Introduction
Defining Salafism, Analyzing Canons

This book examines the interaction between two important forces on the world stage: Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, and Salafism, a loosely organized community of Muslim activists who claim that they alone incarnate the practices and beliefs of the earliest Muslims. In northern Nigeria, a majority-Muslim region, Salafis have become prominent as preachers, media stars, and allies of certain elected politicians. These Salafis challenge the religious dominance of hereditary Muslim rulers and Sufi shaykhs by advancing a largely textualist model of religious authority. This book provides insight into how Nigerian Muslims are negotiating their relationships with one another and with the contemporary Middle East – especially Saudi Arabia, where Salafism receives political and institutional support. At the same time, the trajectory of Salafism in northern Nigeria sheds light on the stages through which the global Salafi movement has passed. Salafis around the world, even in non-Arab lands, have come to invoke a set of Arabic texts and a group of twentieth-century Middle Eastern thinkers as standards of authority in local struggles over who gets to speak for Islam. Examining Salafism in Nigeria illustrates how references to core texts can reflect membership in religious communities – and how such references provide a key tool for understanding the many geographically dispersed, decentralized religious activist networks that are helping to shape the world today.

On the basis of fieldwork in Nigeria and a historical study of the formation of Salafism, I argue that Salafism is embodied in and transmitted through a canon, a communally negotiated set of texts that is governed by rules of interpretation and appropriation. Salafis invoke the canon to spread Salafism but also to police the boundaries of Salafism. The idea of a Salafi canon is implicit, although underdeveloped, in some previous work on Salafism;[1] here I make it the explicit theoretical frame for analysis, examining how the canon formed and how it is disseminated.

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[1] Richard Gauvain mentions a "modern Salafi legal canon," and David Commins has described a "reconstruction of Salafism's patrimony" by scholars in Saudi Arabia starting in the 1970s. What I describe here incorporates both of these notions but asserts an even broader reading of Salafism as a set of texts that provides mechanisms for Salafizing the

This understanding of Salafism challenges widespread Western depictions of Salafism as a one-dimensional and "literalist" school of interpreting the Qurʾan and the Sunna (the authoritative tradition of the Prophet Muḥammad, as preserved in reports of his words and deeds, reports known as *aḥādīth* in the plural and *ḥadīth* in the singular). Salafis do not simply consult scriptures and then derive practice. Indeed, individual Muslims who "return to the Qurʾan" outside of established scholarly frameworks often generate unusual and divergent interpretations of Islam.[2] Salafism, in contrast, "is a system of startling coherence and uniformity."[3] Its canon attempts to unify the Salafi community in the present, as well as to align earlier texts with a twentieth-century understanding of Salafism, and vice versa. Today global Salafism is characterized by tension over who gets to define the boundaries of this canon.

This book offers a case study of Salafism in Nigeria and a broader framework for understanding how contemporary religious activists engage textual traditions. Many canons, open-ended and contested but nevertheless influential, operate in different religious communities today. In a world marked by the "fragmentation of sacred authority,"[4] attention to canons helps identify the shifting sources of claims to religious leadership: each body of texts transmits a particular set of rules and standards.

Intra-Muslim struggles, in Africa as elsewhere, are not just contests pitting one worldview or group against another, but also battles to determine which body of texts a community will consider authoritative. Conflicts over canons are struggles over "basic, usually unarticulated, differences in how such groups define what it means to know."[5] In northern Nigeria, Salafis have sought to partly supplant, and partly co-opt, a rival canon based on Sunni Islam's Mālikī legal school and on Sufism, a form of Islamic mysticism. Salafis have also worked to replace a classical, teacher-centric mode of knowledge transmission with a set of allegedly transparent methods for accessing foundational Islamic texts. The Salafi

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past and present – not just in the legal sphere but also in terms of religious authority, Muslim politics, and communal identity. See Gauvain, *Salafi Ritual Purity: In the Presence of God* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 227; and David Commins, "From Wahhabi to Salafi" in *Saudi Arabia in Transition Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic and Religious Change*, edited by Bernard Haykel, Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix, 151–66 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 164.

[2] For two examples, see Muḥammad Shaḥrūr, *Al-Kitāb wa-l-Qurʾān: Qirāʾa Muʿāṣira* (Damascus: Al-Ahālī li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1990); and Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1973–4).

