling class, which both encouraged and allowed for the construction, maintenance, and perpetuation of such a system and, in particular, the close ties which obtained between the culture of the *ʿulamāʾ*, the transmission of religious learning, and the praxis of the Sufi *ribāṭs* and *khānaqāhs* in major urban centers."[7] This lacuna highlights for Ohlander the greater need for contextualized historical studies of the main actors who participated in the rise of organized

6 O'Fahey, R.S. and Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism reconsidered," in *Der Islam* 70.1 (1993), 54.

7 Ohlander, Erik S., *Sufism in an age of transition: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and the rise of the Islamic mystical brotherhoods*, Leiden: Brill, 2008, 6.

Sufism and for their comparison as case studies in ways that take into consideration "the broader sweep of their historical moments" and "the social, political, institutional, religious, and textual genealogies informing them."

To date there are no significant comprehensive historical studies on the ʿAlawī *sāda* and the premodern history of Hadhrami Sufism. Muhammad Ali Aziz's *Religion and history in early Islam* is a welcome and important study on the early Sufism of premodern Yemen, focusing especially on the spiritual and intellectual legacy of one of its greatest premodern Sufi authorities, Shaykh Aḥmad b. ʿAlwān (d. 665/1266). While insightful in many respects, his historical focus remains mostly on developments in the western highlands of Yemen and the Tihāma, which have traditionally been home to the country's ruling dynasties and its intellectual and cultural capitals, such as Taʿizz, and Zabīd. As such, his survey of Sufi developments in the eastern Hadhrami interior, historically regarded as a rural cultural and intellectual backwater, remains relatively marginal to his study.[8]

Anne K. Bang's *Sufis and scholars of the sea* and Engseng Ho's *The graves of Tarim* are two noteworthy and penetrating studies on members of the widely diffused ʿAlawī diaspora and their migratory patterns and scholarly networks across the Indian Ocean, with significant forays into the *sāda*'s early history in Hadhramawt. However, as to be expected, given their scope and diasporic focus, their overviews of the *sāda*'s early intellectual and social history in the valley, while more helpful for our purposes, are far from comprehensive.[9] This study, by contrast, focuses on the *sāda's* social and intellectual history in Hadhramawt, while the diaspora and their migrations are addressed to the extent of their bearing on developments in the Hadhrami homeland.

Other notable academic forays into the state of Hadhrami historiography include the pioneering efforts of Robert B. Serjeant and the more recent contributions of Alexander Knysh and Esther Peskes. Serjeant's scholarship in the mid-20th century helped pave the way for much of the contemporary academic

8 While he acknowledges the historical significance of the major Hadhrami Sufi figure of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam (d. 653/1255), the founder of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*, and the significant impact of his spiritual legacy on the religious history of premodern Yemen, his very brief survey of the ʿAlawī tradition remains far from satisfactory for our purposes. See Aziz, Muhammad Ali, *Religion and mysticism in early Islam: Theology and Sufism in Yemen*, London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2011, 36, 196–199.

9 The ʿAlawī diaspora and their migratory patterns across the Indian Ocean region have been the subject of considerable scholarly interest in more recent decades. See n. 4 above. For another brief yet insightful historical survey of their migrations across this vast geographical region, see al-Qaḍmānī, Muḥammad Yāsir, *al-Sāda Āl Abī ʿAlawī wa-ghayḍ min fayḍ aqwālihim al-sharīfa wa-aḥwālihim al-munīfa*, Syria: Dār Nūr al-Ṣabāḥ, 2014, 286–327.

scholarship on Hadhramawt. His short yet informative monograph *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt*, based on a 1956 lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and his historiographic and ethnographic fieldwork in the valley, in which he attempted to appraise the condition and scope of Hadhramawt's primary materials by providing an annotated catalogue of the major surviving MSS of its historic libraries, are no doubt valuable scholarly resources for the contemporary historian.[10] On the other hand, Knysh's "The Sāda in history"[11] offers a critical and bleak reflection on the current state of Hadhrami historiography in which he questions the nature of the *sāda*'s intellectual Sufi tradition and our ability to reconstruct an accurate account of their early history, while Peskes's German study *al-ʿAidarūs und seine Erben*[12] remains perhaps the most informative and detailed academic study on the early ʿAlawīs to date, focusing on the intellectual and social history of their famous ʿAydarūs clan more specifically.

In addition to building on the insights, questions, and concerns of such secondary scholarship as its point of departure, this study also consults other significant and occasionally overlooked contributions by modern Arab historians of Hadhramawt. Thus, Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥāmid's *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt* (*The history of Hadhramawt*) is perhaps the most ambitious social and political history of

10 For his two studies surveying the current state of Hadhrami MSS, see Serjeant, Robert B., "Materials for South Arabian history: Notes on new MSS from Ḥadramawt," in *BSOAS* 13.2 (1950), 281–307 and Serjeant, Robert B., "Materials for South Arabian history: Notes on new MSS from Ḥadramawt (Part II)," in *BSOAS* 13.3 (1950), 581–601. These are henceforth cited as "Materials I" and "Materials II." For his more detailed assessment of the general state of Hadhrami historiography, see Serjeant, Robert. B., "Historians and historiography of Ḥaḍramawt," in *BSOAS* 25.1/3 (1962), 239–261.

11 Knysh, Alexander, "The Sāda in history: A critical essay on Ḥaḍramī historiography," in *JRAS* 9.2 (1999), 215–222. Based on his fieldwork in Hadhramawt, Knysh also authored a more recent study on the valley's modern Bā ʿAlawī tradition since the 1990 unification of Yemen, which offers a similarly bleak and pessimistic take on the current state of the *sāda*'s intellectual Sufi tradition. See Knysh, Alexander, "The 'tariqa' on a Landcruiser: The resurgence of Sufism in Yemen," in *The Middle East Journal* 55.3 (2001), 399–414.

