ABSTRACT

The rise of modern media has led to debates about religious authority in Islam, questioning whether it is fragmenting or proliferating, and exploring the state of the ‘ulamā’ and new groups like religious intellectuals and Muslim televangelists. This study explores these changes through a specific group of popular preachers, the media du‘ā, who are characterized by their educational degrees and their place outside the religious establishment, their informal language and style, and their extensive use of modern media tools. Three media du‘ā from the Arab world are the subject of this study: Amr Khaled, Ahmad al-Shugairi, and Tariq al-Suwaidan. Their written material – books, published interviews, social media, and websites – form the primary sources for this work, supplemented by examples from their television programs. To paint a complete picture, this dissertation examines not only the style of these preachers, but also their goals, their audience, the topics they address, and their influences and critics.

This study first compares the media du‘ā to Christian televangelists, revealing that religious authority in Islam is both proliferating and differentiating, and that these preachers are subtly influencing society and politics. Second, it presents a theoretical analysis of their main audience – Muslim youth. Youth are strongly encouraged to take action, and thus serve as both the media du‘ā’s tool for change and the target audience for their religious messages. Third, it provides evidence of how these preachers blend old sources with new issues and how they are
shifting religious discourse to focus on life in this world, not just the afterlife. Finally, this study explores the ties between the media du‘ā and the ‘ulamā’. There is no clear line of demarcation between the du‘ā’s ideological views and those of the ‘ulamā’, at least on big issues, and, the media du‘ā often defer to the religious authority of the ‘ulamā’. This study thus concludes that these preachers have two roles in society, that of agenda setters and motivators. This allows them to suggest issues that require attention, subtly affecting religious discourse, and then encourage their audience to act, thereby slowly enacting social and religious change.
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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND OTHER CONVENTIONS

In this study, I transliterate Arabic words and titles using the rules given by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES), which also include a list of exceptions that are not italicized or fully transliterated, like Qur’an and fatwa. Any direct quotations, however, will follow the transliteration as given in their source text.

I deviate from these guidelines on two occasions. First, I fully transliterate the term ‘ulamā’ rather than using ‘ulama’ (single quotations included) as suggested by IJMES. This avoids any possible confusion that I am placing this term in quotations and thereby minimizing or disparaging this scholarly group. Second, in the body of my text, I do not transliterate the names Amr Khaled, Ahmad al-Shugairi, and Tariq al-Suwaidan, for which the correct transliterations are respectively ‘Amr Khālid, Aḥmad al-Shuqayrī, and Ṣāriq al-Suwaydān. I use these simplified versions for ease of reading and because the preachers themselves write their names like this in English. I do however maintain the transliterated versions in my bibliography and footnotes. Regarding Ahmad al-Shugairi in particular, this simplified version also distinguishes him from another Aḥmad al-Shuqayrī, the first Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), who was born in 1908 in Tebnine, southern Lebanon, then part of the Ottoman Empire.

Translated passages of the Qur’an follow the version of Marmaduke Pickthall. A comparison of Pickthall’s translation with other versions can be found at [http://quran.com](http://quran.com). Hadith citations from the six canonical collections (the Six Books) are not tied to a particular edition, but are listed by the section under which they appear. Thus, for example, a citation for a hadith might read: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: Kitāb al-Istī’dhān, bāb qawl Allāh ta‘ālā.
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INTRODUCTION

The month of Ramadan begins and a Muslim family turns on their television to find a clean-shaven preacher in pants and a button-down shirt talking about Andalusian history. Rocky cliffs extending down to the water form a vibrant backdrop as he unpacks the lessons of the Muslim presence in the region.¹ On a different channel, another preacher paces a computer-generated stage, speaking about the ideal leader and how to develop leadership skills, quoting Western research and theories, but using the Prophet Muhammad as his reference point.² That show ends and another one begins. A colorful display of computer animation forms the opening sequence, taking the viewer from the twenty-first century to the twelfth century and back again, showing the diverse influence of Classical thinkers on modern thought, science, and technology. The animation fades and a young preacher begins a discussion on mosques in the modern world, stressing how, like in the Prophet’s era, they should serve as a community center and not just a place for prayer. In Singapore, he explains, mosques now include classrooms, a Friday market, a playroom for children, and even a welcome desk to answer questions.³

The family finishes their ifṭār, turns off the television, and heads into the city. In a local bookstore, the faces of these same preachers greet them from the covers of books about faith, happiness, leadership development, and Muslim history. Pausing to check her phone, the mother finds her Twitter and Facebook feeds full of messages from the same preachers, featuring statements about religion, self-motivation, and personal and social development. One aisle over,

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³ *Khawāfūr 6*, Episode no. 11, directed by Majdī ‘Umar and presented by Aḥmad al-Shugayrī, first broadcast in 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZdms6dItX0 (accessed June 5, 2016).
DVDs of these preachers’ many television series are available for sale, along with CDs and audiotapes of their sermons and lectures.

The popularity of these particular preachers and their diverse range of products provide a unique means to analyze religious authority in Islam today. These men are outside the religious establishment, yet hold considerable power through the global reach of satellite television and the Internet. Their status and the open discussions they hold about social and religious issues hint at changes in the system of religious authority in Islam. To what extent can we say that these preachers are religious authorities however? And in what areas of religious life and practice might they hold authority? Is the work of these preachers different from or in opposition to traditional authorities like the ‘ulamā’? This study analyzes these questions, seeking to better define the current system of religious authority in Islam through a detailed look at these unique preachers.

**Terminology**

Many scholars refer to these television preachers as televangelists, a label that is familiar to American readers and does accurately reflect these Muslim preachers’ prominence on television. Yet the term televangelist has roots in Christianity, with the prefix “tele” (for television) attached to the word evangelist. Evangelists are literally preachers of the Gospel and thus the word televangelist refers directly to teaching the story of Jesus and the Christian revelation, which does not fit Muslim preachers. Modern preachers agree – Egyptian preacher Muʿizz Masʿūd, whose television work follows in the steps of another popular preacher, Amr Khaled, said “Televangelists in the States are all about making money in the name of Christianity…. I like to think of myself as a Muslim thinker. My message is to reintroduce the
concepts of orthodox, classical Islam with a deep understanding of its spiritual core and allow people to merge modern life with traditional teachings."\(^4\)

In addition to these misconstruing links to Christianity and the Gospel, there are other flaws with using televangelist when referring to these popular preachers. First, it minimizes these preachers’ work by ignoring their broad reach outside of television, such as their books, articles, public speeches, and their considerable online presence. Second, the word televangelist ignores the distinction between, on the one hand, the Muslim preachers who are traditionally educated and part of the religious establishment (the ‘ulamā’\(^\)) and, on the other hand, those preachers that are outside the traditional system, the popular preachers alluded to above. The broad term televangelist can describe the television work of Muslim preachers of all backgrounds – from traditional Azharī shaykhs, to the media-savvy ‘ālim Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, to popular preachers like Amr Khaled – so to refer specifically to popular preachers on television requires a separate term.

For many of these reasons, some modern studies have avoided the term televangelist, opting instead for labels like tele-dāʾī\(^5\) or media preacher.\(^6\) In truth, the word dāʾī, a person who proselytizes or calls people to Islam, is an apt one and is the term used in Arabic to describe these television preachers.\(^7\) The term al-duʿā al-judud as coined by Wā’il Luṭṭī to describe these

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popular preachers in Egypt, using the plural form of dāʿī, is a prominent example. Yet using this word by itself does not fully express the characteristics of the preachers whom I study here. In addition to their educational degrees (in accounting, engineering, and business respectively) and their place outside the religious establishment, they address their audiences in an informal manner and employ a wealth of modern media – not just television, but also social media, audiocassettes, CDs, DVDs, and print publications. The term tele-dāʿī is slightly better as it reflects these preachers’ most prominent medium, yet it still fails to capture the extent of their work. Thus, I chose to use the term media dāʿī (pl. media duʿā), which better reflects the diverse output of these popular preachers.

This reflection of the many means these individuals use to deliver information does mirror some previous attempts at new terms, such as calling Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī a “media shaykh” and Marcia Hermansen’s choice of the term “media preacher.” However, the words preacher and shaykh do not convey the informal nature and delivery of the people studied here. For all these reasons, this study uses the term media duʿā – defining a group of popular preachers who are characterized by their educational degrees and their place outside the religious establishment, their informal language and style, and their extensive use of modern media tools.

The Scope of My Study

Exploring all angles of expansive fields like popular preaching and the evolution of religious authority is impossible in the scope of one research project. For clarity and so that my

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9 Nabil Echchaibi also used this term, with the spelling media daʿas [sic] in his article “From Audio Tapes to Video Blogs: the Delocalisation of Authority in Islam,” Nations and Nationalism 17, no. 1 (2011): 36.
11 Hermansen, “The Emergence of Media Preachers.”
readers better understand my perspective and my arguments, let me state what this study is and what it is not. In terms of religious authority, my work explores the authority of individuals (specific preachers) and the effect they have on their audiences and religious discourse as a whole. I do not debate the authority of religious sources such as the Qur’an and hadith, nor do I explore the mystical authority of Sufis. This work also focuses on Sunni Islam, and does not deal with the work of Shia preachers on television or on social media. I leave such a project for a future time or for the work of other scholars.

Geographically, the majority of Muslim media du‘ā work in Egypt and the Gulf states, and my choice of preachers for this study reflects that fact. This is not the sole region for such preachers however, with Aa Gym from Indonesia being a prominent example. To my knowledge, North Africa does not have such preachers on television to date, but this avenue is worth exploring as well.

Considering the scholarly work to date on Muslim televangelists and the media du‘ā, my research expands the discourse on these preachers in several ways. First, I take a broader approach geographically, looking beyond the confines of Egypt, which houses many such preachers, yet is not the only locale for successful media du‘ā in the contemporary era. Second, I paint a more complete picture of these preachers, examining not only their new style and production methods, but also their goals, their audience, the topics they address, and their influences and critics. To do so, this study examines the phenomenon of the media du‘ā from a variety of angles or lenses of interpretation, which each chapter exploring a new aspect of these preachers.

Chapter One provides the background for my study. A literature review presents the previous research on religious authority in Islam, television preaching in Islam and Christianity,
and works covering the media *du‘ā*. The chapter concludes with a lengthy biography of each of the three preachers I study here – Amr Khaled, Ahmad al-Shugairi, and Tariq al-Suwaitan – and a brief discussion of my source material.

Chapter Two explores the definition and goals of the media *du‘ā*. I compare these preachers to Christian televangelists, analyzing the different groups and the influence they have on both society and religious authority. Through this comparison, we see that religious authority in Islam is not fragmenting, but rather is proliferating *and* differentiating. In addition, I demonstrate how these *du‘ā* are subtly influencing society and politics.

Chapter Three studies the aims of the media *du‘ā* through a theoretical analysis of their main audience – Muslim youth. The *du‘ā* purposely target this group, incorporating new visuals, a relaxed style, and interactive programming into their work and publications, thereby securing the attention of this large and relatively untapped audience. The preachers’ ability to reach young people allows them to target two issues: the need for social and community development, and what they see as one of the main flaws of modern society, a lack of religiosity. Youth are strongly encouraged to take action, thus serving as both the media *du‘ā*’s tool for change as well as their target audience for their religious messages.

Chapter Four uses the *sīra* of the Prophet Muhammad as a case study for how the media *du‘ā* deliver their message. This analysis shows, first, that the media *du‘ā* are not as new as has been portrayed. In fact, these preachers and some of the themes they discuss can be connected to the Muslim concept of religious storytelling from the Classical era. Second, this chapter shows how the media *du‘ā* use the *sīra* to introduce new themes that range from unity and coexistence to day-to-day issues like domestic violence, good manners, and effective leadership – evidence
of how these preachers blend old sources with new issues and how they are shifting religious discourse to focus on life in this world, not just the afterlife.

Chapter Five discusses the critics and critiques of the media duʿā. Analyzing the validity of these critiques, we find that these preachers do, in fact, have some formal religious education; they do not appear to be motivated by money and fame; and the degree to which the media duʿā bring youth towards conservatism or radical Islam also seems quite small. In addition, it appears that there is no clear difference or line of demarcation between the duʿā’s ideological views and those of the ‘ulamā’, at least on big issues.

My concluding chapter discusses the state of religious authority in modern Islam. I note that the media duʿā defer to the religious authority of the ‘ulamā’, with the former adopting the position of religious guides rather than official authorities. I conclude that the media duʿā have two main roles in society, that of agenda setters and that of motivators. This dual role allows these popular preachers to suggest issues that require attention and then encourage their audience to take action, thereby subtly and slowly enacting social and religious change.
CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review and the Sources For This Study

Television preaching accelerated in the Middle East in the late 1990s after the founding of the region’s first privately owned satellite networks: the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) in 1991, ART in 1993, and Orbit in 1994 – all launched by Saudi funders.\(^1\) Since then, Muslim preachers have adopted the use of other new media, including the Internet and social media such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. My research is thus deeply rooted in the field of media studies, including the rise of satellite television and the Internet, and the growth of televangelism, from its Christian roots in the United States to its expansion into other religions and across the globe.

This chapter clarifies those scholarly roots, tracing the history of these fields and presenting the scope of research to date. Since my work revolves around the issue of religious authority, however, this literature review begins by examining previous studies of religious authority in Islam, before discussing the ongoing debate over the contemporary role and power of the ‘ulamā’. The focus then narrows to consider the field of televangelism, looking at scholarly works both within Islam and more broadly. Following this review of scholarly work, the chapter presents three different media du‘ā (Amr Khaled, Ahmad al-Shugairi, and Tariq al-Suwaidan), providing detailed biographies of these individuals and a survey of their publications and media work. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of my primary sources.

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Literature Review

To begin with, it is important to note that authority is not a simple, straightforward concept. Rather, it can be achieved and expressed in many ways and through many areas of expertise. Moreover, the means to and expressions of religious authority have changed and evolved over time. In the case of Islam, traditional definitions of religious authority have focused on the argument that the ‘ulamā’ are the “heirs of the Prophets”\(^2\) and thus are the protectors, transmitters, and interpreters of religious knowledge, what Meir Hatina described as “the gatekeepers of Islamic learning.”\(^3\)

Recent studies of Muslim popular preachers also attribute these individuals’ authority and success to their charisma or even their use of modern management and self-help concepts. Hamid Dabashi and Liyakat Takim incorporated Max Weber’s theory of charismatic authority into their analyses of authority in the Classical era,\(^4\) and case studies of modern figures have applied Weberian theory on the individual or group level.\(^5\) Research by Patrick Haenni and James Hoesterey has contributed an additional element, showing how self-help authors have influenced individual preachers and increased the preachers’ popularity amongst the middle class, who is often attracted to these preachers’ acceptance of material and financial success.\(^6\)

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\(^2\) A summary of this claim and a discussion of the other groups competing to be “heirs of the Prophets,” both in terms of religious and political authority, can be found in Liyakat Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi’ite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006). The phrase “the ‘ulamā’ are the heirs of the Prophets” is part of a Prophetic hadith that appears in canonical collections such as *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*: *Kitāb al-Ilm, bāb al-ḥathth ‘alā ṭalab al-‘ilm*.


Patrick Gaffney further broadened the scholarly discussion of authority, not by adding an additional factor, but by separating Islamic authority into three types: mystical, prophetic, and warrior, which are represented accordingly by saint-magicians (awliyā’, s. wali), the ‘ulamā’, and holy warriors (mujāhidūn).  

Besides these diverse means to authority and the varied expressions thereof, religious authority is further complicated by the fact that scholars of Islam distinguish between religious authority and religious authorities, the bases of Islam’s authority and the holders of this authority. As Krämer and Schmidtke have explained, these terms both hold significant value and meaning. In the singular sense, authority in Islam is found first and foremost with God. God is the utmost authority, and the Qur’an, hadith, and Prophetic Sunna are the means for communicating His will or His authority to mankind. But who has the right to present God’s message to his people? It is in this regard that we can refer to the plural term religious authorities, the individuals who have the power and legitimacy to present God’s message and communicate His authoritative views and doctrines. Authorities of this nature come in many varieties, from muftis who interpret religious texts, to judges who rule on legal cases, to teachers and preachers who spread religious knowledge by educating others on Islam’s doctrines and values.  

Scholars have devoted considerable time and effort to both of these subjects, religious authority in its general or theoretical sense, and the distinctions between different religious authorities. In terms of theoretical studies, George Makdisi’s work in the 1970s described the evolution of the caliph’s authority, specifically the relationship between authority and power, and

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7 Gaffney, *The Prophet’s Pulpit*, 36-43. 
8 For a detailed discussion on this distinction within Islam, see Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke, eds. *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 1-6.
how these two notions are distinct yet intertwined. In 1980, Roy Mottahedeh explored authority more broadly, looking at the concept across society as a whole. He detailed two interlocking networks of authority: acquired loyalties (oaths, vows, etc.) deliberately forged between individuals and then loyalties of category that people feel they owe each other based on social status, ancestry, and wealth. In 1989, Hamid Dabashi focused more specifically on religious authority, tracing the evolution of the concept in early Islam from the time of Muhammad to the founding of the Umayyad Caliphate. Through the lens of Weber’s theory of legitimate authority, Dabashi revealed how Muhammad’s charismatic authority broke with the traditional style of authority in pre-Islamic Arabia, and over time split into three models of authority: Sunni, Shi’ite, and Kharijite. More recent scholarship has extended such studies in new directions, examining the details of religious authority in Shi’ism, as well as the history and theory of authority in the legal sphere.

My work is not a study of religious authority in this general or theoretical sense, however, but rather focuses on a set of individual authorities. Research on religious authority in the modern era has also tended towards such case studies, with particular emphasis on groups that oppose the traditional ‘ulamā’ or that include minority voices like women or religious storytellers (qāṣṣ, pl. quṣṣāṣ). Raymond Baker’s Islam Without Fear, for example, presents a glimpse of a new phenomenon in Egypt, the “New Islamists” – a diverse group of lawyers,

11 Dabashi, Authority in Islam.
12 Takim, The Heirs of the Prophet.
13 Wael Hallaq, Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
journalists, judges, and traditional scholars who united to oppose the religious establishment and present a more moderate approach to Islam.\textsuperscript{14} Other works have examined the relationship between women and religious authority,\textsuperscript{15} or explored internal debates amongst the ‘ulamā’ over the concepts like scholarly consensus and the common good, or new discourses on violence, terrorism, and socioeconomic justice.\textsuperscript{16} Of particular note is Krämer and Schmidtke’s edited volume \textit{Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies}, the first book solely dedicated to the study of different religious authorities.\textsuperscript{17} While the work does not mention popular preachers, topics studied there include religious authorities in Sufi networks and in post-revolutionary Iran, as well as the evolution of concepts such as religious consensus and apostasy.

Of all the research that surveys religious authorities in Islam, only two books discuss the issue of popular preachers: Patrick Gaffney’s \textit{The Prophet’s Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt}, and Jonathan Berkey’s \textit{Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East}. The first focuses on preachers within mosques, but mentions du’ā who split time between mosques and the public realm, and also describes how popular preachers hold some of the religious authority previously reserved for the ‘ulamā’.\textsuperscript{18} The second book puts forth a more important argument, at least in terms of my research here, saying that tensions between the ‘ulamā’ and popular storytellers were a significant part of religious life in the Classical period.\textsuperscript{19} In fact, as others have noted, this tension can be traced back to the first

\textsuperscript{16} Muhammad Qasim Zaman, \textit{Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
\textsuperscript{17} Krämer and Schmidtke. \textit{Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies}.
\textsuperscript{18} Gaffney, \textit{The Prophet’s Pulpit}, 33, 35-36.
century of Islam and is one of the reasons why the Isrā’īliyyāt, biblical stories that popular preachers mixed into their commentary, came to be disdained in scholarly circles. It is exactly these divisions, the friction between popular preachers and the religious establishment, which my study continues into the present day.

The second major field in which I engage is the evolution of traditional religious authorities and, more specifically, the debate over the changing role and power of the ‘ulamā’. Two works from the 1970s, Gabriel Baer’s The Ulama in Modern History and Nikki Keddie’s edited volume Scholars, Saints and Sufis, became the foundation of this scholarly sub-field, giving a historical survey of the ‘ulamā’ in the modern era and charting their status and power over time within different regions of the Arab and Islamic worlds. Some of the research in these volumes alludes to a decline of the ‘ulamā’, an issue that later academics took up with more vigor and focus. Kamel Ghozzi, for instance, used case studies of Iran in 1979 and the dismantling of Tunisia’s ‘ulamā’ institution al-Zitouna in 1958 to propose a sociological theory explaining the resilience or decay of the ‘ulamā’. Malika Zeghal examined the Azharī ‘ulamā’ in Egypt from the 1960s through the mid-1990s, highlighting the power of the state over these religious scholars, and also the rise of new rivals, non-Azharī preachers who were preaching in local mosques. Other studies have argued that social, educational, and legal reforms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries pushed aside traditional institutions like the madrasa, shari’a

courts, and even the ‘ulamā’ themselves. All told, these different books and articles agreed that traditional authorities and institutions were on the decline or all but destroyed in some cases.

Despite this research, the debate over the current authority of the ‘ulamā’ is far from settled and several studies actively counter the positions listed above. In his book The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change, Muhammad Qasim Zaman revealed how the ‘ulamā’ in South Asia, particularly Pakistan, remained active in twentieth century society, even expanding their roles at times or making important contributions to religious and political discourses. Meir Hatina presented a similar case for modern Egypt, arguing that although the Azharī ‘ulamā’ may have lost power and suffered from a decline of their institutions by the early twentieth century, this did not mean that they had been marginalized.

While the ‘ulamā’ remain active in some countries and in some fields of expertise, the rise of the Internet and other new media have certainly presented new obstacles and further complicated the ‘ulamā’’s status and power. As Eickelman and Anderson explained in 2003, these media innovations led to new arenas for religious debate and new authority figures, individuals the authors labeled as “new interpreters of Islam.”

Eickelman and Piscatori’s Muslim Politics picked up on this issue as well, referring to the twentieth century’s “‘new’ religious intellectuals” who, as the authors explain, were educated in modern state schools or studied at both religious and secular institutions. The relationship between these new authorities and the ‘ulamā’ has since been discussed in Hatina Meir’s Guardians of Faith in

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26 Meir Hatina, ‘Ulama’, Politics, and the Public Sphere: An Egyptian Perspective (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), 8.
27 Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 47.
Modern Times, an edited volume that continues the historical surveys of the ‘ulamā’ started by Baer and Keddie in the 1970s. A chapter there by Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen is of particular interest to the present study, as it describes the internationalization of religious authority in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as well as the tensions between the ‘ulamā’ and modern du‘ā, a theme I explore in Chapter Five.²⁹

In this vein, it is also important to note the central role that preaching and sermons play in the Muslim community. The khūtbah is a religious ritual, conveying messages of faith and religious doctrine, and, like the realm of religious scholarship, has the power to educate and influence its audience on a variety of other issues. Sermons are both a way to inform and unite the Muslim community, as well as a means for providing social commentary. In early twentieth century Iran, for example, two opposing groups – the Royalists and the Constitutionalists – both used preachers’ sermons to disseminate their views to the public, thereby developing a form of mass communication.³⁰ After World War II, preachers in Syria, Jordan, and Egypt used the khūtbah for political purposes, speaking about Arab nationalism and political unity, serving as a bridge between the ruling elites and the general population.³¹ An anthropological study of a village in rural Jordan has also shown how a preacher in the 1960s served as a cultural broker, using Friday sermons to mediate between, on the one hand, the forces of religious, political, and social change and, on the other hand, his audience’s traditional ways.³²

Over the course of these debates about religious authorities in Islam, some scholars began discussing Muslim televangelists, a growing area of research and the third field that my work

engages in. While I disagree with term televangelist in the Muslim context, as I discussed in the Introduction, television preachers have a long history outside of Islam. Scholarly studies of Christian televangelists deserve special attention as a historical source for this form of preaching and as a means for comparison with their Muslim counterparts, especially in how they each use modern media and how they express their religious authority.

Studies of Christian televangelism first flourished in the 1980s and into the early 1990s, with the rise of this genre of television and the scandals surrounding prominent preachers like Jimmy Swaggart and Jim and Tammy Bakker. Scholars analyzed this phenomenon from diverse perspectives: through the lens of sociology, religious studies, and the then emerging field of media studies. Robert Abelman and Kimberly Neuendorf were some of the first scholars to provide specific content analysis of this genre, writing an article in 1987 that documented the different religious, political, and social themes found in this new type of television programming.\[33\] Stewart Hoover followed shortly thereafter with a study of the social and cultural sources of the “electronic church,” discussing why people were attracted to these programs and to what extent they were actively involved with them.\[34\] The specific origins of the electronic church and religious broadcasting were then explored by Quentin Schultze and Dennis Voskuil, each of whom examined the use of radio as an evangelical tool.\[35\] Bobby Alexander’s book *Televangelism Reconsidered* turned to television, arguing that televangelists’ programs

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were a form of ritual performance, helping viewers to legitimate their beliefs and also adapt to the views of society, or allowing them to build a supportive community of viewers.\textsuperscript{36}

The approaches and techniques of Christian televangelism remain popular and continue to inspire religious leaders and preachers. Contemporary scholarship has picked up on these trends, exploring new aspects of televangelism, including previously ignored preachers and the use of new media tools. Jonathan Walton, for instance, examined the history and practice of African American televangelism, a phenomenon he says was ignored or marginalized by previous scholars.\textsuperscript{37} James Wellman took on the study of the Christian televangelist Rob Bell, a contemporary preacher whose creative interpretations of the gospel had some calling him a celebrity, while others labeled him a radical or even a heretic.\textsuperscript{38} In addition, the tools of modern preaching have continued to evolve, as Denis Bekkering has shown, with streaming video preachers now competing with their television counterparts.\textsuperscript{39}

Contemporary scholars have also begun documenting and analyzing televangelism’s expansion worldwide. In 2010, Jonathan James described the influence of American televangelism on Protestant and Hindu communities in India,\textsuperscript{40} while the edited volume \textit{Global and Local Televangelism}, published in 2012, examines contemporary televangelists in three different religious traditions: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.\textsuperscript{41}

These diverse studies of televangelism form the scholarly platform upon which I build my research, but they also serve as a source of inspiration and have provided a model for me to

\textsuperscript{36} Bobby Chris Alexander, \textit{Televangelism Reconsidered: Ritual in the Search for Human Community} (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994).


\textsuperscript{40} Jonathan D. James, \textit{McDonaldisation, Masala McGospel, and Om Economics: Televangelism in Contemporary India} (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2010).

emulate at times. Jonathan Walton’s work on televangelists,\textsuperscript{42} for example, presents a history of African American televangelism and a detailed study of several such preachers, a framework that matches my approach. Moreover, his method of using multiple sources – the televangelists’ publications, speeches, interviews, and television programs – to capture and analyze their ideology was the method I chose to pursue as well.

This in no way diminishes other approaches, however. For example, in their respective studies of Christian televangelism, Bobby Alexander and Stewart Hoover used interviews with television viewers to analyze audience reactions, participation, and commitment to particular televangelists or religious television programs.\textsuperscript{43} While my research here does not pursue this approach, such surveys of Muslim viewership would be valuable in the study of Muslim preachers, but to date has not been undertaken in a systematic way.

In fact, lengthy studies on Muslim televangelists as a group are remarkably absent, a fault that my study begins to address. Previous monographs on modern preachers have concentrated on those that preach in mosques. Richard Antoun studied preachers in Jordan,\textsuperscript{44} while Patrick Gaffney, whose research I discussed earlier, examined preachers in the central Egyptian town of al-Minyā.\textsuperscript{45} Neither work focused on popular preachers, however, nor on the modern media tools that extend preaching beyond the mosque. Book-length studies that trace the effect of such media tools on preaching do exist, yet these discussions are currently limited to Charles Hirschkind’s book on cassette sermons in Egypt and Gary Bunt’s work on Islamic websites and online forums.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{42} Walton, Watch This!: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism.
\textsuperscript{43} Alexander, Televangelism Reconsidered; and Hoover, Mass Media Religion.
\textsuperscript{44} Antoun, Muslim Preacher in the Modern World.
\textsuperscript{45} Gaffney, The Prophet’s Pulpit.
Individual case studies of Muslim preachers and the media du’ā are much more common, although they present a limited picture as they repeatedly analyze the same two preachers: Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī and Amr Khaled. Al-Qaraḍāwī is a prominent religious scholar, and a television and Internet personality, but is not one of the media du’ā due to his formal religious education at al-Azhar. Born in Egypt in 1926, al-Qaraḍāwī gained fame after his move to Qatar and his work on the satellite channel al-Jazeera hosting the popular religious program al-Sharī‘a wa-l-Ḥayāh. The edited volume Global Mufti, the only book to focus exclusively on al-Qaraḍāwī, covers a broad range of topics from his current relationship with al-Azhar and the Muslim Brotherhood, to his views on women, wasatiyya (centrism, the middle way), and his transnational work in Europe and beyond.47 In Krämer and Schmidtke’s volume on religious authority, two chapters explore al-Qaraḍāwī’s views on consensus and apostasy,48 while a separate article by Alexandre Caeiro features al-Qaraḍāwī as part of a study of adab al-fatwā manuals.49 Other scholars have discussed al-Qaraḍāwī in works about Islamic websites,50 religious education,51 and politics and democracy.52 His fame through al-Jazeera, his prolific web presence, and considerable work in Europe make him an influential preacher and religious scholar, and a frequent source for academic research.

Egypt’s Amr Khaled is a popular topic as well, starting with Lindsay Wise’s influential thesis “Words from the Heart,” one of the first scholarly studies of this preacher. 53 Wise covered Khaled’s initial foray into television and showed how his colloquial and participatory approach to preaching set him apart from other preachers and eventually led to his exile from Egypt in 2002. Other research soon followed, picking up Khaled’s story where Wise had left off and analyzing his career from new angles. One scholar adopted a sociolinguistic approach for analyzing Khaled’s sermons, 54 while another portrayed the preacher as a prime example of how satellite television and the Internet provide a means for challenging religious and political authority. 55 According to recent research from 2009, the growing piety among religious elites in Egypt is also partially due to Khaled’s influence. 56

Scholars have demonstrated Khaled’s regional and international influence too, such as Samuel Harris’ analysis of how the Egyptian preacher inspired the Islamic organization “Life Makers” (Ṣumā‘ al-Hayāh) in Egypt, the Middle East and around the globe, 57 or Sophia Pandya’s anthropological study of Yemeni women who watch Khaled’s programs. 58 In addition, as with al-Qaraḍāwī, researchers regularly chose Khaled as a case study in larger works and, in this regard, further research on this preacher includes a chapter on online sermons and media

53 Lindsay Wise, “‘Words from the Heart’: New Forms of Islamic Preaching in Egypt” (M.Phil. thesis, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University, 2003).
57 Samuel Lee Harris, “Development through Faith: The Ma‘adi Life Makers and the Islamic Entrepreneurial Subject” (M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 2008).
campaigns, and a study of “market Islam,” an approach to Islam influenced by the pursuit of material success and self-improvement.