[3] Gauvain, *Salafi Ritual Purity*, 11.

[4] Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, second edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 70.

[5] Rudolph T. Ware III, *The Walking Qurʾan: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 15.

canon represents both a field of debate within the Salafi community and a tool deployed in debates with other communities.

Although African Muslims have sometimes been crudely stereotyped as inherently "syncretist," the study of Islam in Africa – especially when scholars of other regions are willing to take seriously the theological commitments of African Muslims – has a major role to play in theory-building projects about contemporary Muslim activism worldwide.[6] Africa is the site of new renegotiations of "Muslim politics" that do not fit into the frameworks familiar from Middle Eastern Studies.[7] Few African countries have equivalents to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood; when scholars of the Middle East treat that organization as the archetype of Muslim political activism, they risk missing a much broader spectrum of activist postures. Even specialists on the Middle East now "warn . . . against overgeneralizing based on the Egyptian case."[8] Scholars of Islam need to more carefully delineate the theologies and ideologies of activist groups. In the Middle East, the rise of Salafi political parties in post-2011 Egypt and Tunisia has challenged assumptions that the Middle East is gripped by a two-sided struggle between authoritarian regimes and a catch-all category of actors called "Islamists."[9] Salafis' creed and worldview, which are much more tightly defined than the rather generic and flexible outlook of the Brotherhood, mean that Salafi activism proceeds from a different intellectual foundation than the Brotherhood's.[10] There is a need to consider Salafism on its own terms, and not just in relation to Islamism. The wide range of regime types that exist in Africa and the growing variety of Muslim communities there permit rich observations about how Salafism can generate varied activist postures in different contexts.

[6] For critiques of the idea of an inherently and unusually "syncretist" kind of "African Islam," see Roman Loimeier, *Muslim Societies in Africa: A Historical Anthropology* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013); and Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*. For a critique of the marginalization of the study of Islam in Africa, see Benjamin Soares, "The Historiography of Islam in West Africa: An Anthropologist's View," *The Journal of African History* 55:1 (March 2014): 27–36.

[7] René Otayek and Benjamin Soares, "Introduction: Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa" in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, edited by Benjamin Soares and René Otayek, 1–24 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[8] Marc Lynch, "Introduction" in *Rethinking Islamist Politics*, Project on Middle East Political Science Briefing 24, 3–6 (11 February 2014), 4.

[9] See Stéphane Lacroix, "Sheikhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism," Brookings Institution, June 2012. Available at: www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2012/6/07-egyptian-salafism-lacroix/stephane-lacroix-policy-briefing-english.pdf; accessed March 2015; and Jonathan A. C. Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011. Available at: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/salafis_sufis.pdf; accessed September 2015.

[10] Noah Salomon, "The Salafi Critique of Islamism: Doctrine, Difference and the Problem of Islamic Political Action in Contemporary Sudan" in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, edited by Roel Meijer, 143–68 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

Nigeria's politics, encompassing a federalist system, the implementation of Islamic law (*sharīʿa*) in northern states, a vibrant media, and ongoing processes of democratization, allows for an examination of how multiple kinds of Muslim activists compete within a partially open society. As in other African societies, religious activism in Nigeria is an important form of "politics from below."[11] Important conflicts can begin with seemingly minor struggles over control of mosques, with alleged blasphemies uttered by preachers, or with intra-Salafi competition for audiences. As they grow, these disputes can shape electoral outcomes, fuel intercommunal violence, and shift the balance of power among constituencies. Islamic Studies has taken a strong interest in questions of micropolitics and ethical self-fashioning at the level of the individual,[12] but there is a need to connect micropolitics to other forms of mobilization by believers. Studying the deployment of canons helps us connect what happens in the mosque with what happens in the public sphere. Nigeria's Boko Haram movement, a fringe offshoot of the Salafi preaching circles discussed in this book, is only one example of why it is important to understand interconnections between preaching and politics.