12 Peskes, Esther, *al-ʿAidarūs und seine Erben: Eine Untersuchung zu Geschichte und Sufismus einer ḥaḍramitischen Sāda-Gruppe vom fünfzehnten bis zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005. Peskes also offers another insightful essay on the major ʿAlawī Sufi and patron saint of Aden, Imam Abū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs al-ʿAdanī in Peskes, Esther, "Der Heilige und die Dimension seiner Macht: Abū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs (gest. 1509) und die Saiyid-Sūfīs von Ḥaḍramaut," in *QSA* 13 (1995), 41–72. This celebrated Imam is the subject of chapter 6. For an English essay summarizing the conclusions of these two German studies, see also Peskes, Esther, "Sainthood as patrimony: ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAydarūs (d. 1461) and his descendants," in Alexandre Papas and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (eds.), *Family portraits with saints: Hagiography, sanctity, and family in the Muslim World*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020, 125–157.

Hadhramawt written to date, offering the researcher much valuable information drawn from the valley's surviving historical MSS, while Muḥammad Ibn Hishām's *Tārīkh al-dawla al-Kathīriyya* (*The history of the Kathīrī state*) constitutes what is perhaps the most complete political history of the Kathīrī sultanate, with important details on its rulers and their extensive relations with the ʿAlawī *sāda*. Furthermore, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Shāṭirī's less ambitious *Adwār al-tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī* (*The phases of Hadhrami history*) offers important complementary insights for another helpful comparison. As for ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād, who is widely regarded among Arab historians as the modern father of Hadhrami historiography, two works worthy of mentioning here are his *Janī al-shamārīkh: Jawāb as'ila fī l-tārīkh* (*Harvesting the date clustered stalks: responses to questions in* [*Hadhrami*] *historiography*), which displays his unrivaled encyclopedic knowledge of the valley, its tribes, and early history in its responses to probing questions in the field of Hadhrami historiography, and his *ʿUqūd al-almās* (*The diamond necklaces*), which though technically a work of hagiography, offers lengthy and valuable forays into the *sāda*'s history and intellectual tradition.[13] In addition to this highly insightful Arabic secondary literature, we may also mention the helpful contributions of the modern ʿAlawī scholar and biographer of the *sāda* Ḥabīb Abū Bakr al-Mashhūr, who's accessible series of biographical monographs profiling the lives of major ʿAlawī saints, among other historically significant Hadhrami figures, can be found published under the relatively popular series Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramaut.

More importantly, for my primary sources, I rely heavily on historical chronicles, travel memoirs, and the traditional hagiographic (*manāqib*) and biographical (*tarājim*) works on the *sāda*, the two most authoritative and comprehensive of which are perhaps Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Khirid's[14] (d. 960/1553) *Ghurar al-bahā' al-ḍawī* (*The resplendent highlights of luminous beauty*) and Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr al-Shillī's (d. 1132/1720) *al-Mashraʿ al-rawī* (*The quenching*

13 For these works, see al-Ḥāmid, Ṣāliḥ, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2 vols., Sanaʿa: Maktabat al-Irshād, 2003; al-Shāṭirī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar, *Adwār al-tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2 vols., Tarīm: Dār al-Muhājir, 1994; al-Ḥaddād, ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir, *Janī al-shamārīkh: Jawāb as'ila fī l-tārīkh*, ed. Muḥammad Yaslam ʿAbd al-Nūr, Tarīm: Tarīm lil-Dirāsat wa-l-Nashr, 2012; al-Ḥaddād, ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir, *ʿUqūd al-almās bi-manāqib shaykh al-ṭarīqa al-Ḥabīb Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAṭṭās*, Tarīm: Tarīm lil-Dirāsat wa-l-Nashr, n.d.; Ibn Hishām, Muḥammad, *Tārīkh al-dawla al-Kathīriyya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Jifrī, Tarīm: Tarīm lil-Dirāsat wa-l-Nashr, 2002.

14 Both Serjeant and Peskes spell the family name as 'Kharid,' which is correctly pronounced as 'Khirid.' See al-Maqḥafī, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, *Muʿjam al-buldān wa-l-qabā'il al-Yamaniyya*, 2 vols., i, Sanaʿa: Dār al-Kalima, 2002, 565.

*watering place*).[15] Upon examining these primary sources, a major recurring concern is their relatively late authorship. Indeed, the dearth of earlier near-contemporaneous sources on the lives of the ʿAlawī *sāda* and their settlement in the valley poses a challenge for historians seeking a more complete and accurate understanding of their premodern religious life in Hadhramawt. Nearly all of the surviving biographical sources consulted for this study were composed between the 15th and 17th centuries, and most of these were authored by the ʿAlawīs themselves. Indeed, as Knysh and Serjeant have noted, the 15th century appears to be generally a terminus a quo with respect to pertinent biographical accounts (mostly hagiographic *manāqib*) and chronicles, among other relevant historical materials.[16] The general neglect of manuscripts, exacerbated by infestations from the voracious white ant, in addition to the generally low rates of literacy among the valley's predominantly rural population[17] and the Wahhabi invasion of 1224/1809, appear to have collectively contributed to the destruc-

15 See Khirid, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī, *Ghurar al-bahāʾ al-ḍawī wa-durar al-jamāl al-badīʿ al-bahī fī dhikr al-aʾimma al-amjād wa-l-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿārifīn al-nuqqād wa-l-fuqahāʾ al-mubrizīn al-asyād min Banī l-Shaykh Baṣrī wa-Banī l-Shaykh Jadīd wa-Banī al-Shaykh ʿAlawī Banī al-Shaykh ʿAbdallāh b. al-Shaykh Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-ashrāf al-Ḥusayniyyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī Ibn Sālim b. ʿAlawī Khirid, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2002; al-Shillī, Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, *al-Mashraʿ al-rawī fī manāqib al-sāda al-kirām Āl Abī ʿAlawī*, Egypt: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿĀmira al-Sharafiyya, 1901. For an extensive discussion on these and other primary historiographical sources consulted for this study, see ch. 4.

