UC Santa Barbara

UC Santa Barbara Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Online Islamic Rituals: Their Structure and Impacts on Muslim Communities

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0hp6t6t6

Author

Hegazy, Wael Taha Elsenousy

Publication Date

2023

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara

Online Islamic Rituals: Their Structure and Impacts on Muslim Communities

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Religious Studies

by

Wael Taha Elsenousy Hegazy

Committee in charge:

Professor Ahmad A. Ahmad, Chair
Professor Juan E. Campo
Professor Kathleen Moore

September 2023

The dissertation of Wael Hegazy is approved.

____

Kathleen Moore

____

Juan E. Campo

____

Ahmad Atif Ahmad, committee chair

September 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed supervisor, Professor Dr. Ahmad Ahmad, for his unwavering scholarly guidance, invaluable support, and insightful recommendations throughout the different phases of this thesis. His mentorship and profound wisdom have been instrumental in shaping this research. I am also deeply appreciative of Professor Juan Campo for his steadfast support throughout my PhD journey. His encouragement and guidance have been invaluable in helping me navigate the challenges of academic pursuit. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Professor Kathleen Moore for her dedicated efforts in educating and mentoring me. Her tireless commitment to my growth and development as a scholar has been truly inspiring. I am indebted to these esteemed professors for their contributions to my academic journey. Without their guidance and encouragement, this research would not have been possible.

Vita of Wael Hegazy

September 2023

EDUCATION

BA, Islamic Studies, Al-Azhar University, Egypt, 2008.
MA, Islamic Studies, Al-Azhar University, Egypt, 2015.
PhD, Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, September 2023 (expected).

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

2020 – 2023 Teaching Assistant of Arabic and Islamic studies at the department of Religious Studies, University of California Santa Barbara.
2015 – 2018 Assistant Lecturer at Islamic and Arabic Studies Department, Al-Azhar University, Egypt.

PUBLICATIONS

"Muslim Online Prayer in a Socio-Cultural Context." *Journal of CyberOrient*, Vol. 14, Issue 2, 2020, pp. 64-84.

"The Salience of Saintliness in Islam: A Sufi Perspective*". Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam.* Vol. 11, June 2021.

Mohammad Habib in "Christian-Muslim Relations, A Bibliographical History, (1800-1915)". *Brill,* Volume 18, November 2021.

"Review: Cyber Sufis: Virtual Expressions of the American Muslim Experience (Islam in the Twenty-First Century)". *Journal of CyberOrient*, Vol. 14, Iss. 2, 2020, pp. 99-103.

"Review: The Digital Social: Religion and Belief. *Journal of Religion Media and Digital Culture*. November 2021, Brill. DOI: 10.1163/21659214-bja10053.

AWARDS

Spring 2022: *Charles Wendell Memorial Award* for Academic achievement in the field of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies by the Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Spring 2021: Graduate Student Research Award from UCSB Center for Middle East Studies

Abstract

Online Islamic Rituals: Their Structure and Impacts on Muslim Communities

by

Wael Hegazy

If you made up your mind that the Islamic rituals are inextricably linked to bodily movements and physical space, this thesis aims to challenge and persuade you otherwise. It is conceivable that one may perceive Islamic rituals devoid of corporeal actions or spatial attributes as a relatively recent innovation introduced by contemporary Muslim intellectuals, possibly catalyzed by the exigencies imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. This study, however, will astound you by providing evidence that this idea of distant rituals can be traced back to the 9th century, when early Muslim jurists conceptualized several Islamic rituals without reliance on physicality or spatiality, such as the "Heart Prayer" and "Ship Prayer". Moreover, this study offers a comprehensive reassessment of the historical evolution of religious rituals' performance and explores their long-held perception of being unaltered. By drawing upon legal and philosophical evidence, this research presents a historical context that supports these reinterpretations. A significant aspect of this evolution is the emergence of cyber-Islamic rituals, which has profound implications for both individuals and communities at large. This dissertation goes beyond theoretical examination and delves deeper into the nuanced implications of online Islamic rituals, specifically those pertaining to religious authority, authenticity, and identity formation. By presenting empirically grounded case studies encompassing diverse Sunni and Sufi communities situated in both Egypt and

the United States, this study augments its findings with real-world instances, thus enriching the scholarly discourse on this subject matter.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement iii
Vita iv
Abstract v
Table of contents vii
Transliteration Table and Notes ix
Introduction 1
1. Space 10
2. Body 16
3. Mental Element and Symbolism 19
4. Impacts of Online Islamic Rituals 24
5. Literature Review 35
6. Methods 41
7. Chapters layout 47
Chapter One: Conceptualization of Body in Islamic Rituals 57
1.1 Is the Body Essential in Rituals? 63
1.1.1 Juristic Discussions of *Al-niyābah* (Proxy) in Rituals 63
1.1.2 The Primacy of al-Niyyah in the Islamic Rituals 68
1.1.3. Status of the Physical Cleanliness versus the Spiritual Cleanliness 73
1.2 Symbolic rituals 82
1.2.1 *Tayamum* (Dry ablution): 83
1.2.2 *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-khuffain* (Wiping Over the Leather Socks): 85
1.2.3. Kissing the Blackstone 87
1.2.4. *Amr Bi al-Maʿruf wa al-Nahy ʿan al-Munkar* (Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil by heart) 89
1.3 Theory of Body and Soul in Islamic Theology 92
1.2.3. Supremacy of Spiritual Aspects of Rituals over Physical Ones 97
1.4 Ḥajj as a Mental Ritual Example 103
1.5. Conclusion 111
Chapter Two: Conceptualization of Space in Islamic Rituals 113
2.1 Juridical Discussion of Spatial Significance in Islamic Rituals 118
2.2 Ship Prayers 122
2.3 Radio Prayers 134
2.3.1. Relevant Fatwa of Gad al-Ḥaq 135
2.3.2. Al-Ghumāri's Theory of Radio Prayers 136
2.3.3. Space Theory in al-Ghumāri's Fatwa 140
2.4 Online Prayer 142
2.5 Does Virtual Space replace Physical Space? 145

2.5.1. Is Space Secondary only in Urgent Cases? 150
2.6 *Itiḥād al-Majlis* (unity of spatial session) in E-Nikaḥ 156
2.6.1. Is *Itiḥād al-Majlis* a Pillar of Nikaḥ? 158
2.6 Conclusion 166
Chapter Three: The Impacts of Body and Space Absence from Islamic Rituals on Muslim Communities 168
3.1 Authority 177
3.1.1. Definition of Authority 177
3.1.2. Islamic Authority and Tradition 179
3.1.3. Online Authority 184
3.1.3. Authority and Gender 191
3.1.4. Neo-Traditional Authority 197
3.2 Identity 200
3.2.1. Nature of Online Identity 200
3.2.2. Heterogeneous Identity 203
3.2.3. Spatial Identity 209
3.3 Authenticity 214
3.3.1. Lack of Social Bonds 214
3.3.2. Sacralizing the Mundane Space 223
3.6 Closing Remarks 232
Conclusion 235
Bibliography 238

Notes on Transliteration

I used the IJMES Transliteration System for Arabic as follows:

ء	ʾ	ذ	Dh	ظ	ẓ	ن	n
ب	b	ر	R	ع	ʿ	ه	h
ت	t	ز	Z	غ	gh	Vowels	
ث	th	س	S	ف	F	ا	ā
ج	G	ش	Sh	ق	q	و	ū
ح	ḥ	ص	ṣ	ك	K	ي	ī
خ	Kh	ض	ḍ	ل	L	ا	ā
د	D	ط	ṭ	م	m		

Fatha: a

Kasrah: i

Dammah: u

Notes

- This transliteration table above is used through this thesis to transliterate Arabic sounds and letters. However, in case of quoting other works, I followed the transliteration of the quoted work.
- All translations of the Qur'anic texts have been quoted from Marmaduke Pickthall Translation. The prophetic traditions (Ḥadiths) are from Sunnah.com website. There is an important note about footnotes and references: I used the Chicago citation, 17th edition, for notes and bibliography style.

Introduction

Islamic rituals are comprised of three components: the physical body, space, and the mind. The harmonious integration of these three culminates in the formation of acts of worship known as *ʿIbādāt*. The inquiry regarding whether one or more of these components can be excluded has not yet been posed. This study extensively details the relative importance of each component and elaborates on the potential for neglecting any of these three constituents. To accomplish this, I incorporate legal discussions encompassing two layers: the classical layer, which handles traditional theories, and the modern layer, which pertains to contemporary perspectives and interpretations. I also incorporate philosophical discourse that analyzes the relationship between body and soul along with which component holds superior qualities and virtues and, consequently, holds greater significance within Islamic rituals. Because Islamic rituals do not exist in a vacuum, their social significance must be recognized. As part of the broader framework of ritual, I have explored the social dimensions of Islamic rituals, drawing upon foundational social theories of ritual such as those of Emile Durkheim, Pierre Bourdieu, and Victor Turner. A rigorous examination of influential scholarly perspectives within the fields of computer-mediated communication, digital religion, and cyber religious studies is included to conclude the discussion.

Online Islamic rituals provide an arena wherein the significance of various components of Islamic rituals and their hierarchical order or potential exclusion can be explored. The spatial component is comprehensively addressed in legal and historical examples enumerating a number of distant rituals, such as ship prayers, radio prayers, remote *Iʿtikāf* (ritualistic stay at mosque), online Sufi *ḥadra* (ritualistic movements with chanting God's names), and online prayers. In the first section, I look at how rituals have been

conceptualized independently of physical space. The following section is dedicated to the physical element, highlighting instances where physicality may not necessarily be present or essential. Examples such as the heart prayer, *Niyābah* (proxy), and the issue of *ṭahārat al-badan wa al-makān* (the body-and-location cleanliness) as a prerequisite of prayer are highlighted to emphasize their validity despite their lack of explicit physicality. In the last section, I offer a detailed examination of the mental element, as a primary component of any ritual. This is accomplished mainly through a number of symbolic rituals such as *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain* (wiping over the socks), Kissing the Blackstone in pilgrimage, *Tayamum* (Dry ablution), and *Amr Bi al-Maʿruf wa al-Nahy ʿan al-Munkar* (Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil by heart). The discussion in this section clarifies that while physical space and bodily movement can be separated from the structure of the Islamic rituals, the mental element is a necessary aspect that can never be skipped or disregarded.

One of the essential objectives of Islamic rituals is fostering social cohesion and strengthening the bonds among members of society. Rituals, as Emile Durkheim asserts, are unified frameworks of practices and beliefs about sacred beings that serve to bring together individuals who share similar views into a cohesive moral community.[1] Consequently, these rituals are critical in strengthening and solidifying social relationships. Despite the primarily spiritual and religious motivations of Islamic rituals, their communal aspect is of immense significance. For instance, congregational prayer in Islam has several goals, one of which is to build a sense of connection while enhancing links between individual Muslims and the larger Muslim community. Likewise, Hajj, or pilgrimage, gathers Muslims in a single

[1] Durkheim, Émile, 1858-1917, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, a Study in Religious Sociology*, (London: New York: The free Press, 1995), 46.

physical space to participate in religious rites as a means of cementing their community and foster a feeling of shared identity. The inherent social dimensions of Islamic rituals align well with Erika Summers-Effler's theory of rituals. Summers-Efller holds that rituals generate collective emotions through symbols and shape the basis of beliefs, thoughts, morals, and culture.[2] As a result, a cycle is created in which interactions generate emotions, which are then associated with symbols and used to drive further interactions. These interactions serve as the fundamental structural force that over time organizes society.[3]

With these as a basis, this thesis considers the prospect of replacing social and physical space with digital space. Furthermore, those considerations will lead to insight about whether the internet weakens or enhances social relationships, with substantial consequences for our understanding of social interaction in the digital age. The authenticity of online rituals is frequently challenged because traditional rituals are typically understood to be physical and communal gatherings, marking their digital counterparts as insufficient due to their lack of physical presence and increased emphasis on individual experiences.[4] In addition to its role in strengthening social bonds among community members, physical space is also perceived as crucial in shaping social collective identity. An extensive review of various fatwas issued by Muslim religious authorities addressing the use of cyberspace for religious rituals reveals a robust connection between religious space and the cultivation of social collective identity. In his study, *Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shīʿī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa*, Najam Haider examines the connection between ritual

---

[2] Summers-Effler, Erika. "Ritual Theory," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, ed. Jan E. Stets, (New York: Springer Science-Business Media, LLC, 2007).
[3] Ibid.,

[4] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning" in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed., Daniel Enstedt, Göran Larsson, and Enzo Pace, (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 35.

performance, ritual space, and the development of religious social identity. In doing so, he sheds light on the complex link between religious rituals, the physical environment in which these activities occur, and the construction of religious identity by examining how these aspects interact and impact one another.[5] He understood pilgrimage sites, shrines, and festival grounds as unmistakable markers of a well-defined collective identity. My research develops his argument by considering how Muslim religious authorities perceive the substantial importance and impact of spatial elements on the construction of Muslim identity, highlighting the crucial role of physical space for defining that identity. Therefore, the loss of such spatial elements of identity could have a substantial impact on the constituent aspects of one's identity, if not endanger it entirely.

Cyberspace, therefore, has presented a formidable challenge to physical spaces and the very concept of physicality. Its non-physical nature may threaten to diminish its efficacy; however, it serves as a powerful tool for facilitating communication between religious platforms and religious users. Cyberspace is aptly described as a social space, even though it cannot be viewed as a direct substitute for physical space, as recognized by scholars such as Mia Lovheim and Alf G. Linderman.[6] It offers new avenues for religious expression and community involvement by facilitating social interactions and supporting religious activities. I am here borrowing the term *social space* from the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, however with a related but slightly different meaning.[7] As Bourdieu finds social agents can

---

[5] Najam Haider, *Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shīʿī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa*, *Islamic Law and Society 16*, no. 2 (2009): 151–74.
[6] Mia Lövheim and Alf G. Linderman, "Constructing Religious Identity on the Internet," *Religion and Cyberspace* ed., Morten T. Hojesgaard, and Margit Warburg, (London, New York: Routledge, 2005).
[7] Pierre Bourdieu, Social Space and Symbolic Power, *Sociological Theory*, Spring, 1989, Vol. 7, No. 1 Spring, 1989, pp. 14-25.

come together though this non-physical social space, the cyborgs[8] can unite and share same ideas, concerns and thoughts within the social digital space. Social interaction, according to Emile Durkheim, can pave the way for "shared religious beliefs and practices to provide a support and legitimacy for individual as well as collective processes of constructing identity and meaning.[9] The internet has emerged as a parallel social domain, exerting a significant influence on a global scale and providing simple access to enormous quantities of digital information. According to Mia Lovheim and Alf G. Linderman, the Internet has the potential to improve the process of constructing identity by increasing access to information, resources, and outlets for self-expression. This is especially pertinent in the context of modern society, which is characterized by heightened insecurity and ambivalence.[10] The Internet also serves as a platform that equips individuals with the tools and opportunities to engage with disparate perspectives, acquire knowledge, and assert their identities in a world that is swiftly changing.[11]

With the emergence of the blended realm and the digital world's increasing preference people show for digital worlds over physical interactions, a new era of social interactions and traditions has emerged. Drawing on Donna Haraway's work, it can be said that we have all become cyborgs – conceptual and constructed hybrids of machines and organisms.[12] A complete separation between online and offline worlds has become extremely difficult, if not impossible. A third space, known as "onlife," has emerged, which combines online and

[8] It is a concept that combines technology components with a biological framework, making the line between man and machine less clear.
[9] Mia Lövheim and Alf G. Linderman, "Constructing Religious Identity on the Internet," 123.
[10] Ibid., 125.
[11] Ibid.,
[12] Haraway, Donna."A Cyborg Manifesto Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century."in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 150.

offline spaces into a singular entity.[13] This situation has led to, among other things, increased acceptance of online substitutes for in-person gathering, especially for religious purposes. In Islam, this legitimacy is backed up by both historical legal justifications--like those presented in the context of ship prayer, radio prayer, and online prayer (as detailed in Chapters One and Two, respectively) --and contemporary fatwas that sanction religious practices performed over great distances using digital media.

In addition to the theoretical foundations of social-based digital worship, there are practical instances of their implementation in real-world contexts. For instance, Imam Amr Dabour, an Azhari scholar affiliated with the Salam Islamic Center located in Sacramento, California, is the first American Muslim scholar to practice an Internet prayer. His remarkable contribution reached beyond the context of American Islam, connecting a global Islamic community through the first-ever internet prayer in history. During the sacred month of Ramadan in 2021, Imam Dabour deftly led the collective night prayer, broadcasting it in real-time to his audience whose numbers exceeded 3,000 followers. The live stream, which was available through his own Facebook page, got viewers and online performers from various regions including throughout California and parts of Canada.[14] The legitimacy of his online prayer has been intensely debated among contemporary Muslim religious authorities (as detailed in Chapter Two). Some religious institutions such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), The Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA), The Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia, Council of Senior Scholars of al-Azhar declared

---

[13] Evolvi, G., & Giorda, M. C. (2021). Introduction: Islam, Space, and the Internet, *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, *10* (1), 1-12. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-bja10047.

[14] Dabour, Amr, "Livestream of Ishaa and Taraweeh Juzu' 16 Livestream", Facebook, May 8, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/profile/1206849357/search/?q=taraweeh%20livestream.

that online spaces should not change the ritual format and gave fatwa in support of holding prayer at home until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, other religious authorities such as al-Shanqīṭī Ayāt, Mohammad Fawzy Abdul-Hay (a former head of Islamic studies at al-Azhar university and a member of fatwa center at al-Azhar), Ahmad al-Ghāmdi (the former head of the Commission of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice), and Khaled M. Abou El-Faḍl, gave a different fatwa supporting the permissibility of any alternative online prayer continuing even after the pandemic receded.[15]

Shikha Ḥakima, an esteemed American female religious figure within the Sufi tradition, is another notable example of virtual religious activities in her leadership of the al-Shadhilya Sufi Center based in San Diego, California.[16] Through its primary website and various social media platforms, the al-Shadhilya Sufi Center conducts a variety of Sufi spiritual practices using teleconferences and online platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. These practices include Dhikr sessions, as well as a diverse range of Sufi prayers such as the prayer of illumination, the invocation of God's 99 names, and meditation sessions. Notably, Ḥakima's online and phone-based religious and spiritual events have attracted a diverse group of participants in terms of gender, religious traditions, and even beliefs; Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and spiritualists, have all have actively participated.

Online Islamic practices have been practiced globally in regions such as Egypt and Indonesia. In Egypt, the Sufi order Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammadiya, along with its

---

[15] Hegazy, Wael. "Muslim Online Prayer in a Sociocultural Context", *CyberOrient*, Vol. 14, Issue No. 2, (2020): 64-84.

[16] Hakima, "Sufi Teachings and Remembrance of God", Meetup, 12/19/2021, https://www.meetup.com/encinitas-sufis/.

institutionalized branch Al-Ashira Al-Muhammadiya, accomplished an important milestone in Egyptian Sufism by launching the first online Ḥadra. On Saturday, October 24, 2020, the official website of both the Egyptian Sufi order Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammadiya and Al-Ashira Al-Muhammadiya (which was established by Egyptian Presidential Decree No. 750 in 1930) streamed its Ḥadra online with over 16,000 followers and 500 simultaneous users participating, many using the commenting function to input their chants and *Dhikr* (God's remembrance) prayers.[17] This transformation is an unprecedented and revolutionary departure because it signifies a fundamental shift in the Sufi realm from the prevailing offline method of performance to a highly sophisticated virtual format of ritual expression. Furthermore, it is a significant shift in the context of one of the world's most firmly embedded and traditional Sufi orders. Paradoxically, this particular Egyptian sect was one of the most traditional factions, standing strongly opposed to incorporating technology into its spiritual practices. However, when the Covid-19 epidemic broke out, it became the first and only sect in Egypt to embrace the broadcasting of their activities.

While many Muslim religious authorities in Egypt, the United States, and Europe permitted the virtual format only for supererogatory prayers, the Indonesian religious authority Wawan Gunawan Abdul Wahid went one step further by conducting the most important obligatory prayer for Muslims, the "Friday prayer," in a virtual format.[18] According to Akmaliah and Burhani, "Wawan Gunawan argues that the main reason for conducting a virtual Friday Prayer is to address the diverse demands on Islamic worship (at-

[17] Al-Shaykh Zaki Ibrahim, "Al-Ḥadra", *Facebook*, 1/24/2021, https://www.facebook.com/groups/alemamalraed2013/posts/10158800625306197/.

[18] Akmaliah, Wahyudi and Burhani, Ahmad Najib, "Digital Islam in Indonesia: The Shift of Ritual and Religiosity during Covid-19", *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, Singapore, 12 August 2021. ISSUE: 2021 No. 107, ISSN 2335-6677.

tanawwu' fil ibadah) in a time of crisis."[19] Wawan uses the same argument that others like Mauritanian scholar Muḥammad al-Hassan Ould al-Dadaw al-Shanqīṭī, and Mohammad Fawzy Abdul-Hay employ about the legitimacy of having distant prayer as long as communication channels are established. In their article, *Digital Islam in Indonesia: The Shift of Ritual and Religiosity during Covid-19*, Wahyudi and Burhani delve deeper on the three primary reasons that were the basis upon which Wawan Gunawan builds his argument: first, he highlights the Prophetic permission of using the house as a mosque, or in other words, any spot of the earth is legitimate for holding the prayer. Second, the permissibility of virtual marriage, which is also an act of worship. Third, Wawan Gunawan draws a parallel between the validity of collective prayer with a river that separates the Imam and Ma'mum as long as the voice of the Imam can be heard by the Ma'mum, and the virtual prayer with a screen separates both Imam and Ma'mum as well.[20]

The introduction of new examples of Islamic rituals that provide alternatives to traditional practices challenges the physical and spatial circumstances that validate rituals, perhaps opening the door to disembodied and distant alternatives. In the following section, I will detail the historical and legal validation of bodyless and spaceless Islamic rituals. This examination will investigate the rich historical context of these acts of worship and track their evolution over time, offering perspectives and insights on the factors that have contributed to their acceptance within Islamic tradition. In addition, it will investigate the legal aspects of these rituals, analyzing key scriptural texts, jurisprudential attitudes, and

[19] Ibid.,

[20] Akmaliah, Wahyudi and Burhani, Ahmad Najib, "Digital Islam in Indonesia".

scholarly discourses to establish the legal basis and legitimacy of these rituals within the Islamic framework.

The following is the primary elements of the validation process of the non-physical/spatial Islamic rituals and their impacts on Muslim individual and communities:

Space

In the first half of the twentieth century[21], a question on the permissibility of praying behind an imam via radio broadcasting has been raised by some Indian Muslim scholars who requested a fatwa from the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Sheikh Bakhīt al-Mutīʿī (d. 1935).[22] This query was raised because of the absence of an Arabic-speaking sermon giver within the mosque congregation. Therefore, they sought clarification on the legality of attending the Friday congregational prayer in a mosque but listening to the Friday *khuṭbah* (sermon) through a radio broadcast. They inquired if they were allowed to listen to Khutba via radio, then, the congregation, after listening to the sermon, would choose one of them (as in-person leadership) to physically lead the post-sermon prayer. However, the Grand Imam stated that such a practice of listening to online-sermon is not legally valid in Islamic law. A Moroccan Muslim scholar al-Ghumāri (d. 1960) responded to this query by authoring a book titled *Al-Iqnaʿ fi Seḥat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyaʿ (The Persuasion of Veracity of Friday Prayer Following the Radio),* permitting Muslims to follow not only the *khuṭbah* via the radio broadcast but also to follow the prayer itself.

[21] The precise date of this question remains unknown as it is solely mentioned in Al-Ghumāri' *Al-Iqnaʿ fi Seḥat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyaʿ (The Persuasion of Veracity of Friday Prayer Following the Radio)*, which was initially published in 1957.

[22] Al-Ghumāri, Aḥmad Seddiq, *Al-Iqnaʿ fi Seḥat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyaʿ,* (Cairo: Dar al-Taleef, 1957), ii.

These kinds of concerns offer insights into the persistent ritualistic concern in all Islamic eras about the significance of the spatial element in shaping Islamic rituals. However, al-Ghumāri's response is even more intriguing as highlights the fact that physical space can be entirely excluded from the framework of some Islamic rituals such as prayer.

However, neither Al-Ghumāri nor twentieth Muslim scholars such as Gad al-Ḥaq (d. 1996), the former Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, who issued a similar fatwa to Ghumāri's,[23] were alone in reconsidering the structure of Islamic rituals, which are commonly perceived as placing a disproportionate emphasis on corporeal movements and physical space in Islamic rituals. Classical Muslims, roughly in 9th century, were also concerned about the issue of having spatial elements or physical space absent from Islamic rituals. The first discussion of such kind came about regarding ship prayer in the 8th century. In the renowned book titled *al-Mudawana al-Kubrā*, also referred to as *al-Kitāb* among Mālikī adherents, the compiler and editor Saḥnun ibn Saʿid ibn Ḥabīb at-Tanukhī (d. 854) gathered multiple questions and answers on the topic attributed to Mālik (d. 795), the founder of Maliki school. One of the inquiries included within this collection engaged the question about an Imam on a different ship than the followers. "Mālik said about people who pray in multiple ships following an Imam in a separate ship, if the ships are adjacent to each other, it is all right."[24] The inference drawn from this model is that spatial union is secondary to the other prerequisites of prayer, if it is necessary at all. Despite the significant time span exceeding eleven centuries between the ship prayer and subsequent forms of distant rituals, the ship prayer model remains relevant.

[23] Gad al-Ḥaq's fatwa allowed following the Imam via radio broadcast in prayers except Friday prayer.
[24] Sahnoun al-Tanoughi, *al-Mudawna al-Kobra*, 1st volume, (Saudi Arabia: Maktabat al-Saadah, 1906), p. 82.

In the 21st century, attempts to legitimate online prayer sparked a considerable apprehension among the contemporary religious authorities. While the proponents of online prayer seamlessly relate the past with the present, perceiving no problems in maintaining continuity, opponents find discrepancies between old examples of distanced prayer and online prayer. The significance of the ongoing discussion lies in its feasibility in drawing a picture of how space's position in Islamic rituals is interpreted in classical legal minds. On the one hand, supporters of online prayer prioritize rituals over places of worship, while opponents value places over rituals. In addition, the legalization of internet prayer has expanded the possibilities for authorizing more acts of worship that Muslims have never imagined to be performed remotely. Online *Jalsat At-tilwāh* (recitation of the Qur'an sessions), *dhikr ḥalaqas* (collective sessions for remembrance of God), *Iʿtikāf*, and even virtual pilgrimages (not actual pilgrimages, but simulations) are among these activities.

In his article titled *Online Religion as Lived Religion: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet*, Christopher Helland examines the concerns held by religious communities regarding the online performance of rituals. He examines the adoption of either a complete transition to an online format or a combination of offline and online elements by various online congregations from diverse religious denominations.[25] Helland brings attention to the fact that the religious significance of an activity depends on the underlying purpose rather than the act itself. He also provides extensive details about the most common reservations surrounding the virtualization of religious practices, speculating that the reluctance of institutional religious organizations or individuals to embrace these

[25] Helland, Christopher, Online Religion as Lived Religion Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet, *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 1.1, 2005, https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/index.php/religions/article/view/380/355, 11.

online rituals might stem from their perception of the internet as merely a communication tool rather than an extension of our social sphere.[26]

However, the growing acceptance and validation of incorporating cyberspace as a legitimate medium for religious practices, coupled with the flexibility regarding spatial requirements in these rituals, has made it an undeniable reality that cannot be ignored. Another foundational example that aids in understanding the flexibility of spatial requirements in Islamic tradition is the concept of "*Itiḥād al-Majlis*" (unity of session) in marriage. Itiḥād al-Majlis as well as other similar terms such as *Itiḥād al-makān* (spatial union), *Itiḥād al-zamān* (time union), *ḥudūr* (to be present)[27] denotes the necessity set by classical Ḥanafī scholars for the primary parties engaged in a marriage contract, namely the groom, bride, and two witnesses, to be physically present during the contract's session. What if one or more of these parties are physically absent from the contract session? In his study E-Nikaḥ; *Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh,* Mansur Ali, explored this spatial requirement in *nikaḥ*. Ali elaborated on debates among the contemporary religious authorities, expressing his support.