Studies of Khaled and al-Qaradāwī are so common, in fact, that they are often both featured in the same scholarly work. This could signify their uniqueness, but in my opinion illustrates a hole in scholarship. Other popular preachers from the Arab world – such as Muṣṭafā Husnī, Muʿīzz Masʿūd, Ahmad al-Shugairi, and Tariq al-Suwaidan – are also famous and influential, yet in English language sources, they remain primarily confined to journalistic pieces and short mentions or asides in scholarly works.

The exceptions to this narrow focus are a book chapter by Olfa Tantawi; the research of Nabil Echchaibi, a joint professor of Media Studies and Religious Studies; and the work of anthropologist Yasmin Moll. The first, Olfa Tantawi, examines the religious media discourse of Amr Khaled, Tariq al-Suwaidan, Muʿīzz Masʿūd, and Khālid al-Gindi. She describes the financial backing of these preachers, how their dress and style match their desired audiences, and how they focus on self-development rather than political issues. The preachers are trapped, as she argues, in a complex web of political and social elites, business interests, and target

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60 Haenni, L'Islam De Marché.
audiences, each of which is trying to enforce their values and dominance. This critical discourse analysis is very useful, but does not put the media duʿāʾ into the broader context of religious authority, exploring their relationship with traditional religious sources or authority figures like the ‘ulamāʾ.

The second, Nabil Echchaibi, discusses the influence of modern technology on religious discourse in Islam – citing the work of Khaled and Masʿūd, as well as that of the Iranian-born American blogger Ali Ardekani, who runs a popular religious video blog. His argument that these preachers “encourage public participation and civic engagement,” and shift religious discourse from morality to a practical and public religiosity, matches some of my findings here. However, he alludes to a crisis of authority in Islam, a statement with which I disagree. Religious authority is evolving, yet the idea of a crisis or fragmentation of authority does not reflect the situation at hand, as I discuss in Chapter Two. Also, Echchaibi does not address the duʿāʾ’s complicated relationship with the ‘ulamāʾ, such as the critiques of the duʿāʾ by religious scholars and the deference the duʿāʾ give their counterparts on many issues. This is a vital component of the current system of religious authority in Islam, something I address in Chapter Five and my concluding chapter.

The third, Yasmin Moll, explores Islamic television in Egypt including the entire range of the country’s al-duʿāʾ al-judud, from Khaled to Ḥusnī and Masʿūd, with a mention of the Kuwaiti preacher Tariq al-Suwaidan as well. Her lengthy research on al-duʿāʾ al-judud encompassed over two years of interviews and ethnographic fieldwork at the Egyptian offices of the satellite

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64 Ibid., 108, 125.
65 Echchaibi, “From Audio Tapes to Video Blogs.”
66 Ibid., 27, 43.
67 Ibid., 27.
channel Igra’, examining the creation of these preachers’ shows.\textsuperscript{69} She concentrates on the production and performance of these programs, however, and does not examine their intellectual contributions in detail, as I do here. Still, her discussion of religious authority is vital to my research, as she argues that these \textit{du’ā} in Egypt do not work against traditional modes of authority, but rather within them.\textsuperscript{70} More precisely, Moll notes that these preachers focus on providing \textit{irshād} (guidance), not \textit{ifiā’} (formal legal opinions), and repeatedly state that they are neither ‘\textit{ulamā’} nor \textit{fuqahā’} (jurists). Therefore, their legitimacy as sources for moral guidance stems from their sincerity as Muslims and their status as “ordinary people,” sharing stories from their own lives and from the Qur’an much like popular storytellers did for centuries before them.\textsuperscript{71} Her conclusions about Egyptian \textit{du’ā} reinforce my argument that the current tension between the media \textit{du’ā} and traditional scholars is not a new one and that both groups have a role in the development of religious discourse in Islam.

Outside the Arab world, the popular preachers Aa Gym from Indonesia and Cherif Haidara from Mali have also received scholarly attention. Although my own research will not focus on them in detail, due to their limited reach into the Arab world, their background and style hints at similarities with the Arab media \textit{du’ā} whom I discuss here. Several articles discuss Haidara’s charisma and his use of modern media tools,\textsuperscript{72} and he also serves as the primary


\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 29-30.

example in a study of religious charismatic leaders in Mali. As for Aa Gym, researchers attribute his popularity to his humor and strong command of media tools, and more importantly to his synthesis of Islamic teachings and the modern self-help genre. This combination of charisma, an informal style, the use of modern media tools, and little formal religious education might mean that Haidara and Gym are part of the media duʿā, but this hypothesis requires research beyond the scope of my work here.

My Study: Three Media Duʿā from the Arab World

My study examines the work of three Muslim preachers from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with roots in different parts of the Arab world: Egypt, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. These three individuals are Amr Khaled, Ahmad al-Shugairi and Tariq al-Suwaidan, whom I selected based on their popularity and prominence, as well as their prolific output. They all fit my definition of media duʿā. They are not part of the religious establishment (as they have no formal religious degrees or positions, and are not recognized as one of the ‘ulamā’); they are popular preachers with a colloquial and informal style; and they extend their preaching into the public arena, using books, television, websites, and social media. For reference and to set the scene for my analysis, here are biographies of these three men, including a short discussion of their work to date.

Amr Khaled

The Egyptian preacher Amr Khaled is the individual most often mentioned in discussions of Muslim televangelism. An accountant by training, a career he pursued in Egypt for a number

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73 Kimberley Davis, “Preaching to the Converted: Charismatic Leaders, Performances and Electronic Media in Contemporary Islamic Communities” (M.A. thesis, Concordia University, Canada, 2002).
of years, Khaled has amassed a vast array of television shows, books, and radio broadcasts, as well as a strong online presence, that have made him one of the most popular and most successful Muslim television preachers in the Arab world. In 2007, Forbes Arabia calculated his income at 2.5 million dollars, the highest of all media preachers at the time. In 2009, he was ranked fourteenth in a publication of the world’s 500 most influential Muslims, a rank that remained fixed in the low to mid-thirties in later years. On Facebook and Twitter, he currently has a combined total of over 27 million followers, and his website amrkhaled.net receives considerable traffic. The preacher’s road to success was not clear from the start, however, and evolved incrementally with its share of setbacks.

Khaled was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1967 and received a Bachelor’s degree in Accounting from Cairo University in 1988. When he joined the accounting firm KPMG upon


graduation, preaching was hardly on his radar. In fact, as a child, Khaled had no formal religious education and little interest in religion. As the preacher noted in a 2002 interview, it was only in his late youth, during his first year of high school, that he became interested in Islam, reading books on religion and sharing his passion with others.  

His first real experience as a preacher came by chance at Cairo’s Shooting Club, a social and sports club that included a small mosque. When the club’s regular preacher was unavailable, Khaled, a member with a reputation as a devout Muslim, was invited to fill in. His sermons, given in colloquial Arabic and presented from the perspective of an everyday Muslim, quickly attracted large audiences and propelled his preaching beyond the walls of the club. People invited him to hold lectures at their homes and the retired singer Yāsmīn al-Khayyām, daughter of a famous Qur’an reciter, asked Khaled to preach regularly at her father’s mosque in the neighborhood of Muhandinūn. The young preacher’s fame grew exponentially through these new venues. As Khaled describes in his book İslāḥ al-Qulūb, the mosque in Muhandinūn could only hold an audience of 200, but became a venue for many more listeners, thanks to local residents and businessmen who voluntarily opened their roofs, businesses, and parking lots to accommodate the growing crowds.

The preacher’s popularity drew the attention of his friend Aḥmad Abū Hayba, a television producer who wanted to launch a new type of Islamic television. Abū Hayba rejected the dull, traditional style of television preachers like Muḥammad al-Shaʻrāwī and instead turned toward Christian televangelists for inspiration. Their approach, combining proselytizing and


80 “Preaching With A Passion.”

entertainment with state-of-the-art production values, captured his vision for revitalizing Islamic programming. In 1999, Abū Hayba thus teamed up with Khaled to produce four episodes of Kalām min al-Qalb, a show that combined the preacher’s informal style with modern production elements and an interactive approach that encouraged audience participation. Although television channels turned down this pilot project, video sales proved a huge success and eventually draw the attention of media executives. The satellite channels Dream TV and Iqra’ signed Kalām min al-Qalb in 2001, officially launching Khaled’s career on television.

As the preacher’s successes grew, both on and off screen, the Egyptian authorities began to take notice. In 2001, the government forced Khaled to move his weekly sermons from Muhandisin to the suburbs, citing traffic issues and parking problems when he preached. Khaled’s popularity did not diminish though, and his completion of a diploma in Islamic Studies around this time probably increased his credibility as well. The next Fall, in 2002, the tides changed however. The preacher left the country for Lebanon and then the U.K., claiming that the authorities had officially banned him from preaching in Egypt. While Khaled blamed direct interference from the government, who sensed a threat to their monopoly over religious authority, the government denied instituting a ban and hinted that the move might be a publicity stunt by the preacher himself. In either case, this exile did little to silence Khaled, who continued producing and hosting shows from abroad, while also expanding his approach to preaching and activism.

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82 Shapiro, “Ministering to the Upwardly Mobile Muslim.”
84 Wise, “‘Words from the Heart’,” 81-86.
His 2004-2005 series Ṣunnaʿ al-Hayāḥ (Life Makers), for instance, gave birth to a nongovernmental organization (NGO) of the same name with branches throughout the Arab world and across the globe. The preacher is technically independent from the organization, but each branch draws inspiration from his sermons and shows, and from connections to other branches via the forums on Khaled’s website. Members join together to conduct work on personal and societal development, including courses for the public, and a variety of campaigns in the areas of health, literacy, and charity. In 2004, Khaled launched his own NGO as well, Right Start Foundation International, which frequently partners with Life Makers’ campaigns in Egypt, but has also conducted work in the U.K., Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.

The preacher’s expansion into the world of NGOs and development was quickly followed by another incident, the publication in 2005 of Danish cartoons lampooning the Prophet Muhammad. Khaled’s reaction drew extensive media attention, when he responded to the cartoons by organizing a conference in Copenhagen on coexistence. This openness to interfaith dialogue separated him from the Egyptian ʿālim Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, who demanded an apology before any discussions or attempts at dialogue. The two-day conference incorporated direct dialogue between 25 Arab youth and 25 young Danes, and featured a Danish church representative, a few academics, and three individuals from the Arab world – Khaled, Tariq al-Suwaidan, and Ḥabīb ‘Alī al-Jīfri. The event reached many others through the Internet and media coverage, however. By Khaled’s count, he conducted over 35 interviews with the press,

85 Harris, “Development through Faith,” 17-18.
86 See the website of Right Start Foundation International: http://rightstart.org.uk/ (accessed June 27, 2016).
87 For a detailed study of the cartoons, this conference, and the debate between Khālid and al-Qaraḍāwī, see: Wise, “Amr Khaled vs Yusuf Al Qaradawi.”
while 60 satellite channels covered the conference, and the event’s use of the Internet engaged
over 800,000 Danes in these discussions.\textsuperscript{89}

In recent years, Khaled has continued to innovate and evolve. In addition to producing
new television programs, he joined the protests in in Tahrîr Square in 2011, and after the
revolution launched his own political party, the Egypt Party.\textsuperscript{90} This decision to lead a party, let
alone join one at all, surprised many people, as Khaled had actively avoided such political action
in the past. The party’s focus on development and youth did deeply resonate with the preacher’s
previous work though and perhaps, with the departure of President Mubarak, Khaled felt less
fear of government repression. This foray into politics was short-lived however. In 2013,
Khaled resigned from his position as party leader\textsuperscript{91} and grew closer to the military regime,
appearing in a propaganda video where he told soldiers that they have a religious duty to obey
orders, even if it means using deadly force against Egyptian protestors.\textsuperscript{92}

All in all, Amr Khaled remains by far the most successful of the media \textit{du’ā} in Egypt,
whose ranks also include Muṣṭafā Ḥusnî and Muʿizz Masʿūd. Since 1999, he has hosted 22
television programs,\textsuperscript{93} published 24 books,\textsuperscript{94} and also broadcast on the radio and YouTube,
where his channel has over 71 million total views.\textsuperscript{95} Khaled’s books and shows fall into several

\textsuperscript{89} Gihan Shahine, “Now Danes Respect Muslims,” \textit{Al-Ahram Weekly}, March 23-29, 2006, originally at
http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/787/eg11.htm, and now available through the \textit{Internet Archive Wayback Machine}
2016).

\textsuperscript{90} The Egypt Party was originally titled “Egypt’s Future.” For more on this party and its founding, see: “Popular
Islamic Preacher Amr Khaled Launches Party for Youth,” \textit{Ahram Online}, Saturday, September 22, 2012,
http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/53526/Egypt/Politics-/Popular-Islamic-preacher-Amr-Khaled-

\textsuperscript{91} “Preacher Amr Khaled Steps Down From Leading Egypt Party,” \textit{Ahram Online}, Wednesday, July 17, 2013,
http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/76745/Egypt/Politics-/Preacher-Amr-Khaled-steps-down-from-


\textsuperscript{93} See “Appendix I” for a full list of these programs and the years they were broadcast.

\textsuperscript{94} See “Appendix I” for a complete list of these written works, as well as the date they were first published.

\textsuperscript{95} See: https://www.youtube.com/user/AmrKhaled/about (accessed May 17, 2016).
main categories: stories of the Qur’an, the Prophet Muhammad, and his Companions; calls for religious and cultural co-existence; and discussions of social and spiritual development – of the individual, the family, and the community as a whole. His books, many of which draw directly from his television shows, fall into the same general themes.

**Ahmad al-Shugairi**

This Saudi preacher’s books and television programs are unique in their diversity – each work focuses on a variety of topics, which are carefully chosen in order to explore larger issues from all sides. One year, for instance, al-Shugairi’s television series examined social and economic development through studies of cotton and coffee production across the world and innovations in modern taxis, sewer construction, and the treatment of animals, to mention only a few topics. Another year, he compared the Arab world to Japan – in terms of their values, skills, educational system, and lifestyle – searching for inspiration in that country’s renewal and economic success since World War II.

This broad approach propelled al-Shugairi to fame across the region. In 2009, a publication ranked him among the world’s 500 most influential Muslims, a rank he has maintained in later years as well. In 2010, he won the prize for the best young media

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96 See: *Khawāṣir 9*, directed by Jāsim al-Sa‘ādī and presented by Ahmad al-Shuqayrī, first broadcast in 2013, [YouTube Playlist], [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLM7DHPAGxHOEWkIGfTrQUtj-C7D](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLM7DHPAGxHOEWkIGfTrQUtj-C7D) (accessed May 22, 2016).


personality at the Third Youth Media Forum in Jordan,99 and in 2011, the magazine Arabian Business ranked him 143rd in their list of the 500 most influential Arabs.100 The preacher is also one of the most popular Saudi personalities on social media with a combined total of almost 28 million followers on Facebook and Twitter.101 These accolades are especially impressive considering that al-Shugairi stumbled into the media business, much like Amr Khaled.

Al-Shugairi was born in Jeddah in 1973, after his father, a Saudi diplomat, returned to Saudi Arabia to enter the private sector. The family still travelled frequently, visiting Europe and the United States, and when al-Shugairi was 17, he went abroad for his college degree, joining his older sister in California. He received a Bachelor’s degree in Information Management Systems in 1997 from California State University in Long Beach, followed by an M.B.A. from the same institution.102

In his youth, al-Shugairi gave little thought to religion and when first studying in California, he led a wild life of partying, drinking, and womanizing. This trend reversed completely in the mid-1990s, however. Al-Shugairi got married in 1995 and immersed himself fully in Islam, so much so that his marriage ended in divorce and he now labels this period as a time of “intellectual extremism.”103 As his study of Islam deepened, al-Shugairi arrived at a more tolerant and flexible middle ground however. The preacher credits religious classes in

101 See: https://www.facebook.com/AhmadAlShugairi and https://twitter.com/shugairi (both accessed May 18, 2016). For the sake of comparison, the Saudi ʿālim, Professor Muhammad al-ʿArīfī has a combined total of almost 37 million followers on Facebook and Twitter; the ʿālim and self-help author ʿĀʾīḍ al-Qarnī has over 26 million followers; and the ʿālim and founder of islamtoday.net Salmān al-ʿAwda has over 14 million followers.
102 I have compiled al-Shuqayrī’s biography from a number of sources, including: Ahmad al-Shuqayrī, Interview with Saʿīd al-Dawsarī, Aḥam ‘Ashra, Rūtānā Khalfīyya, April 20, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83Ep4vAsmr0 (accessed May 22, 2016); Wright, Rock the Casbah, 176-188; and Worth, “Preaching Moderate Islam.”
103 Wright, Rock the Casbah, 178; and Worth, “Preaching Moderate Islam.”
Jeddah for giving him this broader perspective of Islam and allowing him to focus on “its diversity and its openness to new ways of thinking.”

Al-Shugairi’s first foray into television happened a few years after his return to Saudi Arabia, albeit only by happenstance. While he was managing his family’s business in Jeddah, friends asked him to help launch the television show *Yallā Shabāb*, a religious program geared toward the younger generation. Despite his lack of experience, al-Shugairi accepted and soon found himself as one of the show’s hosts. The program stressed cultural tolerance, featuring interviews with Muslims in Europe and the United States, and encounters with people of all faiths. Al-Shugairi hosted *Yallā Shabāb* for three seasons, and then in 2005 decided to found his own television series.

*Khawāṭir* (Thoughts) started small, at only five to six minutes per episode, but over the years, it grew to over 20 minutes per episode, with a new season every Ramadan through 2015. The show challenged viewers to think critically about their actions and the world around them, with an emphasis on social and economic development, education, and the environment. Each episode of *Khawāṭir* explored a new element of these themes, permitting al-Shugairi to discuss complex topics including the dangers of smoking and the importance of literacy, and less obvious problems like double parking, how to best fix potholes, and the need for good drainage systems. By highlighting these social concerns and questioning people’s pre-conceived notions, *Khawāṭir* tried to reform the individual and society within the framework of Islam. As al-

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104 Worth, “Preaching Moderate Islam.”
106 One newspaper article says that the first season of *Khawāṭir* can be traced back to a series of weekly editorials written by al-Shugayrī in the Saudi newspaper *al-Madīna*. I have been unable to confirm this statement elsewhere, either through the newspaper itself or in other sources. Some chapters of al-Shugayrī’s first book *Khawāṭir Shābb* are written in a journalistic style however, and they reference recent dates and events, suggesting that they were published elsewhere before appearing in this book. For this statement about the editorials in *al-Madīna*, see: Ghassān Khārūb, “ʾAḥmad al-Shugayrī Yastabdal bi-l-Ḥulūl fī Khawāṭir 7,” *al-Bayān*, June 28, 2011, [http://www.albayan.ae/five-senses/mirrors/2011-06-28-1.1463318](http://www.albayan.ae/five-senses/mirrors/2011-06-28-1.1463318) (accessed May 31, 2016).
Shugairi explained in a 2010 interview, the show’s goal was: “for Muslims to have a more balanced life that caters to all our human needs. Our religion is not only to feed our spirituality. Religion should feed the body physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.”

Al-Shugairi’s innovative approach, forcing viewers to think critically about social and religious issues while also emphasizing volunteerism and self-improvement, is complemented by his modern production style and the creative ways in which he presents his message. In 2009, for example, he launched a religious version of the show Candid Camera, a television series he called Law Kāna Baynanā (If He Were Among Us). The show staged situations featuring a modern moral or religious issue. Al-Shugairi stood back with a hidden camera to see how individuals would react, before emerging to ask: “If the Prophet were among us today, what would he have done?” In one instance, a woman dropped her wallet as she walked down the street – most people ran to return it, although some did not. In other cases, al-Shugairi watched to see who would help carry a stroller down a long flight of stairs or stopped people who had thrown trash from their cars.

This creativity extends outside the realm of preaching and television as well. In his hometown of Jeddah, al-Shugairi founded Andalusia Café, a coffee shop designed to promote reading and provide a safe space for youth to gather together. The café’s interior reflects a

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110 Law Kāna Baynanā, Season no. 2, Episode no. 6, directed by Muḥammad Shawqi and presented by Aḥmad al-Shuqayrī, first broadcast in 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lFXxvBnKmR0 (accessed May 18, 2016).
combination of modern and classical styles, and also pays homage to Islamic history. Columns and tall arches reminiscent of Andalusian Spain decorate the space, while the furniture and intricate lanterns hung from the high ceiling complete this Andalusian feel. Modern touches include large flat-screen televisions and shelves of books along the walls to encourage reading. For al-Shugairi, Andalusia Café is a positive influence for youth, an alternative to wandering the malls or smoking shisha (which is banned in the café), and also a reminder of the rich cultural and intellectual heritage of Arab Andalusia. As the preacher put it, “You can find modern cafés everywhere, but there are hardly any traditional ones that serve as reminders of our days of glory in Al-Andalus. So I wanted our youth to remember those days and be proud of our heritage and to make an effort to bring us back to the glory of bygone days.”

In terms of total literary and media production, al-Shugairi has relatively few books and television programs, especially when compared to Amr Khaled and Tariq al-Suwaidan. Since 2002, al-Shugairi has published five books and hosted four television series, albeit this includes a combined total of 17 seasons of television. In total, his diverse works can be divided into the themes of social activism, individual and community development, and Islam in the today’s modern world.

Al-Shugairi’s presence in the online world is on par with Khaled and al-Suwaidan, if not surpassing them. His YouTube channel has 252 million total views and he is active across the breadth of social media, with accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Google Plus. While he has no personal website, which distinguishes him from both Khaled and al-Suwaidan, al-Shugairi actively utilizes webpages to pursue his professional and social goals. His

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112 Shalhoub, “Catering for Your Body and Mind.”
113 See “Appendix II” for a complete list of these written works, as well as the date they were first published.
114 See “Appendix II” for a full list of these programs and the years they were broadcast.
115 See: https://www.youtube.com/user/AhmadAlShugairi/about (accessed May 18, 2016).
café and television programs have Facebook accounts,\footnote{116} and in 2012, he launched the website \textit{Ihsān}, an interactive site to encourage volunteer work and help volunteers connect with each other.\footnote{117} His 2016 television series \textit{Qumra} was based around an online competition, where participants submitted short videos based on a series of diverse topics from social and intellectual issues, to health concerns, and ideas for developing and improving society.\footnote{118}

\textit{Tariq al-Suwaidan}

This Kuwaiti preacher is an engineer by training, with a Ph.D. in Petroleum Engineering, and is famous both as an expert on leadership, management and motivation, and as a popular preacher on religious issues. Using books, cassettes, television shows, and the Internet, al-Suwaidan has made a name for himself in the worlds of business and religion, often bringing the two together in his publications and television programs. The preacher is a prolific entrepreneur too, having founded many programs and centers on education and leadership, as well as establishing and developing the popular religious satellite channel \textit{al-Risāla}, where he served as general manager until 2013. In 2009, a publication ranked him among the world’s 500 most influential Muslims, a rank he has maintained in later years as well.\footnote{119} The preacher currently has a combined total of over 15 million followers on Facebook and Twitter,\footnote{120} and his income in

\footnotetext{116}{See: https://www.facebook.com/AndalusiahCafe; https://www.facebook.com/khawatirTV; and https://www.facebook.com/QomrahTV (all accessed June 28, 2016).}
\footnotetext{117}{See: www.i7san.net. As of June 2016, this website was under reconstruction, but a snapshot from the Internet Archive reveals the website at its peak. See: “Shahkat Iḥsān,” Internet Archive Wayback Machine, April 24, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20140424124537/http://www.i7san.net/ (accessed June 28, 2016).}
\footnotetext{118}{See: http://qomrah.tv/?lang=ar (accessed May 22, 2016).}
\footnotetext{120}{See: https://www.facebook.com/Dr.TareqAlSuwaidan and https://twitter.com/TareqAlSuwaidan (both accessed May 18, 2016).}
2007 was once calculated at one million dollars, the second richest Islamic preacher after Amr Khaled.\footnote{121} Al-Suwaydān was born in Kuwait in 1953, but studied in the United States on a Kuwaiti scholarship from the age of seventeen, attending an American high school and then receiving his B.S. in Petroleum Engineering from Pennsylvania State University in 1975.\footnote{122} He continued on at the University of Tulsa for his Masters and Ph.D. in the same field, receiving a doctorate in Petroleum Engineering in 1990 with a minor in business administration.\footnote{123} While completing his degrees, al-Suwaydān also met and studied under some ‘ulamā’,\footnote{124} of which two in particular served as his teachers for several years: the Palestinian ‘ālim Dr. ‘Umar al-Ashqar\footnote{125} and Iraqi dā’iyya Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Rāṣid.\footnote{126}

Al-Suwaydān continued to pursue these two themes, religion and business, upon his return to Kuwait. In 1991, he launched the Gulf Innovation Company, a consulting firm he leads to this day, and began giving lectures on leadership and business, incorporating theories and practices he had encountered during his studies abroad. At the same time, he also recorded

\footnote{121}{“Amr Khaled richest Islamic Preacher: Forbes,” \textit{Alarabiya.net}. Al-Suwaydān has disputed the amounts given in this study however. For more on this topic, see my discussion in Chapter Five.}
\footnote{122}{I have compiled al-Suwaydān’s biography from a number of sources, starting with the resume on his own website (see: Tāriq al-Suwaydān, “Al-Sīra al-Dhāfiyya Muṭawwala li-l-Duktūr Tāriq,” \url{http://www.suwaidan.com/?q=ar/content/طريق-لادكشون-بطلة-الذاتية-السيرة}, accessed June 28, 2016) and then newspaper articles and interviews such as: Lindsay Wise, “Interview with Tareq Alsuwaydān, General Manager of Al Resalah Channel,” \textit{TBS Journal} 16 (2006), \url{http://tbsjournal.arabmediasociety.com/SuwaidanInterview.html}(accessed June 31, 2016); and Tāriq al-Suwaydān, Interview with Ḥabū Ḥayba, ‘Alāmāt, broadcast on the channel 4Shbab in 2013(?), \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kU5OqTQksDg} (accessed June 6, 2016).}
\footnote{123}{See: Tāriq al-Suwaydān, “Effect of the Presence of Ṭar Mat on the Performance of an Oil Reservoir: A Simulation Study” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Tulsa, 1990).}
\footnote{124}{In his autobiography, al-Suwaydān lists a total of eleven ‘ulamā’ who have been strong influences in his life and education. See: Tāriq al-Suwaydān, \textit{Madrasat al-Ḥayāh}, vol. 1 of ‘Allamātī al-Ḥayāh, (Kuwait: Sharikat al-Ībdā’ al-Fikrī, 2011), 14-18.}
\footnote{125}{‘Umar al-Ashqar was born in 1940 near Nablus, and studied at the Islamic University of Madina and al-Azhar University in Cairo. He lived in Kuwait from 1966 to 1990, and then spent the remainder of his life in Jordan, where he passed away in August 2012.}
\footnote{126}{Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Rāṣid is the nom de guerre of Ḥabīl al-Mun‘īm Sāliḥ al-‘Alī al-‘Īzī, who was born in Baghdad in 1938. Al-Rāṣid studied under several Iraqi ‘ulamā’ and is also famous as a writer and a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq.}
cassette tapes on religious topics, releasing popular works such as \textit{al-Sīra al-Nabawīya}, his first big hit, and \textit{Qiṣas min al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī}, which has now sold over two million copies.\footnote{127 See: Rowan Callick, “Mixed Messages From Touring Muslim Lecturer,” \textit{The Australian}, June 7, 2012, \url{http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/} (accessed June 1, 2016).}

Al-Suwaidan has continued to juggle these many roles throughout his career, holding jobs in the professional sector, preaching on television and cassettes, and using his entrepreneurial skills to start new ventures. For instance, while serving in Kuwait as an Assistant Professor of Technological Studies, a role he held until 2001, al-Suwaidan launched the American Creativity Academy, what he described as “an American-Islamic school.”\footnote{128 Wise, “Interview with Tareq Alsuwaidan, General Manager of Al Resalah Channel.”} From the school’s founding in 1997 until 2001, al-Suwaidan was the General Manager of the school, which offered a full range of classes from pre-kindergarten to high school. In 2002, he also founded \textit{Ruwwād}, a leadership center for boys, while his wife launched \textit{Murtaqā}, a leadership center for girls.\footnote{129 Al-Suwaydān’s wife is Buthayna al-Ibrāhīm, who is also an educator and leadership trainer. See her website here: \url{http://www.buthinah.com} (accessed May 18, 2016).} Through these centers, al-Suwaidan and his wife host an annual leadership camp, the Leadership Preparation Academy (\textit{Akādimiya I’dād al-Qāda}), which is open to Arab youth from around the world.\footnote{130 For more information on the Leadership Preparation Academy, see its website: \url{http://www.leadersta.com} (accessed May 18, 2016).}

In the literary and media world, al-Suwaidan’s work prospered as well, both in books and on television, where his shows ran on satellite channels like MBC, ART, Orbit and \textit{Igra’}, as well as national channels in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Sudan.\footnote{131 See the resume on al-Suwaydān’s website: al-Suwaydān, “Al-Sīra al-Dhātīya Muṭawwala li-l-Duktūr Tāriq.”} In 2006, his success and relatively liberal religious views attracted the attention of the Saudi prince and businessman Alwaleed Bin Talal, who wanted to found a new satellite channel that would be both Islamic and entertaining, offering youth an alternative from religious extremism and giving them a better understanding of
Bin Talal hired al-Suwaidan as the General Manager of this channel, *al-Risāla*, which was soon broadcasting formal religious shows, as well as cartoons, game shows, and women’s programming. The more formal shows included a number hosted by al-Suwaidan himself, as well as programs by a range of other preachers from Amr Khaled to the Saudi religious scholar Salmān al-‘Awda.