16 "My considered opinion, based on a cursory examination of MSS., is that Ḥaḍramī MSS … 500 years old, do not exist." Serjeant, "Materials I" 283. The most relevant surviving biographical and historical sources noted by Knysh are al-Khaṭīb's (d. 855/1451) *al-Jawhar al-shaffaf*, al-Shaykh ʿAlī b. Abū Bakr al-Sakrān's (d. 895/1490) *al-Barqa al-mushīqa*, Shanbal's (d. 920/1514) *Tārīkh*, Khirid's (d. 960/1553) *al-Ghurar*, and al-Shillī's (d. 1093/1692) *al-Mashraʿ al-rawī*. Knysh, "The Sāda in history" 216. To this list, we may also add the following biographical and hagiographic works noted by Serjeant under slightly variant titles: ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bā Wazīr's (d. 15th century) *al-Tuḥfa al-nūrāniyya*, ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣāḥib al-Ḥamrā"s (d. 889/1484) *Fatḥ Allah al-Raḥīm al-Raḥmān*, Shaykh b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAydarūs's (d. 990/1582) *al-ʿIqd al-Nabawī wa-l-sirr al-Musṭafawī*, and ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Bā Shaybān's (d. 944/1537) *Tiryāq asqām al-qulūb al-wāfī*. Serjeant, "Materials I" 305; Serjeant, "Materials II" 583, 586, 588.

17 The valley's Bedouin and largely illiterate character (*ghalabat al-badāwa wa-l-jahl*) seems to be a dominant motif in much of the primary literature. See, for instance, the historian Bāhāʾ al-Dīn al-Jundī's remark in al-Saqqāf, ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr, *al-Barqa al-mushīqa fī dhikr libās al-khirqa al-anīqa*, eds. Ṭāhā Ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Maghribī et al., Egypt: Nafaqat al-Sayyid ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Sahl Jamal al-Layl, 1347/1928, 106. The eminent ʿAlawī historian ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād also observes that, to the exception of its principal towns such as Tarīm, Sayʾūn, and Shibām, Hadhramawt's largely uneducated and mostly rural population may serve to explain why Hadhrami histories and chronicles prior to the 16th century have not survived. Al-Ḥaddād, *Janī al-shamārīkh* 53–56.

tion of several important libraries and the loss of thousands of volumes in Tarīm, ʿĪnāt, and elsewhere.[18]

Another major concern with the surviving biographical works is their predominantly ʿAlawī authorship and their allegedly pro-*sāda* bias, in addition to their overwhelmingly hagiographic character, an idealized genre (*manāqib*) that is viewed to be inherently more susceptible to exaggeration and embellishment.[19] For Knysh, these works' pro-ʿAlawī accounts are so "riddled with underlying agendas and biases, which often hinge on considerations of genealogy and clannish honor," as to be patently unreliable.[20] His foray into the early historiography of Hadhramawt and his interpretation of the *sāda*'s historical materials is thus largely informed by a hermeneutic of suspicion, which at times appears to tilt towards the more critical and anti-ʿAlawī sentiments of the *sāda*'s modern Hadhrami detractors in the wake of the heated historiographical debates that were fueled by the ʿAlawī-Irshādī rivalries of the early 20th century.[21]

Knysh's generally pessimistic outlook on the historiography of Hadhramawt, which seems to be partly colored by his negative encounters during his fieldwork in the valley,[22] may be contrasted with Serjeant's more nuanced and pos-

18 Serjeant, "Materials I" 281–282.

19 With the exception of al-Khatīb's 15th century work *al-Jawhar al-shaffāf*, the remaining works noted by Knysh are authored by ʿAlawī scholars. Another surviving non-*sāda* work from the 16th century is the MS of Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Sulaymān al-Khaṭīb (d. 1025/1616) *Burd al-naʿīm fī manāqib khuṭabāʾ Tarīm*, which as a biographical work on the prominent *mashāyikh* family of Āl Khaṭīb is less relevant for this study.

20 Knysh, "The Sāda in History" 215.

21 "One may even find oneself in the camp of such critics of the *sada* as Ṣalāḥ al-Bakrī and the leadership of the Indonesian Irshad League, who denounced traditional *sāda* biography and history as a deliberate, calculated distortion of historical data that was driven by their insatiable desire to dominate and exploit the credulous and uneducated members of the other lineages." Knysh, "The Sāda in History" 218. For more on the ʿAlawī-Irshādī controversies of the early 20th century, see Motoki, Yamaguchi, "Debate on the status of *sayyid/sharīfs* in the modern era: The ʿAlawī-Irshādī dispute and Islamic reformists in the Middle East," in Morimoto Kazuo (ed.), *Sayyids and sharifs in Muslim societies: The living links to the Prophet*, London: Routledge, 2012, 49–71.