The opponents of *E-nikaḥ*, have comparable concerns to those who oppose other online rituals such as prayer, *I'tikaf*, and *Ḥadra*. Particularly, their major concern revolves around the potential for fraudulent activities, where online users may impersonate others to obtain financial gains or visas or undermine ritualistic actions. While these are all true and important concerns, the objection to virtual *nikaḥ* would be potentially more detrimental. In

[26] Helland, Christopher, *Online Religion as Lived Religion Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet*, 13.
[27] Mansur Ali, E-Nikah *Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh*, BRAIS, 2022.

fact, E-Nikaḥ is no longer unusual; it has been widely accepted among individuals, religious authorities, and institutional frameworks. "In April 2020, Malaysia witnessed its first state-sanctioned online *nikāḥ*[28] that was supported and backed by a fatwa from the National Fatwa Council for Religious Affairs in Malaysia (MKI)," as Mansur argued.[29]

While Mansur appears to support the idea of utilizing the internet as a medium for certain ritual practices such as virtual marriage, there seems to be some hesitancy in fully endorsing the virtualization of Islamic rituals as a whole. He acknowledges that as long as *Itiḥād al-Majlis* in marriage is a medium for facilitating the proposal and acceptance of the couple, the internet may play the same role by acting as a mediator for facilitating communication and connectivity among couples. Then, he added, "Whilst there is a near consensus amongst Muslim scholars on the permissibility of using the internet as a tool for learning about Islam, the discussion on whether 'cyberspace' can act as a substitute for physical space is heavily contested".[30]

This hesitancy aligns with the conservative stance of some religious authorities about the inclusion of the internet into religious activities or its role as a medium for facilitating rituals and linking practitioners. The history of objection to incorporating media into religious practices can be traced back to the late 1990s, a time when television became prominent in the Muslim world, prompting questions and worries regarding its religious implications and potential uses. Conservative scholars criticize television, arguing that it

---

[28] 'Couple exchanges vows in virtual 'akad nikah' ceremony' The Star, April 18, 2020, https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/04/18/couple-exchanges-vows-in-virtual-039akad-nikah039-ceremony accessed November 2022.

[29] Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, *Decision of Muzakarah fatwwa committee of National Council of Islamic affairs*,3rd ed. (Putrajaya: Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, 2012), pp. 123-124. Quoted from Mansur, *E-Nikah*, 2022.

[30] Ibid.,

functions as a malevolent instrument that promotes immoral behavior and disregard for religious principles. Sheikh Abdel Aziz Bin Baz, a prominent Saudi figure who passed away in 1999, described television as an extremely dangerous medium for Muslim viewers, as its negative effects overshadow its positive ones and have the potential to erode the religiosity of observant Muslims.[31] Moreover, he argued that television represents a dangerous device with enormous potential for damage, comparable to or possibly eclipsing cinema. Corruption of morality, provocative imagery, tempting displays, and atheistic material are only some of the ways in which this medium contributes to a deterioration of ethical ideals, beliefs, and social relationships, he added.[32] He sees it as a representation of dishonest, treacherous, and violent behavior against others.[33] Similarly, Mohammed Saleh Al-Munajjid (b. 1960), a later Salafi scholar, has an analogous perspective on the use of television in the Muslim community. In response to a question about the permissibility of watching television and any conditions associated therewith, he stated that watching movies is not permissible due to numerous religious prohibitions. These include concerns regarding music listening, the exposure of nudity, the propagation of corrupt ideologies, and the encouragement of imitating non-believers.[34] Nevertheless, traditionalist scholars who previously issued these fatwas have embraced television as a means of reaching a larger audience for their programs. This shift is most noticeable in the area of entertainment, and one can only speculate on the consequences

---

[31] Al Jawab Al Kafi. January 27, 2015. "Hukm Mushahadat al-Telfaz lil-Sheikh Abdel Aziz Bin Baz (Ruling of watching T.V. by sheikh Abdel Aziz Bin Baz)." *YouTube*. Accessed May 20, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEmtRc9s2js.

[32] Ibn Baz, AbdulAziz, *Majmoo' Fatawa wa Maqalat Mutanawwi'a (The Collection of Fatawa and Various Articles)*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Presidency of Scientific Research and Ifta, 27 Volume, N.D. 648, and 649.

[33] Ibid.,

[34] Al-Munajjid, Mohammed Saleh. A*l-qism al-'arabi min mauqe (al-'islam, su'al wajawab) The Arabic section of the website (Islam, Question and Answer), Electronic book, 2009, Vol., 5, 363, https://shamela.ws/book/26332.*

of religious activities being integrated into this supposedly secular medium. This view is consistent with how the conservative team of the Muslim authorities has used the Internet since the late 1990s. There have been demands to avoid using the Internet due to concerns that it may be used to enable immoral conduct and corruption by certain people and religious leaders.

Body

In Islam, there is a type of prayer called as "heart/mind prayer." It is not a Sufi ritual, but rather its roots deeply embedded in the classical Sunni Fiqh tradition. In *Rawḍat al-ṭalibīn wa-'umdat al-muftīn*, An-Nawawī (d. 1277) elaborated on how to perform prayer in case of physical inability[35] (This includes bodily disability and also incapacity caused by circumstances such as fear of drowning or killing as in wars, etc.). He argued that while the Ḥanafī school does not require those who are physically incapable of moving their head to pray, the Shāfi'ī school argues that no Muslim who is alive and mentally sound can be waived from performing prayer. Therefore, the Shāfi'ī school offers alternative forms of prayer in case of physical disability. In this regard, Al-Nawawī maintains that for those who are physically unable to perform the prayer in a standing form, there are two options. The first option is to pray while lying down on the right side with the body facing the Qibla. The second option is to pray while lying down on one's back facing the Qibla with the legs. In both positions, the person will pray by moving only the head. If unable to move the head, the person can move the eyebrows instead. If unable to move the eyebrows, ***the person can pray by the heart imagining the prayers' movements***. The recitation of Surat al-Fatiḥa and a short

[35] Al-Juwayni (d. 1058) defined inability as any distraction that prevents one from being mindful while praying.

surah can also be done by the heart/mind if the tongue does not work.[36] This prayer model, along with the subsequent examples, demonstrate that physical movements are not prioritized in Islamic rituals. Instead, physicality can be compromised or even eliminated entirely from practice. Although physical actions may be omitted, the inner spiritual actions of the heart in rituals cannot be neglected or overlooked. To illustrate, the significance of al-Niyyah (intention) in Islamic rituals cannot be overstated. It is not merely an optional element, but rather a fundamental requirement emphasized by Muslim jurists. Al-Niyyah is both a condition for the validity of a ritual and the essence that infuses meaning and purpose into the act of worship. Al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) presents a compelling instance that not only highlights the profound significance of al-Niyyah as a non-physical element in shaping Islamic rituals, but also underscores its irreplaceability, rendering it indispensable. The following example illustrates that not only theologians, but also jurists are extremely interested in addressing the hidden actions of the heart. The question of whether divorce can be considered effective by intention or by what is referred to as *Kalām Nafsānī* (self-talk) has been a matter of controversy among Muslim jurists. In response to this issue, Al-Qarāfī states that the jurists are divided into two main groups. The first group believes that divorce can happen just by thinking and having the intention of separation. The second group, including Al-Qarāfī himself, does not consider thinking and the intention as a means of divorce.[37] Averroes (d. 1198) took a middle position. In his opinion, divorce will occur when self-talk is accompanied by verbal communication, but both must be present.[38] This debate over whether al-Niyyah has the power to invalidate the physical action (marriage) highlights not only the

---

[36] Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf An-Nawawi, *Rawdat al-talibīn wa-'umdat al-muftin,* 3rd Edition (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991), 236 - 237.
[37] Al-Qarāfī, *Al-OmNiyyah Fi Idrak al-Niyyah*, 26.
[38] Abu Abdullah Al-Bāqurī, *Tartīb al-Forouq, (*Morocco: Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 1994), 297.

centrality and superiority of al-Niyyah over physical action, but also its superiority over almost all physical actions. Exactly as Al-Swaisī observes, the intention is the primary component of worship, while the action constitutes the secondary component, since actions without intentions are equivalent to bodies without souls.[39]

Another example about the primacy of non-physical aspects of the Islamic rituals is *Ṭahārah* (cleanliness) as a physical requirement for prayer. In his book, *Al-Bayān fi Madhab al-Imam al-Shāfi'ī*, the *Shāfi'ī* scholar Al-Omrānī stated that the Mālikī school along with Abdullah Ibn Abbas; the Prophet's cousin (d. 687) and Said Ibn Jubayr (d. 714) did not see the cleanliness of the cloth as a requirement for the validity of the prayer, but rather as preferable.[40] The same is true for the place where the prayer can be held. Al-Omrānī highlights the Ḥanafī position toward the cleanliness of the foot spots where the performer of the prayer shall stand. Only the foot spots must be clean, even if the knee spots are not clean.[41] Moreover, the Ḥanafī school of thought offers a more intricate understanding of the precise meaning of cleanliness as necessary for the performance of prayer. In *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai'*, the Ḥanafī scholar Al-Kasānī details the required physical purification before performing the prayer as two kinds of purification: first is the primary purification, which requires washing the body after major impurity (after having sexual intercourse, wet dream or menstruation for women) or minor impurity (urination or defecation). Second is secondary purifications of cleansing the body, clothes, and place where prayer is performed. Although primary and secondary purifications are mandatory for prayer, Al-Kasānī clarifies that they

[39] Muhammad bin Yunis Al-Swaisī, *Majāl al-Niyyah,* (Tunisia: Dar Sakhnon for Printing and Publication, 2021), 7.
[40] Yahya Ibn Abi al-Khayr Al-ʿOmrānī (d. 1163), *Al-bayān fī Madhab al-Imam al-Shāfi'ī,* 1st Edition, Vol.1 (Jeddah: Dar al-Mihaj, 2000), 90.
[41] Al-ʿOmrānī, *Al-bayān*, 104.

hold ***symbolic significance, representing the spiritual purification of the heart from negative desires and satanic influences***.[42]

The following is a translated excerpt from Al-Kasānī's Badā'i al-Ṣanāai':

"He (God, the legislator) commanded purifying these apparent organs from minor Ḥadath (impurity) and major Ḥadath as a reminder of purifying the inside from cheating, envy, arrogance, bad thinking of other Muslims, and similar sinful heart actions. The command of purification is not actually for physical purification because having ritualistic impurity does not generally inhibit the performance of rituals, as in fasting and Zakāh, which are valid even though the impurity…. ***Therefore, God commanded purifying these apparent limbs as a signifier and indicator of purifying the inside from these bad desires.***[43]

The Mental Element and Symbolism

As previously discussed, acts of worship in Islam can be perceived and practiced in the absence of physical and spatial aspects. The mental component, on the other hand, remains an essential component that holds significant importance and cannot be neglected or excluded. Furthermore, there is an often neglected yet crucial factor within the framework of Islamic rituals that underscores the supremacy of the mental component over other physical and spatial parts: symbolism. Symbolism plays a significant role in Islamic rituals, conveying deeper meanings and spiritual insights beyond the mere physical actions. It emphasizes the significance of the intention, and what is behind the outward expressions of worship,

---

[42]Al-Kasānī, ʿAlāa al-Din, *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fī Tartib al-Sharāi,'* (Beirut: Dar al-Kotb al-Ilmiyah, 1986), 114 - 105.
[43]Ibid., 114.

underscoring the mental engagement and implication within the overall framework of Islamic rituals. The Quran emphasizes multiple times that God does not require human worship and that the objective of worship is to express submission and obedience to Him.[44] Therefore, worship is a symbolic representation of the ultimate objective of surrender. The physical or spatial performance of rituals function as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself. As illustrative examples of symbolic rituals, we can consider the following:

- ***Tayamum* (Dry ablution):**

While prayer in Islam typically requires *wudu* (ablution), Tayamum serves as a substitute for wudu in various circumstances. It is not limited to individuals who lack water, but also applies to those who are sick and unable to use water, have a fear of reaching water sources, or are on a journey where obtaining water is hard.[45]

Tayammum, as a ritual in Islam, embodies a profound symbolic meaning that distinguishes it within the ritualistic actions. Its significance is visible in various venues, starting with the rationale behind its legitimacy as an alternative to ablution without nullifying the need for ablution itself. Furthermore, the precise process of wiping over the face and hands during tayammum further adds to its symbolic significance. The specificity of the face and hands as the exclusive organs to be wiped over with a clean dust or sands during tayammum stems from their significance in the performance of good or bad deeds, representing human actions and moral responsibility. Moreover, wiping the face with dust during tayammum shows obedience and surrender to God's command.

---

[44] Quran (39: 7), (35: 18), and (14: 8).

[45] Al-Kasānī, *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fī Tartib al-Sharāi,'* 44.

Ultimately, tayammum demonstrates how Islamic rituals transcend mere physical or spatial restrictions and emphasize the ultimate spiritual goal of worship, which is surrender to the Divine will.

- ***Al-Masḥ ʿala al-khuffain*** **(Wiping Over the Leather Socks):**

In spite of the Quranic principle of avoiding hardship in worship and the existence of the uṣulī maxim of "hardship breeds easiness," the Islamic legislature follows a different approach in this regard. Instead of completely nullifying acts of worship in the cases of hardship, (save few cases of incapability), it introduces symbolic performances as an alternative. The introduction of symbolic ritual performances ensures that the essence and significance of these acts are preserved while easing the burden on individuals facing hardships.

Al-Mash'ala al-Khofain is widely accepted among Muslim Sunnī Madhahib with the exception of Mālikī Madhahab who put restrictions on accepting such ritual. They allowed only travelers—not residents—to wipe over the socks. Moreover, Ibn Abbas (d.687), the Prophet's cousin, had completely rejected al-Mas 'ala al-Khofain.[46] Even though Ibn Abbas and Shia strictly reject Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain, Ḥanafī Madhhab not only affirm its validity but also see it as a marker of Sunnī Muslim Ahl al-Sunnah Wa al-Jammāʿh.[47] It is narrated that Abu Ḥanifa said that what characterizes Sunnī from Shi'a is, "to honor the two elders (Abu Bakr al-Seddiq (d. 634) and Umar Ibn al-Khattab (d. 644), to wipe over the socks, and to believe that date syrup (nabeedh) is lawful."[48]

---

[46] Al-Kasani, *Bada'i al-Sana'i fi Tartib al-Shara'i,* 7.
[47] Ibid.,
[48] Ibid.,

Wiping over the socks exemplifies another symbolic meaning of submission and a full obedience to God's orders. According to a narration attributed to Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the cousin of Prophet Muhammad, that Ali said if the religion is solely based on logical deduction, it would be more rational to wipe over the bottom side of the socks, rather than the upper side.[49] This narration emphasizes the profound nature of Islamic rituals, where the juridical commands given by God or the Prophet Muhammad may not always align with pure logical reasoning. Instead, these commands require trust in the Divine wisdom and a willingness to submit to the prescribed actions as an act of obedience and devotion.

- **Kissing the Blackstone**

One of the rites of Islamic pilgrimage is touching, kissing, or pointing towards the Black Stone, known as Al-Ḥajjar al-Aswad, during the Tawaf (circumambulation) around the Kaʿbah. From an outsider's perspective, these actions might be perceived as idolatrous, but the legislature hold a different view. In a well-known hadith attributed to Omar Ibn al-Khattab, he said that "By Allah, I know that you are just a stone that cannot bring any benefit or harm, If I hadn't witnessed the Prophet Muhammad kissing you, I would not have kissed you."[50] Omar's narration underscores his concern about how the ritual of touching, kissing, or pointing towards the Black Stone during the Tawaf could be misunderstood if viewed solely from a physical perspective. He clarified that the significance of this physical action is not based on the stone itself, but rather on the spiritual incentive behind it and symbolic meaning it entails. His kissing of the Black Stone was neither an idolatrous action nor did it attach any

[49] Shamsuldin Muhammad Ibn Muflih, *Usul al-Fiqh,* (Riyadh: Obeikan Publishing, 1999), 329.
[50] Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abi Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf,* (Riyadh: Dar Konoz Ishbilia for publishing, 2015), 426.

power or meaning to the stone itself. Instead, it was a sign of devotion and reverence to the Prophet's Sunnah (tradition).

While touching or kissing the Blackstone is not a mandatory act of worship, it is subsequent action of *Tawaf* around the *Kaʿbah* occupies a great place in the hearts of pilgrims as they exert their utmost efforts not to miss it. Coping with this significance in an unprecedented step, on December 13, 2021, the official website of Saudi Arabia's General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques announced the inauguration of the "Virtual Blackstone" program in *Kaʿbah*, where the stone may be touched digitally via VR (virtual reality) technology. This project is being carried out in collaboration with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Institute at Umm Al Qura University by the Agency for Exhibitions and Museums Affairs. The objective behind initiating this program is to use virtual reality and the digital world to imitate reality utilizing as many senses as possible.[51] "The General President of the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, Sheikh Dr. Abdul Rahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Sudais said that the initiative aims to "use virtual reality (V.R.) and digital experiences that simulate real reality. He stressed the importance of "creating a virtual simulation environment, to simulate the largest possible number of senses, such as vision, hearing, touch, even smell, to reach all the outputs of the presidency that pertain to the Two Holy Mosques, and what the government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is doing to all parts of the world, through the virtual world, and it simulates reality clearly and honestly."[52]

[51] "Saudi Arabia launches an initiative that allows virtual touching of the Black Stone," *Middle East in 24 English*, Accessed December 15, 2021. https://middleeast.in-24.com/News/amp/492979.
[52] Middle East in 24 English. December 13, 2021. "Saudi Arabia launches an initiative that allows virtual touching of the Black Stone."

Impacts of Online Islamic Rituals

In light of the increasing prevalence of virtual spaces as a formidable competitor, and in some cases, a substitute for physical spaces, adherents of the Islamic faith, much like followers of other religious traditions, have turned to the internet as a means for conducting commercial transactions and engaging in religious practices through social media platforms and dedicated religious blogs. In sharp contrast to the internet's limited religious services during the 1990s, the past two decades have witnessed an exponential growth in the prominence of online platforms for religious engagement. These platforms today provide a vast spectrum of religious resources, such as various theological perspectives, institutional information, interactive communication channels, religious services, and even online religious item sales. This substantial transition has given religious users unrivaled access and chances for religious participation in the virtual sphere.[53] According to Oliver Krueger's seminal work, "The Internet as Distributor and Mirror of Religious and Ritual Knowledge," there has been a significant shift in the acquisition of ritualistic and theological knowledge. Online communication within religious forums has surpassed the old forms of direct social connections within physical communities as the major channel for individuals to gain such knowledge. This paradigm shift highlights the internet's tremendous significance as a platform for the spread, exchange, and study of religious information. It indicates a fundamental shift in how people interact with and receive religious rites and theological ideas in the digital age.[54]

[53] Krueger, Oliver. "The Internet as Distributor and Mirror of Religious and Ritual Knowledge." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 32, no. 2 (2004): 183–97. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23654584.
[54] Krueger, Oliver. "The Internet as Distributor and Mirror of Religious and Ritual Knowledge.".

Religious users employ the internet to not only seek knowledge but also to engage in religious and spiritual rituals. Elena Larsen's ethnographic study, *Cyberfaith: How Americans Pursue Religion Online*, originally published in the Pew Research Center and later republished in the volume *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, reveals the ways in which American religious internet users actively employ online platforms to pursue their religious and spiritual aspirations. Larsen's research showcases the significant role of the internet in facilitating religious experiences and expressions in the modern digital era, labeling those who utilize the internet for these purposes "religion surfers.[55] Her study concludes that contrary to 61 percent of the general public, who stated that religion was "very important" in their lives, 81 percent of Religion Surfers believe that their religion is "very strong."[56]

The growing presence of cyberspace has far-reaching ramifications across various dimensions, giving birth to a number of consequences that extend to realms such as authority, gender equality, authenticity, and identity. Hence, inspired by Meredith McGuire's perspective on the study of religion which emphasizes its lived realities in people's everyday lives rather than mere textual analysis, the subsequent section will provide a brief overview of these implications.[57] However, it is in chapter three of this dissertation where a comprehensive examination of the specific ramifications of engaging in online Islamic

[55] Elena Larsen, Cyberfaith: How Americans Pursue Religion Online, in "*Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*" edit., Lorne L. Dawson, Douglas E. Cowan, (Routledge, 2004), 17.
[56] Ibid., 19.
[57] Meredith McGuire. *Lived religion: faith and practice in everyday life*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

rituals, both for individual Muslims and their communities, will be undertaken, providing a more nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics at play.

Authenticity:

Despite the pervasive influence of the Internet across multiple spheres of life, including finance, politics, and social interactions, the utilization of the Internet for religious purposes, particularly the engagement in virtual religious rituals, remains a subject of skepticism and suspicion. This ongoing skepticism regarding online religious rituals can be attributed to two primary factors: the lack of social bonds in cyberspace and the perception of mundane space as inadequate for sacred practices.

1. **Lack of Social Bonds**

The authenticity of online rituals is frequently questioned because traditional rituals are typically perceived as physical and communal gatherings, making their digital counterparts appear unreal due to their lack of physical presence and increased emphasis on individual experiences.[58] This is a prevalent characteristic observed in various world religions, including the remote performance of rituals in Islam.

Classical and modern Islamic authorities have emphasized the significance of physical space in most Islamic rituals, highlighting the social dimension as an additional factor that contributes to the authenticity of these practices. For them, the social or communal aspect of these rituals is a compelling factor for the necessity of a physical location for their performance. Therefore, an in-depth review of relevant fatwas questioning the invalidity of online prayer reveals that being physically present at the mosque serves a communal

[58] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning" in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed., Daniel Enstedt, Göran Larsson, and Enzo Pace (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 35.

function.[59] Congregational prayer, for example, is seen necessary for attaining social objectives due to its communal nature, thereby substantiating the need for physical presence.

While Islamic rituals can be situated within the broader framework of global religions, they exhibit comparatively less pronounced social influence when compared to other faith traditions like those observed by Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner in their studies on Australian and African traditional religions, as well as Christianity. In practice, however, Islamic rituals are susceptible to alterations or adaptations in response to societal conditions even if only in format, as seen in the above discussion. Despite the primary spiritual and religious motivations of Islamic rituals, the communal aspect is of great significance.

With that being said, the efficacy of non-physical or distant rituals has been substantiated by both theoretical and practical evidence. In addition to the underlying principles of various digital socially-based forms of worship noted thus far, there are practical examples of their implementation in real-world settings. This study provides several case studies of online congregational rituals in the U.S. such as ISSB, Glendale Islamic Center, Sacramento Islamic Centre and Al-Shadhilyah order in Pope Vally along with examples from Egypt such as al-Muhammadiyah Sufi order. The active participation of these Muslim communities in live online practices serves as a counterargument to the notion that cyberspace has a detrimental effect on the communal nature of religious rituals.

For example, the Maqra'ah (circle of Qur'anic recitation) run by the Islamic Center of Glendale is an illustration of effective online-based rituals. Sheikh Abdulghany, an Egyptian

[59] Masoud Sabry, *Fatwas of scholars on Corona*, (Cairo: Dar Al-Bashir for Printing and Publishing, April 2020).

Azhari Imam who relocated to the United States in 2019, is now the religious authority of the Muslim community in Glendale. In the past, he used to serve as an Imam at the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf where he conducted all religious and spiritual activities in person. However, after the COVID-19 closure, he adapted to the online environment. He embraced the opportunity and began delivering sermons, administering the Maqra'ah, and delivering lectures through the Islamic Center of Glendale's official Zoom account, despite his initial skepticism of cyberspace as a legitimate platform for religious practice. The Maqra'ah, a key religious activity, was conducted online routinely with more than 15 male and 5 female participants. After the closure of Covid-19 was lifted, the Maqra'ah continued to attract participants, even those from neighboring communities.

This online Maqra'ah played a crucial role in nurturing connections between members of the community who had relocated but continued to attend the sessions daily after morning prayer. Attendees of Maqra'ah celebrated the monthly completion of reciting the entire Quran in both virtual and physical gatherings. Once they had completed reciting all the chapters, they arranged a physical gathering to share food and beverages and exchange congratulations. The importance of this digital Maqra'ah resides in the fact that it may serve as an assembly spot for other online gatherings of a spiritual or social nature. The Mosque in Glendale, inspired by the success of the Maqra'ah online, has now started offering Hadith and Tafsir lessons for women and hosting online fundraisers. These online social and religious meetings have been running strong for almost three years, proving the viability of cyberspace as a stand-in for real-world locations. As long as the internet is there, events like

this will serve to prove that virtual ones are equal, if not superior, to their physical/spatial counterparts.[60]

2. **Sacralizing the Mundane Space**

Concerns regarding the use of cyberspace as a platform for religious rituals also revolve around the perception of the internet as a secular space where people predominantly engage in worldly activities such as financial, social, and political endeavors. This mundane and profane environment has prompted doubts about the internet's ability to effectively convey the sanctity of physical places of worship.[61]

The incorporation of technology into religious practices and the dissemination of religious knowledge have historically been met with skepticism. In his work titled *Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā*, Emad Hamdeh argues that in the past Muslim traditional authorities denied the printing press in the Muslim world, due to the belief that it contributed to the decline of oral-based traditional education. Hamdeh goes on to argue that the scholarship of the Ottoman Empire relied heavily on the Ijāza (verbal license) system, and that those who lacked this traditional authority were not regarded as reliable sources of knowledge.[62] Likewise, Qasim Zaman also believes that the dissemination of knowledge and the introduction of fresh perspectives made possible by print presented a serious threat to the authority of Muslim religious leaders. The proliferation of printed materials allowed people to investigate Islam from a variety of angles and perspectives, thereby weakening the authority of religious leaders. Thus, traditional religious authorities

[60] Islamic Centre of Glendale, Homepage, accessed June 8, 2023, http://icglendale.org/khutbah-videos/.
[61] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning, 40, and 41.
[62] Emad Hamdeh, *Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā', and Self Learning*, 82.

were challenged by the free flow of ideas and the democratization of information facilitated by print technology.[63] A corresponding view can be found in Francis Robinson's book *Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print*, where he discusses how, in contrast to the Western world, the Islamic world had a different response to the arrival of printing presses in the 15th century.[64] Robinson argues that the opposition to printing by Muslims stemmed from the belief that true Islamic knowledge could only be transmitted verbally. Furthermore, the ulama's status as the exclusive interpreters of Islam was perceived as being endangered by the advent of print media; their ability to maintain a monopoly on religious knowledge and interpretation within the Muslim community was challenged by the widespread availability of written material. Thus, it might be argued that the Islamic world's reluctance to adopt print technology stems from a desire to preserve the ulama's role as the ultimate arbiters of religious understanding and the preeminence of oral transmissions of knowledge in Islamic educational institutions.[65]

Despite the constant concerns regarding the use of the internet as a medium for religious rituals, cyberspace's interconnection with offline space gives credence to its authenticity. Earlier research on digital religion, such as those undertaken by Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, reinforce this viewpoint, seeing the internet as a reflective medium that mirrors and reproduces offline reality.[66] Heidi Campbell also notes that the character of Internet technologies and digital culture not only enables the emergence of new

---

[63] Emad Hamdeh, *Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā'.*

[64] Robinson, Francis, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1993): 229-51.

[65] Robinson, Francis. "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print.

[66] Dawson & Cowan, *Finding Faith on the Internet,* 2004, 6.

religious actors, but also empowers them.[67] Moreover, she contends that it elevates traditional religious systems and their leaders.[68] Recent studies provide further support for the emergence of a novel space known as "hybrid space." Christopher Helland supports this composite notion by identifying parallels between remote online rituals and offline experiences.[69] He then argues that those who engage in online religious practices do not regard the internet as a distant environment, but rather as an integral part of their daily lives.[70] They view the digital domain as an extension of their religious meanings and rituals, easily incorporating their religious beliefs and practices into it.[71]

Authority

Authority is a complex and multifaceted concept that can manifest in individual, scriptural, structural, and hierarchical modes. These different forms of authority play distinct roles in shaping religious beliefs, practices, and institutions. Religious authority is a divine legitimation "granted to religious structures, gatekeepers or representing the sentiments and decision making of God on earth, trust-based relationship given to institutional professionals, or self-appointed leaders."[72] Unlike other authorities, Islamic authority is intrinsically linked to tradition, hence its wide acceptance as traditional. Tradition is often used to portray the behaviors seen within a given community as being resistive to modernity or unable to accept

---

[67] Campbell Heidi, *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*, (New York: Routledge, 2021), 14.
[68] Ibid.,
[69] Helland, Christopher. "Online Religion as Lived Religion: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet," *Online – Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet,* Volume 01.1, 2005, DOI: 10.11588/heidok.00005823.
[70] Ibid.,
[71] Ibid.,
[72] H.A Campbell, *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*, 20.

change, however this is not totally accurate.[73] The word "tradition" is not a rejection of change or Regressivism, or backwardness.[74] Instead, "tradition is, as Shils put it, "a traditum. . . . anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present" and it is also anything perceived to have been passed from one generation to the next; or, as Acton defined it: a belief or practice transmitted from one generation to another and accepted as authoritative, or deferred to, without argument".[75] Until the eighteenth century, traditional authority stood as the only form of recognized Islamic authority. This model of authority maintained dominance across the Muslim world until the advent and widespread use of print technology in the nineteenth century, followed by the rapid rise of the internet in the 1990s. Until recently, individuals had to wait in line at the Ministry of *Iftaāʾ* to receive a fatwa from the "religious authorities" (juridical verdicts).[76] However, the extensive availability of online religious information, as well as the reliability it attained over time, has changed the dynamics of religious authority, resulting in an enormous change in the religious landscape. New authorities are generated, challenging the existing authorities (although not completely eliminating them), which is seen as both an advantage and disadvantage. In this cutting-edge space of the internet, traditional authorities continued but struggled to find any satisfactory platforms. As a result, they sought to embrace their already fragmented and distractible audiences, those who are attracted to z-authorities (authorities that are appropriate for a generation as fast and spontaneous as that of the z generation).