Outside of religion and business, al-Suwaidan is also active in the social and non-profit sectors. For instance, he is the Chairman of the AWARE Center (Advocates for Western-Arab Relations), a non-profit organization that works to improve relations between Arabs and the West, serving specifically as a cultural and educational resource for Westerners in Kuwait. In the socio-political realm, the preacher has close ties with the Muslim Brotherhood. In his autobiography, he cites three Brotherhood leaders as strong influences on his life and education, and notes a particularly close relationship with former General Guide Muṣṭafā Mashhūr. As to his own membership in the group, al-Suwaidan states that he is a member on his own terms: he is proud to be a member of the Brotherhood and a decision maker within the organization, yet he also clashes with them on many topics and hopes to create reform within the group. For instance, he agrees that Islam is a comprehensive system covering every aspect of life, but opposes the Brotherhood’s comprehensive approach. In his opinion, Islam and Islamic activists (*al-‘āmilūn al-Islāmiyyūn*) are not the same – the religion is comprehensive, yet one group or organization cannot encompass everything, as it would thereby hold a monopoly on religion or

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132 Wise, “Interview with Tareq Alsuwaidan, General Manager of Al Resalah Channel.”
politics. In fact, al-Suwaidan argues that the Brotherhood should withdraw from politics and focus on their original goals: education and da‘wa.\textsuperscript{137}

The preacher’s support of the Brotherhood increased following the overthrow of President Muhammad Morsi in Egypt. Al-Suwaidan was vocal in his opposition to military rule in Egypt, even calling the takeover a “fascist military coup” in a 2013 television interview with al-Jazeera.\textsuperscript{138} He voiced his pro-Brotherhood stance in public as well, telling an audience in Yemen that he was “one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood.”\textsuperscript{139} This drew considerable media attention, as well as the ire of prominent social and political figures, directly affecting al-Suwaidan’s professional work. Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal fired al-Suwaidan from his role at al-Risāla, citing the preacher’s links to the Brotherhood, whom Bin Talal called “a terrorist movement.” He added that he had repeatedly warned al-Suwaidan not to declare his political affiliations.\textsuperscript{140}

Even with this prominent dismissal, al-Suwaidan’s many roles and projects demonstrate his success as an accomplished entrepreneur and a prolific writer and television producer. Since 1999, al-Suwaidan has hosted 26 television programs,\textsuperscript{141} published 44 books,\textsuperscript{142} released many popular series on cassette and video,\textsuperscript{143} and also broadcast on YouTube, where his channel has over three and a half million total views.\textsuperscript{144} Unlike the other media du‘ā, al-Suwaidan’s books and television shows are mostly independent of one another; few of the preacher’s books are

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\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} “Al-Suwaydān Wāthiq min Fashal al-Inqilāb bi-Misr,” \textit{Aljazeera.net}, September 6, 2013, \url{http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/2f3e5d0b-bede-44da-bb6a-1f55255fa46b} (accessed May 18, 2016).
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} See “Appendix III” for a full list of these programs and the years they were broadcast.
\textsuperscript{142} See “Appendix III” for a complete list of these written works, as well as the date they were first published.
\textsuperscript{143} Al-Suwaydān’s resume on his website lists a total of 40 different cassette and videos. See: al-Suwaydān, “Al-Sīra al-Dhāṭiyya Muṭāwawala li-l-Duktūr Tāriq.”
\textsuperscript{144} See: \url{https://www.youtube.com/user/DrAlSuwaidan/about} (accessed May 18, 2016).
based on his television work. The topics he discusses in these two mediums do overlap, however. Al-Suwaidan’s television shows treat several main categories: stories of the Prophets and Companions; the renewal of Islam and Islamic civilization; the attributes of a successful leader; and individual and spiritual development. His books include works of history, general studies of Islam, and almost 30 works in the fields of management, leadership and education.

The Sources For This Study

Faced with such a prolific group of preachers and writers, I was presented with a daunting task: where to begin in terms of my research. As previous scholarship on these individuals has concentrated primarily on the format, style, and production of their television programs, I chose to focus on their intellectual contributions, looking for reoccurring themes as well as the specific messages they are trying to convey to their audience. To research such prolific individuals requires establishing certain boundaries however. Watching all the television programs of each preacher is too much for one person or one study, not to mention the large amount of transcription that would be necessary to make such television shows the main focus of a research project. For this reason, I chose to concentrate primarily on the preachers’ written material – their books, published interviews, social media, and websites. Not only does such an approach highlight the diverse platforms that these preachers utilize, but it also presents ideas that need no transcription, having already been carefully written down by the preachers themselves. This does not mean that I ignore their television work, of course. Their shows provide an important picture of these preachers’ oratory style and also serve as useful examples of the issues they discuss.
CHAPTER TWO

Definitions and Goals: The Media Du‘ā as Religious Authorities

The call for religious reform and reformers in Islam appear in religious and academic discussions alike. Since the Classical era, ‘ulamā’ have discussed the number and nature of the religion’s mujaddidūn (renewers), while some modern academics and journalists seek a Muslim version of the Protestant Reformation.¹ Such debates have significant implications for the nature and structure of religious authority in Islam, and thereby serve as a valuable tool in our study of the media du‘ā. We can gain insights into who these du‘ā are and are not by comparing them with Christian reformers like Martin Luther and modern innovators like Christian televangelists Billy Graham and Joel Osteen. Based on these comparisons, we can also extrapolate about the future potential of Muslim televangelism and its impact on society.

This chapter thus delves into the desires and goals of the media du‘ā, questioning who these individuals are and what they seek to accomplish. I argue that the media du‘ā are neither explicit reformers, nor overt political actors. They do not critique religion, but instead use it as a tool to subtly influence society and politics, supporting the theory that religious authority in Islam is not fragmenting, but rather is both proliferating and differentiating.

Defining Important Terms and the Issues At Stake

To discuss a complex concept like religious authority, it is vital to define it carefully, breaking it down into its specific components and attributes. Max Weber broke legitimate

authority into three types: rational or legal, traditional, and charismatic. As he explains, legal authorities are part of a legally established hierarchy and hold an official position or office of some kind. Traditional authority, on the other hand, places power in the person himself rather than the office, and thus obedience is based on personal loyalty and historical tradition, not a system of legal rules. Lastly, charismatic authority requires someone with charisma, a characteristic that Weber defined as “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”

In our case here, the media du’ā do not hold official offices or positions in the religious establishment, and thus are not rational-legal authorities. They are also not recognized as member of the ‘ulamā’, Islam’s traditional authorities. As for charismatic authority, the Prophet Muhammad is the classic example in Islam, but this model is not a perfect fit for the media du’ā. These popular preachers actively use their status as ordinary Muslims, not individuals with extraordinary qualities, and the idea of innate charisma also takes away from the active role the du’ā play in their own authority and success.

Sociologist Mark Chaves’ vision of religious authority is more useful in our context. He argues that the defining characteristic of religious authority is not how it enforces itself, but rather its mean of legitimation. Thus, he defines “a religious authority structure as a social structure that attempts to enforce its order and reach its ends by controlling the access of

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3 Ibid., 358.
individuals to some desired goods, where the legitimation of that control includes some supernatural component, however weak.”

Following Chaves’ model, one can say that religious authorities in Islam control access to the afterlife and the tools to reach it, as found in the realm of religious knowledge (’ilm). As Patrick Gaffney put it, religious knowledge is “the cardinal quality in the legitimation of Islamic authority,” a quality that is deeply embedded in the fields of religious education (learning and teaching), religious guidance, interpretation, and preaching.

Of course, when judging who or what can have religious authority, there is also an important distinction between religious authority and religious authorities, as I discussed in Chapter One. In Islam, the singular form “religious authority” is attributed to God, but also includes the scriptural sources of the religion – the Qur’an and Sunna – which present the divine word of God and the ideal example of the Prophet Muhammad. The plural form “religious authorities,” on the other hand, encompasses all the individuals who claim the power and legitimacy to present God’s message and communicate His authoritative views and doctrines.

Narrowing the focus of our study to religious authorities in Islam does not simplify the situation, however, as these individuals span a remarkably broad spectrum of spaces and practices. These include the authority to give fatwas, transmit hadith, judge in court, lead prayer, preach, provide religious guidance, contribute to religious knowledge, enforce religious rules and doctrines, and formally teach others, bestowing licenses upon one’s students. When someone notes that a Muslim individual or group has religious authority, it does not mean that they cover

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5 Ibid., 755-756.
7 Ibid., 34.
8 Krämer and Schmitdke, Speaking for Islam, 1-6.
all these areas only that they are authoritative in one or more of these fields. Overlapping areas of authority are normal, but for one person to be an authority in everything is almost impossible, especially in the modern era. Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī is a prominent religious scholar, for instance, contributing to scholarly knowledge, issuing fatwas and offering religious guidance, but he does not serve as a judge in court. An imam at a local mosque leads prayer and preaches, but is not necessarily publishing books on religion or teaching students. Similarly, outside the Ulama, a popular preacher gives sermons without leading prayers and is not qualified to give fatwas or legal rulings.

The rise of the Internet and satellite television further complicates matters. These new media have expanded the dimensions of religious discourse by providing new forums and players for religious discussions. In Western academia, this has spawned a debate over the resulting consequences for religious authority. Some scholars say that these changes have fragmented religious authority, with new voices outside the Ulama striving to speak for Islam. Others oppose the idea of fragmentation, instead describing a “proliferation of religious knowledge, actors and normative statements.” These two models present remarkably different pictures of what is happening on the ground, positing a fragmentation of the system of religious authority as a whole or a multiplication of the knowledge and actors included with such authority, without note of any new divisions. Of course, a third option is also possible – some combination of both fragmentation and proliferation. This model argues that as authority proliferates, it will eventually divide or differentiate to some degree. This idea of differentiation

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10 Eickelman and Piscatori, Muslim Politics, 131-135; Eickelman and Anderson, New Media in the Muslim World, 3, 14; Francis Robinson, “Crisis of Authority: Crisis of Islam?” Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Third Series, 19, no. 3 (July 2009), 350-353.  
11 Krämer and Schmidtke, 12.
also tones down the rhetoric of fragmentation, removing the sharp break inherent in that term, while still keeping its sense of change and evolution.

New modes of communication have certainly had an influence on religious authority, yet to what degree this is a fragmentation of religious authority, the proliferation of its many components, or something in between is not immediately clear. To take these terms by themselves, fragmentation is by definition “the disintegration, collapse, or breakdown of norms of thought, behavior, or social relationship.” In our discussion, fragmentation thus implies that religious authority is collapsing or somehow breaking apart into separate pieces or entities. Proliferation, on the other hand, is “a rapid and often excessive spread or increase.” The proliferation of religious knowledge and actors thus implies a multiplication or growth of religious authority and authorities without reference to new divisions or breakups. In this model, the system of authority is growing, not breaking apart. Lastly, differentiation means becoming unlike or dissimilar, changing in character. The differentiation of religious authority thus suggests changes in the system of authority or the characteristics of authority figures, but not the concrete divisions or collapse of fragmentation.

From these definitions, one can already see that the pure fragmentation model is difficult to prove, as it requires demonstrating clear breaks in the system of religious authority in Islam. Fragmentation could mean, for example, that the areas of authority in Islam are now divided between different sets of people. If so, then some or all of the areas of religious authority described above have split apart from each other and are controlled in isolation by separate groups or figures. This is not the case however. As Zaman has shown, the ‘ulamā’ still control

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power across the range of authoritative spheres in India and Pakistan, and also in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Philippines. There, religious scholars continue to issue fatwas, transmit hadith, judge in court, lead prayer, preach, provide religious guidance, and formally teach others, not to mention exerting their influence in local and national politics. They may not hold exclusive power in these areas, but the fact that they hold power there at all invalidates this definition of pure fragmentation.

Fragmentation could also mean that religious authority in Islam no longer lies with one group. This is in some sense what Eickelman and Piscatori are saying, that the ‘ulamā’ are on the decline, losing their authority over religion to groups of ‘new’ religious intellectuals who emerged from modern state or secular schooling.”

Francis Robinson takes this view as well, describing in his opinion how the ‘ulamā’ sustained religious authority until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when their authoritative system began to break down. There are elements of truth to these views. To be sure, it is now much more difficult for the ‘ulamā’ to proclaim themselves as the sole authorities of Islam, including the interpretation and transmission of knowledge. But can we say that the ‘ulamā’ ever had sole authority over their religion? No, we cannot. They may have claimed or wished they did, yet they were hardly the only religious authorities.

For a long time, other people have also claimed a stake in defining religion, meddling with the religious system in a number of ways. Governments supported some ‘ulamā’ over others, using scholars to counter religious opposition or promote particular ideas. Rulers and wealthy elites also endowed madrasas and other institutions of learning, and in some cases

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16 Eickelman and Piscatori, 13, 131.
17 Robinson, 342-353.
played a role in selecting which scholars received positions at these schools. Popular storytellers helped define religion as well, sharing their tales with the public. While some storytellers were respected ‘ulamā’, others were individuals who did not have a firm grasp of the sources and science of religious knowledge (‘ilm).

The problems of the pure fragmentation model are thus on clear display in these failed attempts to link fragmentation to the realities of the Muslim world. Authority is not a contained entity that can be clearly divided or compartmentalized. It involves overlapping sectors, people and places. The concept of proliferating authority avoids this problem. Krämer and Schmidtke’s explanation of increasing claims on authority and knowledge in Islam does not discuss the system of religious authority as a whole, but leaves it as a complex construct that is only becoming more complex. Although they do not mention it, this also allows for the diversification and differentiation of religious authority.

Other examples are required to better address the question of whether the system of religious authorities in Islam are fragmenting, proliferating, or differentiating. The Christian Reformations of the sixteenth century, for instance, led to a break with the Catholic Church, a fragmentation that gave rise to Protestantism. In modern times, Christian televangelists are also presenting religion in new ways, yet have not led to direct fragmentation. A comparison of these cases with the Muslim media du ‘ā holds the theory of proliferation and differentiation by showing how the subtle shifts of Christian televangelism, not the divisive critiques of Martin Luther, are a more apt depiction of how religious authority is changing in Islam.

21 I employ Carter Lindberg’s use of Reformations in the plural. As he explains, the Reformation era was not a single movement, but rather multiple reform movements from Martin Luther’s one in Germany, to Ulrich Zwingli’s in Switzerland, to the Huguenots in France. See: Carter Lindberg, The European Reformations, 2nd ed. (Chichester, U.K.; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), xv.
A Flawed Comparison: The Media Du’a and the Protestant Reformations

Recent scholarship has illustrated the similarities between the Protestant Reformations in the sixteenth century and Muslim reformers from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, like Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Rashīd Riḍā, and Maḥmūd Shaltūt. In both cases, the gradual secularization of education allowed greater access to education for the general public and led to a new system of institutions that were not controlled by religious groups. The printing press also brought immense changes in both eras. Thanks to this technology, reformers could distribute their opinions quickly to large audiences, without going through the traditional authorities that had controlled the production of religious texts up to that point. And lastly, these two groups of reformers rejected the established interpretation of their religion, calling instead for a return to scriptural sources – the Bible in the Christian case, and the Qur’an and Sunna in the Muslim one.

At first glance, it might seem like the similarities between these Muslim reformers and the Protestant Reformations continue into the present day and are relevant to the media preachers we study here. One could cite continued developments in education, the rise of new media like the Internet, or the fact that the media du’ā continue the trend of calling for a return to scriptural sources. However, the world is too different from Luther’s time or even the time of ʿAbduh and Riḍā. The distinct historical and social circumstances of the media duʾā and the Protestant reformers make seeking similarities between these groups like trying to compare apples to oranges.

23 Ibid., 30-41.
Moreover, there are sharp differences in the critiques put forth by the Protestant Reformations and the media _du’ā_. A core tenet of Protestant reformers was their critique of the religious establishment, something not found in the work of the media _du’ā_. Martin Luther’s “Ninety-Five Theses,” for example, opposed the Catholic Church’s concept of buying indulgences, giving money to absolve one’s sins, and actively questioned the church’s system of salvation. The Catholic theology cast salvation as the goal of life, leaving people uncertain of their fate in the afterlife and dependent on the church to avoid punishment in purgatory. Luther turned this idea around by saying that salvation was inherent and formed the foundation for life in this world.\(^{24}\) Moreover, he was sharply critical of the indulgence system and how it tainted the message of Christianity. As Luther explained:

\begin{enumerate}
\item 37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters.
\item 43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buy indulgences.
\item 45. Christians are to be taught that he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God’s wrath.\(^{25}\)
\end{enumerate}

Believers should thus focus on carefully following Christ’s example, not just showing up at church for services or spending money in an attempt to pay off their sins, as the Church proposed. In this fashion, Luther directly challenged the Catholic Church, openly questioning the prime religious authority of Catholicism and its theological tenets.

The media _du’ā_ make no such theological critiques or attacks on traditional authority. Instead, they criticize Muslim society as a whole, not the religious powers. Muslims are following the wrong Islam, they argue, or have drifted from the true message of the Qur’an and

\(^{24}\) My description of the Church’s views and Luther’s new ideas are based on Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 63-67.

the Prophet Muhammad. Khaled cites the unfortunate state of society today, where people fall into two categories: “those who are pious, but have bad ethical conduct, and those who have good ethical conduct, but are not pious.”

Piety is not the issue, Khaled argues. Muslims must be pious and follow through on that faith with good ethical conduct, as the Prophet said. Al-Shugairi also chastises Muslims for their superficial approach to Islam. People memorize hadith and study the life of the Prophet, yet do not implement their teachings in practice. The Kuwaiti preacher goes further, citing a crisis of thought and a loss of Islamic identity. Customs, traditions, arbitrary whims (ahwā’) and doctrinal adherence (intimā’āt) have all influenced Islamic thought, he explains. Moreover, the younger generation of Muslims is now closer to Western ways in their clothing, interests and attitudes.

In this sense, the media du’ā critique society as a whole, and not the religious establishment or its theological beliefs. While they urge Muslims to return to the scriptural sources, a new theology is not on their agenda. Indeed, these preachers opt to work within the existing system of religious authority. As anthropologist Yasmin Moll explained:

Islamic televangelists do not see themselves as operating against traditional modes of authority, but rather within them. Indeed, far from negating ‘traditional’ forms of religious authority, Islamic televangelists actively support them. This does not mean, however, that they claim such authority for themselves. Islamic televangelists go to great lengths to ensure that their viewers know that they are not ulama (scholars) or fuquha [sic] (jurists) and are hence unqualified for ifta (issuing binding religious opinions), tafsir (Qur’anic exegesis), or tashri’ (formulating Islamic laws) - all activities that have been the historical province of Islamic scholars.

The reason why they stay within the traditional system has as much to do with religion as it does with politics. The du’ā fear accusations of heresy from religious authorities, as well as

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27 Ibid., 55-56.
repression or forced exile by political authorities, fears that we will examine at the end of this chapter.

A Better Model for Comparison: The Media Du’ā and Christian Televangelists

Eliminating this link between the Protestant Reformations and the media du’ā invites calls for another alternative, something better suited for an analysis of this Muslim phenomenon. Modern newspapers and academic works provide just such an option, contemporary Christian televangelists. In particular, authors often link Amr Khaled with the work and charismatic appeal of the evangelist Billy Graham. Yet is Billy Graham’s work and history the best comparison for Khaled and other media du’ā? For sure, Graham and the du’ā are famous and recognizable names in their own religious communities. They are both renown for their charismatic sermons on television, as well as their work in other media such as radio and books. Graham has no advanced theological degrees, just like the media du’ā, although he does hold an unaccredited Bachelor of Theology from Florida Bible Institute, and a B.A. in Anthropology.

Despite those similarities however, Graham is unlike the media du’ā in many important ways. First, he is a long-standing religious figure who has been preaching since the 1940s, not a new preacher like the du’ā who started in the 1990s and 2000s. Second, Graham has been connected to the highest levels of political power for a long time, including particularly close relations with U.S. Presidents Johnson and Nixon. In this sense, Graham is not one of the

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32 Florida Bible Institute changed its name to Trinity College of Florida in 1947. It has been accredited by the Association for Biblical Higher Education since 1996.
34 Wacker, 210-214.
people, as Khaled and others claim to be. His prominent place in local and national politics is starkly different from how the media *duʿā* present themselves and how local politicians treat them.

This is not to say that comparisons between Muslim media *duʿā* and Christian televangelists should be discarded altogether. However, there are other Christian preachers who serve as more relevant examples for comparative purposes. The contemporary televangelist Joel Osteen is the best case, blending the charismatic preaching of Billy Graham with the style, background, and media savvy of the Muslim media *duʿā*.

In particular, Osteen’s age, his personal history, and the religious themes he addresses all make him uniquely similar to the Muslim media *duʿā* and thereby a useful tool for comparative analysis. Osteen was born in 1963, in the same age range as al-Suwaidan, Khaled, and al-Shugairi (born 1953, 1967, and 1973 respectively) and almost fifty years after the birth of Billy Graham (born 1918). Like the media *duʿā*, Osteen did not receive formal religious training; he pursued a degree in television production, despite the fact that his father was a famous pastor and had a seminary degree. The younger Osteen only attended college for one year, however, before dropping out and returning home. There, he joined the team at his father’s mega-church, Lakewood Church, working behind the scenes in television production.\(^{35}\)

Osteen’s entry into preaching and televangelism mirrors those of the media *duʿā* as well. At first, despite his father’s best efforts, Osteen refused any invitations to preach. This changed in 1999, seventeen years after starting his work at the church. After refusing yet another of his father’s invitations to preach, Osteen had a change of heart, as he recalled in his first book:

Daddy’s words kept flitting through my mind, and with no other provocation, I began to have an overwhelming desire to preach. I didn’t really understand it at the time, but I knew I had to do something. Keep in mind, I had never even prepared a sermon, let alone considered standing up in front of thousands of people to speak. Nevertheless, I called Daddy right back and said “Daddy, I’ve changed my mind. I think I’ll do it.”

Of course Daddy nearly passed out!

I studied all week and prepared a message, and the next Sunday I spoke at Lakewood Church for the first time.36

When his father passed away shortly thereafter, Osteen found himself at the helm of the entire church.

The media duʿā benefited from similar instances of luck or fate. Al-Shugairi joined the new television show Yallā Shabāb and was chosen to be the host, despite his trepidation and lack of experience.37 Khaled frequented a mosque at his local sports club and when the regular preacher was unavailable, the role fell to Khaled. He accepted and soon gathered a significant following.38

The duʿā’s fame grew through these initial experiences, and so did Osteen’s. In 2004, Osteen published his first book, Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential, which quickly became a New York Times bestseller and, to date, has sold over four million copies.39 In 2005, Lakewood Church moved to the Compaq Center, a former basketball arena with space for over 16,000 worshippers. A decade later, his weekly congregation now totals over 40,000 worshippers, he has published more than 15 books, and conducted numerous tours, preaching to audiences in stadiums and concert halls. Like the duʿā, Osteen spreads his message through more than just books, television and in-person sermons. His diverse media approach

37 Wright, 179.
38 Samantha M. Shapiro, “Ministering to the Upwardly Mobile Muslim.”
39 See the biography of Joel Osteen as given on his website: https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/AboutJoel.aspx (accessed May 19, 2016).
includes a modern website,\(^{40}\) a regular podcast,\(^{41}\) a YouTube channel,\(^{42}\) and accounts on Facebook\(^{43}\) and Twitter.\(^{44}\) His accounts on these two social media sites have 13.6 million and 4.5 million followers respectively.

The similarities between Joel Osteen and the Muslim media \(du’ā\) extend to their message as well. They each push for piety in this world, stressing hope and happiness, while promoting personal and social development. Osteen’s nickname is the “smiling preacher,” a moniker he embraces,\(^{45}\) and he underscores the importance of relaxing, lightening up, and choosing to be happy.\(^{46}\) Al-Suwaïdān dedicates a full chapter of his autobiography to smiling, citing its benefits for one’s overall health, mentality, work, finances, and social life.\(^{47}\) Osteen emphasizes the importance of positive thinking, envisioning success and maintaining hope. Khaled stresses hope as well, saying that his job is one of a motivator, giving young people hope through concrete projects not rousing speeches.\(^{48}\) He acknowledges life’s many challenges, but urges people to keep going, reminding them that such hardships are not “the end of the world.”\(^{49}\)

Osteen pairs his positive approach with compassionate action. “When you reach out to other people in need, God will make sure that your own needs are supplied,”\(^{50}\) Osteen says. He adds that if you want to reap good things – happiness, financial rewards, friendship – then you

\(^{40}\) “Joel Osteen Ministries,” \texttt{www.joelosteen.com} (accessed May 19, 2016).
\(^{42}\) See: \texttt{https://www.youtube.com/user/joelosteenministries} (accessed June 28, 2016).
\(^{46}\) Osteen, \textit{Your Best Life Now}, 277-278.
\(^{49}\) Khālid, \textit{‘Alā Ḫuṭṭā al-Ḥabīb}, 37.
\(^{50}\) Osteen, \textit{Your Best Life Now}, 223.
need to sow it in others first. The media *du’ā* place a similar emphasis on helping others and the power of individual action. Khaled argues that it is one’s duty to contribute to society, not merely take from it. In this vein, his television program *Life Makers* stressed faith-based development, including a focus on health, literacy and charity, and led to the creation of independent *Life Makers* organizations around the world. Al-Shugairi’s emphasis on volunteering presents a similar message. During Ramadan in 2008, he launched Fīnā al-Khayr (Goodness Is In Us), a campaign to get one million Muslim youth to perform volunteer work. This served a dual purpose, encouraging young people to focus on their civic duties and get involved in society, while also turning the modern focus of Ramadan away from food, soap operas, and shopping.

None of these approaches have led to religious divisions, fragmentation, or new sects and denominations. Instead, Osteen and the media *du’ā* seek to develop and improve their audience and the community at large. They claim no great power or prestige in doing so, and Osteen’s call of being an ordinary person echoes those of the media *du’ā*. “God uses ordinary people like you and me to do extraordinary things,” says Osteen. “I am a very ordinary person (*insān ‘ādī jiddan)*,” says al-Shugairi, “I have my merits and I also have my many faults.” As Khaled tells his audiences, “I’m one of you,” not a religious scholar or a mufti. These attempts to distance themselves from authority are not a fragmentation. By avoiding new theological claims and not giving critiques of the religious establishment, these new preachers support the theory of

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51 Ibid., 250.
52 White, “The Antidote to Terror.”
53 Harris, “Development through Faith.”
proliferation and differentiation, not the direct fragmentation of authority. Yet this does not mean they have no influence on religion or society. Quite the contrary.

Extrapolating into the Future

The consequences of this comparison and the theory of proliferation and differentiation play out in important ways in the political sphere. Christian evangelicals have had considerable influence on politics in the United States, and present one possible vision for the future of Muslim televangelism and Middle Eastern politics. American presidents and politicians have frequently turned to prominent televangelists for their spiritual and political counsel. To date, twelve sitting presidents have met with Billy Graham, while preachers like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson have founded influential political organizations and become individuals synonymous with the rise of the Christian Right.

The development of these evangelical preachers’ audience over time is just as influential. In recent decades, the generations raised on evangelical preaching have become a strong political force in the United States. By developing their voice and political clout, religious conservatives have voted their candidates into positions of power, bringing their opposition to abortion and gay marriage into the realm of politics and policy.

To some degree, this type of social and political change is the goal of the Muslim media du’ā and the future to which they aspire for their audience. To do so, the preachers have two alternatives, what I deem overt influence and subtle influence. Overt influence involves direct involvement in the political sphere, working with rulers, politicians, and political parties. In the American context, Billy Graham and Pat Robertson are preachers who employ this model. As I

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mentioned earlier, Graham has had close relations with several presidents. In addition, he supported several presidential hopefuls – Nixon in the 1960 elections and Romney in the 2012 elections – and has been outspoken on important political issues, opposing communism during the Cold War era and denouncing apartheid in South Africa. Pat Robertson took a more direct approach, running for president in 1988, before supporting political candidates and campaigns through his group, the Christian Coalition. By 1996, the organization claimed 1.6 million members and was said to control or exert major influence over thirty-one state Republican parties.

This direct approach to social and political change is more dangerous for Muslim preachers, with the possibility of significant repercussions from rulers and political elites. In Khaled’s early years as a preacher, for instance, the Egyptian authorities forced him to move his popular sermons to a mosque in the outskirts of Cairo, hoping to stifle the young preacher’s success. Khaled’s popularity continued to grow and when he left Egypt in exile in 2002, blame fell on the government as well. In another case, Tariq al-Suwaian openly supported deposed Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, criticizing the military government. This eventually culminated in a 2013 speech in Yemen where al-Suwaian described himself as one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. While he had previously hinted at his political leanings

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62 Graham, *Just As I Am*, 381-382.
63 Ibid., 430-431.
64 Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism*, 84-85.
65 Ibid., 110-111.
66 Wise, “‘Words from the Heart’,” 81-86.
67 “Saudi Prince Sacks TV Chief for Muslim Brotherhood Ties.”
toward the Brotherhood, this public statement was a step too far. Within days, al-Suwaïdān lost his job as General Director of the TV channel *al-Risāla*, a station funded by Saudi businessman Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal. As the prince explained in a statement about the incident, the Brotherhood was a terrorist movement, and he had repeatedly warned al-Suwaïdān not to declare his political affiliations. In this fashion, al-Suwaïdān’s overt action brought an immediate repercussion.

The subtle approach to political influence counterbalances this overt or direct approach. Rather than explicit involvement in the political scene, this method focuses on teaching youth and thereby raising a group who will become political players in the future, voting and otherwise expressing the opinions espoused by the preachers. In the United States, Billy Graham falls into this camp as well, although Joel Osteen is a better model as the latter shuns overt politics. As Osteen explained in a recent interview, some religious figures get involved in political issues, yet his own focus lies elsewhere:

I think [hot button political issues] are important but I think everybody has their own calling. I have friends that are very political. They’re pastors and that’s what their thing is….

Our message is about lifting people up, it’s about helping them fulfill their destiny, helping them how to forgive in a tough time, how to make it through this life when life tries to push you down. So I think the answer is… they are important issues, but for my calling, it’s not what I feel called to do.