Salafism in Nigeria tells how a group of Nigerians from modest origins became some of the most controversial Muslim voices in Africa. After examining the formation of Salafism's canon over more than a millennium, I turn to twentieth-century Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, tracing the paths of Shaykh Jaʿfar Maḥmūd Ādam (1961/2–2007), Dr. Muḥammad Sani ʿUmar Rijiyar Lemo (b. 1970),[13] Shaykh Abdulwahhab Abdullah (b. 1953), and another half-dozen Muslim scholars. As young preachers in the 1980s, they won scholarships to Saudi Arabia's Islamic University of Medina. There they studied a canon of texts that pulled together writings from ninth-century Baghdad, medieval Syria, nineteenth-century Yemen and India, and the twentieth-century Middle East. I chart the Nigerians' return home in the 1990s and 2000s, analyzing how they taught the canon – and how they brought it into politics. I conclude by examining the rise of the jihadi movement Boko Haram, showing the centrality of the canon in conflicts between this group and other Salafis. The graduates of Medina are now competing with Boko Haram to define Islam and its textual bases. That struggle – perhaps even more than the fight between Boko Haram and the Nigerian state – will shape Nigeria's religious trajectory for years to come.

[11] Jean-Francois Bayart, "Le politique par le bas en Afrique noire: Questions de méthode," *Politique Africaine* 1 (1981): 53–82.

[12] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[13] For the sake of clarity, I refer to him as "Rijiyar Lemo" throughout the book, partly to distinguish him from the Nigerian scholar Dr. Muhammad Sani Umar, formerly of Northwestern University and now of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Defining Salafism through Creed and Canon

Before discussing the Salafi canon, it will be useful to discuss the Salafi creed. Salafis are just as keen to explain what they reject as they are to state what they believe, and Salafism can be described through five binary oppositions: Sunni Islam and not Shīʿism; literalism in contrast to speculative theology (ʿilm al-kalām) or philosophy (falsafa); direct consultation of foundational texts rather than allegiance to established legal schools; an impulse to "purify" others and a rejection of Sufism, especially organized, "ecstatic" Sufism;[14] and finally, an insistence on producing "evidence." This insistence means, in theory and often in practice, that Salafis refuse to defer to authority based on spiritual, intellectual, or biological genealogies[15] or to accept that the most precious knowledge is secret, elusive, or even unattainable.[16] Let us investigate each binary.

First, Salafis are Sunni Muslims, or even "über-Sunnis" who claim that the earliest Muslims (al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ, the "pious predecessors") constituted a unified, orthodox, exemplary moral community. Salafis call Shīʿī Muslims apostates for rejecting certain Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, including three of the four "Rightly Guided Caliphs." Salafis assert that their own particular beliefs are completely contiguous with those of Islam itself. Indeed, many Salafis would reject the term "Salafism," preferring to describe themselves simply as the only genuine Muslims or to use various names that connote claims to authenticity and rigor in interpreting Islam. One twentieth-century Salafi scholar writes:

In the contemporary world, those who follow the Salafi approach, believe in it, and call [people] to it, have multiplied. They are known in the Indian subcontinent as "salafis" and "ahl al-ḥadīth" (the people of ḥadīth). In some Arab and non-Arab countries they are known as "anṣār al-sunna al-muhammadiyya" (defenders of the Muḥammadan model, an organization founded in 1926) – such as Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, and Thailand. They are known in the Levant as "salafis." All of them call for a return to Islam in its correct conception as a creed (ʿaqīda) and as a set of legal provisions (aḥkām). [They call] for speculative

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14 Jonathan A. C. Brown, "Is Islam Easy to Understand or Not? Salafis, the Democratization of Interpretation, and the Need for the Ulema," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 26:2 (2015): 117–44.
15 William Graham has analyzed the "isnād paradigm" in which Islamic knowledge has meaning in the context of a "chain of personal transmission" that links the possessor of knowledge back to the source of that knowledge. William Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23:3 (Winter 1993): 495–522. See also Rüdiger Seesemann, "On the Cultural History of Islamic Knowledge and Its Contemporary Relevance," Religious Studies Faculty Colloquium, Northwestern University, 17 February 2010.
16 Noah Salomon, "Evidence, Secrets, Truth: Debating Islamic Knowledge in Contemporary Sudan," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81:3 (September 2013): 820–51.

theology (ʿilm al-kalām) – which came between people and the correct creed, which the first group [of Muslims] followed – to be abandoned. They reject the educational approach at all levels, and replace it with the Salafi approach whose source is the Book of Allah and the Sunna of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, which was all the salaf knew.[17]