22 Thus, he describes his "shock" at the existence of illiterate *sāda* amongst the Bedouin rural tribes and at being "accosted by a persistent beggar in traditional *sayyid* garb." Knysh, "The *Sāda* in History" 217–218. The Banū ʿAlawīs are one of the largest and most diverse tribes in Hadhramawt today, consisting of at least 125 clans. Bā ʿAlawī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad and ʿAlī Bā Ṣabrīn, *Bughyat al-mustarshidīn fī talkhīṣ fatāwā baʿḍ al-aʾimma min al-ʿulamāʾ al-mutaʾkhkhirīn*, 4 vols., iv, Tarīm: Dār al-Faqīh, 2009, 480. Certainly, not all of these families took to the rigors of Sufi piety and scholarship, and indeed, a few of the *sāda's* clans in the rural areas took more readily to the ways of their surrounding Bedouin context.

itive assessment of the *sāda* and the quality of their modern scholarship.[23] Though not entirely uncritical, in his opinion, the ʿAlawīs have generally fared better than their modern detractors, largely "owing to their superior scholarship."[24] Perhaps, nowhere is this contrast more readily felt than in the lingering doubts concerning the authenticity of the ʿAlawīs' claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad. Not only does Knysh question the authenticity of the *sāda*'s Prophetic ancestry, which Peskes also considers to be a dubious claim, but he goes further to question the very historicity of their famed ancestor Imam Aḥmad al-Muhājir.[25] As for Serjeant, on the other hand, he displays no such concerns, for "despite the lack of early sources … there is no great reason to be suspicious of the descent of the Hadrami *saiyids*, for it is difficult in Arabia to support a spurious pedigree, the more so, of course, when financial considerations enter."[26] As Peskes thus concludes, while Serjeant reflects a clearly pro-*sāda* leaning, Knysh's reading of their history and motives is unduly critical. Though she acknowledges the limitations of the biographical sources and at times shares in Knysh's general concerns, she nevertheless recognizes their value in allowing for at least a partial reconstruction of the *sāda*'s social and intellectual history.[27]

Given the foregoing perspectives on the limitations of our primary sources, a major aim of this study is to revisit the questions they raise and to re-examine the reliability of the available hagiographic biographies, among other primary materials, in allowing us to reconstruct a more accurate and complete picture of the *sāda*'s premodern social and intellectual history. Here, it must be noted

23 Having visited Hadhramawt in the mid-20th century, Serjeant had the advantage of several personal encounters and fruitful exchanges with some of the *sāda's* most influential scholars and historians of the twentieth century. For a brief description of these encounters and his more sympathetic and positive take on the ʿAlawīs' scholarship, see Serjeant, "Historians" 252–257.

24 Serjeant, *The saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt* 28. As for his take on Ṣalāḥ al-Bakrī's controversial modern anti-*sāda* work *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt al-siyāsī*, "the historical section of the book, it must be confessed, is inaccurate in many matters of detail, and a number of refutations are in circulation …" Serjeant, "Historians" 250. For al-Bakrī's work, which reads more as a polemical history, see al-Bakrī, Ṣalāḥ, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt al-siyāsī*, 2 vols., Egypt: Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1936.

25 Knysh, "The Sāda in History" 218. Peskes also points to the absence of non-ʿAlawī sources confirming the historicity of al-Muhajir, a claim which, as we shall see in chapter 1, is far from accurate. See Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs* 23, 201.

26 Serjeant, *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt* 11.

27 Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs* 11–16. For a favorable English review of her German study, see Fuess, Albrecht, review of *Al-ʿAidarūs und seine Erben: Eine Untersuchung zu Geschichte und Sufismus einer ḥaḍramitischen Sāda-Gruppe vom fünfzehnten bis zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert* by Esther Peskes, in *JNES* 69.2 (2010), 283–284.

that other scholars have already successfully demonstrated that hagiographical materials can in fact be carefully mined in the service of historiography since most such materials are not exclusively concerned with the domain of the miraculous and the extraordinary, offering us a wealth of other valuable historical and biographical information.[28] John Renard, for instance, draws our attention to the helpful distinction between 'hagiography' and 'biohagiography'—while 'hagiographies' are focused on the spiritual and moral qualities of their subject, with a special focus on elements of the supernatural and the marvelous, 'biohagiographies' add significant information concerning their subject's personal, public, and political life.[29]

The primary hagiographic biographical sources consulted for this study would nearly all qualify to varying degrees as examples of 'biohagioaphies.' Upon their closer examination, the competing objectives and considerations of authority construction and the individual biases of their authors certainly played a role in the selection and presentation of their biographical subjects. Thus, Khirid's genealogical work *al-Ghurar*, for instance, selects its subjects primarily on the basis of their scholarly credentials and employs a clear conceptual distinction between its biographic (*tarājim*) and hagiographic (*manāqib*) content; it is thus divided in two main sections reflecting this distinction, with its individual subjects having two entries under each section respectively. Such an organizational distinction makes the work easier to navigate for the researcher as a valuable source of historiographical information.[30]

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28 Despite some of its drawbacks and limitations, Peskes's study on the ʿAydarūs family remains a helpful illustration of the overall value of the hagiographic genre for the field of Islamic historiography. For another powerful vindication of the use of hagiographic materials as an informative source of Sufi cultural history, see de Nicola, Bruno, "The ladies of Rūm: A hagiographic view of women in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Anatolia," in *Journal of Sufi Studies* 3.2 (2014), 132–156.

29 Renard, John, *Friends of God: Islamic images of piety, commitment, and servanthood*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, 241–242. For a useful study of the genre of hagiography, where elements of the spiritual, doctrinal, and supernatural are foregrounded above the factual and the biographical, see al-Kaisi, Meis, *Nine celebrated ascetics: A critical edition and a study of an extract of Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (336/948–430/1038) in two parts*, London (PhD Diss.): SOAS, University of London, 2006. For one of the most authoritative academic investigations of early Sufi biographical and hagiographic materials, see the two volumes of Gramlich, Richard, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums—Erster Teil: Scheiche des Westens* (Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission 42.1), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995; Gramlich, Richard, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums—Zweiter Teil: Scheiche des Ostens* (Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission 42.2), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996.