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69 “Saudi Prince Sacks TV Chief for Muslim Brotherhood Ties.”
70 Osteen does appear to have had some ties to Texas Governor Rick Perry. The Governor spoke at the inaugural service of Lakewood Church in the Compaq Center and Osteen then prayed at Perry’s 2007 inauguration. [See: Lee and Sinitiere, *Holy Mavericks*, 35]. However, I do not deem this overt political influence, as there is no evidence of political discussions or counsel between the two men.
While Osteen and the media *du‘ā* avoid commenting directly on politics, their words and actions still convey a political message. This is what I mean by the subtle approach to political and social reform. Osteen frequently urges his audience to break out of their own bubble, to have an impact in society and be extraordinary: “It’s time to rise up and become leaders and have influence and respect and credibility, not just in our own circles, but also in the marketplace. That means in the general public, in the schools, in the government, and in arts, sports, and entertainment.”

The media *du‘ā* are similarly inspiring. Al-Suwa’idan urges his readers not to settle for an average life, like the vast majority of people, but to leave a lasting legacy that others will remember. For these preachers, taking action is essential, not only for oneself as an individual, but also for society as a whole. Too many people just sit back and criticize, says al-Shugairi. Instead, you need to take responsibility. Start with the problems around you – clean your local mosque, found an organization at your school, or sponsor or establish a club for youth in your neighborhood. Khaled takes a skills-based approach. God gave everyone a particular talent or skill, he says. It is your duty to discover that talent, develop it, and then use it to benefit yourself and your community. If everyone took this advice, he says, a new renaissance would certainly follow.

The *du‘ā* go one step further than Osteen, however, by commenting on specific social issues in a way that offers hidden critiques of the political system. For example, al-Shugairi has several episodes and chapters that discuss public infrastructure. He wanders the streets of Jeddah

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asking for directions to the library. Nobody knows. In one sense, this is a social issue – people are not interested in reading or libraries – but in another sense, it points to a problem in political priorities. The city of London alone, says al-Shugairi, has more public libraries than the entire Arab world combined. London also has one of the world’s oldest sewer systems, a history that al-Shugairi explores in detail in another episode. There, he highlights that the sewer was built 150 years ago, employing extra large pipes to accommodate future usage. Al-Shugairi did not choose these topics and statistics at random. In 2009, Jeddah witnessed devastating floods. A day’s worth of rain resulted in flooded streets and homes, over one hundred people dead, and thousands homeless. Much of this could have been avoided if the city had had better sewer and drainage systems.

This lack of public services, even in a wealthy country like Saudi Arabia, highlights a lack of political responsibility. Who is thinking of the future? While al-Shugairi does not call out any Arab leaders in particular, he does point out the importance of long-term planning. Today’s leaders are not responsible for the drainage and sewer issues, he says. Those fall on the shoulders of previous administrations. Yet the sewers for 2020, those are the responsibility of leaders today. One needs to think of future generations. Khaled presents a similar message through his work with Life Makers, pushing his audience to work on health education, literacy

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77 Ibid.
80 Khawāṭir 9, Episode no. 14.
and the environment. This implies that the government is not doing enough or, at least, that it cannot handle these problems alone.

A social issue like the role of women provides another example of this subtle commentary. Through their actions in person and on screen, all three media du’ā illustrate the ways that men and women alike can contribute to social and economic development. Khaled’s reality television show Mujaddidūn featured sixteen contestants, eight men and eight women, and was designed to promote development through faith.  
81 Al-Suwaidan and his wife founded two leadership centers in Kuwait, one for young men and another for young women.  
82 In one episode of his popular Khawāṭir series, al-Shugairi interviews a woman running an all-female business.  
83 In each of these cases, even if the preachers do not explicitly discuss the role of women, the duʿā’s actions as prominent public figures serve as a role model for their audience and convey the political message that women can be leaders and entrepreneurs.

Thus, the media duʿā do discuss politics, no matter what they say about being ordinary and just one of the people. The discrepancy between these statements and the message conveyed in their subtle actions is a reflection of the political climates at work in their respective countries. Saudi Arabia, for instance, has a restrictive political environment that continues to repress local opposition. Police halt demonstrations by the country’s Shiʿi minority population and in the early 1990s also quashed the Sunni-led opposition movement al-Ṣahwa al-Islāmiyya (Islamic Awakening). Preachers who spoke out then, like Salmān al-ʿAwda and Safar al-Ḥawālī, faced travel bans and were incarcerated until they agreed to support the regime.  
84 The Saudi

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82 For more information on these centers, see: al-Suwaydān, Mahārāt al-TaʾĪhīr, 20.
government has been quick to stop online dissent as well, arresting prominent blogger Rā’if Badawī in 2012 for instance, and eventually sentencing him to ten years in prison and 1,000 lashes.\(^8^5\) In this light, it is no wonder that Ahmad al-Shugairi steers clear of overt political critiques.

Kuwait’s political environment is similarly subject to the wills of royal power, the Emir, who along with the Constitutional Court has the power to dissolve parliament. While opposition groups have more of a voice than in Saudi Arabia, the Kuwaiti parliament has been dissolved six times since 2006\(^8^6\) and the regime has jailed outspoken activists and parliamentarians on several occasions.\(^8^7\) That said, within Kuwait, al-Suwaidan seems to be a popular figure and has not faced jail time or political opposition. Instead, it is Saudi Arabia that has issue with him. In addition to losing his job with Prince Al-Walīd’s channel al-Risāla, al-Suwaidan had his books banned in Saudi Arabia in 2014,\(^8^8\) and the country denied his visa for an ‘umra pilgrimage in 2013.\(^8^9\) In each case, the reasons appear to be his outspoken opposition to the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt.

Amr Khaled most clearly illustrates how the du’ā’s willingness to enter or discuss politics is contingent upon the realities on the ground. Before the Egyptian Revolution, when the Egyptian state tightly controlled the political sphere, the preacher shunned overt politics. After


the Revolution however, with Mubarak deposed and hope in the air, Khaled jumped directly into politics by founding his own party. He reversed himself a mere ten months later, stepping down as head of the party and stating that “his messages of reform and preaching [did] not fit with the requirements of political life.” The timing was not coincidental. Khaled resigned as leader of the party on July 17, 2013, just two weeks after the army removed President Mohamed Morsi from office. By the end of August, the preacher was part of a video supporting the army and its crackdown on protestors, telling soldiers that they have a religious duty to obey orders, even if it means using deadly force. As the political situation evolved, it appears that Khaled feared a crackdown on his preaching and political action.

What the future holds for these preachers and their audiences thus depends to a large extent on the political climate within each particular country. That said, whatever the political situation may be, I believe that the subtle approach – teaching and inspiring youth – can lead to more activism and a greater awareness about social, religious and political issues. While major political changes are unlikely in the short-term, this suggests a possibility for large political and social changes in the long-term.

Conclusion

This chapter lays the framework for my study of the media du’ā by defining them in relation to other religious figures and scholarly debates on religious authority. In doing so, it presents a case against the pure fragmentation of religious authority in Islam in the modern era and provides an example of the proliferation and differentiation of religious authority in Islam.

91 “Preacher Amr Khaled Steps Down From Leading Egypt Party.”
92 Kirkpatrick and El Sheikh, “Egypt Military Enlists Religion to Quell Ranks.”
The media *du‘ā* are not breaking apart from the traditional system of authority, but they are expanding the definition of what religious authorities are, how they act, and what they say.

In another sense though, the greatest shift in the contemporary era lies not with the authorities themselves but rather with their audience. In many ways, power lies not with the ‘ulamā’ or the new intellectuals, but with the average Muslim who can now choose from a wealth of authority figures. As Francis Robinson noted, with the rise of the printing press, the ability to define Islam began to shift to the audience. Readers could not only choose which sources they wished to read, but they could also interpret them to match the need at hand.93 This trend has only grown through the effects of globalization and new media like the Internet and satellite television. The proliferation and differentiation of authority means that audiences now have more choices and ways to gain knowledge. And so, from the preacher’s perspective, this creates a greater impetus to innovate in order to attract and maintain his audience. My next chapter thus focuses on the importance of the audience and how the media *du‘ā* tailor their religious message to target particular groups and needs.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Power of the Youth Audience:

A Theoretical Analysis of the Aims of the Media Duʿāʾ

For a long time, Arab populations have been trapped under dictatorial and autocratic regimes, and the weight of entrenched elites. After the Arab Spring, we can now see in hindsight the effect that this had on young people in particular. Unemployment, the rising cost of living, and the lack of political power left youth in a difficult situation. Without jobs, they could neither provide for themselves, nor establish the credibility to present their ideas to society. Without political representation or their own political power, they were voiceless. Society did not value their opinions. Young people were merely the unemployed masses, not a group that could be leaders or make a difference in their community.

As the media duʿāʾ began their work in the late 1990s and early 2000s, this untapped youth audience formed the perfect springboard for their publications and television programming. The aims of these preachers were two-fold. First, they sought to rejuvenate interest in religion and thus targeted Muslim youth, a group who was disenchanted with the stricter, more rigid methods of traditional ‘ulamā’. Second, they called for faith-based development, both on an individual basis and at the community level, a nahda (Renaissance) that would restore the Muslim world to its former glory. Using contemporary models of audience theory, this chapter demonstrates how the media duʿāʾ actively tailored their message to a youth audience in order to pursue these two goals. In this fashion, young Muslims serve a dual role for these preachers, as both their tool for social change and their target audience for increasing piety in the Muslim community.
Theorizing the Roles of the Modern Audience

In a 2004 article, Norwegian media theorist Trine Syvertsen broke from the standard dichotomy of the public as citizens or consumers by positing four more nuanced roles for audiences. Consumers in her model were divided into audiences, customers, and players. As she explained, when the media think of the public as an audience, they aim simply to provide entertaining programming, doing what it takes to keep passive viewers watching. Active consumers, on the other hand, are either customers or players. Customers want to purchase products and services, not only in markets and stores, but also through television and the Internet. Players wish to join in media activities, both through online interactions and physical participation in programming like talk shows and game shows. These three consumer-based roles are complemented by Syvertsen’s expansion of the idea of citizens. In her model, the media see the public as citizens not just in the political sense, the focus of previous theories, but also in the civil, social, and cultural senses of citizenship. In each case, the goal of media producers is action-oriented – “not to keep people watching, but to help them turn off the set and involve themselves actively in society.”

This theoretical model offers unique insight into the aims and actions of Muslim media duʿā, since it allows us a way to analyze how these preachers approach their work. As they seek to deliver their message, preachers clearly need an audience, whether they are listeners, viewers, or readers. The medium of television complicates matters however, as televangelists require a consistent audience to renew their television programs for further seasons or pitch new ideas to

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2 Ibid., 368-369.
3 Ibid., 370-374.
4 Ibid., 367.
studio executives. Preachers and television producers must thus make a series of conscious choices before delivering their message. These choices include the topics the speaker wishes to discuss – not only what to say, but how and where to say it. The style and format of the message are in some ways as important as the subject matter itself, not to mention the addition of supplemental materials, whether in the form of an online presence or physical publications. The way the media duʿā capture all four areas of Syvertsen’s audience theory shows how they value these different audience roles and also helps explain the preachers’ methods and why these duʿā are so popular.

A New Approach to Religious Television: Targeting All Types of Consumers

If you consider the basic principles of communication and marketing, these preachers’ approach makes sense. They are seeking an audience for their lectures, television shows and publications, and most importantly, their ideas. For this reason, they try to set themselves apart from the work of other, more traditional preachers. Television preachers like Muḥammad al-Shaʿrāwī and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī present shows in a style reminiscent of a madrasa, with a robed shaykh speaking at length in formal Arabic (fuṣḥā) before an audience of men, or they opt for an intimate one-on-one environment with just the preacher and a host. The media duʿā have a more relaxed style, trying to capture the attention of a passive audience through their informal approach, inclusive atmosphere, and diverse topics and visuals.

Khaled, as other studies have discussed, frames himself as an everyday person, much like his own audience. In his television shows, his colloquial language and demeanor mirror those of people on the street. A blazer with no tie complete his relaxed look and his face is

5 Lindsay Wise, “‘Words from the Heart’,” 13-14; and Grüf and Skovgaard-Petersen, Global Mufti, 154-157.
6 For more on Khālid’s new stylistic and linguistic approach, see: Wise, “‘Words from the Heart’; and Soliman, “The Changing Role of Arabic in Religious Discourse.”
clean-shaven or sports a moustache but no beard. He speaks before mixed-gender groups and takes his show into public spaces, visiting venues or people that complement the subject of the day.

The other preachers I study here further support this bid to attract viewers using an informal style of religious programming. Saudi preacher Ahmad al-Shugairi is comfortable on screen in traditional clothing as well as blue jeans and a jacket. In his television shows, he speaks with both men and women, including women in niqāb. His attitude is not one of teacher and student, but rather a closer, more collegial one. In his interviews and interactions, the preacher comes across as an eager student in search of information and not an all-knowing teacher. He jokes and laughs with his participants, and does not hesitate to acknowledge his own faults. On his show Law Kāna Baynanā, he openly states that hosting such a show does not mean he is perfect. “We don’t do a program on the Prophet because we are special in any way or even because we deserve it. It is an honor for us, even though we are wrongdoers.”

Kuwaiti preacher Tariq al-Suwaydan presents a similar approach, although he speaks primarily in formal Arabic (fuṣḥā) and chooses to sport a sharply pressed Gulfī thawb rather than a suit or blue jeans. He appears equally at home lecturing on stage, interviewing guests one-on-one, or working with small groups. Al-Suwaydan addresses a variety of subjects, from religious issues to topics such as history, human rights, and education. When his programs show an audience, they reveal a mixed-gender group of men and women.

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7 See, for instance, an occasion where al-Shuqayrī interviews a young woman in niqāb at a supermarket: Law Kāna Baynanā, Season no. 1, Episode no. 4, directed by Muhammad Shawqi and presented by Ahmad al-Shuqayrī, first broadcast in 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aslb5DkAnM (accessed May 19, 2016).
8 Law Kāna Baynanā, Season no. 2, Episode no. 10.
9 See, for example, the television program Al-Wasatiyya, including this episode discussing al-du‘ā al-judud: “Al-Du‘a al-Judud Bayn al-Tajdid wa-l-Ibtidā‘,” Al-Wasatiyya, directed by Akram Fāruz and presented by Tāriq al-Suwaydān, first broadcast in 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffnrAr5dK4& (accessed May 19, 2016).
These stylistic changes are supplemented by an emphasis on modern production techniques, following the model found in other types of television entertainment. Not only do these preachers employ multiple television cameras, but they also incorporate computer graphics into their work. In the show *Al-Rasūl al-Insān*, for example, al-Suwaidan emerges from between a set of columns to lecture in a room decorated in brown marble, all computer-generated, suggesting that the preacher is standing before a green screen and adding the background in post-production. This idea is reinforced by the show *Asrār al-Qiyāda al-Nabawīyya*, where al-Suwaidan stands upon a computer-generated stage, and references charts and tables that float beside him as he talks.

This use of graphics and visuals continues in written works as well. In al-Suwaidan’s autobiography ‘*Allamātī al-Ḥayāh*, almost every page features a picture or diagram amongst the text or along the sidebar. These include tables and charts, pictures of books mentioned in the text, and even images of al-Suwaidan himself, lecturing and interacting with young people and workshop participants. In addition, each volume uses a different color palette for the background of each page, to highlight text boxes, and to reinforce important headers (browns in Volume One, greens in Volume Two, etc.).

Al-Shugairi adopts the same vibrant approach. In his book *Law Kāna Baynānā*, we find a diverse array of images, fonts, and backgrounds. For example, a thirty-page chapter titled “Muhammad, the Husband,” includes pictures of a bejeweled crown, a smiling husband, a crying child, men yelling, a hand clutching a loaded handgun, and some wedding rings, as well as a

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10 Wise, “‘Words from the Heart’,” 14-15.
12 See, for example: *Asrār al-Qiyāda al-Nabawīyya*, Episode no. 1.
number of pictures of rose petals or flowers, some wilting, some in full bloom.\textsuperscript{13} Across the book as a whole, the headers and text are enclosed in lightly shaded text boxes, and quotations by Arab and Western individuals dot the sidebar. On some pages, al-Shugairi even creates the image of a handwritten message, framing his text within the white rectangular shape of a letter, complete with the envelope to match.\textsuperscript{14} Al-Shugairi’s \textit{Khawāṯir} books are less vibrant, with colorful pictures confined to a photo gallery in the appendix of each work. The corresponding television shows regularly feature computer graphics however, such as 3-D reconstructions of Medina during the Prophet’s time\textsuperscript{15} or models of a library or a bedroom as part of al-Shugairi’s book reviews.\textsuperscript{16}

Contrast these graphics and vibrant colors with the approach adopted by a more traditional preacher like Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī. Works such as his popular book \textit{Al-Ḥalāl wa-l-Ḥarām fī al-Islām} or more recent treatises like \textit{Wājib al-Shabāb al-Muslim al-Yawm} have no color or pictures, and make no use of the sidebar as al-Shugairi and al-Suwaidan do.\textsuperscript{17} Al-Qaraḍāwī’s television shows are similarly straightforward. His popular show \textit{al-Sharī‘a wa-l-Ḥayāh} employs no computer graphics or 3-D modeling, aside from the opening credits.

These visual and stylistic changes set the media \textit{du‘ā} apart, capturing the attention of their readers and viewers, and bringing them back for more. By itself, this new approach would only attract passive audiences, not the ranks of consumers, players, or citizens. The media \textit{du‘ā} were well aware of this however and put every element of their work into consideration, not just

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\textsuperscript{13}Al-Shuqayrī, \textit{Law Kāna Baynānā}, 43-72.
\textsuperscript{14}See, for instance, al-Shuqayrī, \textit{Law Kāna Baynānā}, 48.
\textsuperscript{15}See, for example, a 3-D portrayal of Aisha’s house in Medina: \textit{Law Kāna Baynānā}, Season no. 1, Episode no. 6, directed by Muḥammad Shawqi and presented by Aḥmad al-Shuqayrī, first broadcast in 2009, \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-WRy1N6Lio} (accessed May 19, 2016).
\textsuperscript{16}See, for example: \textit{Law Kāna Baynānā}, Season no. 1, Episode no. 13, directed by Muḥammad Shawqi and presented by Aḥmad al-Shuqayrī, first broadcast in 2009, \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDXho3kH0rA} (accessed May 19, 2016).
\textsuperscript{17}Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, \textit{Al-Ḥalāl wa-l-Ḥarām fī al-Islām}, 16th ed. (Cairo, Maktaba Wahba, 1985); and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, \textit{Wājib al-Shabāb al-Muslim al-Yawm}, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 2006).
\end{flushright}
stylistic and production issues, but also the format of their programming, and the publications and other media they used to supplement their television shows.

Thus, from the outset, these preachers have diversified their portfolio with a collection of books, cassettes, DVDs, social media, and websites. Their success in these ventures mirrors that of their television programs. Taped sermons became bestsellers, some books went through six or seven printings, and the numbers of their viewers and followers on social media quickly grew into the millions. This broad approach served multiple purposes, extending the reach of their religious message to larger audiences, and also monetizing their work beyond the compensation they received for their television programs. Audience members could now act directly as customers, purchasing the books that accompanied their favorite television shows or getting the DVD so that they could watch the program over and over again.

From a consumer’s perspective however, the duʿāʾs most innovative aspect was their focus on the audience as players. In 1999, Khaled’s program Kalām min al-Qalb was one of the first religious shows to target the audience in this manner. Producer Aḥmad Abū Hayba acknowledged later that the show’s format was a gamble, taking a remarkably different approach to religious programming. Under the lights of a modern television studio, Khaled led the series like a talk show, including famous actresses and soccer players as his guests, but also soliciting stories and opinions from the studio audience. Khaled would speak at length, then let others have a chance, passing the microphone to the young men and women in the studio. After their

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18 See: Bayet, “Piety, Privilege and Egyptian Youth;” and Callick, “Mixed Messages From Touring Muslim Lecturer.”
input, the preacher responded, creating a dialogue rather than a one-way stream of knowledge. The Kuwaiti preacher al-Suwa’dan picked up on this technique as well, giving some of his audiences the opportunity to voice their questions and opinions live.

The media *du ’ā* have refined this approach even further, however, developing new ways to integrate the desires of players who wish to participate in these television shows and religious discussions. In 2010, the reality show *Mujaddidūn*, modeled on the American program *The Apprentice*, featured two teams vying for Khaled’s attention. Contestants did not work on business projects however, but on charitable ones – helping orphans, coaching people on how to find jobs, returning dropouts back to school. At the end of each episode, the group entered a boardroom where Khaled dismissed one participant. There was considerable interest from the public in joining the show – 250,000 young men and women applied to be contestants, with sixteen youth from nine Arab countries making the final cut. The series *Qumra*, presented by al-Shugairi in 2016, took the participatory role of its audience to the extreme. The preacher marketed *Qumra* as part television show, part competition, recruiting the public to film short videos to incorporate into the television series and offering a total of over two million Saudi riyals in prizes. Each episode focused on a particular topic – marriage, the plight of refugees, coexistence, etc. – with al-Shugairi providing commentary between segments from submitted videos.

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22 See, for example, “Al-Du’ā al-Judud Bayn al-Tajdid wa-l-Ibtidā’,” *Al-Wasatīyya*.

23 See, for example, *Mujaddidūn*, Episode no. 1, directed by Muḥammad Bāyazīd and presented by ‘Amr Khālid, first broadcast in 2010, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz7-5RlbMIA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz7-5RlbMIA) (accessed June 13, 2016).


Targeting these three types of consumers (passive audiences, customers, and players) paid off in big ways for the media duʿā. They secured a large following through their vibrant programming and their wealth of supplemental material – publications, social media, and websites. They then maintained that audience by engaging it on many levels. People could consume and process the duʿā’s work individually, in front of the television or on their own time through books and videos, and could actively participate with the shows through the Internet and in the studio audience. This was not the preachers’ final goal however. As in Syvertsen’s model, the duʿā advocated for action, pushing their audience to convert their religious and social commentary into real change, both on the individual and community levels.

Moving from Active Listeners to an Activist Audience: Young People as a Tool for Change

Media theory has often stressed the concept of audiences as both consumers and citizens. Syvertsen’s model is no different, as we discussed earlier, although she expands the idea from citizenship in the political sense, to citizenship in the political, civil, social, and cultural arenas. The media duʿā follow this model as well, emphasizing the power of young people and the role that they can play in development. They do so not only in an effort to change public opinion about the younger generation, as we shall see shortly, but also to motivate youth to take action. Their discussion of development focuses on personal, social, and economic change, emphasizing how religion and action should be combined. In this, the preachers exhibit a trend seen in other forms of television, expanding the focus of programming from passive viewers to more active roles for the audience, Syvertsen’s view of the audience as citizens.

In their books and television programs, these preachers are particularly adamant in their emphasis on the audience as citizens and active agents for change, an approach they began
almost a decade ago. Khaled deems this approach “development through faith”\(^\text{27}\) or “faith-based development,”\(^\text{28}\) which stemmed from his 2003-2004 television series *Life Makers* (**Ṣunnā’ al-Ḥayāh**). However, this concept of development through faith is by no means unique to Khaled’s work alone.

The preachers all agree that change requires work on a number of fronts – thought, faith and ethical conduct (*akhlāq*) – each tied to a different aspect of daily life. In his book *Khawāṭir Shābb*, al-Shugairi calls these ideas thought (*fikr*), heart (*qalb*), and behavior (*salūk*). Change is like driving a car, he says. Your thoughts are the driver, who knows where he is going, and your heart is the fuel, which powers your way forward. However, if you do not have good driving skills (behavior), then everything falls apart.\(^\text{29}\) Al-Suwaidan focuses on the same general principles, describing thought (*fikr*) and Islamic identity (*huwīya*), stemming from the shari’a, as requirements for changing society. “Civilization is created on thought,” he explains, “and torn down by corrupt ethical conduct.”\(^\text{30}\)

Khaled is the clearest in his approach to development, presenting the three elements above (thought, faith and ethical conduct) as well as two additional ones, skills (*mahārat*) and movement or action (*ḥaraka*). For Khaled, these five components form the building blocks of *insān al-nahḍa* (the Renaissance man), the type of person who will contribute to changing and building a new civilization.\(^\text{31}\) Khaled does not describe what this renaissance of new civilization

\(^{27}\) Naggar, “Amr Khaled: ‘I Want to Move Arabic Youth!’.”
\(^{29}\) Al-Shuqayrī, *Khawāṭir Shābb*, 11.
will be however. This is a task for the ‘ulamā’ and the great thinkers, he says. His role is only to define the actors who will be qualified to carry out such changes.\textsuperscript{32}

The fact that al-Shugairi and al-Suwa'īdān do not list skills and action in their theory of change does not mean that they ignore them. Quite the contrary. While their theoretical framework is not as explicit as Khaled’s, their emphasis on education and volunteerism reveals the importance they place on skills and action. In addition, they do cry out for action in other parts of their work. Al-Suwa'īdān notes that the contemporary Arab world is not a proactive region, neither producing things nor taking real action.\textsuperscript{33} Moreover, he does not understand young people who focus on shopping or fashion, both trivial issues in his mind. Instead, he says they should focus on giving back, doing what they can to develop their community.\textsuperscript{34} He proposes that young people divide their lives in two. In the first phase, before the age of thirty, they should focus on education and training, perfecting their skills. Then the second phase, after the age of thirty, can focus on giving back to the community and the world, using their skills to achieve real results.\textsuperscript{35} Similarly, al-Shugairi mourns the fact that the Arab world features a lot of talk, but little action. And look what actually motivates us, he says. Not our dirty streets, nor bigger issues like Guantamano Bay, the occupation of Palestine, the collapse of Iraq, or the terrorist group al-Qaedā. Instead, it is cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad that enrage Muslims and mobilize them into action. Wouldn’t the Prophet have focused on the other issues first?\textsuperscript{36}

In truth, all three preachers offer an array of religious examples to encourage their audience to take action and relinquish the idea of passive viewership. In each case, they note that Muslim youth are central to developing the region. Perhaps they see young people as the

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Al-Suway'īdān, \textit{Mahārāt al-Taʾthīr}, 10.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 108.
\textsuperscript{36} Al-Shuqayrī, \textit{Khawāṭir Shābāb}, 129-132.
最容易执行者进行这种变化，由于他们的数量或他们的青春活力，或者他们不那么被教化的事实，即他们比年长的同龄人更少受当前体系的影响。无论情况如何，牧师们提供了大量的例子来激励年轻一代和改变公众关于年轻一代的看法，展示他们年轻的人可以成为成功的领导者。

古典例子允许媒体通过du‘ā编织伊斯兰历史到他们的论证中。例如，先知信任年轻的乌斯玛·伊本·扎伊德带领军队进入沙姆。哈利德和阿尔-苏威丹都引用了这个故事作为证明，一个青少年可以超越他的长辈，尽管有经验的领导人如‘乌玛尔或阿布·巴克。37在另一个例子中，牧师们指出，先知看到了年轻的‘阿卜杜勒拉赫曼·伊本·阿布·巴什的智力潜力，特别是他对学习的热爱和他的兴趣在法伊赫。先知推动他进一步研究该科目，尽管一些学者认为伊本·阿布·巴什太年轻。这个年轻人坚持并成为了一位著名的学者，验证了先知对他的信任，并展示了个人的驱动和努力如何促使其达到伟大的高度。38

对今天年轻的一代来说，这些例子是可感知的和可实现的模仿模型。先知是一个优秀的榜样，当然，但他的卓越和经验可能对年轻的穆斯林来说显得令人望而生畏。如乌斯玛和伊本·阿布·巴什这样的例子为年轻的榜样提供了具体的例子，成功在特定领域中。作为军队的指挥官，以及一个受欢迎和有影响力的学者，这两个人是他们社会中的重要领导人。最重要的是，他们展示了早期穆斯林对年轻一代的信任，这是媒体希望通过du‘ā想在当今社会传递的东西。

38 Al-Suwaydān, Madrasat al-Ḥayāḥ, 105; and al-Suwaydān, Usus al-‘Aṭā’, 13, 15.
The media *du‘ā* pair these Classical examples with motivational messages from the modern era. Real results are attainable, they say, even within a short time. Take Turkey and Malaysia, which rejuvenated their economies in just ten to fifteen years, or Japan, which changed and developed without sacrificing its culture, language and traditions. The *du‘ā* call the Arab world to follow their lead and they reiterate that the answer lies with the region’s youth, who are a powerful yet underutilized resource.

This call to action is working, taking the audience away from their televisions, books, and computer screens. More Muslim youth in the Arab world are participating in community projects and volunteer groups. Khaled’s show *Life Makers* (*Ṣunnā‘ al-Hayāh*) led to the creation of community groups across the Arab world and beyond, groups that led campaigns against smoking and drugs, started literacy programs, and collected food and clothing for needy families. After a season of *Khawāṭir* dedicated to volunteerism, al-Shugairi’s interactive website [www.i7san.net](http://www.i7san.net) connected over 60,000 individuals interested in volunteer work. At its height, the site had 4,153 different clubs and 3,472 projects in need of support.

**Understanding One’s Audience: New Topics and Methods for Targeting Youth**

The media *du‘ā*’s success with young people in particular cannot be solely attributed to this multi-pronged approach to audiences however. The preachers’ message resonates more deeply than that. In 2002, for instance, a young Arab told a journalist, “I thought being a good Muslim meant wearing a long robe, growing a beard and spending the whole day at the mosque, but after listening to Amr [Khaled], I realized you can be a good Muslim and remain a chic

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Such doubts and questions about religion have become more common for Muslim youth, as they discover that the strict Islamic principles they learned in school differ from the world they experience on television, online, and in their lives at home and abroad. “In high school, the way they taught us religion was very white and black,” a young Saudi, Bakr Azam, explained to The New York Times. “You always felt you were doing something wrong, and it drove a lot of people away.”

Enter the new preachers. With their modern look and feel, they caught the eye of such youth and provided the answers their viewers crave, incorporating an updated approach to religion that considers contemporary issues and the complexities of a globalized world. For Azam, this moment came when he stumbled upon the work of Ahmad al-Shugairi:

In 2004, he happened to see one of Mr. Shugairi’s programs on TV, and he was mesmerized. Here was a man who had lived in the West and yet spoke of the Koran as a modern ethical guidebook, not a harsh set of medieval rules. He seemed to be saying you could enjoy yourself, retain your independence and at the same time be a good Muslim.

Right away, Mr. Azam opened his laptop and found Mr. Shugairi’s Web site. He joined a volunteer group in Jidda linked to the show. He found himself returning to the rituals he had grown up with, fasting and praying. He still counts himself a moderate, like his mentor. But — also like Mr. Shugairi — he became so devout that he separated from his wife, who did not wear a head scarf and retained the secular attitude he once shared.