In this book I retain "Salafism" as the most neutral term I have found for describing the movement. For me, the label acknowledges that these activists have a particular ideological construction of the salaf, but I do not endorse their view of themselves as the only true Muslims. It is important to note that many other Muslims would vigorously dispute Salafis' understandings of the early community and its legacy. For example, Sufi Muslims argue that their path represents the truest legacy of the Prophet's generation, for whom Sufism was "a reality without a name."[18]

A second binary opposition involves theology. Salafis hold a highly detailed creed and prefer to speak of "creed" (ʿaqīda) rather than speculative theology (ʿilm al-kalām). They believe that the Qurʾan is uncreated and has existed eternally with God. They say that descriptions of Allah's attributes in the foundational texts of Islam should be understood literally, albeit without "tamthīl (likening them to human characteristics) and takyīf (probing their modality, i.e., asking how)."[19] If the Qurʾan says that God has a "hand" (as in, for example, 36:83) or a "throne" (as in 7:54), then Salafis say that Muslims must accept the existence of a literal hand and a literal throne.[20] Such stances mean that Salafis oppose many widespread theological schools, including the Ashʿariyya, which allows a role for metaphorical interpretation of God's attributes. Salafis also reject the study of philosophy, including Greek philosophy and Islamic philosophy, believing that philosophy's influence warps the integrity of Muslims' creeds; Salafis today hail various figures in their canon not just for articulating the "sound" creed but also for fighting to roll back the effects of medieval Muslims' engagement with philosophy.

Third, Salafis emphasize aḥādīth over all other potential sources of law, save the Qurʾan. For Salafis, aḥādīth and the Sunna, understood as a totalizing model of behavior exemplified by the Prophet, constitute a manual that should ground all actions and beliefs in textual evidence. The

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[17] Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmī, *Majmūʾ Rasāʾil al-Jāmī fī al-ʿAqīda wa-l-Sunna* (Medina: Dār Ibn Rajab, 1993), 81.

[18] Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 45.

[19] Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn, *ʿAqīdat Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamāʿa* (Al-Riyāḍ: Muʾassasat al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn al-Khayriyya, 2009); see also Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[20] For one account of how such claims can divide Muslim communities, see Rüdiger Seesemann, "The Quotidian Dimension of Islamic Reformism in Wadai (Chad)" in *L'islam politique au sud du Sahara: Identités, discours, et enjeux*, edited by Muriel Gomez-Perez, 327–46 (Paris: Karthala, 2005).

most prominent Nigerian graduate of Medina, Jaʿfar Ādam, explained in one lecture,

> Every religious matter . . . must be well established in Allah's Book [i.e., the Qurʾan] and what has been verified in the *aḥādīth* of Allah's Prophet – may Allah bless him and grant him peace – on the basis of the understanding and exegesis of the pious forefathers (Hausa: *magabata nagari*, a rendering of the Arabic *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*).[21]

This stance means that Salafis reject the established Sunni schools of law (*madhāhib*, singular *madhhab*), and claim to derive practice directly from the Qurʾan and the Sunna. This rejection of legal schools distinguishes Salafis from the Wahhābī movement that is dominant in present-day Saudi Arabia; Wahhābīs embrace the Salafi creed but follow the Ḥanbalī school of law. Saudi Arabia witnessed a "Salafi turn" over the second half of the twentieth century, with scholars downplaying their affiliation to Ḥanbalism.[22] In Africa, the rejection of legal schools also distinguishes Salafis today from many earlier African anti-Sufi movements that held a Salafi creed but preserved affiliations to particular legal schools.

Fourth, Salafis channel their beliefs into a "muscular discourse that is directed at reforming other non-Salafi Muslims, and which amounts to an activist worldview in which one sees oneself as pure and the other as in need or purification in both belief and practice."[23] Salafis emphasize the idea of God's absolute uniqueness (*al-tawḥīd*) and hold a particularly broad understanding of what constitutes polytheism. Many Salafis charge that Sufi orders, with their hierarchical structures and specialized techniques for transmitting mystical knowledge, have introduced blameworthy innovations (*bidiʿ*, singular *bidʿa*) into Islam and have even lapsed into polytheistic worship of shaykhs.[24] In contemporary Nigeria, Salafis have oscillated between strident denunciations of Sufism and an