30 Cf. Bā Shaybān, ʿUmar b. Muḥammad, *Tiryāq asqām al-qulūb al-wafī fī dhikr ḥikāyāt al-sāda al-ashrāf*, MS The British Library, Oriental Manuscripts Collection Or 112, London,

Be that as it may, what can be gleaned from nearly all of our sources, including those composed by non-ʿAlawī members of the *mashāyikh* clans, is that the *sāda* are regularly portrayed as belonging to a social stratum of Hadhramawt's saintly and spiritual elite, who also possessed a distinct spiritual rank and blessing (*baraka*) on account of their noble Prophetic lineage, which has historically served to strengthen their image as uniquely positioned inheritors of the Prophet's spiritual legacy (*al-irth al-Nabawī*). This can be detected even from non-genealogical biographical works, such as *al-Jawhar al-shaffāf* (*The transparent jewel*), the earliest known surviving hagiographic work on the Sufis of Tarīm, authored by the *sāda*'s 15th-century disciple ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb (d. 855/1451).[31] Thus, while recognizing the potential limitations of the hagiographical genre, such sources continue to retain some value to the historian in terms of their devotional or even pedagogical intent. While the historicity of their diverse accounts may not always be fully accessible to the modern historian, they, nonetheless, remain insightful in a secondary sense—as a window into the shared memory, doctrines, values, spiritual imagination, and even collective aspirations of a lived religious community. Indeed, as we shall see in chapter 3, the *sāda*'s historically active participation in the construction of their genealogical and hagiographic canon has served as a major constitutive element of their Sufi *habitus* and subjectivity formation as a Prophetic scholarly family.

Another major objective of this study is to offer a contextualized and comprehensive study of the ʿAlawī *sāda*'s major scholarly contributions to the development of Hadhrami and Yemeni Sufism. This involves not only paying special attention to their scholarly networks and the diverse intellectual works that they studied, but more importantly, examining the works that they authored, so as to provide a more thorough appraisal of their intellectual and spiritual canon. In doing so, this study hopes to revisit the received academic wisdom on the breadth and sophistication of the *sāda*'s premodern intellectual culture and re-interrogate the image of a scholarly family that was largely dominated by the interests of temporal and economic power and the practi-

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where Bā Shaybān (d. 944/1537) tends to privilege the hagiographic qualities of his subjects. This work notably includes the biographies of four saintly women, a rarer consideration in the biographical literature. See also Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs* 14 ff., where it is closely examined as a primary source.

31 See al-Khaṭīb, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad, *al-Jawhar al-shaffāf fī dhikr faḍā'il wa-manāqib wa-karāmāt al-sāda al-ashrāf min Āl Bā ʿAlawī wa-ghayrihim min al-awliyā' wa-l-sāliḥīn wa-l-akābir al-ʿurrāf*, MS Maktabat Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭās, 442, al-Ḥurayḍa, Yemen. This MS serves as a primary source on the early ʿAlawīs for nearly all the later bio-hagiographical literature. For more on its significance, see ch. 3.

cal concerns of religious orthopraxy and public preaching, where engagements with the more sophisticated scholarship of philosophical Sufism and the intellectual concerns of Sufi metaphysics (*ḥaqā'iq*) is believed to have been mostly marginal.[32]

This critical take on the *sāda*'s scholarly credentials and Sufi sanctity is perhaps most forcefully voiced by Knysh, who concludes from his examination of their hagiographic biographies,

> Burdened with vast estates and extended households … in addition to numerous religious and judicial responsibilities and occasional arbitration among tribes, many *sāda* leaders were typical public figures who simply could not afford to dedicate themselves fully to the stringent demands of ascetic self-discipline and Sufi meditation. And yet, in keeping with the hagiographic canon, *sāda* authors persistently cast them as paragons of ascetic piety, otherworldly recluses, and miracle-working saints … Once the camouflage is removed, the saint's religious clientele presents itself as an economic and political clientele of those in power. Seen from this perspective, … the sacred enclave in Ḥaḍramawt (*ḥawṭa*), loses its mythical aura and becomes a seat of quite tangible political and social power …[33]

This view is to some extent also shared by Peskes, whose analysis of the *sāda*'s early history focuses heavily on the economic basis of their activities, where their considerable wealth proved instrumental in the consolidation of their influential status and spiritual leadership within Hadhrami society. Such an emphasis on their economic power as wealthy landowners and merchants is seen as a primary motivation behind their many travels, connections, and social activities, where their spiritual authority was utilized to consolidate their possessions, wealth, and status within Hadhrami society.[34] As she argues, for instance, the recurring theme in the *sāda*'s hagiographic depictions of relent-

32 Thus, much of the existing academic scholarship on Hadhramawt is of the general view that the works of Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, widely regarded as medieval Islam's preeminent authority on Sufi *ḥaqā'iq*, only managed to gain a 'subterranean' following among the ʿAlawīs and Hadhramawt's Sufi elite more generally. For examples of this popular academic perception, see Bang, *Sufis and scholars of the sea* 15; Ho, *The graves of Tarim* 127n8; Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs* 49, 190, 274–275; Peskes, "Der Heilige" 57. See also Knysh's mostly critical assessment of the *sāda*'s Sufi tradition and its relative lack of intellectual sophistication in Knysh, "The Sāda in History" 217–218, 222 ff.; Knysh, "The 'tariqa' on a Landcruiser" 410–411 ff.