“A Ahmad made us look back at religion,” Mr. Azam said of Mr. Shugairi. “He helped us see that Islam is not about living in caves and being isolated from the world. Islam is international. It is modern. It is tolerant.”

Other preachers elicit similar praise from viewers. As a young fan of Amr Khaled told a Washington Post reporter, “His spirituality is very raw. It’s fresh. You don’t feel like it’s

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45 Worth, “Preaching Moderate Islam, Becoming a TV Star.”
46 Ibid.
artificial or old. When he prays, he gets emotional and his voice changes. Sometimes he cries.” 47 Such comments reinforce the distinction between the media duʿā and their more traditional counterparts (al-Qaraḍāwī, al-Shaʿrāwī, etc.). The former’s view of Islam appears fresh and modern, while the latter’s is seen as older and out of touch.

From these stories, it is clear that the new approach of preachers like Khaled, al-Shugairi and al-Suwaidan is resonating strongly with young Muslims. To find out why, we need to delve a little deeper. First, these duʿā distinguish themselves as ordinary people, not part of the religious establishment or the ranks of more traditional preachers. In addition to their relaxed dress and demeanor, they repeatedly tell their audience that they are a different type of preacher – not a shaykh or a scholar, 48 and not a mufti or a judge who gives judgments about Islamic law. 49 Instead, they stress that they are normal people, 50 and that their discussions on religion explore its role in our lives today, not its juristic or academic angles. 51 In each case, these statements bring the preachers closer to their audience; they are not all-knowing teachers, but simply sincere Muslims trying to share how they approach contemporary issues according to the needs of Muslims in the modern world. 52

Second, each of these preachers is closely connected to youth and expresses a strong desire to work with them. They frequently stress their ties to young people, saying they “have always been with youth,” 53 they “live with them,” 54 and they “are one of them.” 55 More

49 Naggar, “Amr Khaled: ‘I Want to Move Arabic Youth!’.”
50 Al-Shuqayrī, Khawāṭīr Shāb, 8.
51 Al-Suwaydān, Fāhm al-Dīn, 6.
52 For a detailed study of how these preachers’ legitimacy stems from their sincerity as Muslims, see: Moll, “Storytelling, Sincerity, and Islamic Televangelism in Egypt,” 21-44.
53 Wise, “Interview with Tareq Alsuwaidan, General Manager of Al Resalah Channel.”
importantly, the preachers’ actions back up these statements. They are in constant contact with young people and have made personal connections with their audience outside the realm of television and print publications. Online communication, phone calls, and in-person activities all contribute to this network of connections. The media du’ā are particularly prolific on social media, often posting several times a day and responding directly to comments and questions. On several occasions, reporters have noted that Khaled receives hundreds of communications a day – phone calls, letters, emails, and text messages that he tries to answer himself.\textsuperscript{56} He has even gone as far as interrupting business dinners to answer calls and, one month, racked up $8,000 in phone bills from talking to his fans.\textsuperscript{57}

Al-Suwaidan and al-Shugairi are particularly entrepreneurial in their youth endeavors, staying in touch with youth by coordinating activities and events tailored to the younger generation. Al-Suwaidan and his wife run two leadership centers, one for boys and one for girls,\textsuperscript{58} and leadership camps organized annually by al-Suwaidan attract young people from across the Arab world. The 2012 edition of this camp, the Leadership Preparation Academy (Akādimīya I’dād al-Qāda), featured 117 young men and women from 19 different countries.\textsuperscript{59} A coffee shop for young people in Jeddah, founded by al-Shugairi, features a small library and also hosts free lectures.\textsuperscript{60} The Saudi preacher also actively promotes volunteering, with a special emphasis on involving youth in charity organizations. One Ramadan, he launched a campaign to

\textsuperscript{54} El-Katatney, “A Religious Rock Star.”
\textsuperscript{55} White, “The Antidote to Terror.”
\textsuperscript{56} See: El-Katatney, “A Religious Rock Star;” and Shapiro, “Ministering to the Upwardly Mobile Muslim.” In a later documentary, in 2009, Khālid displayed his cell phone, showing that he had received 1,170 calls in the past week. See: Muslim Teleevangelists: Voices of Islam’s Future, directed by Thierry Derouet (Journeyman Pictures, 2009).
\textsuperscript{57} Shapiro, “Ministering to the Upwardly Mobile Muslim.”
\textsuperscript{58} For more information on these centers, see: al-Suwaydān, Mahārāt al-Ta’thīr, 20.
\textsuperscript{59} The list of accepted participants for the 2012 camp is available for download here on the Academy’s website: http://www.leadersta.com/index.php?page=cGFnZXM=&op=bHRhNQ==&lan=YXI (accessed May 19, 2016).
\textsuperscript{60} Shalhoub, “Catering for Your Body and Mind.”
get one million Muslim youth to perform volunteer work, and in 2012 he also founded a social network i7san.net that linked individuals to community projects and clubs, and helped them connect with other volunteers.

These activities give the media *du‘ā* the opportunity to interact with youth more directly, in a personal format not possible through television or books. In this fashion, the preachers gain direct access to the pulse of Arab Muslim youth and can gather an accurate picture of young people’s needs and interests. In theoretical terms, the preachers thus get a sense of this group’s expectations and their “knowledge of the world” (the things, events, and people that their audience is familiar with). Such perceptions of one’s intended audience play an important role in the production of books and television programming, as noted in a 1982 study of an American television series. In particular, the study concluded that there are four rules relating to producers’ perceptions about their audience, all of which are issues they consider carefully as they craft their television programming:

- Rule 1: Engage the audience;
- Rule 2: Consider the audience’s knowledge about the world;
- Rule 3: Meet the audience’s expectations for the show; and
- Rule 4: Don’t divide the audience.

Through the perspective of these rules, we can see how the media *du‘ā* construct their work to attract and maintain their young audience. First, the preachers engage their audience (Rule 1) through the informal, entertaining, and interactive style we discussed earlier in this chapter. This style, paired with the preachers’ books and online media, serves as a way to attract the audience and keep them interested. Syvertsen’s view of passive audiences, customers, and

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61 Ambah, “Young Saudis Reinvent Ramadan.”
64 Ibid., 79.
players falls directly into this engagement section.

Khaled, al-Shugairi, and al-Suwaidan also use a mix of Classical and contemporary examples as evidence for their religious discussions. On the one hand, incorporating Classical sources shows that the preachers maintain a solid foundation in their Islamic roots and the history of Islamic discourse, a vital practice to avoid alienating or dividing their audience (Rule 4). They commonly reference the Prophet’s sīra, stories and anecdotes about the Rāshidūn or “Rightly Guided” Caliphs (Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī), and tales of Classical figures like Abū Ḥanīfah and Ibn ‘Abbās. Contemporary examples, on the other hand, demonstrate the media duʿāʾ’s consideration for the perspective and knowledge of their young audience (Rule 2). For instance, al-Shugairi relates how Elvis Presley died sad and alone, despite his fame and riches, having sought happiness only through the material world; and al-Suwaidan explains how Malcolm X moved from militant activism to Islam, and thus can serve as “a model for all extremists to return to the truth.” These contemporary examples address some of the same issues as the Classical ones, but because they are contemporary figures, young people can better relate to their experiences and circumstances.

Lastly, the preachers’ knack for incorporating stories of ordinary people addresses the audience’s modern perspective, while also engaging in the contemporary discussions and debates that viewers want or expect from such a show (Rule 3). Take for instance the tale of a young Muslim woman in New Zealand, as told by Amr Khaled. Sarah’s family left Lebanon when she was ten and, at the age of twenty-one, she realized how far she has fallen – she had forgotten Islam, could not speak or read Arabic, and was living in sin with her boyfriend, while working at a local pub. She wrote to Khaled asking a question on the minds of many young Muslims: “With

65 Al-Shuqayrī, Khawāṭir Shābī, 49-50.
66 Al-Suwaydān, Mahārāt al-Taʾthīr, 35.
67 Khālid, Bīnāʿ Insān al-Nahḍa, 111-114.
all my faults and sins, can God forgive me?” The preacher assured her that God is merciful and over the course of several months, Sarah turned her life around. She left her boyfriend, found a new job, began praying and reading the Qur’an, and finally donned the hijab – only to pass away from cancer shortly thereafter. This tale serves two important purposes. First, the young woman is a testament to the mercy of God, who, Khaled emphasizes, allowed her to return to Islam after years of sin.68 Second, her tale then serves as an inspiration for others who fear their sins have closed the door on any return to religion.

In other instances, the preachers highlight Muslim businessmen who started small and, bit-by-bit, built their work into large and prosperous enterprises. Khaled presents the story of a chicken vendor in Mecca69 and al-Suwaidan discusses the early career of the Saudi businessman and billionaire Sulaymān al-Rājhi.70 Each case illustrates the power of perseverance, hard work, and entrepreneurship, crucial lessons in a region fraught with unemployment, especially amongst the younger generations.

Reframing Modern Issues in a Religious Light: The Example of Unemployment

An understanding of young people’s needs and interests allows the media du‘ā to select issues their target audience will enjoy. At the same time however, the preachers discuss these issues with religious examples, thus addressing own aims – rejuvenating interest in Islam.

In a 2007 interview, Khaled remarked: “Why are we talking about prayer and hijabs when the youth cannot find jobs? If you give them nothing but Islamic speeches, you will turn them into fanatics, or turn them off and towards drugs. You have to start with their practical

68 Ibid., 113.
69 Ibid., 55-56.
needs.” Khaled’s point is a valid one. Unemployment rates among young people are high across much of the Arab world, with one report stating that one in every four Arab youth is unemployed. Underemployment is common as well, with college graduates settling for a job as a taxi driver or opting for volunteer work when other jobs elude them. Recent polling confirms the importance of this issue. The 2014 Arab Youth Survey found that, across the 16 countries polled, almost half (49%) of the young men and women surveyed were very concerned about unemployment, while an additional 23 percent described themselves as “somewhat concerned.”

Some Arab governments have tried to address these issues through employment programs that promote the hiring of their citizens, initiatives thus known as Saudization, Kuwaitization, and so on. Under these programs, governments require companies to employ a certain number or percentage of local citizens. This hiring requirement reduces unemployment to some degree, at least in skilled fields like engineering, medicine, and business, yet the programs also exhibit several flaws. First, nationality can take precedence over a candidate’s skills and job experience. At times, these programs force companies to hire a local citizen over a more experienced foreigner, costing the company a better employee. Second, these initiatives struggle in many sectors of the job market, particularly with small businesses or labor-intensive

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71 White, “The Antidote to Terror.”
jobs like electricians, plumbers, and construction workers, where the salaries are traditionally quite low.\textsuperscript{75}

The media \textit{du‘ā} target both of these flaws. To help their audience better compete for job openings, these preachers stress the need for better education in schools and universities, and additional skill building outside of school. They note that the Arab world has fallen behind other nations in education. Arab teachers should not force students to memorize and regurgitate material, but rather actively engage them in the learning process and allow them to discuss and apply what they learn in the classroom.\textsuperscript{76} While Arab governments have expanded programs to study abroad and built many new universities domestically, the preachers note that opportunities for higher education in the Arab world are still woefully lacking, especially when compared to other nations.\textsuperscript{77}

As for the overlooked sectors of the job market, these preachers note that such positions are not as bad as they seem and can also serve as valuable stepping-stones in a long-term career. They tell young people never to pass up an opportunity, even if it means working as a gas station attendant or a newspaper vendor. Working is better than lying idle around the house, they say, and the simplest of jobs can open doors to new opportunities through promotions or introductions to new connections and networks.\textsuperscript{78} Moreover, they add that skilled laborers are highly valued in many places around the world. Plumbers in the U.K. can make more than a doctor, al-Shugairi exclaims, an average of 150,000 British Pounds per year,\textsuperscript{79} while a London

\textsuperscript{77} Al-Suwaydān, \textit{Usus al-‘Aṭā’}, 21.
\textsuperscript{78} Al-Shuqayrī, \textit{Khawāṭir Shākhb}, 85-86; and Khālid, \textit{Binā’ Insān al-Nahḍa}, 77.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Khawāṭir 9}, Episode no. 11, directed by Jāsim al-Sa‘ādī and presented by Ahmad al-Shuqayrī, first broadcast in 2013, \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhEgON0Yd00} (accessed May 19, 2016).
taxi driver is a coveted job that requires three to five years of specialized training. In this sense, the preachers target the social stigmatisms around these careers, especially the poor wages paid for such work in the region.

At first glance, these preachers’ focus on educational reform and employment appears out of place in religious programming and not relevant to discussions about Islam or the life of a devout Muslim. Yet the preachers infuse these discussions with religious examples, creatively framing these issues in a religious manner by blending in examples from the Qur’an and Sunna. This not only strengthens their discussion of contemporary issues, but also helps the media du’â promote religion, showing that Islam is more relevant to contemporary issues than people realize.

Two themes in particular serve to illustrate this point. First, the preachers stress that society needs to better educate young people, both in and out of the classroom. Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad, they say that Muslims have a responsibility to educate and guide the younger generations. The Prophet knew how to handle youth, steering them to the correct path when they went astray, and remaining calm in situations that would have provoked anger in others. Al-Shugairi cites the example of al-Faḍl ibn al-‘Abbās sneaking glances at a young woman during the farewell pilgrimage, while Khaled references a young man who asked the Prophet for permission to fornicate, or have sex out of wedlock. In both cases, the Prophet was a patient teacher, acknowledging the young person’s mistake, and responding in a way that guided him to be a better person. In the first example, the Prophet simply turned al-Faḍl’s head

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81 Al-Shuqayrī, Khawāṭir 2: al-Juz’ al-Thānī, 21-22; and which appears in many of the canonical collections. See for example: Sahih al-Bukhārī: Kitāb al-Ist’ī’dhān, bāb qawl Allāh ta‘ālā; and Sahih Muslim: Kitāb al-Hajj, bāb al-ḥajj ‘an al-‘ajiz li-zamānā wa-hiram wa-nāḥwihimā aw ī-l-mawt.
away, while in the second he asked the young man if he would wish such a situation (sex out of wedlock) upon his mother, his sister or his aunts. When the youngster responded with a categorical no, the Prophet replied: “Therefore do not wish upon others what you do not wish upon your family.”

These stories illustrate the mercy of the Prophet and of Islam, reminding audiences to be forgiving of mistakes and not to banish people for small infractions. In neither example do we see long lectures, finger wagging, or a note of anger. Instead, the preachers present a softer approach to mistakes that makes religion more inviting. They acknowledge the difficulties and temptations of modern life, but show that young people need not fear Islam. The Muslim community is there to guide them, acting as role models and welcoming wrongdoers back into the fold when they go astray.

Education inside the classroom, as mentioned earlier, is also a concern for the media du‘ā, who believe that the current practice of memorization and blind imitation is not the best means to education or development. They reinforce this view with religious evidence drawn from the Prophet’s sīra. Al-Shugairi notes that the Prophet always said: “Oh God, provide me with useful knowledge (‘ilman nāfi‘an).” As the preacher explains, useful knowledge is information that can be applied, not just recited and remembered. Knowledge that is not turned into action has no benefit. Such an emphasis on action and applicability closely matches the interests of their target audience. A survey of Arab youth in six different countries found that 86 percent “want school curricula to be more relevant to the needs of the workplace.”

83 Khālid, Bīnā’ Insān al-Nahda, 95.
84 Al-Shuqayrī, Khawāṣfīr 3: Min Al-Yābān, 100.
85 Ibid.
Speaking of action, the second theme that these preachers stress is the fact that education is a life-long mission and one that individuals should also take upon themselves. As evidence for this argument, al-Shugairi turns to the Prophet Muhammad’s discussion of *iḥsān*, a term that literally means charity or performing good deeds. The Saudi preacher argues that it is much more than this however, citing a hadith where the Prophet said: “[*Iḥsān* is] that you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for though you don’t see Him, He, verily, sees you.”

Al-Shugairi explains that the intention behind the word “worship” here is not merely prayer and fasting, but all types of actions. Thus, the Prophet wanted us to act in the best way in all things, making *iḥsān* the pursuit of perfection in both issues of faith and our everyday lives.

He reinforces this interpretation with a hadith that is a little clearer about the breadth of *iḥsān*. The Prophet said that “Allah has decreed *al-iḥsān* in everything, so when you slaughter, then do the slaughtering well.”

Al-Suwaidan’s discussion of perfection presents a similar hadith, albeit one not found in the six canonical collections – Verily, Allah loves that when anyone of you does a job, he should perfect it.

After establishing religious support for hard work and perfection in this worldly life, much like the Protestant work ethic, the preachers apply *iḥsān* to a wide variety of contemporary ideas and issues. Al-Shugairi begins by discussing safe driving, being on time, parking your car

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87 Al-Shuqayrī, *Khawāṣir 3: Min Al-Yābān*, 53-54. The hadith is featured in the canonical collection *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: Kitāb al-Imān, bāb bayān al-imān wa-l-īslām wa-l-iḥsān, wa-wujūb al-imān,…
89 Ibid., 54-55. Al-Shuqayrī does not mention that this hadith falls under the subject of blood money and mutilation, nor the fact that he has omitted a section from the middle of the hadith: “…so when you kill, do the killing well, so when you slaughter….” See the hadith collection *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī*: Kitāb al-Diyāt, bāb mā jā‘a fī al-naḥy ‘an al-muthla.
correctly, and even placing your shoes in the appropriate cubbies before praying in a mosque.\textsuperscript{91} In general however, the preachers devote their most lengthy treatments of \textit{iḥsān} to a host of modern business applications. These include organizing one’s wallet and office; better managing one’s emails and one’s finances; managing one’s time, and building and maintaining relationships.\textsuperscript{92} Such skills are useful for self-improvement of course, but are also valuable in the workplace. Strong organizational skills, financial know-how, good time management, and a strong network are all important for work in the business world. In the job search, they can make one’s application more attractive as well. And the fact that these skills are tied to the Islam, through the concept of \textit{iḥsān}, makes them even more enticing for young people to learn and for society to accept.

Islam and Islamic history are also the basis for the preachers’ emphasis on reading and writing, some of the most basic educational tools. Throughout their works, the \textit{du’ā} highlight the educational benefits of reading, give tips for better writing, and offer scores of book recommendations.\textsuperscript{93} As evidence for the value of these skills, the \textit{du’ā} cite a wealth of religious and historical sources. They quote Qur’anic verses: “Read: In the name of thy Lord Who createth” (96:1),\textsuperscript{94} and “Nun. By the pen and that which they write (therewith), thou art not, for thy Lord’s favour unto thee, a madman” (68:1-2).\textsuperscript{95} They cite the Prophet, who said: “Whoever reads a letter from the Book of Allah receives a reward from it, and a reward of ten the like of

\textsuperscript{91} Al-Shuqayrī, \textit{Khawātir 3: Min Al-Yābān}, 54.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 60-69, 74-75; Al-Suwaydān, \textit{Usus Al-‘Ațā’}, 70-75, 106.
\textsuperscript{93} Al-Suwaydān, \textit{Usus al-‘Ațā’}, 23, 36; and Al-Shuqayrī, \textit{Khawātir 3: Min Al-Yābān}, 81-82. Book recommendations appear throughout these preachers’ books and television shows, especially within the volumes of al-Suwaydān’s biography \textit{‘Allamatnī al-Hayāh}, as concluding segments in episodes of al-Shuqayrī’s television program \textit{Law Kāna Baynānā}, and within the text of Khālid’s book \textit{Bīnā’ Insān al-Nahdā} (see for example: pages 55, 67, 286).
\textsuperscript{94} Al-Suwaydān, \textit{Usus al-‘Ațā’}, 11.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 12.
it.” Of course, the fact that “read” (qara‘a in this hadith and iqra‘ in verse 96:1 above) could mean “recite” detracts somewhat from the preachers’ argument about reading. Finally, the du‘ā also use Classical figures as evidence for the importance of reading and writing. Khaled notes that the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ordered his governors to teach reading and writing, and sent out his Companions to teach these subjects. Al-Suwaidan praises the lengths to which the Classical author al-Jāḥiẓ went in his love of reading, and al-Shugairi highlights the work of the Umayyads in Cordoba, who established seventy different libraries across the city, including the caliph’s library, which held 400,000 books.

In short, the preachers tackle the contemporary issue of unemployment by reframing it in a religious light. They stress that education and skill building are part of the religious responsibility of iḥsān, while also making one a more attractive job candidate. For young people, and society in general, this is a call to action. Unemployment is a form of idleness and a sin, says Khaled. The community is responsible for guiding, mentoring, and educating the younger generation, just like the Prophet did. But young people can take the initiative as well, by learning a skill and distinguishing themselves. The message for everyone is the same – get up and take action.

Implications

This study of the media du‘ā’s audience reveals a complex approach to religious preaching with a diverse set of goals. First, the du‘ā’s broad range of religious work incorporates new visuals, a relaxed style, and interactive programming, attracting and securing

96 Khālid, Binā’ Insān al-Nahḍa, 143-144. This hadith is featured in the canonical collection Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī: Kitāb Faḍ’il al-Qu‘rān.
97 Ibid.
98 Al-Suwaydān, Usus al-‘Afā‘, 37.
99 Al-Shuqayrī, Khawāṭir Shābb, 115.
100 Khālid, Binā’ Insān al-Nahḍa, 75-76.
the attention of a large and relatively untapped youth audience. The preachers’ ability to reach this group allows them to target two issues: the need for social and community development, and what they see as one of the main flaws of modern society, a lack of religiosity. The preachers motivate youth to take action and thereby change society, stressing that young people can be leaders, as long as they are armed with more education and renewed ties to religion. Muslim youth thus become both the duʿāʾs tool for change as well as the target audience for their religious messages.

To say that this emphasis on religion makes the duʿāʾ into authority figures in all religious matters is a step too far however and a claim the preachers themselves deny. What is clear however is that they are helping set the agenda by introducing new topics into religious discussions and so pushing the boundaries of religious discourse. They do not explicitly tell people what to think, for they stress that they are not qualified to do so. Yet they are convincing people “what to think about,” to cite Bernard Cohen,101 one of the early inspirations for the theory of agenda setting. This theory, found in studies of the press and mass communication,102 is easily transferable to our context. The popularity of these preachers gives them considerable influence on national and religious debates. While they do not give legal rulings or fatwas, they steer the public eye onto issues like educational reform and social change, in addition to sensitive topics like terrorism, interfaith relations, and the role of women in society. The duʿāʾ’s large audiences and broad reach across the region force politicians, other preachers, and the general public to respond to their work on these issues. By incorporating religion into their work, the

preachers also demonstrate how Islam is a key component of an activist lifestyle and an important tool towards changing the individual, the Muslim community, and the world.

Chapter Four explores this in more detail, exploring how the *du’â* use a Classical genre, the Prophet’s sīra, to deliver their modern messages and discuss religion in a way that their young audience enjoys and can understand.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Media Duʿā and the Sīra of the Prophet:

Using Traditional Sources to Communicate Old and New Ideas

Through the Classical Era, people told stories of the Prophet for their moral, educational, and entertainment value. In these accounts, Muhammad was the ideal model not only as a devout Muslim, but also as a social and political leader. The media duʿā are no different, as they continue to relate the sīra or biography of the Prophet Muhammad in mosques and lecture halls, on television and the Internet, and within the pages of popular books. That they do so is no surprise. The Prophet’s words and deeds are a fundamental component of Islam and a vital resource for Muslims as they attempt to live their lives in accordance with their religion.

Yet, as this chapter shows, the media duʿā are innovative in how they use and communicate the sīra. I illustrate this through a thematic analysis of the sīra and religious storytelling, starting with the Classical Era and then examining each of the media duʿā in turn. This progression demonstrates two things. First, the themes shared by the media duʿā and their Classical predecessors show that intellectually these popular preachers are not a completely new phenomenon. Second, the media duʿā use the sīra to introduce new themes that range from unity and coexistence to day-to-day issues like domestic violence, good manners, and effective leadership – evidence of how these preachers blend old sources with new issues and how they are shifting religious discourse to focus on life in this world, not just the afterlife.

Transmitting the Sīra of the Prophet in Classical Times

Transmitting and relating the sīra of the Prophet is deeply connected to the practice of Islam and Islamic law. The memorization, collection, and recitation of Prophetic hadith have
been common practice for ‘ulamā’ since the early years of Islam. Second only to the Qur’an, Prophetic hadith serve as a cornerstone for legal proofs and provide evidence on how to conduct one’s life in accordance with Islam. The Prophet’s words and actions were relayed in a number of fashions, individually and in compilations, and in written and oral forms, depending on the audience and intention of the author or narrator. Some of these prophetic hadith were short injunctions, while others comprised lengthy stories about Muhammad and his Companions, in addition to tales of the pre-Islamic prophets (Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc.).

The first compilations that focused specifically on the Prophet’s sīra emerged at the end of the first century hijrī. Current scholars list the earliest sīra work as that of Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 110/728 or 114/732), whose compilation, based on the fragments extant today, appears to have combined Prophetic legends with more factual stories about the Prophet.¹ This mix of genres and styles characterizes the sīra in general. Modern scholars enumerate a variety of “text types” within this genre, including accounts of the Prophet’s expeditions and raids (maghāzī); reports on the virtues (faḍāʾil) and faults (mathālib) of specific clans and Companions; Qur’anic tafsīr and the contexts and occasions of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl); stories of Prophetic legend; written documents such as treaties and letters from the Prophet to foreign rulers; speeches and sermons by the Prophet; and even poetry.²

These compilations and written biographies of the Prophet Muhammad remained a resource for the educated elite however, and not the common man. The general public received such stories orally, a fact that gave storytelling a central role in Islam. This tradition grew to play a prominent role in all sorts of Islamic literary genres – in hadith, in tales of the Prophets, in

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² Wim Raven, “Sīra,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., Brill Online (accessed June 2, 2016). Also, for a thorough discussion of each of these text types, as well as examples of the major sīra compilations, see: Kister, “The Sīrah Literature.”
works of history, and in the biographical literature on scholars, rulers, and other important figures – not to mention the role of stories in preaching.³

The popular genre of mawlid poetry is a prominent example and deserves special mention. This devotional poetry, praise poems to the Prophet Muhammad, draws from the rich history of pre-Islamic poetry, especially those composed to praise kings and tribal leaders.⁴ What is important in terms of the present study is that these poems feature sections derived from the Prophet’s sīra. For instance, the most famous poem of praise to the Prophet, the Mantle Ode from the thirteenth century C.E., includes sections on Muhammad’s birth, his miracles, the beauty and inimitability of the Qu’ran, the Prophet’s night journey and ascension, and his military campaigns.⁵ These later poems, especially the Mantle Ode, are widely recited to this day, particularly on instances like funerals or the Prophet’s birthday (mawlid al-nabī).⁶

Considering the place of religious stories across multiple genres, it is clear that they play an important role in Muslim society. The exact times, locations, and individuals involved in relating such narratives are not so clear-cut however. People related stories in formal settings such as mosques and schools, and also in informal locations like street corners and public cemeteries.⁷ Popular preachers did not have a monopoly on religious storytelling either, as this practice also involved prominent religious scholars, a point illustrated by both Berkey and Brown.⁸ Thus, storytelling, albeit encapsulated by definition in the concept of the quṣṣāṣ (popular storytellers), was not by any means confined to these individuals. Preachers (khuṭabā’)

⁶ Ibid., 71.
⁸ Ibid., 5-6; and Brown, “Scholars and Charlatans on the Baghdad-Khurasan Circuit From the Ninth to the Eleventh Centuries,” 89.
and religious scholars (‘ulamā’) employed stories for their educational and religious value, and also to mock or ridicule the work of other storytellers. Brown explains, for instance, that religious scholars initially feared the corrupting influence of popular preachers, whose tales could distort the public’s understanding of Islam and compromise the religious knowledge being communicated by the ‘ulamā’. Yet, as the schools of law formed and the power of the ‘ulamā’ solidified, their criticism of storytellers turned to ridicule and provided a new source of entertainment for their readers. 9

Popular preachers’ stories in the Classical era, as Berkey explained, revolved around two broad themes: first, a focus on poverty and renouncing worldly goods and powers; and second, the issues of suffering, death, judgment, and salvation. In terms of the former, Berkey cites a number of examples, including the popularity of statements such as “your poor are [the occasion for] your acts of charity,” “love of the world is the root of every sin,” and “poverty is my glory, and in it I take pride.”10 It is important to note that religious scholars labeled some of these hadith as weak or fabricated,11 a fact omitted by Berkey. This does not appear to have influenced their usage with popular preachers, however.

The latter subject – death, suffering, and the promise of salvation – was an even larger theme in the Classical era. Formal preachers addressed these topics at length, but they were even more prevalent among popular storytellers, who dwelled on death and the afterlife, and praised those who wept for their sins. According to Berkey, “the tears of the pious were meant to deflect eschatological punishment,” and even the prospect of death, let alone hell, was enough to cause

9 Brown, “Scholars and Charlatans on the Baghdad-Khurasan Circuit From the Ninth to the Eleventh Centuries,” 85-95.
10 Berkey, Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East, 45.
11 Ibn Taymiyya said the statement “love of the world is the root of every sin” has no known isnād linking it to the Prophet. As for “poverty is my glory, and in it I take pride,” he labeled this statement a lie and added that it is not found in any of the well-known collections of hadith. See: Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, Ahādīth al-Quṣṣās, ed. Muhammad al-Ṣābbāgh (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1972), 74 (no. 7), 75-76 (no. 11-12).
fear in Muslim audiences. For example, a manuscript of popular stories and homilies, one that appears to present a record of a popular storytelling circle from the later Middle Period, prominently features the character of the angel of death and comments on poverty and disease. In one instance, the text compares the suffering of the pious believer to the refining of gold, exclaiming that “gold has no value until it has passed through the purifying fires of a goldsmith’s furnace, so too the believer, who must pass through the “agony of poverty” (‘adhāb al-faqr) and the “fire of diseases” (nār al-amrād).”

In general, stories of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions were common in Classical storytelling circles and formed an important part of the popular preacher’s toolbox. They served as evidence and examples for the themes described above and also addressed more day-to-day topics. Berkey cites a handful of the latter, from conducting oneself appropriately in a mosque, to respecting the elderly, to not marrying women for their money. All in all, stories of the Prophet in the Classical era served a dual role to both communicate and clarify the message of Islam, ensuring that it reached all levels of society and that it was clearly understood. In this sense, Classical storytelling played a vital role since it reached individuals that formal books, lessons, and sermons could not, and therefore, despite criticism regarding its style and subject matter, storytelling helped spread knowledge of Islam and bring the religion to new corners of the globe.