---

[73] Hamdeh, Emad. Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā', and Self Learning. *American Journal of Islam and Society*. 2020. 37(1-2), 67–102.
[74] Graham, W. (1993). Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation. The Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 23(3), 495-522. doi:10.2307/206100.
[75] Ibid.,
[76] Bunt, Gary R. *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority,* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

The emergence of the phenomena known as "Sheikh Google" or machine fatwa poses a growing challenge not only to the validity of the online religious experience but also to traditional religious authorities. A user seeking a fatwa on a certain issue may access a broad selection of both traditional and modern fatwas with the option of prioritizing and selecting what is most relevant to his or her circumstances with the touch of a finger. New authorities are generated, challenging the existing authorities (although not completely eliminating them), which is seen as both an advantage and disadvantage. In this cutting-edge space of the internet, traditional authorities continued but struggled to find any satisfactory platforms. As a result, they sought to embrace their already fragmented and distractible audiences, those who are attracted to z-authorities (authorities that are appropriate for a generation as fast and spontaneous as that of the z generation).

Shikha Ḥakima serves as a notable example of an esteemed American female religious figure within a Sufi faction, leading the virtual religious engagements of the al-Shadhilya Sufi order based in California. Several examples prove that the internet has increased the opportunities for Muslim women to advocate for empowerment, progress, support, and freedom. These women have created a forum through which they can convey their concerns and share their experiences regarding the daily obstacles they face, despite cultural or traditional restrictions that previously impeded their ability to do so. The internet has supplied these women with new opportunities to amplify their perspectives and participate in discussions that contribute to their individual and collective development.

Identity

Digitalizing religious experience including Islamic rituals has also affected the identity-making process for religious cyberspace users. While offline identity is inherently fluid and changing, the internet has made it much more volatile. Zygmunt Bauman was surely correct in his contention, "If the modern problem of identity was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the postmodern problem of identity is primarily how to avoid fixation and they keep the options open."[77] According to Gary Bunt's study *Virtually Islamic: Computer-mediated Communication and Cyber Islamic Environments* (2000), the virtual domain may include individuals who do not have a distinct identity. He emphasizes that this vast cyberspace does not need networked involvement and is accessible to all audiences, regardless of faith or allegiance. The idea that online identities are more fractured and warped than physical identities is commonly thought to be a result of anonymity.[78] In Lövheim's work *Young People, Religious Identity, and the Internet*, online interactions can also play a significant role in the development of identity, as well as face-to-face contacts, even if they are less stable.[79] While existing literature has explored this fluidity of identity in the context of digital spaces, there a significant gap pertaining to the influence of digital spaces on the intricate process of identity formation. This study seeks to fill this gap by giving a particular emphasis on the role of digital spaces in shaping individuals' identities.

The shift to the online format is thought to pose a fundamental challenge to traditional ideas of space-based identity, which have been closely associated with physical place. Throughout sociological and anthropological literature, place has been represented as a

---

[77] Zygmunt Bauman, In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*, 18.
[78] Wael Hegazy, Muslim Online Prayer, 2020.
[79] Mia Lövheim, Young People, Religious Identity, and the Internet in *"Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet"* ed., Lorne L. Dawson, Douglas E. Cowan, (London: Routledge, 2004), 60.

critical part of religious identity. This picture may be found in important works such as Emile Durkheim's writings in 1915 and Victor Turner's in 1969, as well as more contemporary additions by Catherine Brace, Adrian R. Bailey, David C. Harvey in 2006, and Erika Summers-Effler in 2007. However, these works portray the link between religious identity and spatial aspects as a result of communal goals rather than as an inherent trait. The depiction of place as holy does not imply intrinsic holiness, but rather highlights its function in fostering social cohesiveness and a shared sense of identity among community members. This study departs from their perspective by emphasizing the significance awarded to the sacred space as both a reservoir and a catalyst for religious identity. For instance, the mosque holds such great reverence and holiness in the lives of Muslims that it is often seen as the guiding force of a Muslim’s life. The mosque was understood as essential in the development of the Muslim community and in the formation of Muslims' unique identities. It was the foundation for the Muslim community. Hence, modern religious authorities insist that the internet cannot replace the physical mosque in terms of its significance in the formation of religious and national identities.

However, I argue that cyberspace should not be seen as a competitor of physical space, but rather a digital extension of it. Despite its virtual nature, the effectiveness of cyberspace should not be underestimated, as it serves to promote not merely communication among religious groups, but also the conduct of worship itself. Further, it offers new avenues for religious expression and community involvement by facilitating social interactions and supporting religious activities.

Literature review

In this literature review, I will delve into the evolution and expansion of literature on digital religion, with a specific focus on digital Islam, in order to contextualize cyber-Islam studies within the wider context of global online religious studies. As the study of online Islamic rituals involves the examination of body and space, this section will also provide a comprehensive overview of existing research on body and space in ritualistic practices. By drawing on these foundational studies, we can gain valuable insights into the intricate interplay between virtual religious experiences and physical components in rituals.

This literature review will also highlight existing gaps within the field of digital religion, particularly regarding digital Islam. By identifying these caesurae, I will demonstrate the significance and relevance of my work in supplementing these areas of inquiry by providing valuable insights and addressing unanswered questions about the individual and communal impacts and implications of online Islamic rituals. By bridging these gaps, the study aspires to enrich the broader understanding of the evolving landscape of religious practices in the digital age.

Prior to the 1990s, academic studies on digital religion were very limited. Two pivotal works emerged paving the way for the investigation of religious practices in cyberspace. John Coate and Hilarie Gardner's *Cyberspace Innkeeping: Building Online Community* proposed the notion of two distinct spaces: the physical space where individuals share a common locality, and the online space where people connect based on shared interests.[80] Meanwhile, S.D. O'Leary's *Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks* documented the rapid integration of the Internet into social

---

[80] John Coate and Hilarie Gardner, *Cyberspace Innkeeping: Building Online Community*, (Internet Culture, Misc, 1992).

and religious arenas, marking the true inception of academic inquiry into mapping religious beliefs and practices onto cyberspace.[81] During this early phase, scholars such as Hojsgaard and Warburg recognized the immense potential and versatility of the internet in shaping and impacting various aspects of society.[82] Heidi Campbell describes this period as one characterized by exploration and documentation of new online phenomena.[83] Researchers attempted to navigate through utopian and dystopian discourses, envisioning both positive and negative consequences of the internet on the world as it was known then.[84] At this stage, the internet was primarily viewed as an abstract concept with limited theoretical grounding, yet this primarily exploratory research was instrumental in laying the foundation for future developments in the field.

From 1997 onwards, a plethora of digital studies emerged, marking the second and more realistic wave of research on the subject. Notable works by authors such as J. Zaleski, M. Wertheim, Brenda Bresher, along with Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan played a prominent role in this new wave.[85] These studies affirmed the revolutionary and transformative impact of the internet on religious beliefs and practices. Unlike the earlier exploratory phase, this second wave of literature delved deeper into the subject matter,

---

[81] O'Leary, S.D. Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64, 781-808, 1996. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/LXIV.4.781.
[82] Hojsgaard, M. and Warburg, M, "Introduction: Waves of Research," in M. Hojsgaard & M. Warburg (eds.) Religion and Cyberspace, (London: Routledge, 2005), 8.
[83] Heidi Campbell. Digital religion, *Understanding religious practice in new media worlds*, (London: Routledge: 2013), 8.
[84] Heidi Campbell. Digital religion, *Understanding religious practice in new media worlds*.
[85] Zaleski, J, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997); Wertheim, M, The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet, (London: Virago, 1999); Brenda Bresher. *Give Me That online religion*, (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2001); Lorne L. Dawson, Douglas E, Cowan. *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

calling for broader sociological, psychological, political, and philosophical debates on topics such as online identity and online community.[86]

The third wave of digital studies, emerging from 2007 onwards, introduced scholars like Christopher Helland and Heidi Campbell as main contributors to this phase. Campbell's seminal works on online identity, authority, and the formation of religious communities have been instrumental in shaping this discipline. In this wave, researchers and academics began to delve more deeply into questions related to ritual, community, and identity, exploring how the internet's integration into everyday life was influencing religious digital practices, such as religious rituals (e.g., Helland 2007; Krueger 2004), community (e.g., Cheong and Poon 2009; Campbell 2010), and identity (e.g., Lövheim 2006; Cowan 2005).[87] This phase of research moved beyond the exploration and documentation of online phenomena to analyze how digital technologies were impacting the religious landscape and shaping religious experiences in the virtual realm.

The current phase of digital studies represents the fourth wave, which is characterized by a focus on refining and developing methodological approaches and creating typologies for categorization and interpretation.[88] Researchers in this phase have theorized various methodological approaches to study digital religious, social, and cultural phenomena. New research tools, such as Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), have emerged, enabling researchers to access a vast amount of data and reach users with greater ease.[89] In addition,

---

[86] Hojsgaard, M. and Warburg, M, "Introduction: Waves of Research," 9.
[87] Heidi Campbell. Digital religion, *Understanding religious practice in new media worlds,* 9.
[88] Ibid., 10.
[89] Alphia Possamai-Inesedy and Alan Nixon, ed., *The Digital Social: Religion and Belief*, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter), December 2, 2019.

this phase calls for in-depth studies delving into the lived experiences of online religions, particularly focusing on the practitioners who actively engage in these online religious practices. By exploring the perspectives and experiences of these practitioners, researchers can attain valuable insights into the transformative nature of digital technologies on religious beliefs, practices, and communities in contemporary society.

Indeed, the studies on digital Islam have emerged later than general digital religion research. Gary Bunt's pioneering work stands out regarding digital Islamic issues. His studies such as *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environment* and *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* have significantly advanced the understanding of digital Islam. While Heidi Campbell has written on digital Islam within the broader framework of digital religion, Gary Bunt's dedicated focus on digital Islamic environments sets his work apart. His 2018 book, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority*, specifically analyzes the transformation of Islamic authority in cyberspace. Bunt skillfully traces the shift from traditional religious authority to online sources, including religious bloggers who have emerged as competitors and even replacements for traditional authorities in some contexts. This transformation poses a potential threat to the position of traditional Islamic authorities within their Muslim communities. His work sheds light on the complexities and implications of the evolving landscape of religious authority in the digital age.

Likewise, the works of Sahar Khamis and Nawawy in *Islam Dot Com* and Robert Rozenhal in *Cyber Sufis: Virtual Expressions of the American Muslim Experience* explore the integration of religious beliefs and practices in cyberspace. Khamis and Nawawy address issues such as digital Islamic pluralism, feminism, and political activism, shedding light on

the diverse representations of Islam. In addition, Rozenhal's ethnographic study delves into the virtualization of Sufi rituals, religious education, spiritual practices, and public outreach within the Inyati Sufi order. His research demonstrates how the digital paradigm complements traditional ritual practices while adapting to the modern shift towards cyber rituals. These works contribute valuable insights to the field of digital Islamic studies and its impact on Muslim communities.

Three significant studies have emerged after the Covid-19 pandemic focusing on online Islamic rituals, a subject that was previously overlooked in the broader framework of digital religion research. Mansur Ali's abovementioned study, *E-Nikaḥ; Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh* delves into the practice of virtual marriage contracts, examining classical juristic perspectives on the spatial requirement of physical presence for valid marriage. His research successfully demonstrates how cyberspace can serve as an alternative to physical space for conducting marriage ceremonies. My study, *Muslim Online Prayer in a Sociocultural Context*, focuses on the debate and social and religious implications of online congregational prayer for Muslim individuals and communities, analyzing the transformative nature of virtual prayer experiences and their impact on Muslim religious practices.[90] The third study, *Digital Islam in Indonesia: The Shift of Ritual and Religiosity during Covid-19* by Wahyudi Akmaliah and Ahmad Najib Burhani, examines the first online congregational prayer held in Indonesia, led by Imam Wawan Gunawan.[91] The researchers analyze the legitimacy of cyber prayer and its religious

[90] Wael Hegazy, "Muslim Online Prayer in a Sociocultural Context", *CyberOrient*, Vol. 14, Issue No. 2, (2020), 64-84.
[91] Akmaliah, Wahyudi and Burhani, Ahmad Najib, "Digital Islam in Indonesia: The Shift of Ritual and Religiosity during Covid-19".

implications on the Indonesian community, shedding light on the changing dynamics of Islamic rituals during the pandemic. These studies significantly contribute to the understanding of the evolving landscape of online Islamic rituals, providing valuable insights into the intersections of technology, religious practices, and social contexts in the contemporary world.

Despite the abundance of theoretical studies on the digital Islamic experience, few empirical explorations of the implications of online religious practices on Muslim individuals and communities exist. Understanding the lived experiences of actual practitioners who engage with online rituals is essential for comprehensively evaluating the broader landscape of online religious experience. The need for studies that delve into the real-world impact of online religious practices has been acknowledged by influential scholars in the field of religion, media, and digital Islam, such as Heidi Campbell, Dawson & Cowan, Enzo Pace and Robert Rozenhal.[92] Addressing this gap will result in a more holistic understanding of the digital Islamic landscape, in both theoretical and empirical veins. This will facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of the evolving dynamics of online religious practices and their influence on Muslim individuals and communities in contemporary times.

Methods

Drawing on Meredith McGuire's argument that religion should not be solely studied based on how religious organizations define it, but rather on how it is experienced in people's everyday lives, this study conducted empirical research on diverse communities in the U.S

---

[92] Heidi Campbell, *Digital religion,* 21; Dawson & Cowan, *Religion Online, Finding Faith on the Internet*, 10; Enzo Pace, Luigi Berzano and Giuseppe Giordan, “Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning” in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, 36; Robert Rozenhal, *Cyber Sufis*.

and Egypt, encompassing various affiliations such as Sunni and Sufi, as well as diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds.[93] I analyzed the experiences of Muslim individuals and communities who participated in both offline and online rituals. By doing so, this study reveals valuable insights into the implications of authority, identity, and authenticity, along with the complex dimensions of the online religious experience. This research effectively bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and lived realities, providing a comprehensive understanding of the digital Islamic experience.

Attending to these concerns, this study consists of two main parts: a theoretical exploration and an empirical discussion.

Theoretical: Textual Analysis of Religio-legal Doctrines Pertaining to Rituals

The first section of the analysis delves into the legal and theoretical aspects of Islamic rituals, both in spatial and non-spatial contexts. It also plumbs the depths of mystical and philosophical perspectives surrounding these rituals, while paying close attention to their legitimization by religious authorities and sacred texts. Through a careful examination of religious texts, legal sources, and scholarly interpretations, I lay bare the essence of various ritual practices within the Islamic tradition. By discerning the essential ideals, principles, significance, and requirements of these rituals, we gain a profound understanding of their essence and meaning.

To cultivate a deeper comprehension of the evolution of online ritual practices, I undertook a thorough analysis of classical authoritative texts on rituals to understand the historical origins and traditional methods of performing these rituals, as well as their

[93] Meredith McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

evolution. This method facilitates a better understanding of the emergence and widespread acceptance of virtual rituals in contemporary religious practices.

I employ a multifaceted approach to the literature, utilizing various layers of reasoning. It encompasses interpretations of Qur'anic verses, elucidations of prophetic traditions, presentations of theological justifications, examinations of philosophical perspectives, and analyses of juridical rulings. By integrating these diverse components, a comprehensive framework emerges, shedding light on the underlying rationale and hierarchy of Islamic rituals. The synthesis yields what can be termed as the 'standard model,' which ascribes paramount significance to both the physical body and the surrounding space. In this model, the interplay between the physical aspects of rituals and their spatial context is highlighted, reflecting a holistic approach within the Islamic tradition.

The second phase of this analytical process involved collecting modern fatwas addressing the practice of online rituals. These fatwas were sourced from official and non-official religious authorities, covering a wide range of distant rituals. Examples include prayer (both obligatory and supererogatory), *Jalsat Tilawah* (Qur'an recitation circles), *Khutbah* (sermons), *dhikr* (remembrance sessions), *E-Nikah* (marriage contract via Internet), and *Iʿtikāf* (staying at a mosque for a specific time). This layer of discussion is presented as a comparative synthesis, shedding light on how juristic rulings are formulated and how the prioritization process of Islamic Uṣūl (principles) and Maqāṣid (purposes of Sharīʿa) is conducted. The discourse involves proponents and opponents of online rituals, each defending their positions by citing the Quran and Sunnah. The study systematically collects and categorizes these textual references into three groups: relevant texts, supporting texts,

and general texts. Particular attention is paid to the relevant and supporting texts to provide a comprehensive analysis.

Here I employ three levels of analysis:

1. Descriptive analysis, which outlines the essential components of Islamic rituals as perceived by both groups, with a specific emphasis on the significance of the body and physical attendance in the formation of these rituals.
2. Exploratory analysis, which delves into the intricate relationships between rituals, the human body, and the physical space of worship.
3. Comparative analysis, which highlights the main distinctions between these opposing perspectives and offers insights into the larger context of Islamic rituals.

Through this examination, I offer a comprehensive understanding of the implications and interpretations surrounding the practice of online Islamic rituals.

Empirical: Online Ritual Practices of Muslim Practitioners

While the theoretical part provides a foundational framework and understanding of the religious and legal aspects, the empirical part enriches the study by examining the actual experiences and practices of Muslim practitioners in relation to online rituals. By aligning theoretical analysis with real-life examples, I hope to bridge the gap between abstract concepts and concrete manifestations, uncovering the complexities and nuances of online Islamic rituals as they are practiced and understood by Muslims in their daily lives. This combination of theoretical and empirical approaches strengthens the validity and relevance of

the study's findings, providing a holistic understanding of the significance and implications of online rituals within the context of contemporary Muslim religious practices.

The selection of diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural communities is a fundamental aspect of this study, aiming to provide a broad recognition of online Islamic rituals within multiple Muslim contexts. By comparing examples from the United States and Egypt, I show how different political, social, and cultural factors influence the interpretations and practices of Islamic rituals in virtual spaces. The choice of these two contexts acknowledges that the impacts and implications of the shift from offline to online rituals may vary significantly between Muslim communities in the United States and those in Egypt due to their distinct socio-political climates and cultural norms. Furthermore, the inclusion of various ethnic and gender variations enriches the study by presenting a multifaceted portrayal of the effects of transitioning rituals to cyberspace. By encompassing Sunni and Sufi Muslims from diverse backgrounds, ideologies, and identities, the study draws a comprehensive picture of the impact of virtualization on religious experiences across different dimensions.

That impacts of the virtualization of religious Islamic experiences--rituals in particular--can vary significantly between different contexts is a central focus of the present study, which aims to understand how these impacts are perceived and experienced in diverse Muslim communities. A clear example of this difference is visible in the approach to virtualizing congregational prayer in the United States compared to Egypt. In the U.S context, Sunni American Muslim communities in places like Santa Barbara and Sacramento, California, appear more open to the idea of virtualizing certain aspects of congregational prayer. They may readily accept the presence of an online Imam leading Friday prayers or conducting Ramadan night prayers. In contrast, their Sunni counterparts in Egypt generally

tend to disapprove of the virtualization of such rituals, meeting the idea with skepticism. Even Egyptian Imams who relocate to the U.S. may find greater freedom to conduct virtualized Islamic rituals there, as demonstrated by the cases of Sacramento and Glendale in California. This disparity in acceptance and attitude towards virtualization highlights the significance of the socio-cultural and religious context in shaping the reception of online rituals. Factors such as cultural norms, religious traditions, and the attitudes of religious authorities play a pivotal role in determining the permissibility and acceptance of virtual rituals within different Muslim communities.

The virtualization of religious experiences has also brought significant changes in terms of authority and gender equality within the Muslim community. It has opened new possibilities for Muslim women to actively participate and even compete with male religious authorities, as it provides a platform where women can engage with religious practices and rituals, express their beliefs, and assume leadership roles more freely than in traditional physical spaces. In some cases, this has resulted in the emergence of female leaders within certain Muslim communities, challenging traditional gender roles and norms. Shikha Hakima of the Al-Shadhilya Sufi Center in San Diego serves as a notable example of a female leader who has assumed a prominent role within the community through online channels, illustrating how the virtual space can serve as a catalyst for promoting gender equality and empowering women in religious leadership positions.

However, it is essential to recognize that the impact of virtualization on gender equality may not be uniform across all contexts. Cultural and contextual differences play a significant role in shaping the response to female leadership within religious spaces. In the case of the Egyptian Sufi order Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammadiya, which is affiliated with the

same Al-Shadhilya origin as the San Diego center, there has been resistance to female leadership. Despite the opportunities provided by the virtual space, this specific context has maintained traditional gender norms and has not embraced female leadership within the religious hierarchy. This highlights the need to approach these developments with consideration for the diverse perspectives and practices within the Muslim community.

Chapters Layout

Following this introductory chapter where I have explored the intellectual history of physicality and spatiality as it related to religious practices along with the virtualization of religious practices, this dissertation is comprised of three chapters:

This dissertation has three chapters:

Chapter One: Conceptualization of the Body in Islamic Rituals

Taking as its central question the secondary role of physicality in the Islamic ritualistic context, this chapter undertakes a comprehensive exploration of the body. It delves into the legal implications of the potential absence of the body in the structure of Islamic rituals, while also engaging with the philosophical discourse on the hierarchical relationship between the soul and body in Islam, drawing from the rich tradition of classical Muslim philosophy.

In addition, the chapter sheds light on the often-overlooked aspect of symbolism within Islamic rituals, offering a revitalization of its significance. The empirical example of pilgrimage is employed to bolster the argument presented in this chapter, highlighting the secondary status of physicality within the broader framework of Islamic rituals.

This chapter includes the following sections:

1. ***Juridical discussion of Body implications in Islamic rituals***

This section evaluates the hypothesis of excluding physicality from the structure of *ʻibādāt* (Islamic rituals) by examining various juridical perspectives on the matter. The discussion focuses on the concept of *al-Niyābah* (proxy) in Islam to determine the extent to which physicality, including the body itself, can be marginalized or entirely omitted from the realm of Islamic acts of worship. Additionally, this section delves into the significance of intention and its central role in *bādāt*, highlighting several cases where intention is an indispensable element. In conclusion, this section analyzes the requirements of bodily and spatial cleanliness (*ṭahārat al-badan wa al-makān*) in rituals. It presents a range of classical and pre-modern juridical perspectives on the matter, highlighting the emphasis placed on mental elements within rituals and the potential disregard for physical requirements, underscoring the prioritization of the inner, mental aspects of worship over the external, physical aspects.

2. ***Symbolic Rituals***

Building upon the previous argument regarding the secondary hierarchical order of the physical element in rituals, this section delves into the significance of the symbolic aspects inherent in various Islamic rituals. It provides a detailed examination of the juridical treatment of four symbolic acts of worship in Islam, namely Taymaum (dry ablution), Masḥ ʿAla Al-Khuffain (wiping over the socks), kissing the black stone, and al-Amr Bi al-Maʿrūf Wa Nahi ʿan al-Munkar bi al-Qalb (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil with one's

heart). Through the exploration of these rituals, the section underscores the profound symbolism and spiritual essence that supersedes the physical aspects in Islamic worship.

3. Theory of Body in Islamic Philosophy

This section centers on the philosophical examination of the status of the body and soul within the context of Islamic rituals. By scrutinizing the perspectives of renowned classical Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farābī (d. 950), Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), and Averroes (d. 1198), this section provides an in-depth exploration of why the soul and spiritual dimensions hold greater significance in Islamic rituals compared to their physical counterparts. The section sheds light on the elevated value placed on the soul and the profound spiritual aspects of Islamic worship.

4. Ḥajj as an Example of a Mental Ritual

In this section, the focus is placed on the primacy of the mental and spiritual aspects in the context of Islamic pilgrimage. Taking pilgrimage as a prominent practice in many religions, this section employs the insights of eminent anthropologists such as Victor Turner (d. 1983) and Alan Morinis (b. 1949) to highlight the emphasis on the mental dimension rather than the physical act in the Christian contexts of their studies. I then evaluate their findings in relation to the mental and symbolic elements inherent within the Islamic pilgrimage. The section continues to explore recent endeavors to virtualize the experience of Ḥajj, including the emergence of Ḥajj websites that offer simulated experiences of the Islamic pilgrimage. These developments are examined in relation to the broader understanding of the mental and symbolic dimensions in Islamic rituals.

Chapter Two: Conceptualization of Space in Islamic Rituals

In this chapter, the central thematic is the question of whether space is an essential element of Islamic rituals, querying the hypothesis of potentially excluding space from the equation. There I look at the various juristic positions and perspectives regarding this issue, providing a comprehensive analysis of the spectrum of views. Furthermore, the chapter presents a range of supporting examples from classical, premodern, and modern times to illustrate the concept of distant rituals – instances where the physical presence in a specific space is not deemed obligatory for the performance of certain Islamic rituals. Through this examination, the chapter sheds light on the complex and evolving relationship between space and Islamic rituals over different historical periods.

The chapter includes following five sections:

1. ***Juridical Discussion of Spatial Significance in Islamic Rituals***

This section is devoted to a legal analysis regarding the importance of space in the performance of Islamic rituals, with a particular focus on congregational acts such as Friday prayer. It delves into the diverse juridical viewpoints concerning the spatial prerequisites in these acts of worship, exploring the implications of the absence of this spatial component. Considering these aspects, I conclude the section with a hierarchy of ritual components in Islam, emphasizing the significance of non-spatial elements (i.e., mental elements) in the performance of Islamic rituals and how it relates to other essential elements of worship.

2. ***Ship Prayers***

This section serves as an empirical exploration anchoring the theoretical discussions on non-physical/distant Islamic rituals. It provides practical illustrations to highlight the secondary, and sometimes marginal, role of physical space. By examining the 9th-century "Ship Prayer" model, which served as a precedent for subsequent examples like "Radio Prayer" and "Online Prayer," the section presents a comprehensive analysis of the legal perspectives of 9th and later Muslim jurists, encompassing the views of the four schools of Islamic law.

The examination of the "Ship Prayer" not only sheds light on its legal implications but also opens the door to exploring related spatial issues, such as "Market Prayer," "Prayer behind walls," and the concept of *Mutāba'ah Makāniyah* (spatial following). These issues are elaborated upon with pertinent examples and supporting evidence to further illustrate the significance of the mental and symbolic aspects in shaping the practice of Islamic rituals.

3. Radio Prayers

This section delves into the emergence of another distant ritual model, referred to as the "Radio Prayer," which, despite an interval of over 10 centuries, maintains a similar logic to the previous example of the ship prayer. The focal point of this section is a treatise authored by the Moroccan Muslim scholar al-Ghumāri (d. 1960) at the beginning of the 20th century. In response to a question concerning the permissibility of attending the Friday congregational prayer in a mosque while listening to the Friday Sermon through a radio broadcast, al-Ghumāri wrote a book titled *Al-Iqnaʿ fi Seḥat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyaʿ* (The Persuasion of Veracity of Friday Prayer Following the Radio). In this book, he

permitted Muslims not only to follow the khuṭbah via the radio broadcast but also to participate in the prayer itself through radio broadcast.

This section surveys the various juridical perspectives surrounding this issue, highlighting a significant fatwa from the former Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Gad al-Ḥaq (d. 1996). The fatwa, dated January 16, 1979, was in response to a question raised by the Mauritanian Director of the Arab Cultural Center in Nouakchott, seeking clarification on the validity of following the Jumʿah khuṭbah and prayer via radio for the Mauritanian employees working in different regions of the country.

4. *Online Prayer*

This section delves into the cutting-edge distant ritual model known as "online prayer." While it has roots dating back more than 20 years, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought online prayer to the forefront, highlighting the disagreements among classical and contemporary scholars on this matter. The section presents a comprehensive analysis of the debate and the controversy surrounding online prayer, citing relevant examples and evidence used by both proponents and opponents. It concludes with a broader examination of the question of whether digital space can replace physical space, discussing the juridical and sociological arguments on this issue. Moreover, it extends the topic to include insights from renowned researchers and intellectuals in the field of digital religion, who have explored similar issues in other faiths.

5. *Itiḥād al-Majlis (unity of spatial session) in E-Nikaḥ*

This final section of the chapter explores another empirical example known as *Itiḥād al-Majlis*, or the physical unity among marriage contractors, which classical jurists raised as

a condition for a valid marriage in Islam. The issue dates back to the 8th century, though it has recently been revisited by the English researcher Mansur Ali as discussed above. The section probes the juridical, sociological, and digital dimensions of Ali's work before applying it to the wider topic of the marginality of physical space in conducting Islamic rituals.

This section further investigates contemporary fatwas on the same issue through various fatwa websites, representing both proponents and opponents of virtual Islamic marriage. These fatwas shed light on the level of authenticity given to digital space to replace physical space and the extent to which they believe in the secondary role of space in rituals.

Chapter Three: The Impacts of Bodily and Spatial Absence from Islamic Rituals on Muslim Communities

The preceding two chapters lay the foundations for the theoretical framework surrounding the distant Islamic rituals that concludes this work. My primary focus revolves around the legal and philosophical analysis of non-physical/spatial acts of worship. Building upon established theoretical foundations, I employ an empirical method in this chapter to collect data, observe, and make conclusions regarding the impacts of shifting from offline to online places in religious practice. The focus is on identifying the most substantial impacts resulting from the adoption and performance of online rituals, and I inspect the practical implications of practicing religion in the digital realm as well as the real-world impact of such practices. Specifically, this chapter examines the ramifications for authority, authenticity, and identity.