33 Knysh, "The Sāda in History" 222.

34 See Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs* 27–41 ff.; Peskes, "Der Heilige" 50–53.

less Divine punishments being meted out against those who sought to steal from their private properties were intended to preserve their possessions and fend off potential transgressors, while enveloping them in an aura of sacred power and authority.[35]

As this study hopes to illustrate, such a focus on the economic motivations behind the *sāda*'s many social activities and temporal functions in Hadhrami society is perhaps overstated. For instance, the hagiographic depictions of Divine justice being meted out in the defense of the *sāda*'s properties and possessions need not be motivated by purely materialistic and economic considerations. Rather, they represent a relatively common motif in Sufi hagiographical works, which dramatically highlight God's protective care of His friends (*awliyā'*), imbuing the Sufi saint with an aura of Divine protection, sanctity, and spiritual power.[36]

More importantly, underlying Knysh's reading above are latent assumptions concerning the domains of the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal,' where spirituality and 'sainthood' are defined in purely ascetic, intellectual, and otherworldly terms, while a commitment to more temporal social roles is taken as a priori evidence of economic and political aspiration. In this sense, his theorization of 'sainthood' appears to reflect a Protestant bias, where saints are typically portrayed as individual seekers and 'mystics,' quite removed from the mundane pursuits of temporal power and political authority.[37] Such a restrictive conceptualization of sainthood by definition reduces Sufi saints to abstract figures, as

35 Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs* 37.

36 This theme finds ample precedent in the biography (*sīra*) and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Hence, the notable *qudsī ḥadīth* noted in al-Nawawī's popular collection of 40 Hadith, where God promises His friends, "Whosoever shows enmity to a friend (*walī*) of Mine, know that I declare war against him!" (*Man ʿādā lī waliyyᵃⁿ fa-qad ādhantuhu bi-l-ḥarb*). Al-Nawawī, Yaḥyā b. Sharaf, *Matn al-Arbaʿīn al-Nawawiyya wa-yalīh al-Ishārāt ilā ḍabṭ al-alfāẓ al-mushkilāt*, ed. Muḥammad Bassām Ḥijāzī, Damascus: Dār al-Ghawthānī lil-Dirāsāt al-Qurʾāniyya, 2010, 128.

37 For a critique of the Protestant bias in the construction of 'mysticism,' see Kugle, Scott, *Rebel between spirit and law: Ahmad Zarruq, sainthood, and authority in Islam*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006, 31; King, Richard, *Orientalism and religion: Postcolonial theory, India, and the 'Mystic East'*, London: Routledge, 1999, 7–34, 96–97. For classic examples of this tendency to theorize Sufi sainthood in primarily individualistic and 'mystical' terms, see Baldick, Julian, *Mystical Islam*, New York: New York University Press, 1989; Schimmel, Annemarie, *Mystical dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975; Trimingham, J. Spencer, *The Sufi orders in Islam*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. For a broader overview of how Sufism has been conceptualized and portrayed within Orientalist scholarship and its Western historiography, see Khalil, Atif and Shiraz Sheikh, "Sufism in Western historiography: A brief overview," *Philosophy East and West* 66.1 (2016), 194–217.

the passive representatives of a spiritual or religious culture, and precludes our ability to conceive of them in more dynamic terms, not only as the creators and sustainers of religious culture but also as active agents of social and political change.[38]

In contrast to this understanding, we may turn to other scholars who have attempted to shed greater light on the notion of 'authority' in sainthood, proffering alternative and competing paradigms of saintly authority. For instance, Vincent Cornell's penetrating study of the Jazūliyya in Morroccan Sufism offers us a model of premodern Sufi sainthood in which the *awliyā'* were at the center of Moroccan political life, playing a direct role in the establishment of the Saʿdiyyan dynasty.[39] Furthermore, while for Knysh, the *sāda's* numerous 'judicial responsibilities' are seen to fall outside of the regimented Sufi *habitus* consisting of a contemplative life of meditation, mystical writing, and ascetic self-discipline, Kugle's notion of 'juridical Sufism' in his study of the 15th-century Moroccan Sufi authority Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493), by contrast, offers us a competing paradigm of sainthood that is predicated on a strong sense of social responsibility, legal authority, and juristic practice.[40] These more expansive and nuanced conceptualizations of Sufi sainthood offer a more promising alternative that will be used to inform this study's understanding of the *sāda*'s sainthood and their spiritual tradition within the broader context of Hadhrami and Yemeni Sufism.

Finally, in attempting to account for the ʿAlawīs' religious, economic, and socio-political context in Hadhramawt, this study hopes to offer a more con-

38 Kugle, *Rebel* 36.

39 A key observation made by Cornell and Kugle concerning the translation of the term '*walī*' into 'saint' is that, aside from its Christian connotation, no single translation can adequately capture the 'polysemic resonance' of the Arabic term, which connotes the two dimensions of 'intimacy' and 'authority.' As Cornell perceptively notes, the Arabic '*walī*' is a case of "double subjectivity" since it goes back to the two interrelated terms of '*walāya*' and '*wilāya*,' which were exhaustively discussed among premodern Muslim authorities. While '*walāya*' connotes the inner (*bāṭin*) sense of spiritual proximity, '*wilāya*' is indicative of the outer (*zāhir*) sense of spiritual 'vicegerency;' thus, the saint is best conceived as being simultaneously a 'protégé' of God and a 'patron' who intercedes on behalf of the people. Cornell, Vincent J., *Realm of the saint: Power and authority in Moroccan Sufism*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996, xvii–xxv, 272–273; Kugle, *Rebel* 32.