12 Berkey, Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East, 48-49.
13 Ibid., 18.
14 British Library Or. 7528, fol. 22r-v. (As cited in Berkey, Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East, 48.)
15 Berkey, Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East, 44-45.
New Technologies and the Arrival of the Media Duʿā

Flash forward to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Newspapers, magazines, television, and the Internet have taken the world by storm. Within a relatively short time, the realm of Muslim preachers and storytellers grew to include popular books and even the household living room where families had access to a wealth of television channels, not to mention the videos available online through YouTube, Facebook, and preachers’ personal websites. Such media innovations and the new style of the media duʿā do not mean that these preachers are completely original, however. They still have ties to their Classical predecessors and similarities with modern ‘ulamā’.

In 2012, for instance, anthropologist Yasmin Moll placed modern Egypt’s al-duʿā al-judud within the historical tradition of popular religious storytelling – a practice that she says has existed since the Middle Ages.16 She also compared criticism of modern duʿā to that faced by their Classical counterparts, noting that the ‘ulamā’ in each era looked down upon popular preachers with disdain. While religious stories brought people closer to God to some degree, the ‘ulamā’ questioned these preachers’ authority or even feared that audiences took their tales as mere entertainment.17

Narrowing our focus to look at Amr Khaled’s version of the sīra, in his series entitled ‘Alā Khūṭā al-Ḥabīb, we find that he adopts the lecture format of many modern ‘ulamā’. Previous research has commented extensively on Khaled’s emotion and charisma, both evident in series like Kalām min al-Qalb and Al-Janna fī Buyūtinā.18 There, he blends religious preaching with self-help advice and a trendy interactive format, a mixture that has spawned

17 Ibid., 29-30.
18 See, for example: Wise, “‘Words from the Heart’;” and Harris, “Development through Faith: The Ma’adi Life Makers and the Islamic Entrepreneurial Subject,” 7-10.
comparisons to the televangelist Billy Graham, the American talk-show host Dr. Phil, and the Egyptian pop-star Amr Diab.\textsuperscript{19} Khaled’s study of the \textit{sīra} is not that engaging and interactive however. He presents the biography of the Prophet in a pure lecture style, not moving from his desk in the television studio, not soliciting questions from the audience, and not inviting guests onto the show.

Khaled’s retelling of the \textit{sīra} is a straightforward biography of the Prophet, from birth to death, told over the course of a television series and its subsequent book. His presentation proceeds chronologically through Muhammad’s life and reads factually, with little commentary by the preacher himself. Despite this historical focus, Khaled returns over and over again to address several themes. First, he emphasizes the role of the \textit{sīra} as a guide for modern Muslims explaining that everything they need, from today until the Day of Judgment, can be found in the Prophet’s \textit{sīra}.\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, he argues that everyone can relate to Muhammad for one important reason, his all-encompassing experience:

He is the only person in the history of man that lived every aspect of life – rich and poor; strong and weak; ruling and being ruled; in treaties, at peace and at war. He worked with all spectrums of society: with Jews, with Christians; with Arabs, with non-Arabs; with feuding tribes, with great powers Roman and Persian; with the rich and the poor, [and] with city dwellers and the Bedouin.\textsuperscript{21}

Khaled’s treatment of the \textit{sīra} also shares some of the Classical themes discussed earlier, especially the focus on suffering and death. In particular, the Prophet’s suffering and hardships feature prominently in Khaled’s work. Over the course of the Prophet’s childhood, the preacher explains, Muhammad was orphaned three times – losing his father, then his mother, then his

\textsuperscript{19} See: Bayet, “Piety, Privilege and Egyptian Youth;” and Hardaker, “Amr Khaled: Islam’s Billy Graham.” Wise’s M.A. thesis makes this point as well, adding that many articles from Egypt and abroad compare Khālid to Billy Graham (Wise, “‘Words for the Heart’,” 5, footnote 2).

\textsuperscript{20} Khālid, ‘\textit{Alā Khuṭā al-Ḥabīb}, 15.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 16.
Then during the first years of Islam, Muhammad faced accusations, insults and abuse, culminating in several attacks. In one aside, Khaled adds that there were more than seven attempts to kill the Prophet.²³ Poverty and hunger were common features in the lives of the early Muslims as well, he notes, both during the boycott of the Hashimites and in the first stages of the Muslim community in Medina.²⁴

Despite these challenges, the Prophet continued on, a lesson that Khaled extends to his audience and their lives today:

Amidst [this] suffering the Prophet always found a warm breast to embrace him. For this reason, one should not look at difficult events in our lives as if they are the end of the world, for Allah (may He be praised and exalted) sometimes withholds from a person to give to him.²⁵

Khaled stresses that even the Prophet was not immune to struggles and hardship. Yet, as the ideal man, he bore these difficulties and did not despair. In this fashion, the preacher casts failure as a lesson from God, motivating others to try again. Like a motivational coach, Khaled emphasizes the importance of repeated attempts and the fact that failures were as much a part of the Prophet’s life as they are in our lives today:

We will see during our study of the sīra many situations where the Prophet did not reach his aspired goal, yet he never gave up hope. This is a lesson from the blessed sīra at which one should pause. We should not give up hope at the first failure we encounter. For Allah (may He be praised and exalted) placed him [the Prophet] in these sorts of situations for us to learn that a large number of attempts, even if some are failures, is what produces success.²⁶

The Classical theme of salvation and the Day of Judgment is less prominent in Khaled’s discussion of the Prophet. One brief story describes the Prophet Adam laughing when he looked at the people in heaven and crying when he looked at those in hell. In a rare interjection, Khaled

²² Ibid., 33-36.
²³ Ibid., 102.
²⁴ Ibid., 103-104, 151.
²⁵ Ibid., 37.
²⁶ Ibid., 68.
then directs the narrative outwards: “So my dear reader, ‘In which group would you like to be?’”

This commentary shows people that they are individually accountable to God and the Day of Judgment, a sharp reminder that actions in this world have a direct effect on the afterlife.

That this one story in Khaled’s account of the sīra is his only reminder to fear death and the Day of Judgment signals a move away from the emphasis that Classical storytellers placed on this subject. Berkey’s study of Classical storytelling characterizes the theme of suffering, death, judgment and salvation as an “overwhelming” one, with Classical collections of popular stories like the anonymous manuscript B.L.O 7528 and al-Ḥurayfish’s al-Rawḍ al-Fāʾiṣ fi al-Mawāʾiz wa-l-Raqāʾiṣ dwelling at length on the fear of death, the extent of God’s mercy, and the power of repenting for one’s sins.28

Khaled’s shift from this Classical approach widens further when considering the final Classical theme, poverty and the renunciation of worldly goods and power. While Classical storytellers cite statements such as “Love of the world is the root of every sin” and “poverty is my glory and in it I take pride,” Khaled makes no mention of these statements, nor any such endorsements for poverty or renouncing worldly goods and power. The preacher does describe periods of poverty and hunger in the Prophet’s life,30 but this is not a state he encourages today’s Muslims to pursue. In addition, his vision of the Islamic renaissance (al-nahḍa) does not renounce this world, but combines both spiritual and material things.31

The absence of these Classical themes leaves space for other contemporary issues, like unity and coexistence. In his study of the sīra, Khaled makes a number of references to unity, a concept that for him encompasses not just Muslims, but non-Muslims as well. In the preacher’s

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27 Ibid., 116.
28 Berkey, Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East, 46-49.
29 Ibid., 45.
30 Khālid, Ṭaʿlīḥ Khūṭṭ ā al-Ḥabīb, 29, 103-104, 151.
31 Ibid., 15.
retelling of the night journey to Jerusalem, Muhammad found all the prophets from Adam to Jesus awaiting him at the al-Aqsa mosque. For Khaled, this is proof of the unity of humanity, connecting Muhammad with the long line of prophets from Christianity and Judaism. That they descended from heaven to meet Muhammad on Earth also signals their willingness to give him the role of leading mankind, especially as Muhammad would meet each of them again as he ascended on his visit through the seven levels of heaven.\textsuperscript{32}

This idea of unity is reinforced by the Constitution of Medina, which served, as Khaled argues, to unite people and not divide them. Not only did the Constitution make all Muslims equal, but it brought them together with Jews, uniting the groups against their common enemies and giving each group the right to their own religion.\textsuperscript{33} Khaled adds that the name Medina is in itself another example of such equality:

The Prophet also undertook a great matter, changing the name of Medina. For if he left it as \textit{Yathrib}, then it would be for the \textit{Aws} and \textit{Khazraj} [tribes] more than anyone else. And if he named it \textit{Dār al-Hijra}, then it would be for the emigrants more than anyone else. And if he called it the Muhammadan State [\textit{al-Dawla al-Muḥammadīyya}], it would be for the Muslims more than anyone else. Thus, he named it Medina, a name that combines everybody.\textsuperscript{34}

Khaled’s analysis here is a little distorted. First, there is no evidence that Muhammad consciously avoided city names that would preference one group over another. Ibn Hishām’s Classical \textit{sīra} work, \textit{Al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya}, gives no discussion of how or why Medina received its name.\textsuperscript{35} Martin Lings’ biography of the Prophet, based on eighth and ninth century Arabic sources, agrees that the name Yathrib was changed to Medina, but gives no explanation as to

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 149-150.
why this name was chosen.\textsuperscript{36} Second, Khaled’s list of potential names (Yathrib, Dār al-Hijra, al-Dawla al-Muḥammadiyya) is missing a large number of other possibilities. The Prophet said that the city had ten names, listing eight of them as: “al-Madīna, Ṭayba, Ṭāba, Maskīna, Jabār, Maḥbūra, Yandad, and Yathrib,” while the Torah says that the city’s ten names are “al-Madīna, Ṭayba, Ṭāba, al-Ṭayyiba, al-Miskīna, al-ʿAdhra’, al-Jābira, al-Majbūra, al-Maḥabbaba, and al-Maḥbūba.”\textsuperscript{37} Note that two of Khaled’s ideas (Dār al-Hijra and al-Dawla al-Muḥammadiyya) are not present on either of these lists. In fact, as academic Zayde Antrim noted, there is a strong argument that Ṭāba or Ṭayba are the best names for the city. In the Qur’an, Medina and Yathrib are associated with hypocrites. Ṭāba or Ṭayba, on the other hand, come from the linguistic root for goodness and purity, and so calling the city these names shows one’s place amongst the true believers, rather than the doubters or hypocrites.\textsuperscript{38}

Khaled’s efforts to emphasize unity and coexistence are a clear reflection of the state of the world in his time. The Iraq wars, the attacks on September 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2001, the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad – so many actions and events seemed to fray ties between religions and contribute to Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations.”\textsuperscript{39} When a Danish newspaper published cartoons lambasting the Prophet Muhammad, Khaled called for interreligious dialogue not apologies, an attempt to bridge differences or at least foster some understanding of other viewpoints. For Khaled, the Prophet’s history served as a concrete reminder of how and why to build such bridges.

\textsuperscript{36} Martin Lings, \textit{Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources} (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1983), 120.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} See: Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22-49.
New Approaches to the Sīra: What Would Muhammad Do?

While Egypt is home to many media du‘ā – Khaled, Muṣṭafā Ḥusnī, and Mu‘izz Mas‘ūd – this does not mean that this type of preacher is exclusive to the Egyptian context. In fact, by expanding our focus geographically, we find other such preachers, ones with more unique approaches to the sīra of the Prophet. They incorporate the new themes used by Khaled and also use Prophetic stories and hadith to address issues relevant to the day-to-day life of today’s Muslims. Just as the popular Christian slogan asks “What would Jesus do?”, Muslim preachers target contemporary issues by asking: “What would Muhammad do?”

In the Gulf, Saudi preacher and television host Ahmad al-Shugairi concentrates less on lectures and speeches, and takes his work to the streets. His 2009 series Law Kāna Baynānā (“If He Were Among Us”) was modeled on the American show Candid Camera, and thus required him to take his show out in public. It was exactly this slogan “What would Muhammad do?” that al-Shugairi adopted as the premise for this television series. Across two seasons, thirty episodes in total, the preacher framed contemporary issues in the light of the Prophet Muhammad’s words and deeds. In restaurants, offices, and elevators, on street corners and sidewalks, he staged moral problems, and then mounted hidden cameras to see how people would react.

The Saudi preacher distinguishes himself in the way he presents the sīra and the topics he chooses. Stories of the Prophet at home with his family, fighting in battle, and interacting with servants and Companions appear across al-Shugairi’s work. And yet, the focus of this show and the corresponding book is not a complete or chronological presentation of the Prophet’s

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biography. As al-Shugairi explained to one interviewer, “We put the Prophet in context of our simple daily situations to make people understand… Religion is not just about memorizing the Koran or the hadith. It’s about living Islam’s principles in all we do.”

The preacher is particularly critical of traditional religious education on this point. He emphasizes that people make a mistake by considering the Prophet simply as a historical figure, thereby taking his stories as mere entertainment and missing the valuable lessons he left behind.

Al-Shugairi and Khaled agree that the sīra should be a practical example for modern Muslims to follow.

Shedding the constraints of the traditional biography gives al-Shugairi more freedom to design and structure his work. He is not limited by the historical approach of a traditional biography, stuck to chronologies, or forced to relate all the events and aspects of the individual in question. This creative freedom allows significant changes to the style, topics, and themes involved in relating the sīra. Gone is the pure lecture format. Instead we find a diverse show combining brief lectures, public shots with hidden camera work, interviews, and computer graphics. Gone is the historical progression or the complete biography of the Prophet as seen in Khaled’s work. Instead we find a multi-faceted approach concentrating on specific parts of the Prophet’s life, from his many roles (religious leader, husband, employer, mentor) to his relations with non-Muslims and his contract skills. Gone is the Classical emphasis on poverty, death, judgment, and suffering. Instead we find a focus on new contemporary themes, including the concept of unity and coexistence discussed by Khaled and more sensitive issues, like domestic abuse, the excessive reliance on servants, and the role of mosques in society.

Al-Shugairi’s idea of unity follows Khaled’s lead, emphasizing coexistence and discussing how Muslims need to treat others with honor and respect. He cites a story from Ibn

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41 Wright, Rock the Casbah, 180.
42 Al-Shuqayrī, Law Kāna Baynanā, 33-34.
al-Qayyim’s *Zād al-Maʿād* that the Prophet allowed Christians to pray in his mosque, despite some criticism from the Muslim community. Respectful actions and relations like this one, as al-Shugairi argues, show non-Muslims the power, beauty, and humanity of Islam.\(^{43}\) To put this in contemporary terms, he explains that there is a huge difference between a non-Muslim soldier who is fighting and killing Muslims on the battlefield and the vast majority of non-Muslims who just want to live their lives, or who may even sympathize with Muslims on some issues.\(^{44}\) He does not elaborate which issues they might agree upon, but it appears that for al-Shugairi these points of agreement are both a way to heal inter-religious strife and a means of bringing people to the Muslim faith. As he says, working with non-Muslims respectfully and fairly presents an opportunity to be in harmony with others, and increase their love of Islam.\(^{45}\)

Al-Shugairi’s work *Law Kāna Baynanā* makes little mention of the afterlife and the Day of Judgment, which like Khaled, separates him from this prominent Classical theme. Across the two seasons of al-Shugairi’s television series, only a small part of one episode discusses this topic in detail, saying that Muhammad is the only Prophet who can intercede on behalf of people on the Day of Judgment. As the preacher explains, Muhammad can rescue Muslims from hell, as long as they have the tiniest speck of faith in their hearts, but he can also rescue non-Muslims, as long as they believe in God.\(^{46}\) This story appears without allusion to its source, but can be found in both the canonical hadith collections of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī\(^ {47}\) and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.\(^ {48}\) After praising the Prophet’s efforts on our behalf, al-Shugairi also explains how faith and actions in this world have a direct effect on you after the Day of Judgment, for your comportment in this world influences

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 122-125.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 123.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 124.


\(^{47}\) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, bāb kalām al-rabb ‘azz wa-jall yawn al-qiyāma ma‘a al-anbiyyā’ wa-ghayrihim.

\(^{48}\) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: Kitāb al-Īmān, bāb adnā ahl al-janna manzilatan fihā.
how often you will meet the Prophet in the afterlife. Some will meet him once in a thousand years, others once in a hundred years, while some will meet him every year or even every day. In this fashion, al-Shugairi presents the Prophet as a motivating factor, an additional impetus to do good and to devoutly follow the path of Islam.

In addition to these shared themes with Khaled, al-Shugairi’s work moves into a significantly new direction, presenting social critiques on a variety of issues. In the book Law Kāna Baynanā, he begins with the topic of domestic violence, not hesitating to quote one study on how the phenomenon is rising in parts of the Arab world, and another from the 1990s stating that over 50% of women in Egypt faced physical abuse from their husbands in the past year. While these statistics were taken almost verbatim from Arabic media sources, al-Shugairi strengthens his argument through the use of personal stories from his audience. One woman, for example, reports that her father would smack her on the face or beat her with a wire whenever she contradicted him, while in another case, a husband beat his wife for the smallest reason, or just invented reasons to hit her. Switching gender roles, al-Shugairi even describes how a woman blinded her husband with acid because she feared he might take a second wife.

In every case, the Prophet’s response to these issues is clear for al-Shugairi. He says that Muhammad did not hit his wife or his servants, referencing the word of Aisha, and quotes several Prophetic hadith from the canonical collections of Abū Dāwūd and al-Bukhārī that speak

49 Law Kāna Baynanā, Season no. 2, Episode no. 4.
52 See the two preceding footnotes for the original media sources of these statistics.
53 Al-Shuqayrī, Law Kāna Baynanā, 93.
54 Ibid., 54.
55 Ibid., 62.
against such forms of abuse.⁵⁶ Stories of the Prophet with children add to his argument, noting how Muhammad would shorten his prayers if he heard a child crying and how he cut short a sermon upon seeing his grandsons stumbling around, descending from the pulpit to pick them up and kiss them.⁵⁷

Al-Shugairi’s interest in family and the home continues with a direct critique of local society, that Arabs rely excessively on the use of servants and nannies. Servants, al-Shugairi argues, have replaced parents to a large degree, sleeping with children in some cases and spending so much time with them that some kids struggle to speak Arabic well.⁵⁸ A tighter family unit, with involved parents and a home that is free from violence, breeds a better environment for raising children. The Prophet sometimes fed his grandchildren, al-Shugairi notes, referencing a hadith from *al-Mu’jam al-Kabīr* by the Classical scholar Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al- Tambémī (d. 360/971). Muhammad used this mealtime as an opportunity to educate the children about patience and the rights of others, once explaining to an angry Ḥusayn that he could not drink Ḥasan’s milk, since Ḥasan had woken first and so would be fed first.⁵⁹

Through these examples, we can see how al-Shugairi is pushing for specific changes, actions that benefit society through a healthier environment at home and in the community. His work targets particular social concerns, including domestic violence and servants, as discussed above, and also issues like the role of mosques. Mosques are not just places of worship, he argues, but true community centers and thus should be open and active, not restricted to prayer. In the Prophet’s time, mosques were a center of activity throughout the day, not closing their

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⁵⁶ Ibid., 55, 57.
⁵⁷ Ibid., 94-95.
⁵⁸ Ibid., 74-78.
⁵⁹ Ibid., 80.
doors shortly after prayer. He relates how the Prophet Muhammad allowed Abyssinians to dance inside a mosque, for instance, referencing both al-Bukhārī and Ibn Ḥanbal.

Law Kāna Baynanā also addresses the development of individuals through improved manners and behaviors, citing issues like patience, honesty, generosity and timeliness. For instance, al-Shugairi says that the Prophet respected appointments, a statement he uses to confront university students arriving at a lecture hall well after the start of class. He cites a hadith from the collection of Abū Dawūd as evidence of the Prophet’s punctuality. In this story, a man promised to meet Muhammad in a particular place to complete a business transaction, but forgot their appointment and did not show up. When he remembered and went there three days later, he found Muhammad waiting for him. “You have vexed me, young man,” said Muhammad. “I have been here for three days waiting for you.” According to al-Shugairi, each day Muhammad had arrived punctually at the appointed hour and waited. Even without any allusion to this hadith though, the students that al-Shugairi confronts do not doubt that the Prophet would be on time. “Imagine, if the Prophet (PBUH) were with us today, would he be late?” Al-Shugari asks one latecomer. “No, of course not,” the young man quickly responds. Another student adds that he cannot believe the Prophet would be late, as he commits and follows through with everything.

All these topics – domestic violence, nannies and child rearing, the role of mosques, and improved manners and behaviors – reflect a new focus on the here and now. Salvation, Judgment Day, and the afterlife were all important concerns in the Classical era, as we discussed

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60 Ibid., 113.
61 Ibid., 112.
63 See: Sunan Abī Dawūd: Kitāb al-Adab, bāb fī al-’Ida.
64 Law Kāna Baynanā, Season no. 2, Episode no. 3.
65 Ibid.
earlier. These new issues are not related to the afterlife however, and al-Shugairi makes no mention of heaven or hell in his discussions. Such an approach is attractive to the youth audience, as we saw in Chapter Three, and also shows how the media duʿā are subtly shifting religious discourse.

New Uses for the Sīra: Defining the Characteristics of a Muslim Leader

In the nation of Kuwait, Tariq al-Suwaïdan has followed a similar approach, incorporating modern theories and methodologies into his teaching style and subject matter. However, of the three preachers profiled in this study, al-Suwaïdan is unique in the way he approaches the sīra of the Prophet Muhammad. While Khaled and al-Shugairi relate stories of the Prophet to communicate a variety of themes and goals, al-Suwaïdan channels his stories through the lens of leadership and leadership theory.

Of al-Suwaïdan’s works, five in particular are relevant to our discussion of the sīra of the Prophet Muhammad: the television programs Al-Rasūl al-Insān, ‘Allamatnī al-Ḥayāh and Ṣinā‘at al-Qā‘id, and the books ‘Allamatnī al-Ḥayāh and Ṣinā‘at al-Qā‘id, both based on their corresponding television programs. In each of these works, the preacher shows how the Prophet was the ideal example of how to live within Islam, covering all aspects of life, from marriage and fatherhood, to politics, education, and war. In fact, al-Suwaïdan is critical of some other commentaries on the Prophet’s sīra, which he says only discuss the harassment of early Muslims and the battles and bloodshed of the Medinan period. For al-Suwaïdan, this gives a skewed vision of the Prophet’s life, ignoring many important aspects of his life and character, including his roles as a husband, father and friend, and as a judge, leader and advisor.66

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66 Al-Suwaydān, Fāhm al-Dīn, 49.
With this in mind, the Kuwaiti preacher explains why studying the *sīra* is so important, saying (1) that the Prophet provides a practical example of how to apply Islam in our lives, (2) that the *sīra* helps us understand the Qur’an, (3) that the Prophet’s hard life can comfort those who face hardships of their own, (4) that the Prophet demonstrates how to get close to God, and (5) that the *sīra* is a fundamental reference for management science.67 The first four reasons should sound familiar, as they closely resemble the reasons and goals given by Khaled and al-Shugairi. Yet the fifth point is unique and is what sets al-Suwaïdan apart. As a management consultant and an expert on leadership theory, the preacher directs his attention to exploring how the Prophet’s example can be applied to the fields of management and business, with special focus on the concept of leadership.

The books ‘*Allamatnī al-Ḥayāh* and Ṣīnā’at al-Qā’id approach these connections between leadership and Islam in two fashions, first presenting a survey of modern research of leadership and leadership theory, and discussing how it might relate to the Prophet Muhammad, before, second, extending the concept of the ideal leader to create a new concept, the ideal Muslim leader.

Starting with the first point, al-Suwaïdan is quick to reference a study by the academics and leadership experts James Kouzes and Barry Posner, the book *The Leadership Challenge*,68 that documents over 25 years of interviews across the world on the subject of leadership, clarifying the traits and practices of exemplary leaders.69 As al-Suwaïdan notes, the authors conducted 1.5 million interviews on six different continents, and continuously found the same leadership trait rising to the fore – the issue of credibility. The terms the authors used to describe

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67 As summarized from al-Suwaïdan, *Fahm al-Dīn*, 51-52.
a credible leader, honest and trustworthy, surprised al-Suwa’idan, as these are the same terms used to describe the Prophet Muhammad and even constitute one of his titles, *al-Ṣādiq al-Amīn* (the truthful and trustworthy one).\(^70\)

Al-Suwa’idan does not delve further into this issue however, neither elaborating on the work by Kouzes and Posner nor narrating how the Prophet received the title *al-Ṣādiq al-Amīn*. Classical works like Ibn Hishām’s *Al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya* do discuss this fact of course – God protected the young Muhammad from heathenism and vice, says Ibn Hishām, until he grew to have a reputation as one of the kindest, most reliable, and most moral people, and thereby was known as *al-Amīn*.\(^71\) Ibn Hishām reiterates this fact when he discusses the rebuilding of the Ka’ba, noting on two occasions that the Quraysh called Muhammad “the trustworthy one.”\(^72\) That al-Suwa’idan does not relate these stories may just mean that he deems them common knowledge and so not worth repeating.

In addition to the issue of credibility, al-Suwa’idan also noticed aspects of the Prophet Muhammad in Servant-Leadership Theory. In the book ‘*Allamatnī al-Ḥayāh*, brief references to the work of Robert Greenleaf and James Autry highlight the essence of this theory – that true leadership is based upon a desire to help and inspire others.\(^73\) As the pioneer behind Servant-Leadership Theory, Greenleaf developed this theory in the 1970s, arguing that the servant-leader does not crave power, but shares it, putting the needs of others first, and focusing on the development and well-being of the community both individually and as a whole.\(^74\) Autry published a popular book on the subject many years later, using his expertise as a senior

\(^{70}\) Ibid.  
\(^{71}\) Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muhammad*, 81.  
\(^{72}\) Ibid., 86.  
\(^{73}\) Al-Suwaydān, *Fahm al-Dīn*, 53.  
executive and a business consultant to build upon the theoretical framework laid out by
Greenleaf.\(^\text{75}\) Al-Suwwaidan does not mention the details of their studies, but argues that we can see this servant-leader quality in the story of the Prophet. As he explains, the canonical collections reveal how Muhammad helped and served his Companions, taking time to go around with a little girl, who took him wherever she wanted,\(^\text{76}\) and in another case, happily pausing to teach a Bedouin who had asked for help.\(^\text{77}\)

Looking at these collections however, we find that the claims al-Suwwaidan makes about the links between these hadith and servant-leadership are an extrapolation on the preacher’s part. In fact, in the case of the little girl, he has switched the focus of the Prophet’s action. Al-Bukharī placed this hadith under “bāb al-kibr” (the section of pride), thus discussing the Prophet’s humility and not his assistance, servitude, or leadership. Similarly, in the case of the Bedouin, where al-Suwwaidan describes the Prophet’s “love, good manners, and kindness,” the corresponding hadith in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim makes no mention of such characteristics. It is only in a subsequent hadith collection, Shu‘ab al-Īmān by the Shafi‘i scholar Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066), that a description of the Prophet’s attitude appears in the hadith, noting that Muhammad smiled and took the Bedouin’s hand as they talked.\(^\text{78}\) Al-Suwwaidan’s changes reflect his desire to support his leadership theories and the paucity of material at his disposal. In essence, he is forced to reinterpret existing stories to suit his discussion of modern issues.

The second fashion in which al-Suwwaidan links modern leadership theories to the Prophet is more creative, as al-Suwwaidan creates a new term: the Muslim leader. He begins by describing

\(^{76}\) Al-Suwwaidan, Fāḥim al-Dīn, 53. In the canonical collections, we find this in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: Kitāb al-Adab, bāb al-kibr.
\(^{77}\) Al-Suwwaidan, Fāḥim al-Dīn, 53. In the canonical collections, we find this in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: Kitāb al-Dhikr wa-l-Du‘ā’ wa-l-Tawba wa-l-Istighfār, bāb ṣaḥīḥ wa-l-tasbiḥ wa-l-du‘ā’.
the levels of leadership: the average person, the active or effective person (fa‘āl), the leader, and finally the Muslim leader. Leaders, he argues, distinguish themselves and their ability to make change through five characteristics. First, they have long-term goals, as well as plans for how to achieve them. Second, they focus both on their mind and spirit. Third, leaders are masters of the art of cooperating and working with people, while fourth, they also have the capacity to manage their time and control their behavior and emotions. And fifth, they possess an in-depth knowledge of people and personalities, and have the ability to integrate diverse individuals into a unified team.79

These skills match the characteristics of the ideal manager or business leader, being adept at planning, networking, delegating and supervising their subordinates. In fact, al-Suwaidan’s list is nothing new. Such attributes are the subject of numerous books on management, business, and leadership. The habits articulated in Stephen Covey’s popular bestseller The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, for instance, includes planning (“begin with the end in mind”), understanding and channeling the power of teamwork (“synergize”), and the importance of maintaining and renewing your mental, physical and spiritual energy (“sharpen the saw”).80

From this position of a leader, however, al-Suwaidan argues that the individual can progress even further. He defines the role of a Muslim leader, a category not found in previous literature, which incorporates the five traits of a leader mentioned above as well as the following elements:

1) A deep faith and belief in God;

79 As summarized from al-Suwaydān, Mahārāt al-Ta’thīr, 18; and Ṭāriq al-Suwaydān and Fayṣal ‘Umar Bāsharāhīl, Ṣinā‘at al-Qā‘id, 8th ed. (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dār Qurṭuba Li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi‘, 2013), 130-171. Note that the information in the former, published in 2011, is essentially a summary of the detailed information provided in the latter, first published in 2002.
2) Striving to follow the model of the Prophet and his Companions; 

3) Maintaining good behavior before God and other people, and never forgetting one’s ties to the afterlife; 

4) Remembering that God named mankind as inheritors of the Earth, and so we should not destroy it, but rather make it thrive.  

It is at this level, that we see the start of al-Suwaydan’s religious analysis, with a focus on God, the afterlife, and the Prophet Muhammad. For example, the preacher recalls the importance of the Day of Judgment, alluding to death and the hereafter as an impetus for correct action in this life. He emphasizes this point, even suggesting funerals and visits to cemeteries as ways to remind people of death and the fact that they need to live their lives correctly before they too pass away.  

Or, in a section on the traits of an excellent manager, al-Suwaydan includes a hadith from Anas ibn Mālik, that in ten years of service, he was never reprimanded by Muhammad.  