The discussion proceeds in three sections:

1. ***Authority**:*

In this section, the concept of authority is engaged through diverse perspectives, including sociological, philosophical, and religious viewpoints, with a concentration on the Islamic understanding of authority and how it relates to tradition. I emphasize that tradition should not be equated with radicalism or backwardness, but rather as a connection to the past and a preservation of originality. The section inquires into the intricate relationship between authority and tradition, shedding light on the nuanced understanding of authority within the Islamic context, ultimately providing a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted nature of authority and its interconnectedness with tradition.

This section also offers a comprehensive exploration of the shifting dynamics between offline and online authority, including the unique characteristics of online authority and its impact on traditional sources of authority. Specific attention is given to the phenomenon of Sheikh Google, machine fatwa, and online Muftis, which exemplify the changing landscape of authority in the digital age. The discussion highlights the implications of this shift on traditional authority structures within Muslim communities, especially regarding gender equality. Practical examples from various contexts, including the United States, Egypt, and Indonesia, are examined to illustrate the complexities and nuances of these changes. Furthermore, I discuss the responses of traditional religious authorities to the emergence of online authority and "neo-traditional authorities" who actively engage with cyberspace to maintain their influence and compete with other sources of influence. Overall, this section details the transformations in authority dynamics brought about by the digital age and the intricate interactions between traditional and online forms of authority.

2. *Authenticity*

This section is dedicated to examining the authenticity of Online Islamic Rituals and addressing the concerns and doubts surrounding their validity. Two key reasons for perceiving online religious experiences as lacking authenticity are explored in detail: the first centers around the alleged absence of social bonds within the digital realm. I present empirical evidence that challenges this claim and demonstrates the effectiveness of cyberspace in fostering social connections. The second reason relates to the perception of the virtual world as profane and unsuitable for sacred content. While it is true that cyberspace can be vulnerable to fraud and scams due to its uncensored nature, I underscore the growing trust and reliability users place in online platforms, which in turn strengthens their credibility and authenticity. Furthermore, I outline the interconnectedness between the virtual world and the physical world, arguing that cyberspace is not a separate realm but rather a digital extension of the physical world. By addressing these concerns and providing insightful explanations, this section aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the authenticity of Online Islamic Rituals and their integration within the broader religious experience.

3. *Identity*

This section provides a final exploration of identity formation, examining both offline and online identities. I outline the key characteristics of offline identity and compare them to the distinct qualities of online identity, highlighting its ambivalence and relative instability. I proceed to narrow down to the realm of religious identity, critiquing existing literature that examines how religious users develop and negotiate their identities within the context of online spiritual practices.

This section contributes to the field by introducing the concept of "spatial identity," which sheds light on the overlooked aspect of physical space in the formation of religious identity. It delineates how the absence of physical space in online religious practices can potentially impact and undermine the spatial dimension of identity that users previously experienced in physical religious spaces. The section provides a nuanced analysis of the interplay between offline and online identities, deepening our understanding of the complexities and nuances of identity formation in the digital age.

Chapter One

Conceptualization of Body in Islamic Rituals

Introduction:

The corporeal dimension constitutes an integral facet of ritualistic practices within the Islamic tradition. Considering the paramount importance ascribed to these rituals and the prevailing characterization of Islam as a religion predominantly centered on orthopraxy, it is not uncommon for Islam to be delineated through the prism of its ritualistic aspects.[94] Further, it is commonly believed that the juridical requirements of the body-and-location cleanliness (*ṭahārat al-badan wa al-makān*) in rituals solidify the position of the body and space as essential components of the Islamic rituals. Much is lost in this picture, and our research provides more evidence of its simplicity. An in-depth investigation of the full range of classical scholars' rules and exceptions reveals how Islamic rituals have been perceived without excessive emphasis on space or body.

The mental side of Islamic rituals is, indeed, much more important than the physical side. And, in fact, Islamic rituals can be conceived without body or space. During the following discussion, I will describe how the body was conceived in classical legal thought and demonstrate that, although body and space are seen as pillars or at least strict criteria for validating the Islamic rituals, the status of these elements in the construction of these rituals is always subject to controversy. As an example, a group of discussions on 'proxy worship' (i.e., al-niyābah fī al-ʿibādāt) through which scholars negotiated the presence of the body in

[94] Hawting, G. ed, *The Development of Islamic Ritual*, (London: Routledge, 2006).

constructing physical rituals such as prayer, fasting, *zakāh* (almsgiving), and pilgrimage, will be provided.

With a deeper and closer examination of the composition of Islamic acts of worship, we will notice unexplained or implied aspects of these acts. For instance, *Taymaum* (dry ablution), *Masḥ ʿAla Al-Khuffain* (wiping over the socks), kissing the black stone, and *al-Amr Bi al-Maʿrūf Wa Nahi ʿan al-Munkar bi al-Qalb* (Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil with one's heart) are very symbolic rituals where physical movements are not the main component of the act.

Formalists tend to read formalism in legal texts of which they are unfamiliar; this is perhaps an unfair reputation of Muslim jurists. Lawmakers may indeed be explicitly concerned with non-spiritual aspects of their subject matter (e.g., rituals and market and family laws), but without absolute negligence of the elemental and symbolic, which are implicitly incorporated. Narrowing our scope to Islamic jurists, it is not impossible to find jurists who act as philosophers or mystics who deeply engage in what is beyond the physical world. Muslim jurists go beyond body and space to include non-physical-spatial dimensions. Prioritizing the spiritual dimensions of the Islamic rituals may seem explicitly rare, yet is actually widely accepted and dominant in both legal and theological Islamic circles. Fiqh books provide a plethora of examples of laws and rules where the non-physical aspects of the Islamic acts of worship have been emphasized and deemed consequential.

"He (God, the legislator) commanded purifying these apparent organs from minor Ḥadath (impurity) and major Ḥadath as a reminder of purifying the inside from cheating, envy, arrogance, bad thinking of other Muslims, and similar sinful heart actions. The

command of purification is not actually for physical purification because having ritualistic impurity does not generally inhibit the performance of rituals, as in fasting and Zakāh, which are valid even though the impurity. Furthermore, Iman (belief in God) – the supreme ritual – is still valid with impurity. This is because impurity is not a sin or a cause of punishment in contrast to the inner bad desires (previously mentioned such as cheating, envy, arrogance, etc.) it contains. ***Therefore, God commanded purifying these apparent limbs as a signifier and indicator of purifying the inside from these bad desires.*** *Further, purification of the Nafs (soul) from them is mandatory based on four bases: First, Sama' (textual evidence), second, Aql (by reason), and the third is to show thankfulness for the favor different from the favor for whom prayer is made. This favor is having these limbs not only as means for attaining great favors but also means for most God's favors. Hands are used for catching and holding what we need, legs help us to go anywhere, face and head are locations of all senses that let us recognize God's gifts including eyes, nose, mouth, and ears that are means of vision, smell, taste, and hearing and also ways towards joy, entertainment, and other life's delights. Thus, God commanded to purify the apparent limbs recognizing their functions as a means to these favors. The fourth base upon which the command of purifying limbs was built is the expiation of sins committed by these limbs including taking Haram (illegal things) by hands, walking to Haram, looking at Haram, eating Haram, and listening to Haram (including meaningless speech or lie).* These were the words of the renowned Ḥanafī jurist 'Ala' al-Dīn Al-Kasānī (d. 1191), the author of *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fi Tartīb al-Sharāi'*.

These words are quoted from the renowned Ḥanafī jurist 'Ala' al-Dīn Al-Kasānī (d. 1191), the author of *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fi Tartīb al-Sharāi'*. In the subject of *at-Ṭahārah* (purity), always it is the first topic in any *fiqh* book, he viewed the divine commands of

physical purification as symbolic of spiritual purity that includes purifying the self of bad desires, whims, and immorality. In addition, he elaborated on explaining that most Islamic rituals such as *zakāh* (almsgiving), and *sawm* (fasting) do not require physical purification demonstrating that ritualistic purity precedes the physical one.

Likewise, the Yemeni Shāfiʿī scholar, Al-Omrānī (d. 1163), placed a greater emphasis on the intention than on physical purity in his book al-Bayān. Based on the *Niyyah*, he referred to several instances in which physical cleanliness could be completely or partially neglected. In these cases, the same bodily action is practiced, but the result is different based on the intention. For instance, if a *Junb* (ritualistic impure person after sexual intercourse or a wet dream) person made a *ghusl* with the intention of eliminating major impurities, the *ghusl* is valid, but if the intention were to remove minor impurities, the *ghusl* is incomplete and invalid. Although the action is physically the same, whether purity is achieved or not depends on the intent. Another case is the act of invalidating physical purification by an intention held after having already physically purified oneself. In this case, two views have emerged: First, the intention is meaningless since it arose after the action had been completed. Second, his intention was hugely significant, and his purity was cancelled as a result.

Another relevant Yemeni Shāfiʿī scholar, Al-Shawkānī (d. 1835), elaborated on the requirement of apparent physical cleanliness as a condition of the prayer. He tells us some jurists disagreed on whether physical cleanliness is simply a prerequisite (hence, extraneous) or a basic component of the act of prayer. While the most common *madhāhib* adopted the view that it is a component of the act, a minority perceived it as just a prerequisite of the act. Al-Shawkānī enumerated a number of Prophet's companions and *Tabʿūn* (followers) on their side to this opinion. Then, his conclusion tended to prioritize the opponent team who rejects

physical cleanliness by refuting all proofs used to support this condition. This is a unique Juridical understanding of prayer as an act beyond the physical movement, i.e., a more spiritual and mental act.

Aside from the legal perspective, Muslim philosophers and theologians share the same opinion that the mental elements of Islamic rituals are more important than the physical elements. This becomes clear when we examine the classical theological arguments regarding the interplay between the soul and the body, as well as looking at the role of the heart in determining the merit of acts of worship. In his book, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*, the prominent Muslim philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) expounded on the nature of the soul and the body, weighing the soul with its lofty inclinations against the body with its aspirations for worldly matters. For instance, Al-Ghazālī placed great emphasis on *ḥudūr* (heart presence) in performing prayer; this significant aspect can never be overlooked or ignored. Therefore, the prayers of insane or drunk people are invalid because their minds/hearts are absent. According to Al-Ghazālī, ḥudūr is the essence of prayer since it helps the achievement of its primary purpose, which is glorifying God, in addition, it fulfills the second purpose of prayer, which is "prevention of indecency and abomination" (Q, 29:45).[95]

Other Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farābī (d. 950), held the same view. He elevates the intellect above the human soul due to its relationship with God and because the human soul communicates with God through the intellect. Al-Farābī saw the world as divided between spiritual beings and material beings. He further divided material beings into

---

[95] Al- Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*, 165 - 169.

six ranks: the first is human bodies; the second is animal bodies; the third is plant bodies; the fourth is mineral bodies; the fifth is sky, stars, and planets; and the sixth is fundamental materials such as water, fire, air, and dust. At the top of the hierarchy, above all of the body's organs, Al-Farābī placed the heart. Due to its high status, only the most important activities—those of a spiritual nature—have been assigned to the heart, such as belief in God, sincerity, observance of God, and repentance. This superior position given to the heart in Al-Farābī's treatise demonstrates the importance of spiritual activities in medieval Islamic philosophy.[96]

Such juridical and philosophical discussions of the primacy of nonphysical aspects of Islamic rituals over the physical ones and the status of the heart as a locus of spirituality lay the foundations for legitimizing online Islamic rituals where spirituality and symbolism form their main bases. Let us take the Ḥajj (the Islamic pilgrimage) as an example. While the Ḥajj remains a stand-alone space-based act of worship, religious authorities have made a number of attempts to virtualize some aspects of this religious experience. On December 13, 2021, the official website of Saudi Arabia's General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques announced the inauguration of the "Virtual Blackstone" program in the *Kaʿbah* (The Cube, or the God's House), where the stone may be touched digitally via virtual reality technology. This project is being carried out in collaboration with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Institute at Umm Al Qura University by the Agency for Exhibitions and Museums Affairs. The goal of initiating this program is to use virtual reality and the digital

[96] Al-Farābī, Abu Naṣr Muḥammad, *Al-Madina al fādila, (The Virtuous City)*, Edit., Ali Wafi, (Cairo: al-Nahda al-Misriyah, 1986).

world to imitate reality by utilizing as many senses as possible.[97] This and other steps would pave the way for further virtualization of many acts of worship in Islam.

Is the Body Essential in Rituals?

- Juristic Discussions of *Al-niyābah* (Proxy) in Rituals

On most fatwa websites, one of the most common questions is "can I appoint someone to perform actions on my behalf, such as prayer, fasting, *zakāh*, and pilgrimages?" Whether or not a proxy (*Al-niyābah*) may be used in physical Islamic rituals has caused much debate. While an Al-niyābah in *Mu'amalāt* (transactions), is generally accepted among Islamic scholars, a proxy in *'Ibādāt* (acts of worship) raises many complications.

﴿ الفرق الثانى والسبعون والمائة بين قاعدة مايصل الى الميت وقاعدة مالا يصل اليه ﴾
القربات ثلاثة اقسام قسم حجر الله تعالى على عباده فى ثوابه ولم يجعل لهم نقله لغيرهم كالايمان
فلواراد احد ان يهب قريبه الكافر ايمانه ليدخل الجنة دونه لم يكن له ذلك بل ان كفر الحي
هلكا معا اماهبة الثواب مع بقاء الاصل فلا سبيل اليه وقيل الاجماع فى الصلاة أيضا وقيل
الاجماع فيها وقسم اتفق الناس على ان الله تعالى اذن في نقل ثوابه للميت وهو القربات المالية
كالصدقة والعتق وقسم اختلف فيه هل فيه حجر ام لا وهو الصيام والحج وقراءة القرآن فلا
يحصل شيء من ذلك للميت عند مالك والشافعى رضى الله عنهما وقال ابوحنيفة واحمد بن حنبل
ثواب القراءة للميت فمالك والشافعى رضى الله عنهما يحتجان بالقياس على الصلاة ونحوها مما هو
فعل بدني والاصل فى الافعال البدنية ان لا ينوب احد فيها عن الآخر ولظاهر قوله تعالى وان
ليس للانسان الا ماسعى ولقوله عليه السلام اذا مات ابن آدم انقطع عمله الا من ثلاث علم ينتفع
به وصدقة جارية وولد صالح يدعو له واحتج أبوحنيفة وابن حنبل بالقياس على الدعاء فانا اجمعنا
على ان الدعاء يصل للميت فكذلك القراءة والكل عمل بدنى ولظاهر قوله عليه السلام للسائل
صل لهما مع صلاتك وصم لهما مع صومك يعنى ابويه والجواب عن الاول ان القياس على الدعاء
لا يستقيم فان الدعاء فيه امران (احدهما) متعلقه الذى هو مدلوله نحو المغفرة فى قولهم اللهم اغفرله

Al-Qarāfī, *Al-Furūq,* (192).

[97] "Saudi Arabia launches an initiative that allows virtual touching of the Black Stone," *Middle East in 24 English*, Accessed December 15, 2021. https://middleeast.in-24.com/News/amp/492979.

In his book, *Al-Furūq*, the Mālkī jurist Al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) establishes three categories of ritualistic acts in relation to using a proxy. The first category includes acts that may never use a proxy, such as belief in Allah. Consequently, a believer cannot gift his belief's reward to a nonbeliever by asking Allah to reward the latter for the belief of the former. The second category includes deeds for which scholars agree are valid for proxy. These include financial rituals, such as charity and freeing slaves. For instance, a Muslim may give *Ṣadaqah* (charity) or free a slave on behalf of a deceased relative or friend. The third category—fasting, pilgrimage, Qur'anic recitation, and even prayer—consists of deeds that jurists disagree on whether or not a proxy may be used. The Mālikī school argues that actions in this third category cannot be done by a proxy because the basic rule is the prohibition of Al-niyābah in all physical actions. A general Qur'anic principle states that "And that man has only that for which he makes effort."[98][99] Further, the Mālikī school rejects, for example, the idea of analogy on *Duʿāʾ* (supplication) because the *Duʿāʾ* that can be made by a deceased's relative or friend to benefit the deceased person has nothing to do with Al-niyābah. Rather, the deceased person would be receiving a reward that would be a consequence of the action undertaken by the *Daʿī* (supplicant). The Mālikī school further supports their position with the following Ḥadīth, "Three ritualistic actions whose reward is applicable to be transferred to the deceased are: continuous Ṣadaqah, knowledge from which benefit continues to flow, and the supplication from a righteous child for the deceased."[100]

[98] Qur'an, trans., Pickthal, 53: 39.
[99] Shihāb al-Dīn Abu al-Abbās Al-Qarāfī, *Al-Furūq*, Vol. 3 (Saudi Arabia: Ministry of Awqaf, 2010), 192.
[100] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjaj (d. 875), *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dar Ehia Al Torath Al Arabi, N.D), Volume 3, No. 1631, p. 255.

According to the Mālikīs, these three actions are the only ones in which a proxy may be used in.

In contrast, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and al-Awz āʻī (d. 774) all agree on the legitimacy of having a proxy for these physical acts of worship based on the Prophetic permission expressed in multiple Ḥadīths. For example, when someone asked the Prophet about how to be generous with his parents after their death, the Prophet responded by saying, "to pray on behalf of them when you pray, fast on behalf of them when you fast and do charity on their behalf when you do charity for yourself."[101] Another Prophetic Ḥadīth states that it is the heirs' (any one of them) responsibility to fast on behalf of their deceased relative who died with some missed fasting.[102][103] The Shāfiʿī scholar, Badr ad-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d. 1392), states that his *Madhhab* (Al-Shāfiʿī) legalizes proxy in duties and physical acts of worship *ʿAqlan* "By Reason," but the Ḥanafī and Muʿtazila scholars do not. He also added that while there is unanimous agreement on the legitimacy of proxy in financial duties, scholars disagree on the proxy for physical duties due to the claim that proxy in physical acts violates the reason for worship, which is the test for the belief of the believers. But he counters this excuse by noting that if the proxy is meant to violate the cause for worship, it will not differentiate between financial (all scholars agreed on the proxy validity on the financial rituals) and physical rituals, yet it appears that it does not violate either.[104]

---

[101] Ibid.,
[102] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʻīl Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukharī*. Ed, Muḥammad Nasir, (No. 1952), Vol.3, first edition, (Lebanon: Dar Toq al-Najah, 2001), 35.
[103] Muḥammad Al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awtār*, 1st Edition, Vol. 4, (Cairo: Dar al-Ḥadīth, 1993), 279.
[104] Muhammad Badr al-Din Al-Zarkashī, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥit fi Uṣul al-Fiqh*. Vol. 2, (Cairo: Dar al-Kotb, 1994), 168, 169.

وَأَمَّا الْعَقْلِيُّ: فَقَالَ ابْنُ بَرْهَانٍ: مَذْهَبُ أَصْحَابِنَا جَرَيَانُ النِّيَابَةِ فِي التَّكَالِيفِ وَالْعِبَادَاتِ الْبَدَنِيَّةِ عَقْلًا، وَمَنَعَهُ الْمُعْتَزِلَةُ وَسَاعَدَهُمْ الْحَنَفِيَّةُ.

وَالْمَسْأَلَةُ مَبْنِيَّةٌ عَلَى حَرْفٍ، وَهُوَ أَنَّ الثَّوَابَ مَعْلُولُ الطَّاعَةِ، وَالْعِقَابَ مَعْلُولُ الْمَعْصِيَةِ عِنْدَهُمْ، وَعِنْدَنَا: الثَّوَابُ فَضْلٌ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَالْعِقَابُ عَدْلٌ مِنْ اللَّهِ، وَإِنَّمَا الطَّاعَةُ أَمَارَةٌ عَلَيْهِ، وَكَذَلِكَ الْمَعْصِيَةُ.

وَذَكَرَ الْآمِدِيُّ نَحْوَهُ وَحَرَّرَهُ الصَّفِيُّ الْهِنْدِيُّ، فَقَالَ: اتَّفَقُوا عَلَى جَوَازِ دُخُولِ النِّيَابَةِ فِي الْمَأْمُورِ بِهِ إذَا كَانَ مَالِيًّا، وَعَلَى وُقُوعِهِ أَيْضًا لِاتِّفَاقِهِمْ عَلَى أَنَّهُ يَجُوزُ لِلْغَيْرِ صَرْفُ زَكَاةِ مَالِهِ بِنَفْسِهِ، وَأَنْ يُوَكِّلَ فِيهِ، وَكَيْفَ لَا، وَصَرْفُ زَكَاةِ الْأَمْوَالِ الظَّاهِرَةِ إلَى الْإِمَامِ إمَّا وَاجِبٌ أَوْ مَنْدُوبٌ؟ وَمَعْلُومٌ أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَصْرِفْهَا إلَى الْفُقَرَاءِ إلَّا بِطَرِيقِ النِّيَابَةِ.

وَاخْتَلَفُوا فِي جَوَازِ دُخُولِهَا فِيهِ إذَا كَانَ بَدَنِيًّا، فَذَهَبَ أَصْحَابُنَا إلَى الْجَوَازِ وَالْوُقُوعِ مَعًا مُحْتَجِّينَ بِأَنَّهُ غَيْرُ مُمْتَنِعٍ لِنَفْسِهِ، إذْ لَا يَمْتَنِعُ قَوْلُ السَّيِّدِ لِعَبْدِهِ: أَمَرْتُكَ بِخِيَاطَةِ هَذَا الثَّوْبِ، فَإِنْ خِطْتَهُ بِنَفْسِكَ أَوْ اسْتَنَبْتَ فِيهِ أَثَبْتُكَ، وَإِنْ

Al-Zarkashī, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥit fi Uṣul al-Fiqh*

For the ʿAqli "rational" [proof], Ibn Burhan said: our school of thought allows the proxy on physical acts of worship and duties rationally, but Muʿtazila and Ḥanafī schools rejected it.

This issue is based on causation. For them [Muʿtazila and Ḥanafī schools], the reward is the cause of the obedience, and the punishment is the cause of the disobedience. But for us, the reward comes out of God's generosity, and the punishment comes out of God's justice, while the obedience and disobedience are just indicators.

ʾAmdi [Shāfiʿī jurist, d. 1233] also agrees on this opinion. In his edition, Al-Safi al-Hindi narrated from ʾAmdi that the jurists agreed on the permissibility of proxy on financial acts of worship and its consequences. This is because they agreed on the fact that a person has the right to spend his money by himself, or delegate someone to spend it on his behalf. This is definitely true because the responsibility of distributing the zakah money that is collected and

sent to the ruler, is either mandatory or optional on the [ruler]. It is obvious that the ruler cannot distribute this zakah money except by proxy.

They [jurists] disagreed on the permissibility of proxy on the physical acts of worship. Our scholars [Shāfiʿī jurists] agree on its permissibility and applicability……(Al-Zarkashī, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥit fi Uṣul al-Fiqh*, *168*)

In addition to the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī jurists, the Ẓāhirī school agrees on permitting proxy in physical acts of worship. Ibn Ḥazm argues that whenever someone dies without having fulfilled obligatory fasting, whether for Ramadān, a vow, or a *Kaffārh* (expiation), that person's heirs must fast on his/her behalf whether the deceased asked for it or not. This view is supported by al-Laith Ibn Saʿd (d. 1389), Abū Thawr al-Baghdādī (d. 860), and Isḥāq Ibn Rāhwayh (d. 853).[105]

In regard to the Ḥajj, the jurists universally agree on allowing a proxy for it. However, whether proxy is mandatory in the case of physical incapacity is debated. Ibn Rushd in *Bidāyat al-mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid* details this debate. The Ḥanafī and the Mālkī schools opine that disabled persons are not required to delegate someone to perform the Ḥajj on their behalf, even if they are financially capable of doing so. In contrast, the Shāfiʿī school requires that those who are financially capable must delegate someone to perform Hajj for them. Even, if they die without leaving a bequest for performing Ḥajj on their behalf, their heirs must do so.[106]

[105] Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Hazm, *Al Muḥala,* Vol. 1, (Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ʿ ilmiyah, 2010), 420.
[106] Muhammad bin Ahmad Ibn Rushd, *Bidāyat al-mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid,* (Cairo: Dar al-Ḥadīth edition, 2004), 84.

Although prayer is categorized as a physical act of worship, whether a proxy is legitimate for prayer seems to evoke the most controversy. Ibn Taymiyah (d. 1328) states that *Duʿāʾ* and *Istighfār* (asking God for forgiveness) are, without any single disagreement among scholars, subject to proxy despite the fact that they are physical acts. However, for fasting and *Nafl Salāh* (supererogatory prayer), there are two main views. The first, which is held by Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, Abu Ḥanifah, and some Shāfiʿī scholars, allows for a proxy in both fasting and Nafl Salāh. The Ḥadīth that states "It is indeed from *al-Birr* (goodness) after *al-Birr* that you pray for your parents and fast for both of them after you pray, and fast for yourself" is the basis upon which those jurists built their argument.[107] For some jurists, including some Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī jurists, this Ḥadīth clearly indicates that proxy is permissible in physical acts. The second view, which is adopted by Mālik and a group of Shāfiʿī scholars, prohibits proxy in any physical act of worship.[108] For those jurists, the Ḥadīth is regarded as an exclusive permission for those to whom this Ḥadīth was intended at the time.

- **The Primacy of al-Niyyah in the Islamic Rituals**

The classical juridical discussion of Islamic rituals has always been claimed to be excessively bodily-oriented. However, an in-depth examination of all facets of the rituals finds that classical Islamic jurisprudence not only revolutionized the mainstream juridical path but also took progressive steps towards moving away from physical constraints. Highlighting the revolutionary views that legitimize the use of proxy in physical

[107] Muslim, *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim*, 16.
[108] Taqī ad-Dīn ʾAḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyah, *Al-Fatāwa al-Kubrā,* (Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ilmiya, 1987), 33.

ritualistic deeds demonstrates that the elevation of the spiritual aspects of worship over the physical has its roots in classical Islamic jurisprudence. In their perception of worship, the Muslim jurists went beyond the body restrictions by imagining the Islamic rituals in the absence of the physical criteria. The juristic discussion of the physical incapability to perform prayer will demonstrate the way that the classical jurists conceptualized the body in rituals.

In *Rawḍat al-ṭalibīn wa-'umdat al-muftīn*, An-Nawawī (d. 1277) elaborated on how to perform prayer in case of physical inability[109] including bodily disability and also incapacity caused by circumstances such as fear of drowning or killing as in wars, etc. He argued that while the Ḥanafī school does not require those who are physically incapable of moving their head to pray, the Shāfi'ī school argues that no Muslim who is alive and mentally sound can be waived from prayer. Therefore, the Shāfi'ī school offers alternative forms of prayer in case of physical disability. In this regard, Al-Nawawī maintains that for those who are physically unable to perform the prayer in a standing form, there are two options. The first option is to pray while lying down on the right side with the body facing the Qibla. The second option is to pray while lying down on one's back facing the Qibla with the legs. In both positions, the person will pray by moving only the head. If unable to move the head, the person can move the eyebrows instead. If unable to move the eyebrows, the person can pray by the heart imagining the prayers' movements. The recitation of Surat al-Fatiḥa and a short surah can also be done by the heart/mind if the tongue does not work.[110]

---

[109] Al-Juwayni (d. 1058) defined inability as any distraction that prevents one from being mindful while praying.

[110] Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf An-Nawawi, *Rawdat al-talibīn wa-'umdat al-muftin,* 3rd Edition (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991), 236 - 237.