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21 Jaʿfar Maḥmūd Ādam, untitled lecture, 16 August 2006, Kano.
22 Commins, "From Wahhabi to Salafi"; on some Saudi Arabian scholars' turn away from the legal schools, see Frank Vogel, *Islamic Law and Legal System: Studies of Saudi Arabia* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 78. Given this evidence, I disagree with Nabil Mouline that the term "Hanbali-Wahhabism" is more "objective" than the term "Salafism." Salafis who disavow all legal schools are not Ḥanbalī (unless one understands "Ḥanbalī" to refer to creed instead of to law). Additionally, the Salafi canon includes works that are explicitly anti-Wahhābī. See Nabil Mouline, *The Clerics of Islam: Religious Authority and Political Power in Saudi Arabia*, translated by Ethan S. Rundell (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 9–10.
23 Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action" in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, edited by Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 33–57; 37.
24 Some late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinkers in the Salafi canon endorsed "sober" Sufism, especially as a private discipline outside the context of Sufi orders. David Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 80–1.

approach that privileges the dissemination of Salafi thought over anti-Sufi polemics.

Fifth, Salafis charge themselves with the duty of undertaking the intellectual and moral renewal of the Muslim community. This posture includes an insistence that all Muslim practice be based on textual "evidence," rather than on the inherited teachings of scholarly lineages. Such a posture has profound consequences for attitudes toward knowledge: Salafis reject the idea that the most meaningful knowledge is that which is transmitted from person to person, claiming instead that knowledge is found in the correct interpretation of Islam's foundational texts. These texts are held to be transparent and clear, requiring no intermediaries. Salafis also believe that expert scholars in the contemporary period can reassess *aḥādīth*, scrutinizing their chains of transmission and even their content to generate new rankings of the reports – meaning that some long-cherished reports become viewed as "weak" and hence less actionable and that unusual interpretations of worship and law, based on new assessments of "sound" reports, can come to the fore in Salafi practice.

These binary oppositions capture part of the Salafi worldview. To define contemporary Salafis solely through their beliefs, however, risks missing two important facets of this movement, or "approach" (*manhaj*) in Salafi terms. First, the movement has complex and recent historical origins, representing an intersection of several currents of thought from the Arabian Peninsula, the wider Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and North and sub-Saharan Africa. If scholars uncritically accept the Salafi claim that their stances today are little different from those of the earliest Muslims or of various theologians from the classical and medieval periods, we miss intellectual and political developments that shaped contemporary Salafism. It is possible to identify different stages in different communities' acceptance of Salafism's core ideas and to place figures along a continuum according to their conformity to a rather strict definition of Salafism. I use the term "proto-Salafi" to describe figures who held some but not all of the ideas contained in the Salafi intellectual package today,[25] and I use the term "fully Salafi" to describe those who are anti-Ashʿarī, anti-*madhhab*, and genealogically affiliated to a recognizably Salafi canon.

Furthermore, as Henri Lauzière has shown, even the meaning of the word and concept "Salafism" or *salafiyya* changed over the course of the twentieth century, moving from a narrow theological term to a name designating an activist movement.[26] The contemporary Salafi project of

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[25] See also Brown, "Is Islam Easy to Understand or Not?" 118, footnote 3.
[26] Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). Lauzière's "conceptual history" approach is

renewal was inherited from promoters of Islamic revival who appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The project, however, was transformed by later Salafis from the goal of Islamizing modernity and modernizing Islam into a mission of purifying Muslim societies from the inside. Despite the different orientations in these projects, common threads link them, especially a willingness to break with intellectual traditions. For both revivalists and their Salafi heirs, "returning to the sources" of Islam meant claiming intellectual freedom. In the context of West Africa, where the terms "Salafism" and "Wahhābism" have often been misapplied, it is important to recognize that Salafism is not just opposition to Sufism. Salafism is a complex intellectual tradition.

Second, as noted earlier, the Salafi movement has a more developed internal textual tradition than is often assumed. Salafism has jettisoned much of the Sunni scholastic corpus.[27] Yet Salafism has a distinctive "intellectual posture" and distinctive "intellectual traditions,"[28] including a large body of texts other than scripture. Additionally, when Salafi scholars claim that Islam's foundational texts are "easy to understand," they are making a rhetorical move to "undermin[e] the rigid authority of the *madhhabs*."[29] Salafi scholars do not seek to hand over interpretation of texts to uneducated persons but rather to train audiences in Salafi methods of interpretation. Salafi scholars themselves work from texts other than Qurʾan and *aḥādīth*: they read the Qurʾan together with exegeses they consider authoritative, and they read *aḥādīth* as part of carefully assembled collections, including collections reedited or reassessed by recent Salafi scholars.