40 As Kugle notes, premodern Islamic scholarship generally viewed Islamic law, theology, and Sufism as three interrelated specializations reflecting the totality of Islam, which were naturally seen to correspond with the three dimensions of Islam, Imān, and Iḥsān, respectively. This Islamic *weltanschauung*, which he terms as 'integral Islam,' is commonly referred to in more modern discourses as 'traditional Islam' and may be contrasted with the rivaling modernist or puritan and 'Salafi' currents. Kugle, *Rebel* 5–26.

textualized understanding of the uniquely Hadhrami challenges that helped to shape and inform the evolution of their scholarly tradition. Such a focus necessitates a better grasp of not only the wider regional intellectual trends of Yemen and the Hejaz, but also the Hadhrami scholarly elite's relations with the local political elites. As this study hopes to illustrate, as a political and economic backwater, Hadhramawt's social and political history had a markedly different trajectory from the seats of economic and political power in western Yemen. A broad survey of the valley's premodern political history, reveals an impoverished and neglected region that remained largely plagued by entrenched tribal and political rivalries and economic uncertainty, where the valley's scholarly elite were rarely the recipients of the lavish state patronage and institutional support that was enjoyed by their counterparts in the intellectual capitals of Zabīd and Taʿizz. A greater analysis and accounting of these broader societal conditions and disadvantages is thus necessary to help us better appreciate the unique challenges and constraints that the *sāda* faced in their immediate socio-religious and political context and the motives behind their broad social commitments and growing temporal roles as important mediators in the valley's recurring political conflicts, all of which ultimately informed the evolution of a distinctly Hadhrami spiritual culture.

With these objectives and considerations in mind, chapter 1 begins with the ancestor of the ʿAlawīs Imam Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-Muhājir (d. 345/956) and his migration (*hijra*) to Hadhramawt from his native Basra in Iraq *circa* 317/929. The chapter surveys the possible motives behind his choice of settlement in this remote valley, offering an account of the turbulent political and economic conditions of his native Basra under the ʿAbbasids and of the valley's political and sectarian context upon his arrival in the early 10th century. The chapter also addresses his family's settlement in Hadhramawt, leading up to their momentous move to the city of Tarīm in the early 12th century. Finally, I also attempt to carefully re-examine the lingering historiographical debates surrounding Imam al-Muhājir's Prophetic lineage and his family's sectarian identity as Sunni Shāfiʿīs of the Ashʿarī creed, arguing that there are in fact sufficient near-contemporaneous non-Hadhrami historical and genealogical sources to allow for a more conclusive determination of the *sāda*'s family ancestry and their early sectarian orientation in the valley.

Chapter 2 focuses on the major figure of 'al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam' Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 653/1255), the founder of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*, offering a biographical account of his momentous turn to Sufism and his investiture with the Sufi *khirqa* of the great North African Sufi Abū Madyan Shuʿayb (d. 594/1198). The chapter aims to situate his introduction of organized Sufism to the valley within the broader regional developments of his time, more specifically the institu-

tionalizing drive of the emerging *ṭarīqa* lineages in the 12th and 13th centuries. The chapter also provides a synopsis of the major socio-political developments of medieval Yemen, beginning with the Ayyubid conquest in 569/1173 and leading up to the reigns of their Rasūlid and Ṭāhirid successors, whose rule was brought to an abrupt end by the Ottoman invasion of 945/1538.

While these developments ushered in a new era in Yemeni history that was characterized by a greater measure of political stability and economic affluence and a concomitant flourishing of intellectual and scholarly life under the generous patronage of successive sultans and their institutional support for the scholarly elites of cities like Zabīd and Taʿizz, they were sharply contrasted with political developments in Hadhramawt, which remained locked in a prolonged cycle of political fragmentation, recurring invasions, tribal conflict, and economic insecurity under the turbulent rule of the Āl Yamānīs in Tarīm, whose reign was to last for over three centuries until the Kathīrī invasion of 926 or 927/1521. These drastically different socio-political conditions in the valley, which translated into a relative absence of political and economic stability and a lack of state patronage for its scholarly elite, among other factors, helps to account for the wave of ʿAlawī migrations across the Indian Ocean beginning as early as the 13th century. More importantly, this chapter argues that the entrenched political violence and the early *sāda*'s precarious status in Tarīm, are likely instrumental considerations informing al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's decisive turn to Sufism and his vision of social and spiritual reform along entirely pacifist means, a momentous decision that was to have lasting consequences for the formation of a new *sāda* identity and for the ʿAlawīs' gradual emergence in succeeding centuries as a major scholarly family of peacemakers and political mediators within the valley.

Chapter 3 investigates the gradual emergence of the ʿAlawīs in Tarīm as a distinct social stratum within a stratified Hadhrami society and the consolidation of their spiritual identity and praxis as a Sufi tradition. In order to better understand this historical dynamic where, in addition to a life of disciplined scholarship, the *sāda* began to occupy a more prominent temporal role within their society, this chapter also examines the impact of the Rasūlid state's patronage of the Sufi elite in western Yemen, which rarely extended to Hadhramawt, and how this in turn informed the ʿAlawīs' many choices, their expanding social roles, and the unique evolution of their spiritual tradition. This chapter also offers an account of the lives of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's descendants, with a special focus on the spiritual legacies of their two towering spiritual authorities of the early 15th century, Imam ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf (d. 819/1416) and his son, the famous *naqīb* of the *sāda*, Imam ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (d. 833/1429). Here, a phenomenological lens is adopted in exploring their unique contribu-

tions to the evolution of their *ṭarīqa*, where the major ritualistic, textual, and geographic features of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism in the 15th century are also examined, highlighting how they in turn served to inform the *sāda*'s subjectivity formation and the emergence of a distinctly Ghazalian Sufi *habitus*.