In the same vein, the primacy of *al-Niyyah* (intention) in all Islamic rituals demonstrates that the body's actions have no value in the absence of this mental action. According to Muslim jurists, the intention is not only a prerequisite for having a valid ritual, but it is also the essence of all rituals. In his epistle, *al-Omniyah Fī idrāk al-Niyyah*, which is entirely dedicated to addressing ritualistic intentions, al-Qarāfī elaborates on the necessity of having a valid intention before engaging in any ritualistic action. During his discussion, he expounds on the debate between the jurists who posit that the heart is the location of the intention (al-Qarāfī himself belongs to this group) and philosophers who propose the mind instead (more details about this debate will be presented in chapter three).[111] The primary Ḥadīth upon which al-Qarāfī built his argument is "Actions are considered according to intentions, and everyone will attain what was intended."[112] Al-Qarāfī further elaborates on how al-Niyyah is capable of transforming a normal action into a ritualistic one. This principle applies to all Islamic acts of worship, whether they are physical (prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage), financial (Zakāh), or physi-financial (pilgrimage). An excellent observation of al-Qarāfī is that al-Niyyah is only a condition for the physical and financial acts, not for the spiritual acts such as belief in God, love of God, or fear of God, and other heart acts because al-Niyyah and these heart acts belong to the same family, and neither one is a condition for the other.[113]

Though it is widely believed that jurists rarely discuss nonphysical acts, such as heart actions, Al-Qarāfī provides a brilliant example that demonstrates not only how significant al-Niyyah is, as a mental element, in shaping the Islamic rituals but also how it is irreplaceable

[111] Shehab al-Din Al-Qarāfī, *Al-Omniyyah Fi Idrāk al-Niyyah,* (Beirut: Dar al-Kotb al-Ilmiyah, N.D).
[112] Muslim, *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim*. No. 45.
[113] Al-Qarāfī, *Al-OmNiyyah Fi Idrak al-Niyyah,* 21.

and can never be skipped. The following example illustrates that not only theologians, but jurists as well are extremely interested in dealing with the unseen actions of the heart. The question of whether divorce can be considered effective by intention or by what is referred to as *Kalām Nafsānī* (self-talk) has been a matter of controversy among Muslim jurists. In response to this issue, Al-Qarāfī states that the jurists are divided into two main groups. The first group believes that divorce can happen just by thinking and having the intention of separation. The second group, including Al-Qarāfī himself, does not consider thinking and the intention as a means of divorce.[114] Averroes (d. 1198) took a middle position. In his opinion, divorce will occur when self-talk is accompanied by verbal communication, but not if either is absent.[115] This debate over whether al-Niyyah has the power to invalidate the physical action (marriage) highlights not only the centrality and superiority of al-Niyyah over physical action, but also its superiority over almost all physical actions. Exactly as Al-Swaisī observes, the intention is the primary component of worship, while the action constitutes the secondary component, since actions without intentions are equivalent to bodies without souls.[116]

Moreover, we will find *al-Niyyah* is the most critical mental element, even if we turn our attention to legal theorists. "….These mental or intellectual elements are many and various and are collected together in the terminology of English jurists Under the symbol sounding description, *Mens rea* (guilty mind). But the most prominent of these mental elements, and in many ways, the most important, is man's intention, and in English law, and in most other

[114] Ibid., 26.
[115] Abu Abdullah Al-Bāqurī, *Tartīb al-Forouq, (*Morocco: Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 1994), 297.
[116] Muhammad bin Yunis Al-Swaisī, *Majāl al-Niyyah,* (Tunisia: Dar Sakhnon for Printing and Publication, 2021), 7.

legal systems is intention."[117] Theologically and legally, both teams agree that actions are influenced and, at least, primarily shaped by their intentions. "Sometimes legislature will mark off a greater maximum penalty done with a certain intention than for the same thing done without intention."[118] In the ritualistic laws, however, the intention of an action is often given greater importance than the action itself. The following example will help clarify this point:

Two main *Uṣulī* maxims consolidate the al-Niyyah to a highest extent; "*matters shall not be judged except by their objectives*," and "*the reward of an action shall be considered by intention*." In terms of the reward, Ibn Nujaim (d. 1563), states that the al-Niyyah is essential not only for obtaining a reward in the hereafter, but also for ensuring that the ritual itself is valid and acceptable. Aside from some acts of worship, in which al-Niyyah can be embedded in the physical movement, such as Dhikr (remembrance of God), Quran recitation, and *Satr al-ʿAwrah* (covering the intimate parts of men and the entire body for women except the hands and face) as a requirement of prayer, all acts must be preceded or accompanied by al-Niyyah, as Ibn Nujaim explains.[119] This may pose a problem for some rituals that combine legal (Qadāʾn) with religious (Diyant) elements, such as Zakāh, which is not only imposed religiously but is also censored by the concerned authorities. This explains why the jurists disagreed on the legitimacy of Zakāh which is forced upon individuals who refuse to pay it and do not intend to do so whether they will be rewarded for it or not.[120] The same is true for

[117] Hart, H. L. A., "Intention and Punishment," in *Punishment and Responsibility: Essays in the Philosophy of Law*. Oxford University Press, 2008, 113.
[118] Ibid., 115.
[119] Zainuddin b. Ibrahim Ibn Nujaym, *Al-Ashbāh wa'l-Naẓāʾir' ʿAla Madhahb Abi Ḥanifah al-Nomān,* (Beirut: Dar al-Kotb al-Ilmiyah, 1999), 17.
[120] Ibn Nujaym, *Al-Ashbāh wa'l-Naẓāʾir'*, 19.

marriage, where the intention is a prerequisite of its legitimacy; there is controversy among jurists about its legitimacy when it is undertaken without a legitimate intention, such as a joke marriage.[121][122] Having stated that, the jurists believe that the *al-Tark* (avoiding illicit deeds) ritual does not need an intention. For example, avoidance of adultery, robbery, and lying. However, this would be true only for the legal obligation (Qadāʾn), but for the religious obligation (Diyāntan), the appropriate intention is required.

Under this *Uṣulī* rule, "*matters shall not be judged except by their objectives*," Ibn Nujaim enumerated several cases that would never be imagined without examining the intention. For instance, killing a Muslim is the biggest sin one can commit, however, such murder might be justified based on a specific intention, as in the case of *Tatrus* (human shields used in war). If the intention is not to murder a Muslim, but to kill those who are behind them from their enemies (as in wars), the jurists allow it. Therefore, the legislature is less concerned with the deed itself, compared to the intention (as a mental element).[123]

- **Status of the Physical Cleanliness versus the Spiritual Cleanliness**

The requirement of cleanliness (*Ṭahārah*) for prayer is another explanatory example of the supremacy of mental elements in forming Islamic rituals. Numerous juridical voices appeared to explicitly subordinate the physical prerequisites for prayer including body, cloth, and place in favor of the inside cleanliness i.e., ritualistic purity.

---

[121] Both the groom and the bride must officially express *al-Ijiab Wa al-Qaboul* (offer and acceptance) during marriage in Islam. Even jokingly articulating such expressions can satisfy the marriage requirement, according to jurists.
[122] Ibn Nujaym, *Al-Ashbāh wa'l-Naẓāʾir'*, 20.
[123] Ibn Nujaym, *Al-Ashbāh wa'l-Naẓāʾir'*, 24.

In his book, *Al-Bayān fi Madhab al-Imam al-Shāfi'ī*, the *Shāfi'ī* scholar Al-Omrānī stated that the Mālikī school along with Abdullah Ibn Abbas; the Prophet's cousin (d. 687) and Said Ibn Jubayr (d. 714) did not see the cleanliness of the cloth as a requirement for the validity of the prayer, but rather as preferable.[124] The same is true for the place where the prayer can be held. Al-Omrānī highlights the Ḥanafī position toward the cleanliness of the foot spots where the performer of the prayer shall stand. Only the foot spots must be clean, even if the knee spots are not clean. But for the forehead spots, there are two opinions; one does not tolerate the unclean forehead spot, and the other tolerates it.[125] As for the unclean shoes of the prayer's performer or the rug where the prayer can be held, due to some dirt touching it while praying, Al-Omrānī mentioned that there are two opinions of al-Shāfi'ī in this issue; one tolerates it, and one does not.[126]

In *Al-Mughnī*, Ibn Qudāmah (d. 1223) elaborated on the prerequisite of the cleanliness of the place where the prayer is performed. He explained that the area where the prayer is performed, as well as all areas that touch the clothes of the person praying, must be clean. However, Ibn Qudāmah quoted the Mālkī scholar Ibn' Aqil who argues otherwise. Ibn' Aqil finds the prayer that is observed on an unclean spot or even if the clothes touch an unclean spot during prayer, the prayer is still valid. Similarly, if one touches the unclean clothes of another person standing beside him/her in performing a collective prayer, the prayer is still valid.[127] But the striking question is what would happen if one realized that his/her body or clothes had dirt, after finishing prayer? Ibn Qudāmah considers this prayer to be valid.

---

[124] Yahya Ibn Abi al-Khayr Al-ʿOmrānī (d. 1163), *Al-bayān fī Madhab al-Imam al-Shāfi'ī,* 1st Edition, Vol.1, (Jeddah: Dar al-Mihaj, 2000), 90.
[125] Al-ʿOmrānī, *Al-bayān*, 104.
[126] Ibid., 105.
[127] Ibn Qudāmah Al-Maqdesī, *Al-Mughni*, Vol., 2 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qahirah, 1968), 49.

However, suppose he/she becomes aware of dirt on his/her body/clothes during performing the prayer. In that case, two opinions are provided: the first is the one adopted by Ibn' Umar (d. 693), 'Atāʾ Abi Rabāh (732), Sa'id Ibn al-Musayyib (715), Mujahid ibn Jabr (722), al-Shaʿbī (641), and Ibn Shihab al-Zuhrī (742) that the prayer is valid even if the uncleanliness is recognized during performing the prayer. Second is that adopted by Abu Qelaba al-Jarmī (d. 723), and al-Shāfi'ī that the prayer is invalid.[128]

Likewise, in *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai'*, Al-Kasānī details the required physical purification before performing the prayer as two kinds of purification: First is the primary purification, which requires washing the body after major impurity (after having sexual intercourse, wet dream or menstruation for women) or minor impurity (urination or defecation). Second is secondary purification which necessitates cleansing the body, clothes, and place where prayer is performed. Despite both primary and secondary purifications being a requirement of prayer, Al-Kasānī explains that they are merely symbolic signs that symbolize the spiritual purification of the heart from bad desires and satanic whims.[129]

[128] Ibid.,
[129] Al-Kasānī, *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai'*, 114 - 105.

أَنَّهُ أَمَرَ بِغَسْلِ هَذِهِ الْأَعْضَاءِ الظَّاهِرَةِ مِنْ الْحَدَثِ وَالْجَنَابَةِ تَذْكِيرًا لِتَطْهِيرِ الْبَاطِنِ مِنْ الْغِشِّ وَالْحَسَدِ وَالْكِبْرِ وَسُوءِ الظَّنِّ بِالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَنَحْوِ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَسْبَابِ الْمَآثِمِ، فَأَمَرَ لَا لِإِزَالَةِ الْحَدَثِ تَطْهِيرًا؛ لِأَنَّ قِيَامَ الْحَدَثِ لَا يُنَافِي الْعِبَادَةَ وَالْخِدْمَةَ فِي الْجُمْلَةِ أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّهُ يَجُوزُ أَدَاءُ الصَّوْمِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَعَ قِيَامِ الْحَدَثِ وَالْجَنَابَةِ؟ وَأَقْرَبُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ الْإِيمَانُ بِاَللَّهِ - تَعَالَى - الَّذِي هُوَ رَأْسُ الْعِبَادَاتِ، وَهَذَا لِأَنَّ الْحَدَثَ لَيْسَ بِمَعْصِيَةٍ وَلَا سَبَبِ مَأْثَمٍ، وَمَا ذَكَرْنَا مِنْ الْمَعَانِي الَّتِي فِي بَاطِنِهِ أَسْبَابُ الْمَآثِمِ، فَأَمَرَ بِغَسْلِ هَذِهِ الْأَعْضَاءِ الظَّاهِرَةِ دَلَالَةً وَتَنْبِيهًا عَلَى تَطْهِيرِ الْبَاطِنِ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمُورِ، وَتَطْهِيرُ النَّفْسِ عَنْهَا وَاجِبٌ بِالسَّمْعِ وَالْعَقْلِ وَالثَّالِثُ - أَنَّهُ وَجَبَ غَسْلُ هَذِهِ الْأَعْضَاءِ شُكْرًا لِنِعْمَةٍ وَرَاءَ النِّعْمَةِ الَّتِي وَجَبَتْ لَهَا الصَّلَاةُ، وَهِيَ أَنَّ هَذِهِ الْأَعْضَاءَ وَسَائِلُ إلَى اسْتِيفَاءِ نِعَمٍ عَظِيمَةٍ، بَلْ بِهَا تُنَالُ جُلُّ نِعَمِ اللَّهِ - تَعَالَى - فَالْيَدُ بِهَا يَتَنَاوَلُ وَيَقْبِضُ مَا يَحْتَاجُ إلَيْهِ، وَالرِّجْلُ يَمْشِي بِهَا إلَى مَقَاصِدِهِ، وَالْوَجْهُ وَالرَّأْسُ مَحَلُّ الْحَوَاسِّ وَمَجْمَعُهَا الَّتِي بِهَا يُعْرَفُ عِظَمُ نِعَمِ اللَّهِ - تَعَالَى - مِنْ الْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنْفِ وَالْفَمِ وَالْأُذُنِ، الَّتِي بِهَا الْبَصَرُ وَالشَّمُّ وَالذَّوْقُ وَالسَّمْعُ، الَّتِي بِهَا يَكُونُ التَّلَذُّذُ وَالتَّشَهِّي وَالْوُصُولُ إلَى جَمِيعِ النِّعَمِ، فَأَمَرَ بِغَسْلِ هَذِهِ الْأَعْضَاءِ شُكْرًا لِمَا يُتَوَسَّلُ بِهَا إلَى هَذِهِ النِّعَمِ وَالرَّابِعُ - أَمَرَ بِغَسْلِ هَذِهِ الْأَعْضَاءِ تَكْفِيرًا لِمَا ارْتَكَبَ بِهَذِهِ الْأَعْضَاءِ مِنْ الْإِجْرَامِ، إذْ بِهَا يَرْتَكِبُ جُلَّ الْمَآثِمِ مِنْ أَخْذِ الْحَرَامِ، وَالْمَشْيِ إلَى الْحَرَامِ، وَالنَّظَرِ إلَى الْحَرَامِ، وَأَكْلِ الْحَرَامِ، وَسَمَاعِ الْحَرَامِ مِنْ اللَّغْوِ وَالْكَذِبِ، فَأَمَرَ بِغَسْلِهَا تَكْفِيرًا لِهَذِهِ الذُّنُوبِ.

Al-Kasānī, *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fi Tartib al-Sharāi,'* 114.

"He (God, the legislator) commanded purifying these apparent organs from minor Ḥadath (impurity) and major Ḥadath as a reminder of purifying the inside from cheating, envy, arrogance, bad thinking of other Muslims, and similar sinful heart actions. The command of purification is not actually for physical purification because having ritualistic impurity does not generally inhibit the performance of rituals, as in fasting and Zakāh, those are valid even though the impurity. Furthermore, Iman (belief in God) – the most supreme ritual – is still valid with impurity. This is because impurity is not a sin or a cause of punishment in contrast to the inner bad desires (previously mentioned such as cheating, envy, arrogance, etc.) it contains. Therefore, God commanded purifying these apparent limbs as a signifier and indicator of purifying the inside from these bad desires. Further, purification of the Nafs (soul) from them is mandatory based on four bases:

First, Sama' (textual evidence), second, Aql (by reason), and third is to show thankfulness for the favor different from the favor for whom prayer is made. This favor is having these limbs not only as means for attaining great favors but also means for most Gods' favors. Hands are used for catching and holding what we need, legs help us to go anywhere, face and head are locations of all senses that let us recognize Gods' gifts including eyes, nose, mouth, and ears that are means of vision, smell, taste, and hearing and also ways towards joy, entertainment, and other life's delights. Thus, God commanded to purify the apparent limbs recognizing their functions as means to these favors. The fourth base upon which the command of purifying limbs was built is, the expiation of sins committed by these limbs including taking Haram (illegal things) by hands, walking to Haram, looking at Haram, eating Haram, and listening to Haram (including meaningless speech or lie).

In the same vein, in *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, Ibn Rushd (Averroes d. 1198) also refers to the juristic debate over the requirement of *Ṭahārah* for rituals by stating that the Qur'anic verse (74:4) is the main evidence that requires cleansing the dirt. But he explained that the debate arose from the supposed contradictory prophetic traditions that do not have the necessity of cleansing the dirt, such as Ḥadīth of shoes that the Prophet (s) took off while he was praying in a congregational prayer with his companions. The companions took off their shoes as well, but the Prophet (s) asked them why they did so. They replied that they just followed his act. Therefore, the Prophet (s) explained to them he took off his shoes because Gabriel came to him and told him that his shoes are not clean.[130] Ibn Rushd argued that there are three

[130] Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, No. 11877, Vol., 18 (Beirut: Muasisatur-Risalah, 2001), 379.

juridical positions regarding the cleanliness of dirt before rituals. Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī maintained that it is obligatory while others deemed it recommended. The third position deemed it obligatory if it is remembered and not mandatory if it is forgotten. The disagreement took place due to how the Qur'anic address is interpreted, whether it is for recommendation or obligation, and based on how the command of purifications is understood whether physical or ***symbolic*** for heart purification as Ibn Rushd argues. Then, Ibn Rushd added the fourth opinion that the cleanliness of dirt is an absolute obligation, and it has nothing to do specifically with prayer, i.e., it is not a requirement of valid prayer.[131]

Likewise, in his discussion about *Ṭahārah*, Al-Omrānī, a prominent Shāfiʿī scholar (d. 1163) places more emphasis on intention than physical purification. He enumerated several cases where the physical act of cleanliness can be completely or partially neglected based on the *Niyyah*. For instance, if a *Junb*[132] (ritualistic impure person) made a *ghusl* with an intention of *Rafi' al-Ḥadath al-Akbar* (removing major impurity), his act of purification is valid, but if the intention was for only *Rafi' al-Ḥadath al-Asghar* (minor impurity), the *ghusl* is incomplete and invalid.[133] Physically, the action is the same, but whether purity results or not, depends on the intention. The second case is when a person had a physical purification for a matter whose validity is not dependent on purity such as eating, clothing, or meeting people, the act of purification is definitely not sufficient to *Rafi' al-Ḥadath* (whether major or minor impurity). But if the physical cleanliness is done as a requirement for an action that must be preceded by physical purity such as prayer, *Tawaf*, or *Sujūd al-Tilāwah* (prostration for Qur'anic recitation), then the act of purification will be sufficient to *Rafi' al-Ḥadath* as

[131] Ibn Rushd, *Bidayat al-Mujtahid*, 81 - 82.
[132] Janābah is a ritualistic impurity followed the sexual intercourse or wet dream for either man or woman.
[133] Al-Omrānī, *Al-bayān fī Madhab al-Imām al-Shāfi'i,* 103.

well. The striking question is when the physical act of purification is done for a matter whose validity is not strictly dependent on purity, but preferably recommended such as recitation of the Qur'an, *I'tikāf* (ritualistic staying at the mosque), and teaching Islamic sciences such as Fiqh, Ḥadīth and Tafsīr, scholars disagreed on whether the act of purification is sufficient to *Rafi' al-Ḥadath* or not. While some scholars viewed it as a valid act for ritualistic cleanliness, the other group rejected it.[134] The third case is when a person has a physical purification for a specific prayer such as *Dhuhr* or *Asr* prayers, is it a valid ritualistic purification? Three views have been suggested: First, this purification is not valid at all because the intention was wrong as it should be for any prayer, not a specific one. Second, this purification is only valid for this specific prayer not for anyone else. Third, it is valid for all prayers because as long as his purification was for a specific prayer valid, it must be valid for any prayer as well.[135] The last case Al-Omrānī mentioned is when someone had already physically purified him/herself, then decided to invalidate it by intention. Two views emerged in this case: First, the intention is meaningless because it happened after the completion of the action. Second, the intention is truly considerable, and his purity got canceled.[136] All of these cases demonstrate how not only significant the intention in performing rituals, but also is more important than physical acts.

Adding to the group another revolutionary scholar, Al-Shawkānī (d. 1835) negates the requirement of the cleanliness of clothes that person wears during prayer or the place where prayer is performed. He stated that there is a debate over this issue. The majority of scholars stipulate the purification of clothes, the body, and the place for valid prayer. However, Ibn

---

[134] Ibid., 104.
[135] Al-Omrānī, *Al-bayān fī Madhab al-Imām al-Shāfi'i,* 106.
[136] Ibid.,

ʿAbbās, Ibn Masʿūd, and Saʿid ibn Jubayr did not require *at-Ṭahārah* "the cleanliness" for the validity of prayer. Instead, they considered it *Sunnah* (recommended). There are two narrations of Imam Mālik on the requirement of cleanliness for valid prayer: one is mandatory, and the second is recommended. In addition, the old view of Shāfi'ī agrees with the "recommended" case as well. Al-Shawkānī refuted all proofs brought by the majority of scholars for the requirement of the cleanliness of clothes or so for the validity of prayer. The majority of scholars built their argument on the general command in the Qur'anic verse "And thy garments keep free from stain".[137] By stating that the command of purifying the clothes is general in this verse, Al- Shawkānī refuted such evidence for the requirement of the cleanliness of clothes during prayer. In addition, the command of purifying the clothes in the Qur'anic verse is considered recommended even by the majority of scholars who restricted the obligation of the command of purifying the clothes exclusively to prayer. Furthermore, Al-Shawkānī considers some of the Ḥadīths narrated from the Prophet (s) regarding purifying the clothes from sperm, stools, or so are either weak or fabricated. In addition, the prophetic command of cleaning the clothes cannot be considered a requirement for performing prayer. In more than one Ḥadīth, Al-Shawkānī argued that the Prophet Muhammad (s) did not repeat the prayer after taking off his shoes or cleaning his clothes. In the Ḥadīth mentioned above, the Prophet (s) took off his shoes while praying in a congregational prayer with his companions when Gabriel told him that his shoes are not clean. Al-Shawkānī concluded that while most scholars used this Ḥadīth to support their attitude towards the requirement of the cleanliness of the clothes in prayer, the Prophet did not repeat the prayer or commanded his

[137] Qur'an, trans., Yusuf Ali, 74:4.

companions to repeat it. Therefore, the command of the cleanliness of the clothes or shoes is not a requirement of prayer.[138]

This is a unique Juridical understanding of both Shāfiʿī scholars al-Omrānī, and Al-Shawkānī, Mālkī scholar Ibn 'Aqil, and a Hanafi scholar al-Kasānī to the prayer as an act beyond the physical movements. For them, prayer is more spiritual than physical act. That is why the cleanliness of the clothes and place is not a requirement of valid prayer. Similarly, when Shāfiʿī scholars allowed performing the prayer by heart, this definitely asserts the spiritual side of prayer more than the physical one. This goes in accordance with the prophetic tradition of minding the prayer as a condition for its acceptance so only mindful prayers are accepted. The assertion of heart presence in prayer solidified the spiritual aspects of prayer. This is because the heart is seen as the core of worship, and all acts of worship are mandated to repair it if it has flaws. The meaning became clearer if we spotlight to the Qur'anic explanation of "purity" *at-Ṭahārah* that has been mentioned, for instance in the Qur'anic verse "O ye who believe! The idolaters only are unclean. So, let them not come near the Inviolable Place of Worship after this their year. If ye fear poverty (from the loss of their merchandise), Allah shall preserve you of His bounty if He will. Lo! Allah is Knower, Wise".[139] In explaining the meaning of "Uncleanliness", Al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273) presents the debate over it. He mentioned that Qatada considers it physical uncleanliness, Ibn Abbas considers it spiritual uncleanliness, and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī considers it physical dirt. Therefore, the *Ghusl* is obligatory upon converting to Islam according to the Mālkī and Ḥanbalī schools. However, al-Shāfi'ī dropped the obligation of the *Ghusl* upon converting to

[138] Al-shawkānī, *Nayl al-awtār*, 139 - 140.
[139] Qur'an, trans., Pickthal, 9:28.

Islam.[140] Ibn Abbas's interpretation of uncleanliness as spiritual uncleanliness copes with the prophetic statement of cleanliness as a spiritual one as well. It is narrated that Abu Hurairah said, "The Prophet (s) came across me in one of the streets of Medina, and at that time I was Junub (ritual impure due to sexual activity). So, I slipped away from him and went to take a bath. On my return, the Prophet (s) said, "O Abu Huraira! Where have you been?" I replied, "I was Junub, so I disliked sitting in your company." The Prophet (s) said, "Subhan Allah! A believer never becomes impure".[141] Imam Muslim ibn al-Ḥājjāj commented on this Ḥadīth, "*Muslim never become impure in both cases; alive or dead. This applies to non-Muslim as well based on our own Madhab and the majority of earlier and later scholars. But the verse of 9:28 about impure polytheists refers to the impurity of belief not their physical limbs. Therefore, if Muslim and non-Muslim is pure, so his/her saliva, sweet, and tears are absolute pure regardless of the Ḥadath (major or minor).*[142]

Symbolic rituals:

The intention is an essential component of any Islamic ritual. All Islamic rituals, except for a few acts that can be imagined with intention, such as reciting the Qur'an, doing *dhikr*, doing *wudu*[143] (ritualistic ablution), and saying divorce terms, must be preceded or accompanied by an intention. Intention gives rise to symbolic rituals, which are uncommon and have not received the same attention as pure physical rituals. Despite the fact that the

---

[140] Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Qurtubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī,* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya, 1964), 103.

[141] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʻīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*. Ed, Muḥammad Nasir. Lebanon: Dar Toq al-Najah, 2001., 65.

[142] Muslim, *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim,* Vol., 66.

[143] Ablution is only permitted to be done without intention by the Ḥanafī school, in contrast to the majority scholars, because they consider it as a means of purification (Wasīlah) not an act of worship itself. The same ruling applies to *Ghusl* (ritual bath of the entire body) (see Al-Omrāni, *Al-bayān fī Madhab al-Imam al-Shafi'i*, 101).

average Muslim may not pay adequate attention to the rationale for mandating these ritualistic practices, Qur'anic and prophetic texts clearly and implicitly mention this on numerous occasions. Several times in the Quran, God mentions that he does not need your worship[144] and that all worship is intended to show submission to Him. Worship is therefore a symbol of surrender to God, which is the ultimate goal of worship. The physical performance of rituals is just a means towards the ultimate goal of *Ibadah,* not as a goal itself. As examples of symbolic rituals, we provide the following:

- ***Tayamum* (Dry ablution):**

While the prayer must be preceded by *wudu* (ablution), the dust is made as an alternative for water in various cases. Not only the person who lacks water shall use the clean earth for cleaning before performing prayer, but also the one who is sick and unable to touch water, afraid of reaching out to the source of water, or in a journey where water is hard to get, can use *Tayamum* instead of *wudu*.[145] The Qur'anic verse states, "Do *tayammum* with clean earth,"[146] while the *Sunnah* details the ways how to perform it. *Tayammum* cannot only replace ablution, but also *ghusl* which follows sexual intercourse, wet dreams, or the end of the menstrual period for women.

While it is absolutely reasonable to imagine the purification by using water, using the dust in *tayammum* as an alternative to water needs reconsideration. That is why Abu Ḥanifa does not find the intention as a pillar of ablution as it is in *tayammum*. In contrast to Zufar, a prominent Ḥanafī scholar and one of the two companions of the founder of the Ḥanafi

---

[144] Quran (39: 7), (35: 18), and (14: 8).
[145] Al-Kasānī, *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fī Tartib al-Sharāi,'* 44.
[146] Qur'an (4: 43)

Madhahb, the rest of Ḥanafī scholars as well as Shāfiʿī, Mālkī, and Ḥanabalī, stipulate *Niyyah* as an integral pillar of *tayammum*. The reason behind the flexibility of Abu Ḥanifa about stipulating the intention in ablution in contrast to *tayammum*, is, besides being *Wasīlah* (a means) towards the worship, it is symbolic of ritualistic purification. Further, Zufar's position towards *tayammum* is not only stronger due to using analogy to ablution but also implies that even water purification in *wudu* is just symbolic of spiritual purity as it is in dust purification.[147] This understanding is supported by the famous narration from Abu Huraira when he was walking in a street and hid from the Prophet Muhammad, and then he came back and the Prophet asked him, "where have you been". He replied that I was impure and did not want to meet you in such a case. The Prophet responded by saying, " Subḥana Allah! A believer never becomes *Najis* impure."[148]

Tayammum is the primary ritual that embodies symbolism in Islam. Beginning with the reason behind legitimating it as an alternative to ablution, and not canceling the ablution at all, passing by its process of just wiping over only face and hands, and ending with stipulating intention in it, *tayammum* is a symbolic spiritual purification that can never be skipped before standing before God in prayer. The selection of face and hands to be wiped over can be seen as a choice of two main organs of the body that are responsible for most good or bad deeds in addition to showing submission to God's command by wiping the face with the dust. Moreover, the choice of clean earth, not other material, to clean the body is a real reference to the connection between this body and the earth from which the body is grown. With a deep thinking about *tayammum,* we can find the main *uṣulī* principle upon

[147] Ibn Nujaym, *Al-Ashbāh wa'l-Naẓāʾir',* 17.
[148] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*, Vol., 65, No. 285.

which most Islamic rituals have been built upon; "hardship breeds easiness." The common principle among all Islamic acts of worship is that hardship never breeds cancellation of it, but rather it leads to a lesser form of it. *Tayammum* is a splendid example that Islamic ritual should exceed the physical or spatial limits to the ultimate spiritual goal of worship which is submission.

- ***Al-Masḥ ʿala al-khuffain* (Wiping Over the Leather Socks):**

Out of the Qur'anic command that no hardship is made in religion[149] and the *uṣulī* maxim that hardship breeds easiness, it would be the easiest solution to cancel the ritual rather than perform the lesser form of it in case of hardship. However, the Islamic legislature never cancels any act of worship, except in a few cases of incapability such as financial incapability for paying zakat, instead, it enacts a symbolic performance of these acts of worship.