Beyond exegeses and *aḥādīth* collections, Salafis' interpretive practices are heavily conditioned by a set of identifiable texts that have accumulated and interacted over centuries. These texts have clear relationships to one another, evident in citations, common vocabularies, and a shared set of theological and legal concerns. Salafis apply a "canonizing discourse,"[30] which unifies and retroactively Salafizes texts while policing and explaining any divergences that authors exhibit with regard to the Salafi creed. The process of canonization reached a new stage in the late twentieth century with the unofficial but widespread designation of three scholars – an Albanian, Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1914–99), and two Saudi Arabians, Shaykhs ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz (1910–99)

pathbreaking, but the notion of a canon allows me to capture intellectual processes than cannot be described through a conceptual history of one term. As seen earlier, not all Salafis even use the term "salafi" to describe themselves and their project.

[27] Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," 36.

[28] Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism" in *Global Salafism*, ed. Meijer, 244–66; 250.

[29] Brown, "Is Islam Easy to Understand or Not?," 144.

[30] El Shamsy, *Canonization of Islamic Law*, 224.

and Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn (1925–2001) – as standards by which Salafis would measure the authority of other thinkers.

Salafis' use of texts ranging over centuries does not, in their eyes, conflict with their claim to reincarnate early Muslim practice. Rather, they take comfort in the idea that "pure" Muslims existed in various historical circumstances. For Salafis, these Muslims' lives, memorialized in texts, prove that it is possible to revive the early community's example in any time and place.

Today, the canon is distinguished by clear features. For example, prominent Salafis from Nigeria to Indonesia use the Prophet Muḥammad's *Khuṭbat al-Ḥāja* (Sermon of Necessity) as an opening doxology to introduce their formal religious lectures. The Sermon was repurposed and revived by al-Albānī in the early 1950s and spread as a marker of Salafi discourses in the following decades.[31] The contemporary Salafi movement, in Nigeria and elsewhere, is at its heart an educational movement dedicated to spreading the canon as the basis for identity, interpretation, and action.

Defining Salafism through its canon invites a rethinking of internal divisions within the Salafi movement. One influential typology classifies Salafis into three groups: quietists or "purists," who hold themselves aloof from politics; "politicos" or activists, who comment on political affairs and challenge political authorities nonviolently; and "jihadis" who declare contemporary Muslim rulers apostates and seek to impose the Salafi creed and a Salafi social order through violence.[32] More recent scholarship has challenged this typology, showing that "quietists" participate in politics[33] and that defining jihadis through their supposed theological commitments is a fraught endeavor.[34] Attention to the canon further blurs the boundaries that allegedly divide these three tendencies. Many figures molded in the "quietist" tradition act strikingly like "politicos," including in northern Nigeria. Many jihadis pay partial homage to the major – and now canonized – "quietist" scholars.[35] Some of the

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[31] Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Khuṭbat al-Ḥāja allatī Kāna Rasūl Allāh – Ṣalla Allāh ʿalayhi wa-Sallam – Yuʿallimuhā Aṣḥābahu* (Al-Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-Maʿārif li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 2000 [1953]). For an Indonesian example, see Jaʿfar ʿUmar Thalib, "Waspada Bahaya Syiah dan JIL," YouTube, 28 December 2013. Available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=aI09_TGb8UE; accessed December 2014.

[32] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006): 207–39.

[33] Jacob Olidort, "The Politics of 'Quietist' Salafism," Brookings Institution (February 2015). Available at: www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2015/02/salafism-quietist-politics-olidort/brookings-analysis-paper_jacob-olidort-inside_final_web.pdf; accessed March 2015; and Salomon, "Salafi Critique of Islamism."

[34] Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis."

[35] The Salafi-jihadi thinker Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī, in an undated interview, describes attending lessons with Ibn Bāz and states that upon meeting al-Albānī, he "kissed his hand (*qabbaltu yadahu*)" despite their political differences. Available