The canonical collection *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī* lists this hadith in the section “Good Manners and Form” (*al-Adab*), suggesting a general model of courtesy that all people should imitate. Al-Suwaydan’s commentary provides a new twist however, applying the hadith specifically to employers: “Can you imagine,” the preacher says, “working with your employees for ten months, let alone ten years, without directing a reprimand to one of them?”

This focus on leadership translates directly to al-Suwaydan’s goals: to strengthen and develop the Muslim community. He outlines a number of crises, each of which he claims have kept the Muslim community weak and underdeveloped. He notes that the community is behind

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82 Al-Suwaydān and Bāsharāhil, *Ṣināʿat al-Qāʾid*, 184. 
84 *Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī*: Kitāb al-Adab, bāb ḫusn al-ḥuluq wa-l-sakhā’ wa-mā yukrah min al-bukhl. 
the times, lagging behind other groups in fields like healthcare, education, and politics. Muslims are idle and inactive, he says, with few people taking concrete action or working to help others. Society’s political and religious figures are hardly better, as their poor behavior serves as a bad example for others. Al-Suwaidan also argues that Muslims in general have lost their identity, becoming more Western in their clothes, beliefs, and interests. And finally, he laments the fact that there is a general crisis of leadership at all levels – in politics, administration, and the media; in Muslim homes; and even within Islam. It is with these crises in mind that al-Suwaidan presents his definition of Muslim leaders, and lays out the tools for how to develop leadership traits in others. The entire last section of Ṣinā‘at al-Qā‘id is entitled “Building the Future Leader,” which includes a focus on youth as well as suggestions for ways to uncover people’s aptitude for leadership.

Al-Suwaidan thus uses the Prophet’s sīra to spur action not by calling Muslims to tackle specific social projects, but by giving them the creativity, confidence and leadership skills to define and complete their own projects for change. His focus is not on specific social issues (domestic violence, etc.) like al-Shugairi, but rather on the big picture, a broader leadership crisis across the Muslim world. In this regard, stories of the Prophet and his Companions serve to inspire readers and build al-Suwaidan’s theory of the Muslim leader. The Kuwaiti preacher does not focus his narrative on the Prophet’s sīra like the traditional approach of Khaled, but rather uses the Prophet as evidence in his push for action. This call makes little mention of heaven or hell. The issues at stake are firmly rooted in this world – the crisis of leadership, the society in need of development, and the many sectors that need work, from education to healthcare to politics.

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86 As summarized from al-Suwaydān, Mahārāt al-Ta’thīr, 10-11; and al-Suwaydān and Bāsharāhīl, Ṣinā‘at al-Qā‘id, 44-46.
87 See: al-Suwaydān and Bāsharāhīl, Ṣinā‘at al-Qā‘id, 215-256.
Conclusion

Our study of the Prophet’s sīra, as exhibited here in the work of the media duʿā, reveals the continued influence of the Classical era, as well as the slow evolution of religious discourse. These popular preachers are not a completely new phenomenon, due to their strong Classical roots in the tradition of religious storytelling. Yet they are also pushing religious discourse in new directions, slowly introducing new themes and ideas into this historical tradition, issues like interreligious coexistence, domestic violence, the excessive reliance on servants, and the lack of effective Muslim leaders.

More importantly, the preachers are shifting the focus of religious discussions to this life, not just the afterlife. In this regard, they are also changing the way we look at the Prophet Muhammad by concentrating on his day-to-day actions as a husband, father, employer, and leader, tying religion to worldly activities in the fashion of the Protestant work ethic.

Their attempts to negotiate this new approach and the contentious issues they discuss are not without problems however. As my next chapter will show, the media duʿā face criticism and controversy from a number of angles. Religious scholars question their credentials and style, governments fear these preachers’ social and political motivations, and others say the duʿā are only interested in money and fame.
CHAPTER FIVE

Opposition to the Media Du‘ā

The media du‘ā face a diverse array of critics. Not only does the religious establishment critique their work, but conservative Salafis, liberal elites, governments, and business leaders also have their issues with the du‘ā. That these preachers have upset so many types of people displays the power of their ideas and their broad influence on different sectors of society. A close examination of this opposition reveals how the media du‘ā lie at the heart of two power struggles, one religious and the other socio-political. However, it also shows that these critiques are not always accurate portrayals of the du‘ā and, in fact, on big issues, there is often no clear line of demarcation between these popular preachers and the ‘ulamā’.

Analyzing the Opposition and the Validity of Their Critiques

Since the rise of the media du‘ā in the 1990’s, people have criticized them in speeches and the press, and through actions such as censorship and exile. These critiques fall into two categories, one socio-political and the other religious. In the former, governments and business leaders fear the preachers’ influence on the masses. In Amr Khaled’s case, the Egyptian government forced him to move his sermons in 2001, from a mosque in central Cairo to the suburbs. Officials blamed the popularity of his sermons, which caused considerable traffic problems.¹ The 30-kilometer move to Sixth of October City did little to diminish Khaled’s popularity however and when he moved to London in 2002, it was said that the government had forced him into exile.²

¹ Wise, “‘Words from the Heart’,” 81.
² Ibid., 81-86.
In Kuwait, Tariq al-Suwaidan’s statements have provoked similar reactions, affecting both his career and the availability of his products. In 2006, he helped found the satellite channel *al-Risāla*, an enterprise funded by the Saudi prince and businessman Alwaleed Bin Talal. The prince fired al-Suwaidan from his role of General Manager in 2013, however, after the preacher’s vocal support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and his opposition to the overthrow of President Morsi. The same year and for the same reasons, the Saudi government barred al-Suwaidan from entering the country for the ‘Umra pilgrimage, and the Kuwaiti authorities prevented him from broadcasting one of his television shows. Outside the Middle East, the Belgian government has denied the preacher entry into their country, citing his “anti-Semitic comments” and the fact that he represented “a danger to public security.”

These punitive measures show how some parties fear the influence of the media *du‘ā* and believe that these popular preachers promote dissent and unrest. The words and actions of the *du‘ā* complicate this image however. For sure, these individuals make statements and start discussions that are controversial or especially irksome for some governments. They also attract large followings, a warning sign for oppressive authoritarian regimes like Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, who fear public uprisings and mass movements. In addition, the *du‘ā* organize and promote social action in areas such as health and education – fields in which local government projects are lacking or have not fully succeeded. Yet along with these controversial actions, these preachers also go to some lengths to avoid upsetting their governments and the

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3 “Saudi Prince Sacks TV Chief for Muslim Brotherhood Ties.”
4 “Kuwaiti Preacher Barred from Makkah Pilgrimage.”
religious establishment. They say they are not qualified to issue fatwas\(^7\) and frequently insist that they are ordinary Muslims, not members of the ‘ulamā’.\(^8\)

For our immediate purposes here, however, and our investigation of religious authority, it is not the socio-political issues but the religious critiques that are most pertinent. To be clear, the division between the religious and socio-political opposition is not a clear one. The ‘ulamā’ who oppose the media \(du\ ‘ā\) are state-sponsored or at least state-approved. Thus, their opposition is in some sense both religious and political, as they are establishment ‘ulamā’, who are employed or supported by the state. To further complicate matters, journalists and intellectuals – individuals outside traditional religious circles – also voice critiques that are religious in nature. The set of religious critiques from all these different groups is less complicated, however, focusing on three main issues – accusations that the media \(du\ ‘ā\) preach a simplistic version of religion, the belief that these preachers are only interested in money and fame, and the view that the \(du\ ‘ā\) contribute to the radicalization of secular youth.

Examining these critiques more closely, the first says that the media \(du\ ‘ā\) preach a simplified version of Islam, what some critics call “air-conditioned Islam” or “da’wa diet.”\(^9\) This approach states that the \(du\ ‘ā\) are unqualified to address the complicated religious questions they treat in their books, television programs, and speeches. In particular, critics say these preachers have merely read a few books and so lack the serious religious training of the ‘ulamā’. They describe the \(du\ ‘ā\) as “satellite sheikhs,” who are unschooled in religion and therefore not real preachers.\(^10\) Amr Khaled has borne the brunt of this type of criticism. As one Azharī scholar


\(^8\) Al-Shuqayrī, *Khawādir Shābb*, 8; White, “The Antidote to Terror;” and Worth, “Preaching Moderate Islam, Becoming a TV Star.”


\(^10\) Wright, *Rock the Casbah*, 176.
exclaimed, “When you’re sick, would you go to someone who’s not a doctor to have yourself checked? …. What he (Khaled) is doing is not right from an Islamic point of view because he doesn’t have the proper credentials.” Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī was similarly critical, stating:

Amr Khaled does not hold any qualifications to preach. He is a business school graduate who acquired what he knows from reading and who got his start by way of conversations with friends about things that do not really involve any particular thought or judgment.

Salafi opinions of these duʿā follow in the same vein. The Egyptian preacher Wagdy Ghoneim has strongly expressed his disagreement with Khaled, pointing out many mistakes and incorrect interpretations of religious doctrine and fiqh. A Saudi writer slammed Ahmad al-Shugairi’s shows as well, for focusing more on the host’s clothing and visual brand than on actual discussions of the Qur’an and hadith.

This type of critique serves two purposes, both of which are directed at the preachers’ religious qualifications or educational credentials. On the one hand, the religious establishment attacks the media duʿā for not having the right education to speak on matters of religion, undermining their status and seeking to dissuade people from following these preachers. On the other hand, the ’ulamāʾ’s attacks on the duʿā are also a move to protect their own educational credentials, which stem from the traditional system of madrasas, study circles, and teacher-student relationships.

Whatever the ’ulamāʾ’s intentions, their portrayal of clear divisions in education do not reflect the reality on the ground. Although the media duʿā have degrees in accounting, business management, and engineering, they are not without a religious education. In fact, they have

11 Abu-Nasr, “Chic Islamic Televangelist Attracts Hordes of Admirers.”
12 Wise, “Interview with Tareq Alsuwaidan, General Manager of Al Resalah Channel.”
diplomas in Islamic Studies and have studied under a variety of religious scholars. Amr Khaled received a diploma from an Islamic Studies institute in 2001 and later earned a Ph.D. at the University of Wales, where he penned the dissertation “Islam and Coexistence with the Other: An In-depth Look at Islamic Law.” Ahmad al-Shugairi studied under ‘Adnān al-Zahrānī, who is an expert on fiqh, an imam in Jeddah, and a Saudi lawyer. Tariq al-Suwaidan cites his close contact with the ‘ulamā’ in his biography, listing eleven different individuals whom he has met, visited, or studied under. In particular, we can note the Palestinian ‘ālim Dr. ‘Umar al-Ashqar, who taught al-Suwaidan fiqh and usūl al-‘aqīda, and the Iraqi dā‘īya ‘Abd al-Mun‘īm Sālah al-‘Alī al-‘Izī (also known as Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Rāshid), under whom al-Suwaidan learned da‘wa and the shari‘a sciences. All three preachers studied here have thus participated to some degree in the same system of study circles and teacher-student relationships as the traditional ‘ulamā’. To say therefore that the du‘ā’s religious education comes entirely from books or conversations with friends is simply not true.

Underlying these critiques is the fear that unqualified teachers contribute to the corruption of religious knowledge, or, in other words, that the media du‘ā are transmitting simplistic or even incorrect interpretations of Islam. When these preachers discuss religious

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15 There is some debate as to whether he received this diploma in 2001 or in 1999. Khālid’s website mentions the latter in a timeline of his personal history. See: “Risālat Hayāt,” Amr Khaled.net. I use the former date, 2001, as this matches the date on his resume and his LinkedIn page. See: “Dr. Amr Khaled;” and Khālid, LinkedIn [Profile page].
17 Worth, “Preaching Modern Islam.”
19 Al-Suwaydān, Madrasat al-Hayāh, 14-18.
20 Ibid., 15.
21 Ibid., 17.
issues or cite religion to answer questions of daily life, critics say that they do so without regard for the appropriate scholarly methods or the vast body of religious discourse compiled by scholars over the centuries. Although it may appear convenient to a lay audience, simplified Islam is in direct contrast to the discursive nature of traditional Islamic learning. By narrowing opinions on what is the correct interpretation, one ignores the long history of Muslim discourse. In general, religious scholars have presented their views as part of an open and on-going argument, presenting their viewpoints in contrast to other opinions, and situating themselves within the historical chronology of such religious debates.22

Examples from the media duʿā’s books and television programs appear to validate these critiques about simplification. Some duʿā fail to cite their sources, do not quote hadith verbatim, or omit to mention all the issues and opinions around a complex religious issue. Khaled is particularly guilty of these faults. For example, he includes the story of a young man who lied to the Prophet, saying that he had sat in a women’s tent in search of the rope to restrain his camel:

‘Amr bin Shurayd performed the hajj with the Prophet (PBUH), that is to say there is nothing better than that!! But he [‘Amr] made a mistake during the hajj, since he saw a group of women, approached them, and sat down amongst them. That was after visiting [Mount] Arafat and at the start of raising tents. Then the Prophet saw him [‘Amr] and asked him the reason that he was in this place. So he [‘Amr] decided to lie to save himself from the difficult situation. He decided to lie to the Prophet!! He said “I was searching for the she-camel’s rope [ḥabl], so I asked them about it.” The Messenger of God asked the women and they refuted what ‘Amr had said. His look almost screamed, “You are a liar.” But the Prophet – who is merciful and compassionate with Believers – did not say that, because he is very bashful and does not embarrass anyone. He does not like to see anyone make a mistake or be in a moment of weakness.

Yet the Prophet smiled angrily, left [‘Amr] and went away. He did not scowl, but instead he smiled angrily. A smile really requires an effort!

‘Amr says: The Messenger of God encountered me the following day and asked me: “Oh Amr, did you find the camel’s cord [‘iqāl]?” I said “No,” so he left me and went away. He encountered me the second day and asked me, “Oh ‘Amr, did you find the camel’s cord?” I said, “No,” so he left me and went away. He encountered me the third day and asked me, “Oh ‘Amr, did you find the camel cord?” I was silent, so he left me and went away. He encountered me the fourth day and asked me, “Oh ‘Amr, did you find the camel cord?” And I said, “Oh Messenger of God, pardon me.” Then he smiled and said, “God forgives you!” May God honor him, bless him, and grant him peace! [The Prophet] did not tell him “You are a liar.” He carefully approached his response to a person who lied to him, until he could take that sinner by the hand to return him to his spiritual balance (tawāzunahu al-nafsī). Truly he is the affectionate, well-balanced (al-muttazina), and discerning Prophet!23

Khaled includes no mention of his source, yet we find this same tale in al-Ṭabarānī’s al-Mu’jam al-Kabīr, where it is related very differently:

Khawwāt bin Jubayr said: We camped with the Messenger of God (PBUH) going by al-Dhahrān. I came out of my tent and there were some women talking. I liked them, so I went back [inside], pulled out my bag, and took out a garment (ḥulla). I put it on and came and sat with them. The Messenger of God (PBUH) came out from his tent/dome and said, “Abū Abdullah, why are you sitting with [these women]?” When I saw the Messenger of God (PBUH), I was scared and confused. I said, “Oh Messenger of God, my camel broke loose, so I am looking for a rope for it.” He left, and I followed him. He flung his cloak at me and went into [a stand of] Arak trees (al-arāk), as if I can see the white of his back amongst the green of the Arak trees. He finished his business [relieved himself], performed an ablution, and then drew near with water streaming from his beard onto his chest – or [Khawwāt] said it was dripping from his beard onto his chest. [Muhammad] said: “Abu Abdullah, what caused your camel to break loose?” Then we departed and he did not come up to me in the journey, until he said, “Al-salāmu ‘alayka Abā Abdullah. What caused that camel to break loose?” When I experienced this, I hurried to Madina and avoided the mosque and gatherings with the Prophet (PBUH). When this had gone on for a long time, I waited for a time when the mosque was empty. I arrived at the mosque and started to pray, when suddenly the Messenger of God (PBUH) came out of some of his rooms and started to pray two short rak’a. I extended [my prayers], hoping that he would go away and leave me. Then he said, “Extend [them] as long as you like, Abū Abdullah, for I am not getting up until you finish.” I said to myself, “By God, I should apologize to the Messenger of God (PBUH) and clear his mind.” So when he said, “Al-salāmu ‘alayka Abā Abdullah. What caused that camel to break loose?” I said, “By the One who sent you with the truth, that camel has not gotten lost since I became a Muslim.” He said, “May Allah have mercy on you” three times, then he never brought up the subject again.”24

23 Khālid, Binā’ Insān al-Nahda, 34-35.
A comparison of these two stories shows Khaled’s informal style, as he completely omits the traditional *isnād-matn* format of hadith and also mixes his own commentary with the story of the Prophet. Khaled’s decision not to mention where he found this tale renders it more informal and suggests that he is paraphrasing the story. It is clear that his source was not al-Ṭabarānī, as the two versions have different protagonists: ‘Amr bin Shurayd in Khaled’s tale, and Khawwāt bin Jubayr, aka Abū Abdullah, in al-Ṭabarānī’s version. In fact, my searches have found no mention of ‘Amr bin Shurayd being tied to this story.

In another case, Khaled discusses illiteracy in Egypt and the importance of reading and writing. As he stresses the Prophet’s emphasis on these skills, Khaled weaves in hadith such as this one:

> In the same sphere of motivation, the Messenger of God (PBUH) said: “On the Day of Judgment, it is said to the reader/reciter of the Qur’an (and not to the listener of the Qur’an) recite, ascend, and recite. For indeed your rank shall be at the last āya you recited.”

Khaled’s interjection in the middle of the hadith, “and not to the listener of the Qur’an,” highlights the importance he places on the phrase “to the reader/reciter of the Qur’an” (*li-qāri’ al-Qurān*). There are several problems with this however. Khaled’s discussion of education and literacy, in which he cites this hadith, ignores the fact that the word *qāri’* could refer to a Qur’anic reciter, not a reader of the Qur’an. That interpretation considerably diminishes the value of this hadith for Khaled’s discussion of literacy. More importantly, however, the phrase *li-qāri’ al-Qurān* appears in none of the canonical hadith collections. Abū Dāwūd, and al-Tirmidhī both cite this hadith, but use the phrase *li-ṣāhib al-Qur’ān* instead of *li-qāri’ al-Qurān*. Khaled’s choice to use the phrase *li-qāri’ al-Qurān* reflects, at least, a poor knowledge

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of the canonical hadith works, or, at worst, a conscious choice to amend the wording of this hadith to better suit his argument.

Other du’ā have a more scholarly style than Khaled and are better at correctly quoting material and referencing their sources. For instance, al-Shugairi includes the above story about the camel’s rope in his book Law Kāna Baynānā, directly citing his source as al-Ṭabarānī’s al-Mu’jam al-Kabīr.27 Al-Shugairi’s version is almost an exact quotation of the original from al-Ṭabarānī, with the same prepositions and grammar. His only omission from al-Ṭabarānī is two short sentences from the Prophet at the end of the story: “So when he said, ‘Al-salāmu ‘alayka Abā Abdullah. What caused that camel to break loose?’”

Overall, al-Shugairi and al-Suwaidan each cite from a variety of religious sources, including the Qur’an; the canonical hadith collections of al-Bukhārī, Imām Muslim, al-Nasā’ī, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Tirmidhī; and the works of Classical and modern scholars like Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Taymiyya, and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī. These two preachers illustrate their knowledge of scholarly techniques as well, like mentioning if hadith are sound, good, weak or fabricated,28 a topic that Khaled rarely addresses. The volume of al-Suwaidan’s biography entitled Fāhmi al-Dīn (Understanding Religion) also goes into a lengthy discussion on the importance of hadith and the science behind them.29 It presents basic elements, like their isnād-matn structure and the concept of weak and sound hadith. More advanced ideas are included as well, such as the need to determine the context of hadith, to establish whether Muhammad spoke or acted in his role as the Prophet or in one of his many other roles. For, as al-Suwaidan explains:

If the Messenger of God behaved as a prophet and he spoke in his capacity as a prophet, then his action is an obligation for the Muslim community, because at that time he is legislating (yakūn ḥināh ā tashrī’ān). As for situations and roles other than

27 Al-Shuqayrī, Law Kāna Baynānā, 99.
28 See, for example: Al-Suwaydān, Taṣḥih al-Mafāhim, 51; and Al-Shuqayrī, Law Kāna Baynānā, 49, 161.
29 Al-Suwaydān, Fāhmi al-Dīn, 28-43.
this, his action is not an obligation for the Muslim community. And by obligation, I mean that you accrue sin by neglecting him [and his actions].

Figuring out the context of the Prophet’s words and deeds is a task for everyday people, he continues. Determining the soundness of hadith, on the other hand, should be left to the ‘ulamā’.31

This brings us to another aspect of this simplification critique, the view that the duʿā avoid difficult religious questions. Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss academic and Professor of Islamic Studies at Oxford University, is a prominent holder of this belief. As he told one journalist:

Khaled’s approach leaves unanswered specific questions about how coexistence should work. Should Muslims start their own schools or go to public schools? How should they treat homosexuals? Can they take out interest-bearing loans, which many Muslims say are forbidden by the Koran?”32

Other academics agree. Khaled Abou El Fadl, a professor of Law at UCLA and an expert on Islamic law, said, “he is ‘unhappy’ with Khaled’s ‘lack of critical approach or introspective approach to the tradition.’”33

There is some truth to these critiques, if we focus on Khaled, as these two scholars did. His discussions of coexistence either dwell on the historical precedents of religious coexistence, like an entire television series devoted to the history of Muslim Spain, or are broad appeals for Muslims to coexist with others. Khaled notes that Muslims in Europe should not isolate themselves, for instance, but rather seek to integrate with the community and contribute to society.34 He alludes to the dangers of materialism and sensuality, but does not address concrete issues like where young Muslims should attend school, as Ramadan wondered. That Khaled avoids expressing opinions on homosexuals or interest-bearing loans is not surprising though.

30 Ibid., 35.
31 Ibid., 37.
32 Shapiro, “Ministering to the Upwardly Mobile Muslim.”
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.; and White, “The Antidote to Terror.”
Such issues are more controversial and legal in nature, and so go beyond Khaled’s self-stated role as a dā’iyya.

Extrapolating these views of Khaled to other du‘ā is more difficult. Both al-Shugairi and al-Suwaidan are more critical and analytical in how they approach contemporary issues, as we discussed earlier. In direct contrast to Ramadan and El Fadl’s critiques of Khaled, these du‘ā approach tradition and coexistence in a more detailed and careful manner. Al-Shugairi discusses the current confusion between tradition and shari‘a, noting that many Muslims do not know what ideas and practices are based on religion. He suggests that forced marriage, for instance, is not part of Islam, and emphasizes that any traditions that clash with the shari‘a are bad and must be cast aside. Al-Suwaidan provides concrete ways for modern ideas to mix or, to use Ramadan’s term, co-exist with traditional Islam. In 1997, he helped found the American Creativity Academy in Kuwait, a PK-12 school that combines an American curriculum with an environment that respects and practices Islamic values, a place the Kuwaiti preacher described as “an American-Islamic school.” In his work as a consultant, al-Suwaidan also blends modern leadership theory with Islam, as found in his books and his annual leadership camps.

In sum, it is more Amr Khaled, and not the media du‘ā as a whole, who is most guilty of oversimplifying Islam. That the Egyptian preacher is singled out for criticism so frequently is a testament to his popularity and his less scholarly approach, which makes him an easy target. Moreover, the ‘ulamā‘ and other critics thus use Khaled to discredit the du‘ā as a group by presenting this “bad apple” as a general example. This is a way for the ‘ulamā‘ to highlight and elevate their own training, which cannot be acquired by just a cursory reading of the sources.

35 Al-Shuqayrī, Khawāṣir Shābb, 104-105, 134-135.
36 Wise, “Interview with Tareq Alsuwaidan.”
After the idea of simplification, the second critique states that the media duʿā are only interested in money and fame. For example, in his book about al-duʿā al-judud in Egypt, Egyptian journalist Wāʾil Luṭfī presents a two-faced portrayal of the duʿā and their goals. He argues that these men “want to preach about religion without losing what they really relish: fame, wealth, influence, and commercial projects.” These accusations are important because it establishes a claim that the duʿā are not working for the people and are solely interested in their own fame and profit. In other words, this puts their religious credibility into question, creating a division between these popular preachers and the ‘ulamā’, who see themselves both as spokespersons for the people, representing the interest of the community against the authority of the state, and also as “heirs of the Prophets,” responsible for the preservation and transmission of religious knowledge.

Statements regarding the preachers’ monetary goals or financial improprieties are empirically hard to prove however. It is certainly true that these preachers bring in a lot of money. A study by Forbes Arabia found that the top television preachers in the Muslim world were Khaled and al-Suwaidan, who respectively brought in 2.5 million and one million dollars in net income in 2007. The preachers also travel extensively around the world for their work. Khaled’s television shows include time in Spain and throughout the Middle East, while al-Shugairi’s programs have taken him across the Arab world and Europe, and to Japan, the United States, Malaysia, and China, among other places.

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39 In the canonical hadith collection Sunan Abī Dāwūd: Kitāb al-ʿIlm, bāb al-ḥathth ʿalā ʿalāb al-ʿilm, it states: “The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham, leaving only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion.” [This translation is from sunnah.com, http://sunnah.com/abudawud/26/1 (accessed May 19, 2016)] The canonical collection Jāmiʿ Al-Tirmidhī also includes a version of the same hadith.
40 “Amr Khaled richest Islamic Preacher: Forbes.”
However, we do not see these preachers lavishly spending money or flaunting their fame. Money may be one of their pursuits—or a goal of their middle and upper-class audiences—but the preachers deny that they are wealthy. Khaled disputed the findings of the *Forbes Arabia* study, explaining that the calculations included advertisement revenues that went directly to the satellite channels. Al-Suwaidan disagreed with the study as well and, in a 2013 interview, even laughed at the idea that he had access to a vast fortune, noting that he was currently “looking for a loan to remodel his house.” Al-Shugairi says that he reinvests his earnings into his work, making a distinction between his commercial business, the import company he owns in Jeddah, and his media work on television and in books. The former provides his salary, while he says the latter is like a waqf or a non-profit organization, where the profits from his television shows, books, café, and other work are all reinvested back into these projects.

The last critique, actually an extension of the first one, states that the media *du‘ā* start youth on a path to conservative or even radical interpretations of Islam. Some writers have argued that these television preachers are “Islamizing the secular elite of the Arab world” and that “moderates like Mr. Shugairi [could become] steppingstones toward more extreme

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44 Al-Shuqayrī inherited this business through his family and it specializes in cleaning products. See: Wright, *Rock the Casbah*, 178.
47 Worth, “Preaching Moderate Islam.”
figures.” Others say these men are part of a religious revival, the “first step to Islamization,” and that they are making countries like Egypt more conservative.

These broad and conflicting terms – Islamizing, conservative, and religious revival – reveal the challenges in defining the media du’ā. To some people, Islamization signifies extremism and terrorism, including groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS. Others equate Islamization with the idea of a religious revival, namely a renewed piety or focus on the Muslim faith, however that may manifest itself. The term conservative, on the other hand, means something strict or traditional, inflexible, a concept that is in opposition to the term liberal, which is something open, changing, and accepting. Which of these terms, if any, best describes the media du’ā?

A direct link between a more conservative society and the media du’ā is hard to prove. First, people most often describe these preachers as “moderate” and not “conservative.” Second, when describing themselves, the du’ā also say that they present a moderate or flexible understanding of religion, one that lies between the conservative and liberal ends of the spectrum, or what al-Suwaydān and others call wasatiyya (the middle way, or centrism). This

48 Ibid.
49 Wright, “Islam’s Up-to-Date Televangelist.”
middle path offers young people an alternative that, as one author put it, is neither fundamentalism nor secularism.  

Similarly, the *duʿā* are vocally opposed to extremism and terrorism. Khaled denounces violence and actively seeks to quell radical movements in the Arab world. He spoke out against the 2005 terrorist attacks in the London Underground, saying “This… is nowhere in Islam. If anyone kills children or women, this is not acceptable not only in Islam, in the Jewish faith, in Christianity, in all the religions.” In 2010, Khaled put his words into action, traveling to Yemen for a media campaign to counter extremism, a trip he called “an ambitious mission to… take the battle against al-Qaeda to its heartland.” Al-Shugairi shares his passion, and expressed his anger in 2004 that those who executed an attack on the American Consulate in Jeddah did so in the name of Islam. This presents a false picture of Islam, he explained, and shows that we are all responsible for teaching Muslim youth the moderate ways of our religion.

Al-Suwaidan also takes a strong proactive and reactive approach to terrorist groups. His launch of the satellite channel *al-Risāla*, as he explained in one interview, was a way to change opinions about terrorism. Its programming educates young people about Islam, so they better understand their religion and their place in life, and thereby do not seek to join terrorist groups. Actual terrorists should be severely punished however. In reference to the events of September 11th, al-Suwaidan was very clear about his views:

I said at that time and I will say it also now, that we should always take a very harsh stand against these terrorists. They are very dangerous. I’ve studied history, and these people are very dangerous to themselves, to the Arab world, to the Islamic world itself, and to Islam itself. So I am an advocate of no mercy with these people.

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53 Worth, “Preaching Moderate Islam.”
56 Al-Shuqayrī, *Khawāṭir Shābb*, 141-142.
57 Wise, “Interview with Tareq Alsuwaidan.”
Dialogue and discussion should be with those who don’t carry arms, but for those who have crossed this red line, they should be crushed.\(^{58}\)

Critiques that label these men as conservatives or radical Islamists thus do not accurately reflect the du’ā’s influence and place in society. Rather, deeming them part of a broader religious revival appears to best capture who they are and what they are doing. They are renewing interest in Islam, especially among young people who were disenchanted with the religious establishment. Yet their work is not as strict or formal as more traditional scholars. The du’ā talk to young people about God and faith, then join them for a game of soccer,\(^{59}\) or schedule their lectures around exams and important matches on television.\(^{60}\) They preach about religion, but also tie it into simple day-to-day issues. It is contrary to Islam to smoke or to litter, for example, to cheat on exams, arrive late to appointments, or even be lazy.\(^{61}\) Good Muslims vote in elections, donate clothes for the poor, keep their mosques clean, and treat their domestic help with respect.\(^{62}\)

That said, a simplified version of Islam like Khaled’s, as discussed above, does lend itself to extremist tendencies. A simpler understanding and teaching of Islam is, in a sense, also a radicalized version, as it overlooks the discursive nature of Islam, which only can be acquired through long years of training. The media du’ā are not extremists, yet like al-Qaeda and other radical groups, some du’ā essentialize the message of Islam and do not pass on the tradition correctly, namely a tradition of diversity and openness to difference (ikhtilāf). In sum, this critique is true, at least in theory – the media du’ā who simplify Islam can start youth on a path to conservative and even radical Islam. The extent to which they do so is difficult to say.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
\(^{59}\) El-Katatney, “A Religious Rock Star.”
\(^{60}\) “Preaching With A Passion.”
A Closer Comparison of the Media Du’ā and the ‘Ulamā’

Our analysis has put many common critiques of the duʿā into question. With these barriers gone, we find that the ideological differences between these popular preachers and the ‘ulamā’ are not clear, at least on major issues. A study of several sensitive topics helps to prove this point.