One of the main symbolic rituals in Islam is *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain* (wiping over the socks). There is a common narration from Ali Ibn Abi Talib; the Prophet Muhammad's cousin, that if religion is basically dependent on inductive reasoning, it would be more reasonable to wipe over the bottom side of the socks, not the upper side.[150] Some *Uṣulī* and *Fiqh* books usually use this ritual as evidence for the invalidity of *Daleel Aqlī* (opinion-based evidence) in favor of *Daleel Naqlī* (text-based evidence) such as Ibn Umar (693), and Ibn Masoud (650).[151] Even some *Zahiri Madhahib* went to the extreme to use *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain* to invalidate *Qiyas* (legal reasoning) such as Ibn Hazm (d. 1064) and Ibn Sirin (729).[152] These superficial understandings of this unusual ritual have overlooked the non-physical and

---

[149] Qur'an (22 : 78).
[150] Shamsuldin Muhammad Ibn Muflih, *Usul al-Fiqh* (Riyadh: Obeikan Publishing, 1999), 329.
[151] Ibid.,
[152] Ibid., 336.

spiritual facets of it. I would rather say wiping over the upper side of the socks is endorsed not because religion does not rely upon intellectual judgment, but because symbolic representation is highly considered.

Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain is widely accepted among Muslim Sunnī *Madhahab* with the exception of Mālkī Madhahab who put restrictions on accepting such ritual. They allowed only travelers not residents to wipe over the socks. Moreover, Ibn Abbas (d. 687), the Prophet's cousin, had completely rejected *al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain* as he is narrated to say, "The Prophet Muhammad never wiped over the socks after the revelation of Surat al-Maidah (chapter 5 in Quran)".[153] This is because Surat al-Maidah contains the verse of *wudu* "O you who believe! when you raise for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands to the elbows; wipe over your heads and your feet to the ankles".[154] While the majority of scholars consider the last "and" in the verse connects to the previous verb of "wash", Ibn Abbas and Shia Muslims consider it connects to the verb "wipe" and therefore, legs shall be wiped over not washed. However Ibn Abbas and Shia strictly reject *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain*, Ḥanafī *Madhhab* not only affirm its validity but also found it a marker of Sunnī Muslim *Ahl al-Sunnah Wa al-Jammāʿh*.[155] It is narrated that Abu Ḥanifa said about what characterizes Sunnī from Shia, "to honor the two elders (Abu Bakr al-Seddiq (d. 634) and Umar Ibn al-Khattab (d. 644)), to wipe over the socks, and to believe that date syrup (*nabeedh*) is lawful.[156] Further, the Ḥanafī scholar Al-Karkhi (d. 952) considers that those who deny the legitimacy of *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-*

---

[153] Al-Kasani, *Bada'i al-Sana'i fi Tartib al-Shara'i,* 7.
[154] Quran 5:6
[155] Al-Kasānī, *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fī Tartib al-Sharāi',* 7.
[156] Ibid.,

Khofain may be closer to unbelief.[157] In response to that, Shia found *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain* is an innovation launched by the third caliph; Uthman Ibn ʿAffān (d. 656) and has been falsely ascribed to Shari'ah.[158] The Shia argument is that Surat al-Maidah was the last revealed Surah and then, it abrogated the practical sunnah of *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain*. They go in accordance with Ibn Abbas's opinion as he thought that this verse of wudu in Surat al-Maidah has abrogated *Al-Masḥ ʿala al-Khofain* that the Prophet Muḥammad used to do before the revelation of it. This juristic ruling turned out to be theological and political controversies among Sunnī and Shia Muslims which implies how significant this symbolic ritual is in Islam to the extent that it became an identity signifier.

Kissing the Blackstone

With a close look at Islamic acts of worship, we can notice that one of the main principles upon which these ritualistic acts have been built is monotheism which requires keeping worship away from idolatrous actions. However, Ḥajj contains an action of touching, kissing, and pointing to the Black Stone *Al-Ḥajjar al-Aswad* while making *Tawaf* (roaming around Kaʿbah) which can be seen as confusing. The outsider may view it as an idolatrous action, but Muslims themselves receive it differently. In a very common narration from Omar Ibn al-Khattab, he said, "By Allah, I know that you are just stone cannot cause benefit or harm. Without seeing the Prophet Muhammad kissing you, I would not have kissed you."[159] By saying that Omar cared about the reception of this ritual which may be interpreted wrongly

[157] Al-Kasānī, *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fī Tartib al-Sharāi'*, 7.
[158] Jaafar Al-Sabḥānī, *Al-Wuḍūʾ ʾAla Daw' al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah, (Ablution according on the Quran and Sunnah),* (Qom: Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, 1967), 11.
[159] Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abi Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf,* (Riyadh: Dar Konoz Ishbilia for publishing, 2015), 426.

i.e., in the physical performance. Rather he explained the reason behind this uncommon physical performance (Islamically) which is urged by a spiritual incentive embodied in honoring and following the Prophet's ritualistic deed.

Primarily, touching or kissing the black stone is a very symbolic ritual that implies loving the Prophet Muhammad, admiring his actions, honoring his practice, and following it. The symbolism of this ritual also refers to the significance of this divine stone which does not belong to earthy stones, but rather has been sent down from the heavens. It is narrated that in the beginning, the black stone was whiter than milk, but as a consequence of the sins of Adam's children, it has become black.[160] One of the symbolic aspects of the black stone is that it is also been received as God's right hand on the earth.[161] Therefore, Muslim pilgrims fight to touch, kiss or prostrate on it not because of its sacredness in itself, but for the sacred thing it refers to which is God's hand.[162] The intention must be correctly made before conducting this ritual as it is not for seeking blessing or worshiping the stone, but rather following the action of the Prophet in addition to the above-mentioned purposes. Moreover, it is said that this stone will act as a witness for Muslims who touch or kiss it since Allah will grant the Black Stone two eyes and a tongue so that it can intercede on their behalf.[163]

While touching or kissing the Blackstone is not a mandatory act of worship, it is subsequent action of *Tawaf* around the *Kaʿbah*, it occupies a great place in the hearts of pilgrims as they exert their utmost efforts not to miss it. Coping with this significance and in an

---

[160] Jalal al-Din Al-Suyūṭī, *Ad-Durr al-Manthur fi Tafsīr bil-Ma-thur* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, N.D), 326.
[161] Ibid.,
[162] Al-Albāni, *Mawsūʿat al-Albāny Fi al-ʿAqidah, (Al-Albāni's Encyclopedia in faith)*, (Yemen: Noman for Research and Islamic Studies and translation, 2010), 371.
[163] Al-Hindī, Ali ibn Abd-al-Mālik, *Kanz al-ʿUmmal Fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʻāl,* (Treasures of the Doers of Good Deeds), Beirut: Al-Risalah, 1981, 214.

unprecedented step, on December 13, 2021, the official website of Saudi Arabia's General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques announced the inauguration of the "Virtual Blackstone" program in *Kaʿbah*, where the stone may be touched digitally via VR (virtual reality) technology. This project is being carried out in collaboration with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Institute at Umm Al Qura University by the Agency for Exhibitions and Museums Affairs. The objective behind initiating this program is to use virtual reality and the digital world to imitate reality utilizing as many senses as possible.[164] "The General President of the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, Sheikh Dr. Abdul Rahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Sudais said that the initiative aims to "use virtual reality (V.R.) and digital experiences that simulate real reality. He stressed the importance of "creating a virtual simulation environment, to simulate the largest possible number of senses, such as vision, hearing, touch, even smell, to reach all the outputs of the presidency that pertain to the Two Holy Mosques, and what the government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is doing to all parts of the world, through the virtual world, and it simulates reality clearly and honestly."[165]

- ***Amr Bi al-Maʿruf wa al-Nahy ʿan al-Munkar* (Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil by heart)**

What if I could not practice any act of worship? Based on incapability, one may say that it is better to cancel the act than to do it incompletely. However Islamic legislature rarely cancels any ritual but rather mandates a lesser form of it. This is plainly clear in the above-mentioned

[164] "Saudi Arabia launches an initiative that allows virtual touching of the Black Stone," *Middle East in 24 English*, Accessed December 15, 2021. https://middleeast.in-24.com/News/amp/492979.
[165] Middle East in 24 English. December 13, 2021. "Saudi Arabia launches an initiative that allows virtual touching of the Black Stone."

examples such as heart prayer in case of physical incapability, dry ablution in case of absence of water, and wiping over the socks due to hardship. But what about "changing the wrong with heart"? It is hard to imagine that if you are incapable of removing a dangerous stone from people's road to just change it by heart! However, this is the case if it comes to the juristic ruling of someone who is faced with something bad and cannot change by hand or tongue. The stages of enjoying the good and forbidding the bad in Islam are three. In the most common Ḥadīth about changing the bad, the Prophet Muhammad is narrated to say, "Whoever finds an evil, he/she shall change it with your hand; if you are unable to change it with your hands, change it with your tongue; and if you are unable to change it with your heart; and that is the weakest form of faith". [166]

While the first way of changing the evil by hand is the authorities' responsibility (During the classical times, it was widely common and *Hisbah* was in hands of *al-Muḥtasib"*; a person is appointed by the ruler to enjoying the good and forbid the evil, and is still enacted by KSA and Iran) and the second stage which is the change by tongue and the third by heart is everyone's business. ʿIzz al-Din ibn ʿAbd al-Salam (d. 1181) has explained the change by the tongue is expressing objection and refusal while the heart change is by detesting and not accepting it.[167] 'Abd al-Salam understood from the prophetic expression about the heart change "the weakest form of faith" that it is an encouragement to do the previous one "by the

[166] Muslim, *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim,* Vol., 3, No. 49, p. 69.
[167] Al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥashiyat al-Sendī ʿala Sunan Al Nasāaī,* 113.

tongue" than this one.[168] Ibn Taymiyah (d. 1328) agreed with this understanding that heart change is by detesting evil and hating it.[169]

However, change by heart can be seen as symbolic of lesser change. Changing evil is a gradual process and it starts with the heart and ends with the hand. The Islamic ritual of changing evil has not never excused the person from the attempt of change even if it is just a mental attempt. This may be explained as mentally building consciousness against evil and cultivating people's awareness which may be more important than the change by force. The order of changing the evil with heart in the *Ḥadīth* is symbolic of creating awareness and helping people to mentally resist evil.

Obviously, symbolism is argued to have solid grounds in the authentic prophetic practices upon which most Islamic ritual alternatives have been built. For instance, the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad during the night of *Al-Isrāʾ wa al-Miʿrāj*, the miraculous journey to Palestine and to the sky, is a great example. The story narrates that the Prophet Muhammad has led the great prophets such as Abraham, Solomon, and Moses, in a symbolic prayer. This leadership was close to virtual prayer because of the Imam, the Prophet Muhammad, and the followers; the prophets were from different worlds. Further, this symbolic prayer asserts the Prophet Muhammad's leadership over the rest of God's Prophets.[170] Some Muslim scholars

---

[168] Al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥashiyat al-Sendī ʿala Sunan Al Nasāaī,*
[169] Taqī ad-Dīn ʾAḥmad al-Ḥarrānī Ibn Taymiyah, *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwa* (Riyadh: king Fahd complex for the printing of the holy Quran, 1995), 428.
[170] Muḥammad Fawzy, "Fatwa Wa Aḥkam; al-Salāh behind al-Bath al-Mibashir (Fatwas and rulings: Prayer through broadcasting)." *YouTube* (2020), Accessed [May 23, 2020], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1jFNHK2etQ.

consider the whole journey as a spiritual one; however, most Muslim scholars argued that it was conducted by body and soul altogether.[171]

Theory of Body and Soul in Islamic Theology

For a better evaluation of the status of body and soul in structuring the Islamic rituals, it is necessary to examine how Muslim philosophers, theologians, and jurists conceptualize them. In classical Islamic intellectuality, the image of the soul is strongly linked to transcendent values, human morals, and superior ideals. It is also used to indicate the body's perfection. Therefore, they place much more emphasis on the soul-centered deeds that elevate the spirit over the body. They link the body to the clay from which it was fashioned, and the soul to God's spirit from which it was taken. The soul is always pure and can never be attributed to any bad qualities. In his most famous book, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*, Al- Ghazali (d. 1111) elaborated on the qualities of *rūḥ* (spirit) that overlap with some relevant concepts such as *nafs* (soul), *ʿaql* (intellect), and *qalb* (heart). Al- Ghazali depicts *rūḥ* as a transparent entity that originates in the cavity of the physical heart and spreads throughout the body via blood vessels to all parts of the body. The flood of life's lights, senses, sight, hearing, and smell from *rūḥ* is comparable to the flood of light from a lamp that is directed to corners of the house because it does not end in a portion of the house except that it illuminates it, and life is like light, and *rūḥ* is the lamp.[172] However, he acknowledges its perplexing nature, where its essence is only known to God.[173] *Rūḥ* is the entity that is responsible for consciousness and awareness in a way that is beyond human comprehension, and it overlaps with one of *qalb*'s

---

[171] Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭantawy, *Al-Tafsīr al-Wasīt Lil Qur'an al-Karīm,* (Cairo: Nahdet Misr Publishing House, 1998).

[172] Al- Ghazālī, Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*, (Beirut: Dar al-Marefa, 2004). 3.
[173] Ibid, 4.

functions, as Al- Ghazali contends.[174] Likewise, *qalb*, which is associated with high virtues, has two meanings. The physical heart is depicted, as Al- Ghazali maintains, as a piece of flesh of a pine tree shape, and it is located on the left side of the chest. It is a unique flesh with a cavity in its interior that contains black blood, which is the source of the *rūḥ*.[175] On the other hand, the spiritual heart is genuinely connected to the physical heart, and it is the component that is primarily addressed, disciplined, and blamed, as well as having a tight link to the *rūḥ*.[176] *ʿAql* seems to be confusing for Al- Ghazali as he interpreted it in two ways: first, it may be used to refer to knowledge of the realities of things, so it is a description of the knowledge whose place is in the heart. Second is that it may be used to refer to the one who realizes the truth behind things, so it is comparable to the heart.[177]

In the same vein, *nafs* is, as Al- Ghazali argues, where the power of anger and lust is located, and this use is predominant among the Sufis because they always use the term *nafs* as the origin that gathers the reprehensible qualities of the human; the meaning this supported by the prophetic expression that the worst of your enemies is your *nafs*.[178] Al-Razi (d. 925) agrees with Al- Ghazali's attitude towards the *nafs* that it is the locus of bad manners while the soul is the place of good manners and ethics.[179] However, with discipline and *mujahādā* (self-struggle), *nafs*, is argued, can be in the best form which is *nafs-ul-muṭmainnah* (reassured soul) that is content with God's commands or that achieved a state of serenity. The

---

[174] Al- Ghazālī, Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*,
[175] Ibid.,
[176] Ibid.,
[177] Ibid.,
[178] Ibid.,
[179] Al-Rāzī, Muḥammad Ibn Zakariya, *Ḥadāeq al-Ḥadāeq (Gardens of Gardens)*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqafah al-Dinyah, 2002), 44.

second status of *nafs* is labeled as *Lawwāmah* (blaming soul), where it keeps reminding its owner of mistakes and errors and letting him/her feel regret. The last rank of *nafs* is *ammārah bi al-sūʾ* (*commands a person to do sin*) which corresponds to the default case of the human soul that is described to tend more to bad desires and bad morality.[180] Al-Rāzī expounds on the seven most common bad qualities of *nafs*; lust, anger, arrogance, envy, stinginess, wishfulness, and showing off.[181] Lust can be curbed by discipline, anger by patience, the arrogance by humbleness, envy by increasing the certainty that God owns everything, stinginess by right thinking, and showing off by sincerity, as Al-Razi asserted.[182]

Philosophically, the discussion about the mortality/immortality of the human soul and body could mirror more about how Islamic intellectuality perceives the nature of both and what is more valuable. In contrast to the Greek and Aristotelian thought that conceptualizes the body as the locus and origin of *nafs*, which also implies the greatness of the body in which without the soul, multiple lofty virtues such as courage and generosity would not have outlets to manifest. In addition, Human feelings such as anger, happiness, and love would not be expressed without the means of the body which is actually affected by these feelings.[183] It also bases on the assumption that the body is older than the soul as the body was the vessel through which the soul is poured and thus the body is more valuable. Even before Aristotle, "Epicurus and the Stoa in the Hellenistic period argue that the soul is corporeal. A number of Stoic arguments hold the claim that the soul is a body that has come down to us," and thus it is mortal. The soul is a body because (roughly) only bodies affect one another, and soul and

---

[180] Al- Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*.
[181] Ibid.,
[182] Ibid.,
[183] Ibn Rushd, *kitāb Al-nafs*, 1st Edition, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdah al-Misriyah, 1950), 21, 22.

body do affect one another, for instance, in cases of bodily damage and emotion ….It is diffused all the way through the perceptible (flesh-and-blood) body of the animate organism (Annas 1992, 39-41).”[184]

On the other hand, in his *Baqāʾ al-Nafs Baʿda Fanāa al-Jasād*,[185] Al-Tūsī (d. 1274) explains that Muslim *Mutakallimūn* (theologians) unanimously agreed that the soul is immortal, and it must survive after the death of the body. However, they do not underestimate the body. Instead, they agreed with the Aristotelian view that the body is a condition for pouring the soul within it. Also, Al-Tūsī has joined this group that supports the immortality of the soul after the body's death. He also mentioned that Muslim philosophers such as Averroes agree with Aristotle about the existence of an eternal, uncreated substance that precedes the creation through which everything has been created while he asserts that the soul is not an object or a tangible power that can be felt. Instead, the nature of the soul is different from the body by suggesting that one can realize the existence of his soul through the consciousness of his self without needing any external, tangible objects such as body limbs.[186]

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) summarized the Muslim theological attitude towards the nature of the human soul in light of the Qur'anic verse: “They are asking thee concerning the Spirit. Say: The Spirit is by command of my Lord, and of knowledge, ye have been vouchsafed but little” (Q, 17:85). Al-Rāzī argues that the form of the question in the Qur'anic verse indicates that the protentional inquiry was about one of two options: the nature of the soul or whether the soul is old (uncreated) or newly created. He explained that it is possible

---

[184] Lorenz, Hendrik, "Ancient Theories of Soul", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (Summer 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/ancient-soul/>.
[185] Nasir al-Din Al-Tūsī, *Baqāʾ al-Nafs Baʿda Fanāa al-Jasad,* (Cairo: Ramses Library, 1923), 16.
[186] Al-Tūsī, *Baqāʾ al-Nafs Baʿda Fanāa al-Jasad*, 16.

that those who raised the question were inquiring about whether the soul is an object or a mixture of emotions and feelings. Thus, the Qur'anic answer implies that the soul is an abstract object beyond their expectations, and it has been created by a creator. But the second possibility inquiry would be about whether the soul is an old (uncreated) object or a created one. Therefore, the implied answer in the Qur'anic verse is that the soul is created by God's command and is not an old object. The term "God's command" in the verse necessitates that the soul has resulted from divine action.[187]

In terms of the philosophical prioritization of the soul over the body, Islamic philosophy has valued the soul over the body. In *Al-Madina al faḍila,* Al-Farābī highly classifies the human soul and gives it a high position among other primary universal spiritual beings that are classified as six spiritual beings: the first position is given to God, second is the ninth intellects that are responsible for moving the sky stars and planets, third intellect is the one that moves Saturn planet, fourth intellect is the one that moves Jupiter planet, fifth intellect is the one that moves Mars planet, sixth intellect is the one that moves the sun, seventh intellect is the one that moves Venus, eighth intellect is the one that moves Mercury, ninth intellect is the one that moves the moon. The third position is given to the *intellectus materialis*. The fourth position is given to the human soul. The fifth position is the material, and the sixth position is the *Sorah* (form). However, al-Farābī gives the intellect a supreme rank that precedes the human soul as it is connected to God. Moreover, the human soul connects to God through the intellect. Besides the spiritual beings, the second component of the world is the material beings that are classified into six ranks as well: the first rank is the human body,

[187] Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Din, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb or Kitāb at-tafsīr al-kabir*, (Cairo: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 2000), 393, 394.

the second rank is the animal bodies, the third rank is the plant bodies, the fourth rank is the mineral bodies, the fifth rank is the sky stars and planets, the sixth rank is the common original materials such as water, fire, air, and dust.[188] As for the superiority of the spiritual and mental acts over the physical ones, al-Farābī puts the heart on the peak of the body organs as it acts as their president. Because of the great rank that the heart occupies, only supreme actions have been attributed to it. This superior position given to the heart in al-Farābī's treatise indicates how great the spiritual acts are in medieval Islamic philosophy.[189]

Supremacy of Spiritual Aspects of Rituals over Physical Ones

Moving on to Islamic rituals, the spiritual parts of rituals are accorded the most importance, while their physical aspects are regarded as mediators and methods of reaching out to spiritual goals. The rituals have been perceived by considering their ultimate goals. That is why a worshipper can be excused for physical inability but never excused for mental elements of rituals. For instance, a disabled person would not be required to give prayer in standing status (even heart prayer might be an option), but without intention (a mental element) or being inattentive (absence of mind for any reason), his/her prayer would never be accepted. In *Maḥāsin al-Sharīʿah* (Advantages of al-Sharīʿah), Al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (d. 976) expounded on all various kinds of Islamic rituals labeling them all as "mental" rituals. If, for any reason, goes out of this mental purpose, a ritual would not be regarded, Al-Qaffāl contends.[190] He argues that Islamic rituals fall under two categories: physical and financial including prayer, *Zakāh,* fasting, jihad, *Qurbanī/Udḥiyah*, *hady* (sacrifice in pilgrimage),

---

[188] Al-Farābī, Abu Naṣr Muḥammad, *Al-Madina al fādila (The Virtuous City)*, Edit., Ali Wafi, (Cairo: al-Nahda al-Misriyah, 1986).
[189] Ibid.,
[190] Al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī, *Maḥasin al- Sharīʿah*, (Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ʿ ilmiyah, 1971), 29.

vows, foods and drinks, transactions, marital affairs, *ḥudūd* (punishments), treatment, and etiquette.[191] Al-Qaffāl elaborated on the elemental/spiritual aspects of rituals as follows:

Prayer is a method to glorify the Creator by submitting to Him with all kinds of submission and thanking Him for His favors. *Zakāh* is a form of solidarity for the destitute and those in need who are unable to meet their own demands and will perish if left to themselves. Fasting is a way to control one's own sinful cravings by devoting one's time to God in the hopes of receiving solely His satisfaction. Pilgrimage is a way to express repentance to the Creator for failing to fulfill the obligation of thanksgiving, with the hope that the repentance will be accepted. Jihad is sacrificing money and self to achieve God's commands. As for *Qurbani/Udḥiyah*, *hady*, they are a sacrifice to draw closer to God to expiate whatever mistakes and sins are committed.[192]

In the same vein, Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350), classified Islamic acts of worship into three categories: heart worship, tongue worship, and limb worship. To assert the significance of non-physical worship, Ibn al-Qayyim started with this kind of *ʿIbādah*. The heart is the king over other body limbs, and therefore, all actions attributed to it must be highly valued. Ibn al-Qayyim elaborated on the types of heart acts of worship i.e., mandatory, recommended, and prohibited. For instance, sincerity, truthfulness, fear of God, love, and certainty of God's existence are mandatory actions. Recommended actions such as patience in specific cases, and contentment that a person can be excused if some of them are missed. As for the prohibited actions, they are arrogance, showing off, conceit, envy, heedlessness, and

[191] Al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī, *Maḥasin al- Sharīʿah.*
[192] Ibid.,

hypocrisy.[193] Out of its significance, these heart actions can never be replaced by alternatives to the extent that even some of these actions may lead to a high rank of faith or infidelity. Similarly, Ibn al-Qayyim explained the tongue acts of worship that include obligatory, recommended, and prohibited acts. Obligatory acts include *Shahada* (testimony of the Oneness of God and the prophethood of the messenger Muhammad), mandatory recitation of what is due from the Qur'an (for instance Qur'anic recitations in prayer), prayer's remembrance of God (for instance as *Tasbīḥ* in *rukūʿ* and *sujūd*) and enjoining good and forbidding evil. Recommended acts include optional recitations of the Qur'an, optional remembrance of God, and seeking beneficial knowledge. As for the prohibited acts for the tongue, Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned examples include uttering what displeases Allah and His Messenger, such as uttering innovations that contradict what Allah and His Messenger agree on, slanderous accusation (*Qadhf*), telling a lie, and false testimony.[194] The last category of *ʿIbādah* Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned is that comes under *ʿIbādāt al-Jawāreḥ* limbs acts of worship and comprises of those performed by the five senses: touch, hearing, sight, smell, and taste. Acts such as hearing the Qur'an, and sermons, looking at the Qur'an to recite and learn, tasting food whenever abandoning it may lead to death, smelling things to differentiate between *ḥalāl and ḥarām*, and touching your spouse during the sexual relationship, are obligatory deeds, as Ibn al-Qayyim maintains. On the other hand, deliberate hearing of *kufr* and inappropriate words, looking at *ʿAwrah* (private parts), tasting wine, or poison, smelling stolen perfume, and touching a person other than your spouse, are prohibited deeds.[195]

---

[193] Ibn al-Qayyim, Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh, *Madārij al-Salikīn*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-ʿArabi, 1996), 131 – 134.

[194] Ibn al-Qayyim, Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh, *Madārij al-Salikīn*, 134.
[195] Ibid., 136 - 140.

Likewise, in his seminal book *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm Ad-Din,* al-Ghazālī enumerated the requirements for valid rituals as spiritual actions or heart acts, such as reflection, intention, and mindfulness. He places great emphasis on these heart actions as prerequisites of all Islamic rituals. For him, the mental element in rituals is an integral part and irreplaceable in any Islamic act of worship. For instance, he expounded on *ḥudūr* (heart presence) in prayer as a significant part that can never be skipped or neglected. Therefore, this makes the prayers of an insane or drunk person invalid because his mind/heart is not present. For al-Ghazali, *ḥudūr* is the core of prayer as it achieves its main purpose which is the glorification of God. In addition, it helps complete the supreme goal of prayer which is "prevention of indecency and abomination" (Q, 29:45). Being a jurist and mystic, al-Ghazali places much more emphasis on non-physical aspects of *ʿIbādāt* which added a new dimension to his scholarly contribution to Islamic jurisprudence. In a response to a claim that by concentrating on the mental element in *ʿIbādāt*, he added a new dimension to it which is against the mainstream juridical attitude, al-Ghazali supported his argument by quoting some precedent jurists such as Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 778), and some companions such as Muʿādh ibn Jabal (d. 639) and al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAli (d. 670) who asserted the same attitude towards the significance of heart action in validating rituals. However, he made an outstanding point that jurists have nothing to do with mental or heart deeds, instead, they were more interested in bodily deeds that only fulfill the duties and free worshippers from religious responsibilities. Al-Ghazālī, even interprets the juristic outer requirements for prayer. Six conditions for valid prayer including *Adhān* (call for prayer), *Aṭṭahārah* (purification), *Satr al-ʿAwra* (covering of private parts for men and the whole body of women except face and hands), *Qibla,* standing, and intention must be fulfilled but in a unique way according to al-Ghazālī. *Adhān* is the call for people's

hearts which shall be rejoiced upon hearing it. *Aṭṭahārah* (purification) is the actual purity of the inside from the dirt of bad desires and whims. *Satr al-ʿAwra* is basically to cover your inner shortcomings as you cover your outer private parts from people. As for directing only to *Qibla*, it is an indication of the necessity of turning your heart away from any distractions than God's direction. Standing in prayer is symbolic of being straightforward and honest in your life as you are always observed by God.[196]

Further, Al-Ghazālī expands his theory to other acts of worship. For instance, fasting is seen as it falls under three categories: *ṣawm al-ʿAwām* (ordinary fasting), *ṣawm al-khawāṣ* (extortionary fasting), and *ṣawm khawāṣ al-khawāṣ* (ideal fasting). *Ṣawm al- ʿAwām ṣawm* implies avoiding food, drink, and sexual pleasure. *Ṣawm al-khawāṣ* entails maintaining one's limbs, including the ears, eyes, tongue, hands, and feet, as well as all other organs, sin-free. *Khawāṣ al-khawāṣ;* an ideal fast entails the absence of all worldly concerns and thoughts, as well as the total disregard for all things but Allah, the Great and Glorious. This last kind of fast is broken by worrying about anything other than God Almighty and the Last Day. It also occurs when one thinks about this world other than that which is intended for religious purposes. Some righteous people assert that anyone who moves his intention to manage what breaks his fast in the evening will commit a sin, as that is a sign of a lack of trust in God's grace and a lack of certainty regarding his promised provision, as Al- Ghazālī contends.[197] While elaborating on the first and second kinds of fasting, Al- Ghazālī intensively expounded on the third kind, the heart fasting, which embodies the genuine meanings of fasting. Even,

---

[196] Al- Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*, 165 - 169.
[197] Al- Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*, 234.

he considers whoever fails in keeping his heart fasting from bad thoughts, and ideas, his fasting is invalid as shown in the below text:

فإن قلت فمن اقتصر على كف شهوة البطن والفرج وترك هذه المعاني فقد قال الفقهاء صومه صحيح فما معناه فاعلم أن فقهاء الظاهر يثبتون شروط الظاهر بأدلة هي أضعف من هذه الأدلة التي أوردناها في هذه الشروط الباطنة لا سيما الغيبة وأمثالها ولكن ليس إلى فقهاء الظاهر من التكليفات إلا ما يتيسر على عموم الغافلين المقبلين على الدنيا الدخول تحته

فأما علماء الآخرة فيعنون بالصحة القبول وبالقبول الوصول إلى المقصود ويفهمون أن المقصود من الصوم التخلق بخلق من أخلاق الله عز وجل وهو الصمدية والاقتداء بالملائكة في الكف عن الشهوات بحسب الإمكان فإنهم منزهون عن الشهوات

Al- Ghazali "Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-dīn" [198]

"If you say, then whoever restricts himself to refraining from abdominal lust and sexual intimacy, jurists assume his fasting is valid, then what does that mean? Know that outward jurists prove outward circumstances using evidence that is weaker than the proofs we have listed in these inward conditions, particularly backbiting and the like. That is because outward jurists are just concerned with making life easier for the careless laypeople who are more engaged in this world.