Having examined the consolidation of the *sāda*'s spiritual identity and praxis by the first half of the 15th century, chapter 4 investigates the unprecedented spiritual and cultural revival that the valley begins to witness in the 15th century and that appears to reach an intellectual high point by the late 16th century. This explosion of scholarly activity is paralleled in the political sphere with the gradual eclipsing of the Āl Yamānī dynasty by the rising power of the Kathīrī sultans and their eventual conquest of Tarīm in 926/1520. I thus provide an account of the first Kathīrī sultanate's rule (r. *circa* 814–1130/1411–1718), during which Hadhramawt begins to witness a somewhat greater measure of political, social, and economic stability. Here, I pay special attention to the new sultans' strong rapport with the valley's scholarly elite, noting instances of patronage and support for their activities. More specifically, the Kathīrīs' rule is also characterized by warm and cordial relations with the ʿAlawīs, who are frequently taken as their personal counselors and political mediators.

In attempting to document Hadhramawt's major scholarly productions between the 15th and 17th centuries, I pay special attention to the most active scholarly fields of historiography, Islamic law, and Sufism. More specifically, I attempt an appraisal of the Hadhrami scholarly elite's 'high' intellectual Sufism throughout this period and the extent of their scholarly engagements with philosophical Sufism, as exemplified in the works of Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). Here I document the diverse scholarly receptions and attitudes towards the Shaykh's controversial doctrines from among the *mashāyikh* and the *sāda*, with a special focus on his ontological doctrine of the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). In closely documenting what can be gleaned of the works that they studied and providing a more comprehensive appraisal of the ʿAlawīs' emerging spiritual and intellectual canon, I argue for the need to revisit our current academic understanding on Hadhramawt's high spiritual culture throughout this period and the wider reception of Ibn ʿArabī within the Bā ʿAlawī tradition and Hadhrami Sufism more generally.

Chapter 5 continues with the same line of investigation as chapter 4, focusing more specifically on the intellectual and spiritual legacies of the *sāda*'s two major saintly authorities of the mid-to-late 15th century, the towering progenitor of the ʿAydarūs family, Imam ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), and his equally accomplished younger brother al-Shaykh ʿAlī b. Abū Bakr al-Sakrān (d. 895/1490). As the first members of the *sāda* to author notable Sufi treatises, the emergence of Imam ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAydarūs and al-Shaykh ʿAlī marks a

new phase in the evolution of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism. This chapter further examines the extent of these two ʿAlawī authorities' engagements with Sufi metaphysics and the gnostic teachings of al-Shaykh al-Akbar in particular, where Imam al-ʿAydarūs's *al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar* and al-Shaykh ʿAlī's *Maʿārij al-hidāya* are also closely examined.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to an overview of the life and legacy of Imām al-ʿAydarūs's son, Imam Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508), whose illustrious scholarly career, charisma, and connections culminated in his favor and patronage with the Ṭāhirid sultans, securing his eventual fame as the patron saint of Aden and one of the ʿAlawī's most celebrated authorities in the early 16th century. The chapter also closely examines his important work on the Sufi *khirqa*, *al-Juz' al-laṭīf*, which includes a rich autobiographical account of his Sufi training and scholarly connections, offering us a further window into the spiritual and intellectual culture of Hadhramaut in the early 16th century, where his intimate connections to Yemen's Qāḍirī community in particular and its influences on his reception of Ibn ʿArabī's thought are also clearly discerned.

Finally, chapter 7 consists of a more focused examination of the intellectual and spiritual legacy of the towering ʿAlawī authority of the 16th century, the famous *manṣab* of ʿĪnāt, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). As one of the ʿAlawīs' most celebrated exponents of philosophical Sufism, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim represents a high point in the *sāda*'s intellectual tradition, and his two major works of Sufi *ḥaqā'iq* , *Miʿrāj al-arwāḥ* and *Fatḥ bāb al-mawāhib*, remain practically *terra incognita* within the academic study of Yemeni and Hadhrami Sufism. Both works on theoretical gnosis are remarkable in their intellectual breadth and sophistication and their technical Sufi vocabulary, bearing thematic similarities with some of the *sāda*'s earlier works, such as al-Shaykh ʿAlī's *Maʿārij al-hidāya*, and displaying an unmistakable familiarity and intimate mastery of Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥat* and *Fūṣūṣ*.

As such, this chapter begins by closely examining the Imam's early Sufi training in the valley, once again, suggesting the high plausibility of a wider network of scholarly interest in the works of Ibn ʿArabī among his colleagues and Sufi masters. As with the earlier examinations of the *sāda*'s intellectual contributions, the bulk of the chapter is devoted to a synopsis of both works' major overarching themes, with a special focus on the Imam's ontology and theology, his Akbarian vocabulary, and his explication of the major Sufi doctrines of the Muhammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*) and the Complete Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Once again, building upon the findings of chapters 4, 5, and 6, this chapter makes a case for the need to revisit our current academic understanding on the intellectual reception of Ibn ʿArabī within Hadhrami Sufism, and the Bā ʿAlawī tradition in particular.

In examining the premodern intellectual and social history of the ʿAlawī *sāda*'s Sufi tradition in Hadhramawt up to the late 16th century, it is hoped that this contextualized study will serve to advance our academic understanding of Hadhrami Sufism and its significant contributions to the wider intellectual cultures of Yemen and the Hejaz, while laying the necessary groundwork for further historical and anthropological research on the Bā ʿAlawiyya's highly influential yet relatively understudied and poorly understood scholarly tradition.