First, consider the publication in 2005 of Danish editorial cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. The incident was criticized in many parts of the world, leading to protests and violence,63 as well as a debate over the limits of free speech.64 Muslim scholars and preachers opposed the cartoon, but differed sharply in their approach to resolving the crisis. Lindsay Wise has adroitly described this division, one that pitted the dāʿīya Amr Khaled against the Egyptian ‘ālim Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī.65 After the publication of the cartoons, Khaled called for interfaith dialogue and helped organize a conference in Denmark where Muslim youth from the Middle East could meet and talk to Danish youth. The goal, as Khaled described it, was “to build bridges for dialogue.”66 This was an opportunity to educate others about Islam, as the preacher explained on his return to Egypt, while also learning whether Danish people agreed with what happened or felt sorry about it, considering that their government had not apologized.67

65 Wise, “Amr Khaled vs Yusuf Al Qaradawi.”
66 Mekhennet, “Muslims Express Anger and Hope at Danish Conference.”
This idea of an apology was crucial to al-Qaraḍāwī, who opposed the conference in Denmark. “Dialogue about what,” he said on the satellite channel al-Jazeera, “You have to have a common ground to have a dialogue with your enemy. But after insulting what is sacred to me, they should apologize.”

Al-Qaraḍāwī insisted on a government apology before any discussions or dialogue could take place. For him, Khaled’s initiative for dialogue was particularly egregious as it went against consensus.

This division between two individuals (Khaled and al-Qaraḍāwī) cannot be extrapolated to cover all ‘ulamā’ and du‘ā however. First, not all religious scholars opposed the conference. Although no recognized ‘ulamā’ traveled with Khaled’s delegation to Denmark, his initiative did receive a stamp of approval from senior ‘ulamā’. Over 40 different scholars supported the conference, including then Grand Mufti of Egypt ‘Alī Gum‘a, with whom Khaled consulted when planning the event. More broadly, at a meeting in Qatar, 170 religious scholars agreed for the need to have more dialogue with the West around the cartoon issue. Thus, it is clear (1) that members of both the du‘ā and the ‘ulamā’ supported the conference in Denmark, and (2) that Khaled was not acting against an overwhelming consensus of opinion.

Similarly, the Egyptian preacher’s focus on interreligious dialogue does not represent the opinion of every dā‘iya. Some du‘ā agreed with al-Qaraḍāwī on the importance of a Danish apology. For example, Tariq al-Suwaidan, who participated in Khaled’s conference in Denmark, spoke strongly on this issue. In Denmark, he said: “We are here today, because we want to tell you that every Muslim in the world is very angry…. We request an official apology from your

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69 Ibid.
71 Khālid, Interview with ‘Amr Adīb.
72 Shahine, “Debating Dialogue.”
government to the Muslim nation.”

Al-Suwaidan also called on the European Union to pass a law “that forbids the insult to religious figures.”

In sum, the roles and ideological divisions around this issue are not clear. The fact that Grand Mufti ‘Alī Gum’a supported Khaled’s work shows tacit approval of the du’ā from a high-ranking ‘ālim, while at the same time, another ‘ālim, al-Qaraḍāwī, was sharply opposed to the endeavor. The du’ā’s ranks are not unified either. Some emphasized dialogue, while others insisted on a government apology.

Political developments during the Arab Spring reveal similar problems in defining the views of the du’ā and the ‘ulamā’, and the differences between them. Just because the media du’ā present a more open and interactive style of television and religious dialogue does not mean they all support a similarly open and participatory form of government. Take, for instance, their opinions of the recent political events in Egypt, from the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, to the presidential election of Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi in 2012, to his overthrow by the Egyptian military in 2013.

The du’ā reacted in different ways to these events. Al-Shugairi remained distant and, when asked in one interview about the affairs in Egypt, refused to support one group or another, saying he did not have enough information to form an opinion. More broadly, he states that he belongs to no groups, sects, or political parties – “I am neither Sufi, nor Salafi, nor Wahhabi, nor part of the Muslim Brotherhood, nor part of any other group.” This does not mean, however, that al-Shugairi avoids all political commentary. His political opinions are just broader and more

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73 Mekhennet, “Muslims Express Anger and Hope at Danish Conference.
74 Ibid.
76 Al-Shuqayrī, Khawāṭir Shābb, 81.
theoretical in nature. The important thing for Egypt, he believes, and for the Arab world in general, is not who rules, but how they rule. A good ruler should fight corruption and nepotism, unite the nation, provide his people with a good education and equal rights, and establish a good quality of life for his citizens.\textsuperscript{77}

Al-Suwaيدان holds quite the opposite view, as he openly backed the Muslim Brotherhood and spoke out against the military overthrow of President Morsi.\textsuperscript{78} More generally, he has also expressed his firm support for freedom of expression, including the right to object to the State, one’s ruler, or even Islam, God, and the Prophet.\textsuperscript{79} The latter remarks triggered a wave of critiques from high-ranking ‘\textit{ulamā}’. Shaykh Sālih bin Fawzān al-Fawzān, a member of Saudi Arabia’s Council of Senior ‘\textit{Ulamā}’, referred to this incident without mentioning al-Suwaïdan by name, saying that, “Without a doubt, what’s behind this is apostasy. For whatever mocks God, his Prophet, or doctrines of the shari’a is apostasy. This is the worst type of apostasy.”\textsuperscript{80} The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, ‘Abdul ‘Azīz al-Shaykh, responded as well, saying “If one’s intention is to refute the word of God, to refute the Sunna of his Messenger, and to present opinions and arbitrary views (\textit{ahwā}) against the Book and the Sunna, then this error leads one to apostasy.”\textsuperscript{81} In a 2013 interview, al-Suwaïdan was quick to agree with these views, saying that if people thought he approved of opposing Allah, this is certainly not the case. As he explained, there is an important distinction between discussing ideas and insulting or mocking God and

\textsuperscript{77} Al-Shuqayrī, Interview with Abdullah al-Mudīfīr, \textit{Liqā’ al-Jum’a}.
\textsuperscript{78} “Saudi Prince Sacks TV Chief for Muslim Brotherhood Ties.”
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
Islam. The latter is clearly apostasy, while the former, asking questions about religion to clarify something that is vague or unclear, deserves an open discussion and should be neither feared nor ignored.  

Amr Khaled’s approach to the events in Egypt vacillates between these two extremes and appears to follow the changing political situation in Egypt. During the Mubarak era, the preacher stayed outside of politics and avoided discussing political issues. After the Revolution however, he immersed himself in the political scene, forming his own political party. When the Egyptian army took over, Khaled changed his mind again, supporting the military by lending his voice to a video in which he told soldiers that they have a religious duty to obey orders, even if it means using deadly force against protestors.

This diversity of opinion amongst the du’ā militias mirrors the ‘ulamā’ views on these events. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī supported the Egyptian Revolution, delivering a speech at Taḥrīr Square a few days after President Mubarak’s resignation, urging Egyptians to continue their revolution and calling on the military to “deliver on their promises of turning over power to ‘a civil government.” Thus, it is no surprise that when the army deposed President Morsi, al-Qaraḍāwī was not afraid to voice his opposition. He advocated a boycott of the 2014 presidential election, which he labeled unjust, and said front-runner and former army chief ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Sīsī had “disobeyed God” by ousting Morsi.

Some Gulf ‘ulamā’ were similarly critical. After the military takeover and the deadly raids on protestors’ camps around the Rāba’a al-‘Adawiya mosque in Cairo, the Saudi scholar

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82 Al-Sūwaydān, Interview with Abdullah al-Mudīfīr, Liqā’ al-Jum‘a.
83 “Popular Islamic Preacher Amr Khaled Launches Party for Youth.”
84 Kirkpatrick and El Sheikh, “Egypt Military Enlists Religion to Quell Ranks.”
and television personality ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ṭarīfī tweeted that “what is happening in Egypt is a war against Islam,” a message that received 1,584 retweets in only 24 minutes.  

87 Professor and scholar Muḥammad al-ʿArīfī declared himself to be “with Egypt in my heart and my position and my preaching.”

88 Salmān al-ʿAwda, the popular Saudi scholar and activist, was perhaps the most prolific in his opinions, tweeting statements such as: “I am with those whose blood is being shed and against those who are blindly going about killing people;” and “It is clear who is driving Egypt to its destruction out of fear for their own selves.” Although none of these statements mention anyone by name, in context of the events, their condemnation of the Egyptian military is quite clear.

It is important to note that all of these scholars – al-Ṭarīfī, al-ʿArīfī, and al-ʿAwda – do not have close ties with local governments and are not high-ranking members of the religious establishment. In fact, the Saudi government punished both al-ʿAwda and al-ʿArīfī for their opinions about the events in Egypt. The authorities detained al-ʿArīfī after his critiques, while al-ʿAwda lost a television show due to his support for the protestors.  

91 Al-ʿAwda has a history of political critique of course, as he was part of the Sunni-led opposition movement al-Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiyya (Islamic Awakening), which spoke out against the Āl Saʿūd regime in the early 1990s.

The state-sponsored ʿulamā’, on the other hand, did not support the revolution in Egypt or the protests against the overthrow of Morsi in 2013. This should come as no surprise,

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88 Ibid.

89 Salmān al-ʿAwda [@Salman_Al_Odah], “2- I am with those whose blood is being shed and against those who are blindly going about killing people. #Egyptmassacre,” [Tweet], August 15, 2013, retrieved from https://twitter.com/Salman_Al_Odah/status/368023854238531585 (accessed May 19, 2016).

90 Salmān al-ʿAwda [@Salman_Al_Odah], “3- those who deny them their rights. It is clear who is driving Egypt to its destruction out of fear for their own selves. #Egyptmassacre,” [Tweet], August 15, 2013, retrieved from https://twitter.com/Salman_Al_Odah/status/368022839666167808 (accessed May 19, 2016).

considering the firm views of many Arab governments. In 2013, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia strongly endorsed the Egyptian military, calling Arabs and Muslims to stand as one against terrorism and sedition, and these attempts to destabilize Egypt.92 The governments of Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain all issued similar statements.93

Still, there is some variance in the opinions of state-sponsored ‘ulamā’, particularly in how explicit they made their remarks. During the demonstrations in 2011, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Shaykh Aḥmed al-Ṭayyib, called for restraint on the part of the protestors and the regime. After Mubarak’s resignation, al-Ṭayyib asked demonstrators to go home, adding that protests are “illegitimate in Islam.”94 In Saudi Arabia, the Council of Senior ‘Ulamā’ issued a statement delegitimizing demonstrations in their country, and “warning against deviant intellectual and partisan liaisons, and occasions that lead to disunity and the fragmentation of the nation.”95 These two examples oppose protests in general, but did not comment in detail on a particular instance or give explicit political commentary. The former Grand Mufti of Egypt, ‘Alī Gum’a, was much more blunt. A few weeks after General Sīsī took power in 2013, Gum’a described Brotherhood supporters as “putrid people” and “riffraff,” and justified violence against protestors, telling police and military leaders that “the angels are supporting you from heaven.”96

93 Ibid.
This is not to say that all state-sponsored scholars opposed the 2011 revolution and supported General Sīšī, while peripheral ‘ulamā’ like al-Qaraḍāwī and al-‘Awda adopted the opposite approach. As with the media duʿā, the lines of demarcation are rarely so clear. Take for example, the case of Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, the official spokesperson for al-Azhar, who resigned from his position to join the demonstrations in Taḥrīr Square.\(^97\) Or look at another instance, when a group of Azharites criticized a Saudi fatwa that condemned the Egyptian demonstrators. They deemed the fatwa irrelevant, saying it had been ordered by the Saudi government and was therefore “tainted by politics.”\(^98\)

In sum, categorizing opinions of recent political events in Egypt is not possible based solely on whether someone is a member of the duʿā and the ‘ulamā’. Within each group we find individuals on both sides of the issue, arguing whether to support a ruler, no matter how they rule, or whether to protest and even revolt if the ruler is unjust. When taken with the previous case regarding religious dialogue and the cartoons of the Prophet, a trend begins to emerge. The ideological lines between the duʿā and the ‘ulamā’ are blurred, making the definitions of these two groups increasingly unclear.

**Conclusion**

This study of the opposition to the media duʿā reveals both the broad influence of these preachers, as well as the specific critiques and fears behind the rise of the duʿā. Their critics include a surprisingly diverse range of figures, from political authorities and journalists, to academics, mainstream religious scholars, and conservative Salafis. The critiques directed at the duʿā focus on their educational background and religious qualifications, their financial interests, and whether these preachers lead young people toward conservative or radical Islam.

\(^97\) Zeghal, “What Were the Ulama Doing in Tahrir Square?”
\(^98\) Ibid.
As my analysis has shown, most of these critiques do not accurately reflect the work and characteristics of the media du 'ā, however. First, the three preachers studied here all have some form of religious education in addition to their degrees in engineering, accounting, and business management. In their books and television programs, they use traditional religious sources with varying degrees of skill and critical analysis. Khaled is certainly the weakest in this regard. Second, questions about the financial motivations behind their work are difficult to prove, but no improprieties or financial excess are apparent. And third, the degree to which the media du 'ā bring youth towards conservatism or radical Islam also seems quite small. The preachers’ emphasis on wasatiyya and their opposition to extremism and terrorism place the du ‘ā into the moderate camp.

After debunking the main part of these critiques, an important question remained regarding the exact ideological differences between the du ‘ā and the ‘ulamā’. It appears, as we have seen, that there is no clear line of demarcation between the du ‘ā’s ideological views and those of the ‘ulamā’, at least on big issues. Within each group, we find a variety of opinions and viewpoints, making generalizations about the positions of the du ‘ā and the ‘ulamā’ impossible to sustain.

So, who are the media du ‘ā exactly and how can we best define them in comparison to the ‘ulamā’? Accepting the fact that these groups cannot be clearly distinguished by their ideological views, what separates them and what does this mean for the system of religious authority in Islam? I conclude my study of these preachers in the following chapter by looking at these questions.
CONCLUSION

Our discussion has examined the media *duʿā* from many angles – exploring who they are, what they seek, who they speak to, what they say, and what sources they use. From this analysis, it is clear that they are pushing boundaries, slowly and subtly expanding the scope of social and religious discourse. Their exact status as religious authorities is less clear however.

The media *duʿā* say they are not authority figures, stressing their status as ordinary Muslims who are just one of the people. This is more of an image issue however, with the preachers’ brand and style relying on the idea of their ordinariness. The breadth and extent of the criticism against them show that the media *duʿā* are far from ordinary and that they do hold some form of authority, since other groups fear their status and influence. In addition, the size of their audience also hints at their authoritativeness. While their interactive and colloquial style attracts followers, the preachers’ ideas must be resonating with people as well.

The question remains then as to how such contemporary figures became religious authorities. In the past, this was relatively clear-cut, but it is no longer so. Classical authorities participated in an organized system of religious education, comprised of madrasas, study circles, and teacher-student relationships with senior scholars. Certificates (*ijāzāt*) proved that a scholar had studied under shaykh so-and-so and thus established his credentials. These licenses paired with a scholar’s individual conduct and piety built his reputation. Recognition from their peers solidified this authority, as scholarly consensus decided who had the official right to teach and transmit religious knowledge.

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In the twentieth century, globalization, the rise of secular education, and the availability of books and the Internet broke the ‘ulamā’’s control over the acquisition and transmission of religious knowledge. This opened new paths to religious knowledge and reshaped the number and types of religious authorities in modern society. So, where do the media du’ā fit in this picture? And what distinguishes them from the traditional authority of the ‘ulamā’?

At first glance, the media du’ā differ sharply from the ‘ulamā’. These popular preachers did not attend madrasas or study the religious sciences at al-Azhar or universities in Saudi Arabia. They do not use legal tools and terminology like consensus, qiṣṣā, or fatwas in their religious discussions. The discursive nature of traditional Islamic learning does not appear in the media du’ā’s speeches of writing. Instead, they present a shorter and simpler approach to religious issues, not listing a wealth of opinions or the history of particular debates or discussions. On television, the du’ā present more creative and diverse programming, incorporating colorful graphics, audience participation, and filming outside the television studio.

Still, these differences are mostly stylistic. When we look more closely, the distinction between the ‘ulamā’ and the media du’ā is less clear, as we saw in Chapter Five. First, each group has some form of religious training, whether through official degrees in Islamic studies or classes with senior ‘ulamā’. Thus, both participate in the teacher-student educational model, where young scholars learn from their elders and later adopt students of their own. Al-Shugairi cites his fellow du’ā (al-Suwaïdān and Khaled) among his teachers, for instance, along with Shaykh ‘Adnān al-Zahrānī, under whom he studied in Jeddah. Second, ideologically there are no clear lines of demarcation between these two groups. As we discussed earlier, opinions inside both the ‘ulamā’ and the media du’ā vary broadly regarding issues like the Danish cartoons about the Prophet and the recent political events in Egypt.

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2 Al-Shuqayrī, Khawāṣir Shābb, 12.
This ambiguity does not mean that the duʿā have the same level of authority as their scholarly counterparts, however. In fact, these popular preachers acknowledge their subordinate role within the existing authority structure, actively supporting other forms of religious authority. The media duʿā repeatedly state that they are not religious scholars and that they are not capable of giving fatwas or delivering legal judgments. These popular preachers thus see themselves not as outright religious authorities, but more as moral guides or counselors. Grounded in the Classical genre of religious storytelling, they encourage their audience to seek religious knowledge, while also striving to compel these individuals to take action, developing themselves and their communities.

The media duʿā’s role in society is thus two-fold, as agenda setters and as motivators. As agenda setters, they are shifting the focus of religion away from heaven and hell to the affairs of this world, as we saw in their use of the Prophet’s sīra. In this regard, they steer public attention toward issues like education, employment, child rearing, and social and political leadership. As motivators, the media duʿā encourage action in this world, action rooted in religion, what Khaled deems faith-based development. This Protestant idea of piety through action manifests itself in the media duʿā’s emphasis on self-help and community development, concepts the preachers validate with religious examples. Approaching social change from the perspective of a motivator also acknowledges modern realities. Due to globalization and new media like the Internet and satellite television, religious authorities have proliferated and differentiated to such an extent that the ability to define religion lies less with religious authorities, and more with the average Muslim, who for every issue can now choose from a wealth of authority figures.

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3 White, “The Antidote to Terror;” and Worth, “Preaching Moderate Islam, Becoming a TV Star.”
This dual role as agenda seters and motivators permits the media *duʿā* to subtly advocate for social and religious change. Having captured the attention of Muslim youth, these popular preachers suggest topics and issues that require attention, and then encourage their audience to take action. Through the *duʿā*’s influence, small changes by diverse individuals can thus be transformed into significant developments in the long run.
APPENDICES

Appendix I: Amr Khaled’s Publications and Television Productions

NOTE: All works listed here are in order of production or publication. Television shows include the year of their first broadcast, while the titles of written works include the date they were first published.

Television Shows

1) *Kalām min al-Qalb* [broadcast in 2001, but first produced on videotape in 1999]
2) *Islāmunā* [2000]
3) *Wa-Nalqā al-Ḥibba* [Three seasons from 2000/2001-2003]¹
4) *Kunūz* [Two seasons from 2003-2004]
5) *Hatā Yughayyirū Mā bi-Anfusihim* [2003]
6) *Khawāṭir Qur’āniyya* [2003]
7) *Ṣunnā‘ al-Ḥayāh* [Three seasons from 2003-2004, season #4 released online in 2009]
8) ‘*Alā Khuṭā al-Ḥabīb* [2005]
9) *Bi-Ismik Nahyā* [2006]
10) *Lamaḥāt Insāniyya* [2006]
11) *Ṣadaqa Rasūl Allāh* [2006]
12) *Da‘wa li-l-Ta‘āyush* [2007]
13) *Al-Janna fi Buyūtinā* [2008]
14) *Qiṣaṣ al-Qur‘ān* [2008-2009]
15) *Mujaddidūn* [2010]
16) *Rihla li-l-Sa‘āda* [2010]

¹ Khālid’s own websites disagree on the start date for this series. On [http://amrkhaled.net/ak_private](http://amrkhaled.net/ak_private), his biographical timeline puts this in the year 2000, while Khālid’s YouTube page shows the series starting in 2001. See the descriptions under the episodes in the playlist: *Wa-Nalqā al-Ḥibba*, [http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL194C7D7546568EB2](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL194C7D7546568EB2) (accessed June 3, 2016).
17) Bukra Aḥlā [2011]
18) Ma‘a al-Tābi‘īn [2011]
20) Qiṣṣat al-Andalus [2013]
21) Al-Īmān wa-l-‘Asr [2015]
22) Al-Īmān wa-l-‘Asr: Ṭarīq li-l-Ḥayāh [2016]

Written Works

1) Akhlāq al-Mu‘min [2002]
2) ‘Ibādāt al-Mu‘min [2002]
3) Yūsuf ‘Alayhi al-Salām [2002]
4) Ḥattā Yughayyyirū Mā bi-Anfusihim [2003]
5) ‘Ibādāt al-Tafakkur [2003]
6) Islāḥ al-Qulūb [2003]
7) Al-Ṣabr wa-l-Dhawq [2004]
8) Kalām min al-Qalb [2004]
10) Inī Jā‘il fī al-ʾArḍ Khalīfa [2005]
12) Qirā‘a Jādīda wa-Ru’ya fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā‘ [2005]
14) Qiṣaṣ al-Hidāya [2006]
15) Bi-Ismik Nahyā [2007]
16) Al-Janna fī Buyūṭinā [2009]
17) Da‘wa li-l-Ta‘āyush [2009]
18) Qiṣas al-Qur‘ān [2009]
19) Rihla li-l-Sa‘āda [2011]
20) Ma‘a al-Tābi‘īn [2012]
21) Bīnā’ Insān al-Nahḍa [2013]
22) `Umar: Šāni‘ Ḥaḍāra [2014]
23) Rāfī Barakāt Wa-Sīrr al-Rimāl al-Ghāmiḍa [2014]
24) Al-Īmān wa-l-`Asr [2015]
Appendix II: Ahmad al-Shugairi’s Publications and Television Productions

NOTE: All works listed here are in order of production or publication. Television shows include the year of their first broadcast, while the titles of written works include the date they were first published.

Television Shows

1) Yallā Shabāb [Three seasons from 2002-2004]
2) Khawāṭir [Eleven seasons from 2005-2015]¹
3) Law Kāna Baynanā [Two seasons from 2009]
4) Qumra [2016]

Written Works

1) Khawāṭir Shābb [2006]
2) Khawāṭir 2: al-Juz’ al-Thānī [2008]
3) Khawāṭir 3: Min al-Yābān [2009]
4) Law Kāna Baynanā [2009]
5) Rihlatī ma’a Ghāndī [2011]

¹ The first season of this show was titled Khawāṭir Shābb, but the titles of all subsequent seasons was shortened to Khawāṭir.
Appendix III: Tariq al-Suwaidan’s Publications and Television Productions

NOTE: In general, the works listed here are in order of production or publication. Titles not followed by a date reflect an item for which it was difficult to date with certainty. For all other cases, television shows include the year of their first broadcast, while the titles of written works include the date they were first published.

Television Shows

1) Allāh ‘Azz wa-Jall
2) Aṣrār al-Ḥajj
3) Fann al-Iḥsān
4) Al-Mubdi‘ūn
5) Nisā’ Khālidāt
6) Qiṣṣa al-Anbiyā’
7) Qiṣṣa al-Anbiyā’ bi-l-Lugha al-Injlīziyya
8) Qiṣṣa wa-‘Ibar
9) Qiṣṣat al-Nihāya
10) Al-Rasūl al-Insān
11) Rawā‘i’ al-Qiṣṣa
12) Rawā‘i’ al-Tābi‘īn
13) Sihr al-Qur‘ān
14) Sajāyā
15) Ṣinā‘at al-Najāh
16) Sīrat Khālid bin al-Walīd
17) Al-Sīra Al-Khālida [1993/1994, or 1414 hijrī]
18) Ṣinā‘at al-Qā‘īd [2006]
19) Al-Wasaṭiyya [2008]
20) *Akādimīya I’dād al-Qāda* [Two seasons from 2009-2010]

21) ‘*Allamatnī al-Ḥayāh* [Two seasons from 2009-2010]

22) *Riyāḥ al-Taghyīr* [Two seasons from 2011-2012]

23) *Asrār al-Qiyāda al-Nabawīyya* [2012]

24) *Tārīkhunā fī al-Mīzān* [2013]

25) *Qiṣṣa wa-Fikra* [2014]

26) *Kun Najman* [2016]

Written Works: Management, Leadership, and Education

1) *Rattib Ḥayātak* [1999]

2) *Al-Qiyāda fī al-Qarn al-Ḥādī wa-l-‘Irṣrīn* [2000]

3) *Idārat al-Waqt* [2001]

4) *Manhajiyyat al-Taghyīr fī al-Munazzamāt* [2001]

5) *Marrin ‘Aḍalāt Mukhkhik* [2001]

6) *Al-Munazzama al-Muta’llima* [2001]

7) *Qiyādat al-Sūq* [2001]

8) *Ṣinā‘at al-Najāh* [2001]

9) *Khumāsiyyat al-Walā’: Kayfa Tahfīz wa-Tabnī Walā’ al-‘Āmilīn* [2002]

10) *Mabādi’ al-Ibdā’* [2002]

11) *Ṣinā‘at al-Qā‘id* [2002]

12) *Fann al-Ilqā‘ al-Rā‘i‘* [2003]

13) *Ikhtabir Ma‘lūmātik Ḥawla al-Istrāṭiyyāt* [2004]

14) *Kayfa Taktub Khīṭṭa Istrāṭiyya: 100 Su‘al wa-Jawāb* [2005]
15) *Al-Tadrīb wa-l-Tadrīs al-Ibdā‘ī* [2005]


17) Ṣinā‘at al-Dhakā‘ [2008]

18) Ṣinā‘at al-Thaqāfa [2009, includes four volumes]
   a. Ṣinā‘at al-Thaqāfa
   b. Kayfa Aqrā
   c. Al-Ṭif al-Qāri‘
   d. Mādhā Aqrā

19) Kayfa Tatakāth Qarārātik [2010]


22) *Al-Qiyāda al-Mawqīfiyya* [2011]

23) Ikhtabīr Darajat Ibdā‘īk [2012]

24) *Al-Ittiḥāḥat al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Idāra* [2012]

25) *Al-Mawhiba al-Qiyādiyya* [2012]

26) *Al-Quwwa wa-l-Nufūd* [2013/2014?]

27) *Fann al-Ta‘līf wa-l-Nashr* [2015]

28) *Al-Ibdā‘ Khāṭwa Khāṭwa bi-Isti‘māl Ālla al-Ibdā‘* [no date listed][1]

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[1] This work is not a book, but rather is printed on a set of cards that are bound in one corner by a metal pivot. No date of publication is given, but the publisher is the same as many of al-Suwaidan’s recent works, the publisher Sharikat al-Ibdā‘ al-Fikrī in Kuwait.
**Written Works: Religion**

1) *Mukhtaṣar al-‘Aqīda al-Islāmiyya* [1987]
2) *Al-Ṣawm: al-I‘tikāf, Zakāt al-Fītr, Šalāt al-‘Īdayn* [1994]
3) *Al-Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal: al-Sīra al-Muṣawwara* [2006]
4) *Asrār al-Ḥajj wa-l-‘Umra* [2007]
5) *Al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī: al-Sīra al-Muṣawwara* [2007]
6) *Asrār al-Ṣiyām* [2009]
7) *Al-Imām Mālik: al-Sīra al-Muṣawwara* [2009]
8) *Al-Imām Abū Hanīfa al-Nu‘mān: al-Sīra al-Muṣawwara* [2011]
9) *Stories of the Prophets in al-Quran* [2013]
10) *Great Women in Islam* [2013]

**Written Works: History**

1) *Filāṣṭīn: al-Tārīkh al-Muṣawwar* [2004]
2) *Al-Andalus: al-Tārīkh al-Muṣawwar* [2006]
3) *Al-Yahūd: al-Mawsū‘a al-Muṣawwara* [2009]
4) ‘Allamatnī al-Ḥayāh [2011, Al-Suwaidan’s autobiography in five volumes]
   a. *Madrasat al-Ḥayāh*
   b. *Fahm al-Dīn*
   c. *Usus al-‘Aṭā’*
   d. *Mahārūt al-Ta‘thīr*
   e. *Taṣḥīḥ al-Mafāhīm*
5) *Tārīkh al-Islām al-Muṣawwara* [2015]
6) ‘Allamatnī al-Ḥayāh: al-Juz’ al-Thānī [2015, the continuation of al-Suwaidan’s autobiography, also in five volumes]

a. Fahl al-Mashāʿir

b. Azamāt al-Umma

c. Nashr al-Fikr

d. Muthabbiṭāt wa-Muḥarrrikāt

e. Mādhā Nurīd
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Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/AmrKhaled

Twitter: https://twitter.com/amrkhaled

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/AmrKhaled

Ahmad al-Shugairi

Websites: http://www.i7san.net (networking site for volunteering)

http://qomrah.tv (website for the 2016 television series Qumra)

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/AhmadAlShugairi

https://www.facebook.com/AndalusiahCafe

https://www.facebook.com/khawatirTV

https://www.facebook.com/QomrahTV

Twitter: https://twitter.com/shugairi

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/AhmadAlShugairi

Tariq al-Suwaidan

Websites: http://www.suaidan.com

http://www.buthinah.com (website for al-Suwaidan’s wife)

http://www.leadersta.com (website for the Leadership Preparation Academy)

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II. All Other Sources


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2 All sources are listed alphabetically, ignoring any “Al” at the start of the author’s last name. Thus, for example, Al-Dhibyani is found under the letter “D” and not under the letter “A.”


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