For the scholars of the hereafter, validity means acceptance, and acceptance means reaching the goal, and they understand that fasting means abiding by one of God Almighty's morals,

[198] Al- Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*, 236.

which is steadfastness, and imitating the angels in refraining from desires as much as possible because they are free from desires."

Similarly, in his magnum opus, *Qūt al-Qulūb* (The food of the hearts), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996) detailed the spiritual aspects of Islamic acts of worship. "As far as *Qūt* is concerned, the title of the work itself is a clear and sufficient indication for an understanding of the purpose behind the compilation."[199] Over the course of forty-eight chapters, al-Makkī made an anatomy of the structure of Islamic rituals which weighs more on non-physical aspects. "According to al-Makkī only by the purification of the heart, and by attaining the reality of faith one's actions become purified, and who are engaged in pious acts attain nearness to God."[200] While the entire treatise has a great deal on how significant mental elements in rituals are, a chapter titled "*The intention of worshipper is better than his actions*". He enumerated the various interpretations of scholars on this prophetic statement highlighting those who give precedence to the spiritual aspect over the bodily movements in ʿ*Ibādah*. What has really stood out to him about the importance of ritual's heart element is that it is continuous and remains forever, while bodily actions are intermittent.[201]

Ḥajj as a Mental Ritual Example

"Pilgrimage, the Ḥajj to Mecca, has been A prominent feature of Islam since the time of the Prophet Mohammed in that seventh century C.E. It is one of the pillars of religion, required by God of all who is able, according to the Quran. Basically, the Ḥajj is a complex of ritual

---

[199] Shukri, M.A.M. "Abū Ṭālib Al-Makkī and his Qūt al-Qulūb." *Islamic Studies* 28, no. 2 (1989): 161–70. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20839943, 7.
[200] Ibid., 9.
[201] Al-Makkī, Abū Ṭālib, *Qut al-qulūb fi muʿāmalat al-maḥbūb wa-wasf ṭariq al-murid ila maqām al-tawhīd,* (Cairo: Dar al-Torath, 2001), 1345.

practices that occurs annually during the twelfth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. It brings Muslims from wherever they live to a sacred place in Western Arabia, their ontological center of the world: the Kaʿbah in Mecca, God's sacred House, and the holy precincts that encompass it."[202]

Primarily, "The Ḥajj, like other pilgrimages, of human beings, religious beliefs and practices ideologies, institutions, political forces, capital and material goods across spatiotemporal boundaries into physical connection with sacred spaces and places."[203] In the current contemporary debate over the legitimacy of distant Islamic rituals, Ḥajj seems to be the last ritual (if it happens) to be imagined in absence of space and physicality. In contrast other Islamic rituals such as prayer (where there is a possibility for heart prayer and home prayer), fasting (as al-Ghazali highlighted a perfect kind as heart fasting), and *Iʿtikāf* (ḥanāfī opens a venue for home *Iʿtikāf*), Ḥajj looks very connected to space and body; therefore, no attempts have been made by revolutionary or renewals scholars to approach it. Rather, they would prefer delaying for several years or even canceling it than compromising the spatial and bodily requirements.[204] *Ḥifz al-Nafs* (Protecting the self) is the main *maqṣid* upon which this unanimous fatwa is built. However, with the invasion of the internet to the religious arena, people started to compromise the space conditions in practicing the religion. Drawing on the supremacy of spirituality as a dominant component of Islamic acts of worship, many attempts have been taken to simulate the spiritual experience of the pilgrimage. Multiple solid grounds

[202] Juan campo, "The mecca pilgrimage in the formation of Islam in modern Egypt" in Muslim Pilgrimage in the Modern World, ed., Rahimi, Babak, and Peyman Eshaghi. (University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 146.

[203] Juan Campo, "Visualizing the Hajj: Representations of a Changing Sacred Landscape Past and Present." In *The Hajj: Pilgrimage in Islam*, edited by Eric Tagliacozzo and Shawkat M. Toorawa, 269-88. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), doi:10.1017/CBO9781139343794.016.

[204] Humaid Lahmar, Al- Ḥajj Zaman Jāeḥat Corona 2019 (Hajj during Corona 2019), IslamOnline, Accessed 12/27/2022, shorturl.at/kory3.

have been established by classical and modern upon which promotors of simulative Ḥajj experience have built their argument. For instance, al-Ghazali found that the intention is the main pillar of Ḥajj to the extent that if someone intends to do it, but for some reason, he/she becomes unable to do it, a full reward will be gained by this person only for his/her sincere intention.[205] Furthermore, he outlines the gradual phases of Ḥajj by emphasizing spiritual/mental factors such as comprehension, yearning, determination...etc. He said, "Know that the beginning of the pilgrimage is understanding, which means understanding the position of pilgrimage within the religion, then the yearning for it, then your determination to complete it, and then cutting the ties that prevent you from completing it. Further, the rest steps of Ḥajj include purchasing the *iḥrām* dress, purchasing the provisions (for the journey), renting a ride, departing, walking in the desert, wearing the *iḥrām* at the *meeqāt* (spatial threshold) by reciting the *Talbiyah*, entering Mecca, and finally completing the rites of Ḥajj."[206] In other words, as it collects sublime meanings of worship and devotion, al-Ghazālī argued that Islamic mysticism is embodied in Ḥajj (according to prophetic tradition).[207] Likewise, al-Makkī prioritizes the heart's actions in performing the Ḥajj by saying, "The virtues of Ḥajj include, true devotion is shown to God Almighty, the expense must be immediate, and the hand must be free of trades that occupies the heart and disperse the worry, while the concern for God must be abstract, accompanied by a calm, reassuring heart filled with remembrance, empty of passion, looking ahead without looking back, sincere intent, and a good willingness to give and spend for Allah."[208]

---

[205] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn,* 242.
[206] Ibid., 265.
[207] Ibid., 266.
[208] Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb,* 1250.

As for the Ḥajj perception of lived experience, it is still more spiritual (mental perception) than anything else, as some “participants see themselves as 'travellers', 'seekers', ‘Ḥajjis,’ 'pilgrims', devotees', 'conference/festival attendants' and 'holiday makers',”[209] Ḥajj is mainly a spiritual experience that transcends the limits of body and space. In their anthropological study of *Spiritual Journey to Ḥajj: Australian and Pakistani Experience and Expectations*, Farooq Haq, and Anita Medhekar reached the conclusion of interviewing Muslim pilgrims, “Then the official reiterated and emphasized the generalized concept of Ḥajj as “a promise of the soul to visit the house of Allah at least once in the lifetime”.[210] “Ali Bin-Usman al-Hujveri, a renowned Sufi scholar and teacher of many Sufis of the eleventh century. Nicholson (1996: 326) translated his explanation of the Ḥajj as containing two stations. “The first station is that of the body, namely Mecca, and the second is the station of the soul, namely, friendship (with God)… Whoever seeks his bodily station must renounce lusts and pleasures and put on the pilgrim’s garb and follow all the rituals. But whoever seeks his spiritual station must renounce familiar associations and bid farewell to pleasures and take no thought of other than God. Accordingly, what is truly valuable is not the Ka’ba, but contemplation and annihilation in the abode of friendship, of which many things the sight of Ka’ba is indirectly a cause.”[211]

Spirituality in pilgrimage can serve as a universal element among all world’s faiths. An interesting debate between two leading anthropologists and scholars of ritual, Victor

---

[209] Farooq Haq, Anita Medhekar. 2017. Is Spiritual Tourism an Innovation in Tourism for India and Pakistan? Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship as Driving Forces of the Global Economy, pages 519-529.
[210] Ibid.,
[211] Nicholson, R.A. *The Kashf Al-Mahjub: The oldest Persian treatise on Sufism*. Translated from original written by Ali Bin Uthman AlHujwiri. Lahore, Pakistan: Sang-Meel Publications, 1996, 326-327, quoted from Farooq Haq, Anita Medhekar. Is Spiritual Tourism an Innovation in Tourism for India and Pakistan? Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship as Driving Forces of the Global Economy.

Turner (d. 1983) and Alan Morinis (b. 1949) illustrates which part of pilgrimage is most influential, physicality or spirituality. According to Turner, pilgrimage is a sort of "extroverted mysticism" in which "the pilgrim physically traverses a mystical road; the mystic sets forth on an inward spiritual pilgrimage", whether it is in the past "on foot or donkey or camel through rough country with danger of robbers and brigands, and not much in the way of food or shelter," or "in the modern world, "by jet aircraft and stay in the best hotels." [212] In both cases, Turner contends that is it a transition from "familiar place" that is "secular, mundane, every day, ordinary" to a "far place" this is "sacred, rare, often miraculous".[213] On the other hand, Alan Morinis disagreed with the anthropologist approach that pays more attention to "terrestrial and geographical space", as he said, "pilgrimage is as much an act of the mind as it is an act of the body….The distinction portrays the earthly journey as somehow more real, when, in fact, most cultures subsume physical journeys and other quests into one more inclusive category: the spiritual life is a pilgrimage, the ascetic learns to visit the sacred shrines in his own body, devotion is a journey to God."[214]

Furthermore, symbolism is intensively embedded in all rites of Ḥajj. Beginning with *iḥrām,* passing by *Saʿi* (walking) between *Ṣafa* and *Marwa* (two mountains), and ending with *Ṭawāf* (Circumambulation) around *Ka'bah*, these ritualistic actions are symbolic of lofty meanings. As for *iḥrām*[215], Muslims must enter this sacred state in order to conduct the Ḥajj (major or minor). It requires a pilgrim to shave his head, trim his nails, and trim his beard

[212] Macwilliams, Mark W., "Virtual Pilgrimage to Ireland's Croagh Patrick," Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet, ed., Lorne L. Dawson (Editor), Douglas E. Cowan (Editor). (Routledge: June 29, 2004), 223, and 224.
[213] Macwilliams, Mark W., "Virtual Pilgrimage to Ireland's Croagh Patrick,".
[214] Macwilliams, Mark W., "Virtual Pilgrimage to Ireland's Croagh Patrick,".
[215] Adam Zeidan. Iḥrām. *Britannica*. Accessed December 29, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/topic/ihram.

before wearing white, seamless, two-piece clothing. Women also wear white; while no specific attire is required, long robes are preferred. Sexual activity, shaving, and nail cutting are prohibited until a specific stage. This state embodies the complete renunciation of all material pleasures (as in the case of a deceased person who has left behind all worldly things) and is solely for Allah. Likewise, *Sa'i* (walking) between *Ṣafa* and *Marwa* is to commemorate the struggle of Hagar when she walked seven times between these two mountains searching for water to survive her baby Ishmael. Lastly, *Ṭawāf* (Circumambulation) around *Ka'bah* is symbolic of imitating angels who circumambulate around "*Bait Maʿmur"* (Holy House) in the heavens.

Out of the fact that spirituality and symbolism influence the acts of Ḥajj, the ostensibly rigid link between rituals and physicality has been disrupted in addition as a result of new kinds of religiosity emerging on the Internet. As online rituals have grown in popularity, religious leaders have begun to rethink the spatial and physical prerequisites for conducting religion in cyberspace. This novel approach has been bolstered by creating or, more precisely, the revival of a long-forgotten part of rituals reflected in symbolism. "Virtual pilgrimages on the Internet are important for understanding new ways of being spiritual in the postmodern world. Whether strictly for informational purposes or for something more, these pilgrimages draw upon the symbolic relations of equivalence between their cyberspace sites and real-life sacred ones."[216]

In the same vein, the Islamic Center of Southern California (ICSC) staged an innovative event named "Simulation of Islamic *Ḥajj*" a few years ago, in which Muslim

[216] Dawson, Lorne L. , Cowan, Douglas E. ed., *Finding Faith on the Internet*, (Routledge June 29: 2004), 224.

schoolchildren were invited to partake in an experimental *Ḥajj* experience. A black box replicating the *Kaʿbah* in Mecca was constructed in this ceremonial training, with kids going around it while chanting *Talbiyah* (devotional prayer performed by Muslim pilgrims while strolling around the *Kaʿbah*) to live the same experience and feel the same sensations as genuine pilgrims. The community responded warmly to this activity, and a few other American Muslim communities have followed suit, citing the favorable impact on the community's youngsters of this ritualistic simulation experience.

Likewise, it is relevant to highlight the aforementioned inauguration of the "Virtual Blackstone" program in *Kaʿbah*, where the stone may be touched digitally via VR (virtual reality) technology.[217] The official religious authority's move of virtualizing the "touching of the Blackstone" rite located in the *Kaʿbah* is groundbreaking in addition to other attempts to offer a simulated experience. It might open the way for virtualizing the *Ḥajj* experience, even if just in an experimental version, as is typical in other faiths. Although full virtualization of the Islamic pilgrimage is unlikely in the foreseeable future, the debate about this virtual experience that dominates social media platforms may provide hope for the reassessment of its validity on both authority and popular levels. The virtual experience of the "touching of the Blackstone" rite was viewed differently by social media users. While some saw it as a progressive move toward incorporating technology into rituals, others saw it as a step back. In any case, the official traditional authorities in Saudi Arabia's acceptance of such problematic activity would inspire Muslims all over the world to reconsider visiting websites that have been offering virtual simulations of the *Ḥajj* experience for several years. In his

[217] Middle East in 24 English. December 13, 2021. "Saudi Arabia launches an initiative that allows virtual touching of the Black Stone." Accessed December 15, 2021. https://middleeast.in-24.com/News/amp/492979.

paper "Digital *Ḥajj* : *The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Muslim Cyberspace and the Issue of Religious Online Authority*," Dominik Schlosser listed a number of these websites. Princeton.edu (2012), the most prestigious *Ḥajj* website, provided a clickable graphic for practically conducting each of the *Ḥajj* rites. "Clicking on this takes the site user to poorly-proportioned pictorial representations of each stage of the Meccan pilgrimage, and alongside these, there is a brief account of the various ritual actions the non-virtual pilgrim is obliged to perform during the course of it".[218] "Second Life" is another massive website launched by Linden Lab in 2003 that offers a 3D experience of Muslim pilgrimages. "Second Life has more than 31 million registered users worldwide, of whom as many as 33,000 are simultaneously logged into the system around the clock".[219] The website is not only about Islamic rituals, but also includes rituals from other faiths. Islam online.com has acquired a Second Life land for its members to practice Islamic rituals. This could suggest the elevated level of trust and credibility that religious and practicing performers of various faiths place in virtual religious experiences that go beyond regular religious practices. Even, "it may not reflect their spirituality of analog version, but it certainly offers unprecedented opportunities to explore Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca without the hardships, difficulties, and expense of travel."[220] In fact, "the Internet offers a window into Mecca for those unable to travel there. There is also the potential for augmented reality, with the *Ḥajj* experience supplemented by

---

[218] Dominik Schlosser, "Digital Hajj: The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Muslim Cyberspace and the Issue of Religious Online Authority". *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, January 2013: 189-203.

[219] Dominik Schlosser, "Digital Hajj: The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Muslim Cyberspace and the Issue of Religious Online Authority".

[220] Gary Bunt, "Decoding the Hajj in Cyberspace" in *The Hajj Pilgrimage in Islam*, ed., Eric Tagliacozzo and Shawkat M. Toorawa, (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 248.

digital tools. Personal technology and social networking offer glimpses into *Ḥajj* experiences and will become more interactive as technology further develops."[221]

Conclusion

With a deep and close investigation into the structure of the Islamic rituals which is known as *ʿIbādāt*, one realizes that they are composed of three components: physical, spiritual, and spatial. While mainstream Islam recognizes *ʿIbādāt* as a combination between physicality and spirituality, this chapter argues that physicality can be compromised but spirituality not. One can imagine prayer in the absence of physical movements but never happened in absence of the heart. Therefore, "heart prayer" has flourished in classical juridical scholarship. Even they conceptualized *ʿIbādāt* in the absence of the body itself as in *Niyābah* "proxy" where a disabled or deceased person can still perform *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage) or other forms of worship.

In Islam, there is a basis upon which multiple forms of rituals could be formalized in absence of physicality due to flexibility in their requirements. Compromising physicality as an intrinsic aspect of Islamic rites is not a new concept in modern Islam; rather, it has profound roots in pre-modern and even classical Islam. Heart prayer is an ideal example of this kind of worship. While the dominant forms of performing rituals appear to be constant, the emergence of new cyber religiosity encouraged innovative religious practices. This undermines the strength of reality by changing "taken for granted" forms of religious practices. In legal terminology, the force of reality is referred to as "*Taqlīd*," or imitation,

[221] Gary Bunt, "Decoding the Hajj in Cyberspace."

which seems to be more convenient for some religious authorities and the general public than change in what they refer to as "*Musallamāt*," or essential Islamic principles.

Coming to a result that body and physicality can be absent from the scene of the Islamic rituals would prompt an inquiry about the meaning behind non-physical/non-spatial rituals. The enhanced answer with multiple examples would be symbolic significance is crucial in the body of Islamic rituals. The idea behind physical purification, spatial presence in the mosque, kissing the Blackstone in *Ka'bah,* or rejecting the evil with the heart would be definitely of symbolic implications, i.e., they are meant by themselves but for other symbolic purposes. This symbolism made it easy for religious authorities who support Internet worship as a base for their argument as we will see in the following chapter. "Cyberspace is not quite as unusual a place as sometimes predicted. Life in cyberspace is in continuity with so-called "real life," and this holds true for religion as well. People are doing online pretty much what they do offline, but they are doing it differently. Activity is being mediated electronically, and this mediation allows things to be done in ways that are somewhat new and sometimes entirely innovative."[222]

[222] Dawson, Lorne L. , Cowan, Douglas E. ed., *Finding Faith on the Internet*, 1.

Chapter Two:

Conceptualization of Space in Islamic Rituals

Introduction:

As previously discussed, Islamic rituals are made up of three major components: body, soul, and space. We discussed the importance of bodily representations of worship versus non-physical representations in the previous chapter. We now pivot our inquiry to scrutinize the role of physical space within the context of Islamic rituals, pondering whether it is a fundamental component or perhaps relegated to a subordinate status, thereby potentially diminishing its import. The physical presence at a place of worship is traditionally thought to be as important as worship itself. This would appear normal if we came to know that classical minds did not legalize rituals unless they are observed within the spatial limits. However, this was not always the case, as some progressive eighth-century scholars contributed not only to legalizing non-spatial rituals, but also to creating a paradigm for future generations to follow.

The Mālikī school of law, founded by Malik ibn Anas (d. 795), established a simple non-spatial ritualistic paradigm known as *salat al-sufun* (Ship Prayer). The innovative concept behind this novel form of prayer was to have an Imam and followers praying behind him in two separate ships. While other schools of law, such as ḥanafīs, shāfi'īs, and ḥanbalis, impose new requirements for allowing such distant prayer (such as connectedness of ships, presence of the Imam in the front ship towards qiblah, contact between prayer rows, and being within a specific amount of space), Mālikīs were extremely tolerant to waive all of

these conditions except one. They simply stated that followers must properly communicate (one-sided communication) with the Imam and be aware of his movements.

The Ship Prayer's model laid the foundation for more revolutionary distant forms of ritual observance like *salat al-radio* (Radio Prayers), which was launched by a twentieth Moroccan Mufti Ahmad ibn al-Ṣeddiq Al-Ghumārī (d. 1960). Even though the Ship Prayer influenced all subsequent distant rituals, such as *salat al-sūq* (Market Prayer) and *al-salat min warāʾ al-ḥā'iṭ* (Prayer behind walls), this Radio Prayer represented a significant leap in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Radio Prayer is a form of prayer that rejects the dominant physical and spatial forms of prayer in favor of a new concept of spaceless prayer. The story began with some Indian Muslim scholars requesting a fatwa from the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Bakhīt al-Muṭīʿī (d. 1935), regarding attendance at the Friday congregational prayer in a mosque but listening to the Friday sermon via radio broadcast, since no Arabic-speaking member of the congregation was present to give the sermon. In response to this question, Al-Ghumārī wrote a book titled *Al-Iqnāʿ fi Ṣeḥat Salat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyāʿ* (The Persuasion of the legality of Friday Prayer Following Radio), which allowed Muslims not only to listen to the khuṭbah but also to observe the prayer itself following radio broadcast. Al-Ghumārī's book was met with harsh criticism and rejection, and it sparked heated debate among Muslim scholars at the time.

Despite harsh criticism from his peers and contemporary Muslim scholars, Al-Ghumārī's argument for legalizing the incorporation of technology into Islamic worship has remained strong and compelling enough to be heavily quoted by subsequent generations due to his progressive foresight for Islamic rituals. In his early twentieth-century treatise, he predicted that Muslims would become more engaged with technology, even incorporating it

into multiple forms of worship. This paved the way for various acts of worship in the twenty-first century, such as online Qur'an recitations, sermons, online Sufi ḥadra (ritualistic movement of body while chanting God’s names or other prayers), remote *Iʿtikāf* (ritualistic staying at mosque), and even online prayer.

This chapter will gradually take you from the most basic forms of non-spatial rituals, such as *Ship Prayers* and *Radio Prayers*, to the most recent form of rituals, *Online Prayer or Internet Prayer*. While the majority of contemporary Muslim religious authorities oppose it, a few revolutionary figures from various parts of the Islamic world support it. Authorities from Al-Azhar in Egypt, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Europe, and the United States support virtual prayer not only for its consistency with precedent examples, but also for its symbolism of actual spatial prayer. Despite the more than one-thousand-year span between Ship Prayers and Online Prayer on the one hand, and the 70-year interval between Radio Prayers and Online Prayers on the other, both Ship and Radio Prayers appear to be still relevant. Relaxing the requirements of connectedness of rows , *al-Mutābaʿah Makāniyah* (spatial following), and presence in the same space, which were the foundations of both previous forms of remote rituals, have also been used as grounds for online prayer.

The significance of the ongoing discussion lies in its feasibility of drawing a picture of how space's position in Islamic rituals is interpreted in classical legal minds. On the one hand, supporters of online prayer prioritize rituals over places of worship, while opponents value places over rituals. One question, however, remains unanswered: Why does "Place" have such a high status in Islamic rituals? According to the opposing team, mosques are not the only focal point in Muslim worship, but also the spatiality of rituals in general. Attendance at a place of worship is regarded as equally important as the act of worship itself.

Moreover, it is believed that, even in emergencies, it cannot be replaced by any other alternative.

Essentially, the legalization of internet prayer broadened the potential for authorizing more acts of worship that Muslims have never imagined to be performed remotely. Online *Jalsat At-tilwāh* (recitation of the Qur'an sessions), *dhikr ḥalaqas* (collective sessions for remembrance of God), *Iʿtikāf*, and even virtual pilgrimages (not actual pilgrimages, but simulations) are among these activities. There is no doubt that the fatwa for permitting online prayers has established a model for future virtual practices that may compete with those now in place.

If we stick to the three conventional schools of thought, *ḥanafī, mālikī,* and *ḥanbalī*, we will include marriage as an act of worship as well. In terms of space and spatial constraints, what works for prayer and pilgrimage will also work for it. "The nikaḥ is regarded as both an act of worship *ibādah* and a civil transaction *mu'amalah*", and it is a means of staying chaste (an *ibādah*) as well as increasing the ummah of the Prophet (*mu'amalah*)."[223] In his study; *Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal Status of Online Nikaḥ in Ḥanafī Fiqh*, Mansur Ali discussed the spatial requirement in *nikāh*. He further elaborated on the concept of *"Itiḥād al-Majlis*" (unity of session) originated by the classical ḥanafī *madhhab* and developed by some later *madhabs* such as Shāfi'ī who added stricter condition "immediacy" in "*Al-Ijāb wa Al-Qabūl"* (proposal and acceptance) between the groom and the bride. *Itiḥād al-Majlis* idea in marriage necessitates the physical presence in the same

[223] Mansur Ali, E-Nikah *Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh*, Conference paper (Edinburgh: BRAIS, 2022), 5.

place until the proposal and acceptance is conducted between the couple. This traditional requirement is echoed by a number of current Muslim scholars, fatwa websites, and authorities that oppose virtual marriage due to the lack of unity of session as well as the lack of credibility of the internet as a way of practicing Islam as a whole.

However, M. Ali stands for the revolutionary notion of E-Nikaḥ by saying, "whilst the early Ḥanafī jurists employed terms that denote physicality and actual presence such as *itiḥād al-majlis*, *ittiḥād al-makān*, and *ḥuḍūr*, these are merely incidental and secondary and are only there to service primary goals."[224] The rationale underlying the spatial requirement is prioritized in his argument; *itiḥād al-majlis* is a tool to facilitate communication between the bride and the groom and the two witnesses in order to complete the proposal and acceptance process, which is the primary component of the marriage contract. As a result, he eventually finds that cyberspace may serve as an alternate instrument for carrying out the same objective. However, he is not quite convinced that cyberspace is legitimate enough to serve as a method of mediating such a sacred rite (marriage) and believes that it may taint it owing to its doubtful structure and unreliability. Adequately, his research brings up fresh perspectives on the importance of physical space in Islamic rites.

Juridical Discussion of Spatial Significance in Islamic Rituals

As we discussed the significance of the body and physical acts in constructing Islamic rituals, the pertinent question here is whether physical space is a crucial component and an inherent part of Islamic rituals, or it may be compromised owing to its secondary role. Traditionally,

[224] Mansur Ali, *E-Nikah*.

physical presence in a place of worship is thought to be as important as the worship itself. It is also thought that it cannot be replaced, even in an emergency. The importance is thereby ascribed not just to the prayer itself, but also to the place of worship.[225] "Historically, the first effort made by the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) to form a Muslim society and an Islamic state in Medina was to build a mosque. The Nabawi Mosque in Medina was the pulse of all important events during the time of the Prophet (PBUH), where he taught people to organize their lives and religion completely, beginning from the individual to the family, community, and country. Thus, the mosque has played its role extensively covering all aspects of worship, science, politics, economy, military, administration, establishment of national policy, relations between countries and so forth."[226]

The centrality of the mosque (*Masjid*) in shaping Islamic rituals and the Muslim society as a whole is mirrored in the linguistic correlation between rituals (for example, prayer) and the mosque. *Masjid* is the Arabic word for mosque, which is derived from the verb *sajada* (prostrate). As a result, *Masjid* refers to a spot touched by the forehead of an individual during the act of prostration.[227] Az-Zarkashī (d. 1392), a prominent Shāfi'ī scholar, defined it as any spot or place used for prayer. Expounding on the reason why the Masjid is primarily associated with *sujūd* (prostration) rather than *Rukūʿ* (bowing down), he underscores the noble rank *sujūd* achieves among other prayer activities.[228] The same holds

---

[225] Wael Hegazy, "Muslim Online Prayer in a Sociocultural Context". *CyberOrient*, Vol. 14, Issue No. 2, (2020), 64-84.
[226] Hairunnizam Wahid, "Localization of zakat distribution and the role of mosque: perceptions of amil and zakat recipients in Malaysia." *International Zakat Forum* (2011) Accessed June 13, 2020, http://www.ukm.my/hairun/kertas%20kerja/Paper%20Hairunnizam,%20Radiah%20and%20Sanep-MALAYSIA%20_9__final_28062011.pdf. 2.
[227] Hairunnizam Wahid, "Localization of zakat distribution and the role of mosque".
[228] Abū Abdullāh Badr ad-Dīn Az-Zarkashī, *Iʿlam al-Sajid Bi Aḥkam al-Masajid*. Ed., Mostafa Al-Maraghi, (Cairo: Supreme Council For Islamic Affairs, 1996), 27 - 28.

true for the bigger mosque, which is referred to as (*Jāmiʿ*) by alluding to *Jumʿah*, the finest prayer among other necessary prayers.

Although the term Masjid is currently employed to refer to the actual mosque, it was initially used to refer to any space utilized for prayer prostration, notably by classical jurists. This linguistic approach may give some insight into the link between mosque and worship in classical and even modern legal thought, but it does not explain why mosques are so important to rituals. In Islam, it is widely accepted that prayer is permitted anywhere, even at home and in a mosque.[229] According to common Prophetic tradition, Prophet Muḥammad is favored by five distinct qualities, including that Allah making him victorious by instilling fear in the hearts of his enemies over a one-month journey, the earth being made clean for him and his followers, through which prayer and *Tayammum* (dry ablution) are valid, and therefore Muslims are required to pray anywhere whenever any prayer is due.[230] Az-Zarkashī pointed out that while the cleanliness of earth is a unique quality made to Prophet Muḥammad, all preceding prophets and messengers are given the same quality of having any spot of earth a valid spot for prayer.[231]

The value of space may be seen clearly in the assertion of the mosque's standing in *Jumʿah* prayer. Even though there are no divine commands for the requirement of a house of worship for Muslims to perform a Friday prayer, the requirement was established by many jurists. According to some legal *madhhābs*, praying at a mosque is a requirement for doing *Jumʿah* prayer. Ḥanafī school stipulates *miṣr jameʿ* (a big city with enough number of

---

[229] Hegazy, Online prayer, 11.
[230] Al-Bukhārī, *Saḥiḥ al-Bukhari*, 95.
[231] Az-Zarkashī, *Iʿlam al-Sajid Bi Aḥkam*, 28.

Muslims) for eligibility of holding *Jumʿah*. Therefore, people in small villages, regions, or towns are not required or even allowed to have *Jumʿah*.[232] *Miṣr jameʿ*, *sulṭan* (Ruler), *khuṭbah* (sermon), congregation, and time are the five stringent prerequisites for having legitimate *Jumʿah*, according to the Ḥanafī school. Their argument relies on a prophetic tradition that *Jumʿah* is not necessary unless there are sufficient Muslims present in a large city.[233] While the condition of the mosque as a physical space is vague in the *Ḥanafī* school, it is clearly defined in the *Mālikī* school. It remarkably stipulates an actual mosque (not even *Muṣalla* (small mosque)) as a primary condition for holding *Jumʿah*. In their opinion, *Jumʿah* is only valid if there is a building with four walls and a roof, so if the roof is removed or damaged, the *Jumʿah* is not necessary.[234] It is not even allowed to be conducted in an empty field, a tent, a building, or a tiny mosque, but rather in a large mosque.[235] *Mālikī* school was very specific in defining the place where *Jumʿah* prayer must be performed as they define three requirements: First, it must be a building not an empty space nor even a space with a fence. Second, the building must be built with the same material (e.g., bricks, or wood) that is usually used in other buildings of this city. Third, it must be inside a city or close to it of nearly forty feet, and if not then it is not valid.[236]

On its part, Shāfi'ī school limits the validity of *Jumʿah* prayer to people who live in cities or villages in constructed buildings populated by those upon whom *Jumʿah* is mandatory, such as adult, male (female exempted), free people (not slave), and resident

[232] Al-Kasani, *Badaiʿ al-Sanaiʿ*, 259.
[233] Ibid.,
[234] Muḥammad Al-Dosoqī (d. 1814), *Al-Sharḥ al Kabir Li al-Sheikh al-Dardir Wa ḥashyat al-Dosoqī,* Volume 1, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, N.D), 374.
[235] Ibid.,
[236] Muḥammad ʿIlish, *Manḥ Al-Jaleel Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl*, Vol 1, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1989), 426.

(traveler is exempted) because it has never been narrated from the Prophet or his companions that they performed any *Jumʿah* except in a city or a village. This is why holding it in an open area without fences as boudins do in deserts is invalid. In terms of the actual mosque required for *Jumʿah*, they do not define it as a necessity for holding *Jumʿah*, but instead allow it in any unroofed building, city, or village.[237]

After reviewing all these classical on limiting the legality of conducting *Jumʿah* with requirements relating to space and place, the rationale of linking worship to space appears not to be based on textual evidence. Rather, it is taken precedents, i.e., there is a lack of instances from practice of the Prophet and his companions. They did not, however, provide a credible argument for preventing individuals from performing worship outside of space and place limits. This produced a point of contention even within the classical camp itself, such as the Ḥanbalī school, which does not require a large or small city to offer *Jumʿah*, but instead allows it to be held in villages or deserts. Furthermore, having a mosque is not required for observing *Jumʿah* prayer; rather, it is permitted even in the absence of a building.[238]

Apparently, with the exception of Mālikī school, which sees a significant relationship between rituals and space, i.e., the mosque, the majority of scholars do not consider such a connection or even communal form of ritual as required, excluding *Jumʿah* prayer. In addition to the majority's view on dispensability of mosque condition in the five daily prayers, ḥanbali school is credited more for skipping the extra spatial requirements for

---

[237] Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf An-Nawawī, *Al-Majmuʿ Sharḥ al-Muhadhab*, Vol. 1, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, N.D), 501.
[238] Ibn Qudamah Al-Maqdisī, *Al-Mughnī,* Volume 3, (Riyadh: Dar ʿAlm Alkotob for printing, publishing, and distribution, 1997), 208 - 209.

Jumʿah prayer. Such perspectives provided solid foundations for having novel forms of practicing acts of worship in the lack of physical space. They also offer up new possibilities for conceptualizing Islamic worship in settings where physical communication and spatial presence are lacking. These distant rituals have been supported by a number of Muslim intellectuals and schools of law, such as Mālikī *Madhahab*, who legitimized the so-called "Ship Prayers," which defies physical and space limitations. Similarly, the notion of remote rituals has been considered relevant for a post-modern kind of ritual known as "Radio Prayer," in which both physicality and spatiality are excluded from the scene. The following sections will discuss and elaborate on these two types of remote rituals:

Ship Prayers

Because space in prayer is seen as an integral component, not all Muslim scholars tolerate it. With the exception of *Jumʿah* prayer, Mālikī school is the most flexible one in waiving the spatial requirement in other mandatory prayers. Only for Mālikī, and in contrast to the rest of *Madhāhab*, *Jumʿah* demands a physical (actual building) *masjid* made of the same material (e.g., bricks, or wood) as other structures in the home city (to exclude tents, temporary buildings, and mob-buildings). However, the Mālikī school is very tolerant regarding the space requirement for the other five daily mandatory prayers. Let us first examine the reasons why space matters in regard to performing prayers remotely before engaging in the process of legitimizing distant prayers regardless of spatial and physical communication.

In *Tarḥ al-tathrib fi sharḥ al-taqrib*, Zayn al-Dīn Al-'Irāqī (d. 1403) expounded on the requirement of connectedness of rows in congregational prayer. As per the Prophetic commandment, all rows should be straightened and those praying should be close together,

even their shoulders and feet should be close to each other without leaving gaps. Straightening and bringing together the rows is symbolic of the angels' rows in the sky.[239] In *al-Muḥalla,* Ibn Ḥazm asserted that organizing prayers' rows and connecting them to each other is required in congregational prayers, and that if this criterion is breached, the prayer is invalid.[240] The rest of the *Madhāheb* did not consider connecting rows close to each other to be an absolute *farḍ* (obligatory), but strongly recommended it.[241]

In addition to Ibn Ḥazm, Al-Bukhārī (d. 870), a collector of Prophet Muḥammad 's Ḥadīths and author of the most famous Ḥadīth book *Saḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*, found that the Prophetic command of connecting prayers' rows is mandatory.[242] Likewise, in *Al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā*, Ibn Taymiyah (d. 1328) rigorously regards the condition of connecting the rows of prayers as he considers any disconnected rows prayer illegitimate. Furthermore, he goes over and beyond to forbid the following an Imam from outside the mosque.[243] Similarly, Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabī (d. 1184), a notable judge and jurist, concluded that the punishment specified in the prophetic tradition for people who do not commit to joining prayer rows implies the duty of the mandate rather than merely exhortation.[244] Ibn al-Arabī highlights three benefits of joining prayer rows: displaying the beauty of prayer rows, the likeness of angle rows, and being ready to combat (in case of any hostile attack); consequently,

---

[239] Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Al-ʿIraqī, *Tarḥ al-tathrīb fi sharḥ al-taqrīb* (Beirut: Dar Ihyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, N.D).
[240] Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī Ibn Ḥazm, *Al Muḥala bi'l Athār* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, N.D), Vol., 2, 372.
[241] Al-'Iraqī, *Tarḥ al-tathrīb fi sharḥ al-taqrīb*.
[242] Ibn Ḥazm , *Al Muḥala bi'l Athar*, Vol., 2, 326.
[243] Ibid., 114.
[244] Ibn Ḥazm , *Al Muḥala bi'l Athar,* Vol., 2, 326.

breaching such requirements must not be permitted except in exceptional cases.[245] On his part, Ibn Ḥazm outlined the reasons and benefits of connecting prayers' rows as follows:

- Attaining outward uprightness as a prerequisite for inward uprightness.
- Inhibiting Satan's attempts to interfere with those who pray.
- Facilitating the fitting of a larger number of people into the mosque.
- Connecting rows of people while praying helps them concentrate on prayer rather than observing each other's movements at the same time.[246]

Having said this, ḥanbali school skips the spatial requirement by allowing the prayer without connecting the rows. As long as *mamūm* (follower) can follow Imam whether in the same building or not and in the same roof or not, prayer is valid. Prayer is still legitimate even if the Imam and the *mamūm* are in separate buildings. The signifier is the presence of communication between both parties.[247] Similarly, ḥanafīs agree that connecting prayer's rows is not a condition of validity of congregational prayer, either in the front or in the back rows. As long as both Imam and *mamūm* are in the same place, the prayer is still valid. However, the space theory continues to resonate in the mind of the ḥanafīs as they confine the valid outdoor prayer to a specific distance between Imam and *mamūm*. They deem any congregational prayer in the desert as invalid if a distance of more than two rows (three meters) separate between Imam and *mamūm*.

The reasoning behind this is that when the distance between Imam and *mamūm* exceeds two rows, it indicates that congregational prayer is held at two different locations is

[245] Abu Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabi, *Aḥkam al-Quran,* Vol., 4, (Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ʿilmiyah, 2003), 243.
[246] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al Muḥala bi'l Athar*, 326.
[247] Al-Maqdesī, *Al-Mughni*, 44 - 45.

invalid.[248] While Shafiʿīs tolerate the prayer's rows disconnection in congregational prayer, as they allow a person to pray on *Safa* or *Marwa* or Abi Qubais mountains following Imam in the holy mosque as Māwrdī (d. 1058) argues, they define the allowed in-between rows space inside the mosque with three arms (3.429 m) and outside it with three hundred arms (three hundred and forty-two m).[249] Unlike Mālikī school which considers the familiarity of *mamūm* with the movements of the Imam regardless of the barrier between both of them, Shafīs seem not to accept this factor for the validity of congregational prayer as they places high value on the *Istiṭrāq* (That the space between both Imam and *mamūm* can turn into a walkable road) and *mushāhadah* (watching the Imam).[250]

More importantly, there had been a fierce debate among these four commonly recognized *Madhāhib* over separating between Imam and *mamūm* by a wall, a road, or a river. If an Imam and a *mamūm* (follower) are separated by a river or a wall that even prevents seeing each other, ḥanbali school has two views: first, it is impermissible. Second, it is permissible, by using the analogy of the blind person's prayer, based on their perspective on the connectedness of rows and seeing the imam, neither of which are criteria for the validity of prayer.[251] For them, the only thing that matters is that the follower can follow the Imam and is familiar with his motions.[252]

The ḥanafī position is expressed in al-Kasānī's attitude towards the spatial condition. In *Badā'iʿ Sanā'iʿ*, he places much more emphasis on space as a condition for the validity of

---

[248] Al-Kasanī, *Badaiʿ al-Sanaiʿ,* 146.
[249] Aḥmad al-Ansari Ibn al-Rifʽah, *Kefayat al-Nabiḥ Fi Seḥat al-Tanbiḥ,* Vol., 4 (Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ʿilmiyah, 2009), 81.
[250] Ibid.,
[251] Al-Maqdesī, *Al-Mughn*ī, 44 - 45.
[252] Ibid.,

prayer expressed in the term "*Mutābaʿah Makāniyah*" (spatial following). For him, following of Imam by *mamūm* cannot be restricted only to the ritualistic following, but it transcends to the spatial following as well. Therefore, if a river or a road separates Imam from his *mamūm*, the prayer is invalid. Ḥanafīs in general, and al-Kasānī in particular, valued the idea of "*Itiḥād Makān al-Imam wal Ma'mūm"* (Spatial Union of Imam and *mamūm*). Space is an essential component of congregational prayer since it cannot be imagined without it. For some reason, they consider *mutābaʿah* (following) impossible in case of having two different places. They assume that if both Imam and *mamūm* are in two different places or separated by a public road or a river, it would not be possible for *mamūm* to know Imam's movements. While Shāfi'ī accepts a distance of no more than three hundred and forty-two meters[253], Ḥanafīs do not allow more than three meters distance. However, being in different locations does not prevent real-time following: if the Imam is in the mosque and the *mamūm* are in a separate building, but there are rows of performers linking these two locations, the prayer is legitimate.[254]

However, Shāfi'ī accepts the separator between Imam and *mamūm* as long as the following of the Imam can be achieved whether by seeing, familiarity, or even seeing other followers behind Imam.[255] Mostly they ideally approve it by both seeing, and *Istiṭrāq*, but if one is missed, there are two views: acceptance and rejection.[256] Likewise, without putting extra conditions or restrictions on the validity of congregational prayer in case of having a

[253] Ibid.,
[254] Al-Kasanī, *Badaiʿ al-Sanaiʿ*, 145.
[255] Ibn al-Rifah, *Kefayat al-Nabiḥ Fi Seḥat al-Tanbih*, 309.
[256] Ibid., 308.

separator, the Mālikī school would definitely accept small rivers or even walkable roads as long as *ma'mūm* can follow Imam.[257]

This would pave the way for an assessment of how important spatial requirements are in Islamic acts of worship, particularly prayer, as the mosque is the best place to perform it. While some jurists, such as Ibn Taymiyah, al-Bukharī, and Zahirī jurists, would not be that generous in allowing prayer ignoring the spatial requirement, some define the space with a specific measurement such as Shāfi'ī who defined it as three hundred and forty-two meters, and others such as ḥanafī would narrow that more with three meters. The last group that appeared to be willing to waive the spatial limitations was the Mālikī school, which does not impose extra space constraints and even allows congregational prayers' performers to pray in two distinct locations. This resulted in what I term "*Distant Prayer*," the earliest conceived form of prayer in the history of Islamic rites. While Hanafīs are severely constrained in what they call "*Mutāba'ah Makāniyah*" Mālikī established a form of *Ship Prayer* that other schools of Islamic law have later adopted.

The first mention and discussion of such kind of ship prayer was in the 8th century. In his masterpiece, *al-Mudawana al-Kubrā*, which is known as *al-Kitāb* for Mālikī followers, and the second most authentic Mālikī book after al-Muwāṭṭa (authored by Malik himself), Saḥnun ibn Saʿid ibn Ḥabīb at-Tanukhī (d. 854), the collector and editor of *Al-Mudawana al-Kubrā* collected questions and answers that went back to Mālik (d. 795) himself. Al-Mudawanah is a seminal book of Mālikī *Madhab*. It is a collection of questions and answers compiled and classified by Saḥnun, who narrated it on the authority of Abd Ar-Rahman Ibn al-Qāsim al-

[257] 'Ilish, *Sharḥ Manḥ Al-Jalee*, 375.

ʿAtqi, better known as Ibn al-Qasim (d. 806) who attributed it to Imam Malik. Because it was narrated by Saḥnun, it is often referred to as "Mudawwanat Saḥnun" and "*al-Mukhtalitah*" (mixed) because it contained numerous issues, or "Asadiyyah" referring to Asad Ibn al-Furat, the original author. *Al-Mudawana al-Kubra* included the four Mālikī distinguished scholars' views; Malik, the founder, Abd al-Raḥman ibn al-Qāsim, Asad Ibn al-Furāt; Malik's student (d. 828), and Saḥnun.

The story of *al-Mudawana al-Kubra* which uniquely contains the "Ship Prayer" is that Asad Ibn Al-Furāt, the closest student to Imam Mālik ibn Anas, is inspired by concerns posed by the Ḥanafī scholar Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ash-Shaybani (d. 805); the father of Muslim international law when he met him in Iraq. In order to inquire about these issues, Ibn al-Furāt moved to Egypt in order to accompany Ibn al-Qāsim. Ibn Al-Furāt collected the answers from Ibn al-Qāsim who ascribed them to Malik in a book titled "Asadiyyah", which sometimes contained phrases such as "I think, maybe, or assume" which indicate the influence of ḥanafī approach on this version. It is worthy of mention that Mālikī, in contrast to ḥanafī approach, gives priority to Ḥadīth than reasoning. Later, Saḥnun wanted to refine "Asadiyyah", and substantiate its answers with evidence from "al-Muwataa", the first book of Malik, and he was succeeded in it. Ibn al-Qāsim liked the new revised copy of Saḥnun, changed and updated some of his old views in it. Since then, this book "Asadiyyah" which has another name *Al-Mukhtalitah* (the mixed), became "*al-Mudawana al-Kubra",* which contains most if not all, the most Mālikī attitudes towards juridical issues.[258]

[258] Masoud Sabry, Reḥlat al-Mudawana Min Ibn al-Furat Ila al-Sheikh Khalil "Journey of al-Mudawana from Ibn al-Furat to Sheikh Khalil". *IslamOnline*. Accessed: November 6, 2022. https://islamonline.net/رحلة-المدوَّنة-ابن-الفرات-الشيخ-خليل/.

Here is the original text of *al-Mudawana* about Ship Prayer:

الصلاة فوق ظهر المسجد بصلاة الامام

﴿ قال ﴾ وقال مالك لا بأس فى غير الجمعة أن يصلي الرجل بصلاة الامام على ظهر
المسجد والامام فى داخل المسجد (قال) وكان آخر مافارقنا مالكا عليه كره أن يصلي
الرجل خلف الامام بصلاة الامام على ظهر المسجد (قال) ولم يعجبنا هذا من قوله وقوله
الاول به نأخذ ﴿ قلت ﴾ ماقول مالك في صلاة الرجل على قعيقعان وعلى أبي قبيس
بصلاة الامام فى المسجد الحرام (قال) لم أسمع فيه شيأ ولا يعجبني ﴿ قال ﴾ وقال
مالك فى الامام فى السفينة يصلي على السقف والقوم تحته قال لا يعجبني (قال) فان
صلى الامام أسفل والناس فوق السقف فلا بأس بذلك اذا كان امامهم قدامهم (قال)
فقلنا لمالك كيف يجمع هؤلاء الذين امامهم فوق السقف قال يصلي الذين فوق السقف
بامام والذين أسفل بامام آخر ﴿ قال ﴾ وقال مالك فى القوم يكونون في السفن يصلي
بعضهم بصلاة بعض وامامهم في احدى السفن وهم يصلون بصلاته وهم في غير
سفينته (قال) ان كانت السفن قريبة بعضها من بعض فلا بأس بذلك ﴿ قال ﴾ وقال
مالك ولو أن دوراً محجوراً عليها صلى قوم فيها بصلاة الامام فى غير جمعة فصلاتهم
تامة اذا كانت لتلك الدور كوى ومقاصير يرون منها مايصنع الناس أو الامام فيركعون
بركوعه ويسجدون بسجوده فذلك جائز وكذا اذا لم يكن لها كوى ولا مقاصير يرون
منها مايصنع الناس والامام الا أنهم يسمعون الامام فيركعون بركوعه ويسجدون
بسجوده ﴿ قال ﴾ وسألت مالكا عن النهر الصغير يكون بين الامام وبين قوم وهم
يصلون بصلاة الامام (قال) لا بأس بذلك اذا كان النهر صغيراً (قال) واذا صلى رجل
بقوم فصلى بصلاة ذلك الرجل قوم آخرون بينهم وبين ذلك الامام طريق فلا بأس
بذلك (قال) وذلك أني سألته عن ذلك فقلت له ان أصحاب الاسواق عندنا يفعلون ذلك
في حوانيتهم فقال لا بأس بذلك ﴿ ابن وهب ﴾ عن سعيد بن أيوب عن محمد بن عبد
الرحمن أن أزواج النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كن يصلين فى بيوتهن بصلاة أهل
المسجد ﴿ ابن وهب ﴾ وأخبرني رجال من أهل العلم عن عمر بن الخطاب وأبي

Prayer over the Mosque Roof following an Imam Inside

(He said) Malik said "with exception of Jumʿah [prayer], there is no problem for a man to pray over the mosque roof following an Imam inside it. (He said) The last thing we left Malik with was that he disliked the prayer performed over the mosques' roof behind an Imam inside it. (He said) We did not like this opinion, and [and therefore] we prefer his previous one. (I said) What is the ruling of performing a prayer on the Quʿayqʿān and Abi Qubais (mounts) following an Imam inside the Holy Mosque? (He said) I did not hear anything about it [from Mālik] and I do not like it. ***(He said) In the case of an Imam praying on a***

ship's *deck while the followers pray on the orlop, Malik said I do not like it. (He said) But if an Imam prays on the orlop, and his followers pray on a ship's deck, it is permissible as long as the Imam stands in front of them. (He said) We said to Mālik what about those whose Imam is on the ship's deck, he said, those who are on the ship deck shall pray following their own Imam and those who are on the orlop following a different one. (He said) Mālik said about people who pray in multiple ships following an Imam in a separate ship, if the ships are adjacent to each other, it is all right. (He said) Mālik said if there are separated houses with people who pray (prayers other than Jumʿah) following an Imam in a different house, their prayer is valid as long as these houses have windows that enable them to be familiar with the movements of the Imam or those who follow him, so they can follow his Rukū' (Bowing down) or Sujūd (prostration). The same ruling is applicable even if these houses do not have windows that enable them to watch what Imam and his followers do as long as they are able to hear their movements. (He said) I asked Mālik about a small river that separates an Imam and his followers behind him, he said that it is ok as long as it is small. (He said) If an Imam leads a group of people in a prayer while another group, which is separated from this group by a road, and follows it, it is permissible. (He said) This is because I asked him about this saying our traders were doing this and he answered me it is permissible. (Ibn Wahb) It is narrated from Saʿid Ibn Ayyūb from Muḥammad Ibn Abdul-Rahman that the Prophets' wives were praying in their homes following people in the mosque.*[259]

The Mālikī school seems to have no more restrictions on accepting ship prayers despite the discrepancy in spaces. They do not even define the amount of space that should

[259] Sahnoun al-Tanoughi, *al-Mudawna al-Kobra*, 1st volume, (Saudi Arabia: Maktabat al-Saadah, 1906), p. 82.

be between the two ships due to the vagueness of the word "adjacent" (mentioned in the earlier text) which can be freely interpreted to include four, five, or maybe ten meters between ships, as long as there is communication between prayer's Imam and those behind him. It became evident that Mālikī school would be more concerned with easing the following of the *ma'mūm* to the Imam even in absence of *spatial union* that is strongly asserted by Ḥanafīs in congregational prayer.

What we learn from the Ship Prayer model

First, it shows how space requirement is secondary in prayer. Mālikīs revolutionized the conceptualization of prayer by transcending the space boundaries. Obviously, what matters more to Mālikīs is "communication" between *ma'mūm* and Imam by any way whether watching, hearing, or even watching other *ma'mūms*. That is why late Mālikīs such as 'Ilish (d. 1820) elaborated more on this kind of prayer by detailing many cases in this matter. He mentioned that if there are a number of stopping or running ships adjacent to each other, they can have an Imam in one of these ships, and *ma'mūms* can be in the other ships following him whether by hearing, watching, or watching those behind the Imam.[260] Having said this, have specified some additional rules:

The Maliki flexibility about space would be clearer if we compare it with Hanbali attitude who did not approve the ship prayer unless both ships are tied with each other. This is because they put much more emphasis on "connecting prayer rows" as a condition of congregational prayer validity. Even if there the communication between Imam and Ma'mum can happen, still the prayer will not be valid as long as there is no spatial union. In his book,

[260] 'Ilish, *Manḥ Al-Jaleel Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl*, 374.

Sharḥ Muntaha al-Iradāt, the Egyptian Ḥanbali medieval scholar Shaykh Manṣūr Ibn Yūnus al-Buhūtī (d. 1641), holds that it is not enough to hear Imam for a full following in prayer. Instead, he argues, watching the Imam is a crucial part of congregational prayer that can never be replaced.[261] Al-Buhūtī, representing the Ḥanbali attitude, seems not convinced that *ma'mūm* can communicate with the Imam with other ways than watching him. That is why they firmly refused the separation between Imam and *ma'mūm* by river or road.

In the same vein, the Shāfi'ī school is still obsessed with measuring the space between the two ships. Although they prioritize prayer with connecting ships than separate ships, they allowed prayer in separate ships space no more than three hundred arm (three hundred and forty-two m). However, they stipulate the *Istiṭrāq* (feasibility of walking road between both Imam and *ma'mūm*) and *mushahadah* (watching the Imam). It seems that Shāfi'īs do not tolerate these two conditions for validating the congregational prayer to the extent that if there is a wall or a barrier prevents ma'mūm from seeing the Imam, the prayer of *ma'mūm* is invalid even if he/she is able to follow the Imam by hearing.[262]

Second, it helps us to understand how worship goes beyond the limits of physicality and spatiality. This became evident when Mālikīs skipped the order of prayer rows in congregational prayer. While the three Fiqh *madhāhib* have strictly stipulated that Imam must stand before ma'mūm, and if it happens that ma'mūm precedes Imam, prayer is invalid except in *Kaʿbah* where the order is not mandatory.[263] By analogy on the *Kaʿbah's* prayer,

---

[261] Manṣūr Ibn Yūnus Al-Buhūtī. *Sharḥ Muntaha al-Iradat*, Vol., 1, (Beirut: ʿAlm al-Kotb, 1993), 283.
[262] Jamal al-Dinn Al-Rimi (d. 1390), *Al-M'aani al-Badieʿah Fi Ma'refat Ikhtilaf Ahl al-Shari'ah*, Vol., 1, (Beirut: Dar al-Kotb al-ʿIlmiyah, 1996), 205.
[263] Al-Juzairi, Abdul-Rahman (d. 1941). *Al-Fiqh Ala al-Madhahib al-*Arba'ah, Vol., 1, (Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ilmiyah, 2003), 376.

Mālikī did not find the precedence of *ma'mūm* as an invalidator of prayer.[264] Likewise, they preferably (not mandatory), recommend that the ship contains the Imam should be in the front of other ships for making it easy for *ma'mūms* to follow him; however, if some ships go before Imam's ship, the prayer is still legitimate.[265]

Third, based on the permissibility almost unconditionally given to the ship prayer by Mālikī *madhhab*, prayer, as an act of worship, is more spiritual than physical or spatial. It transcends what *ḥanafīs* require; *mutabaʿah makāniyah* (spatial following) by being in the same space or confined by the same spatial borders. It also frees the performer of prayer from unnecessary spatial confines such as what Shāfi'ī condition from attaining the visual communication between Imam and *ma'mūm*. While Shāfi'ī, further, defines the space between the separate ships by three hundred meters, Mālikī finds no need to restrict space with specific measurement, but rather their advanced and progressive opinion (dated eighth century) paved the way for other forms of distant prayers, such as radio prayer (which will be detailed later in this chapter) or internet prayer (chapter three). By freeing the *'Ibādah* from unnecessary spatial requirements, Mālikīs do not only direct the worshippers' attention to the core spiritual goals of worship, but they also revolutionize the concept of ritual as whole. By legalizing this unconditioned *Ship Prayer* as a form of distant ritual, they opened the door for more progressive steps towards more forms of physical-less/space-less rituals.

Radio Prayers

---

[264] Ibid.,

[265] ʿIlish, *Manḥ Al-Jaleel Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl,* 374.

While the *Ship Prayers* as a key paradigm has dominated all other forms of consecutive distant rituals appeared in the following generations such as *Market Prayer,* and *Prayer behind walls*, a big jump happened to late nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century with *Radio Prayer*. *Radio Prayer* is a resistant form to the common dominant physical and spatial prayer. While *Ship Prayer* was a pre-modern form of non-spatial ritual, *Radio Prayer* represents the modern form of distant non-physical/spatial prayer. The first emergence of such Radio Prayer was through a question on the validity of praying behind an imam via radio broadcasting has been raised by some Indian Muslim scholars who requested a fatwa from the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Sheikh Bakhīt al-Mutīʿī (d. 1935), regarding the legality of attending the Friday congregation prayer in a mosque but listening to the Friday Sermon through a radio broadcast, since there was no person in the mosque congregation to give the sermon in Arabic. They assumed that if they will be allowed to listen to Khutba via radio, the congregation, after listening to the sermon, i.e., *khuṭbah*, will choose one of them (as in-person leadership) to lead the post-sermon prayer. The Grand Imam stated that such a practice is not legally valid in Islamic law. A Moroccan Muslim scholar al-Ghumāri (d. 1960) responded to the question by writing a book titled *Al-Iqnaʿ fi Seḥat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyaʿ (The Persuasion of Veracity of Friday Prayer Following the Radio),* permitting Muslims to follow not only the *khuṭbah* via the radio broadcast but also to follow the prayer itself via radio broadcast. Al-Ghumāri's book received several fierce criticisms, rejections and evoked hot debates among Muslim scholars of the time. The main argument against the rejection of the position of Al-Ghumāri was that his *Fatwa* went against the position of the majority of Muslim scholars.

Relevant Fatwa of Gad al-Ḥaq

Before detailing al-Ghumāri's *Fatwa* and its repercussions, it is worth mentioning a relevant *Fatwa* dated January 16, 1979, on the official website of *Egypt's Dar al-Ifta* (Egyptian Fatwa House). The *Fatwa* was an answer to a question raised by the Mauritanian Director of the Arab Cultural Center in Nouakchott, who asked on behalf of the Mauritanian employees working in different regions of the country and inquire about the validity of following Jumʿah *khuṭbah* and prayer via radio. In response to this question, the former Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Gad al-Ḥaq (d. 1996), has issued this Fatwa outlining the positions of the four *madhhābs* in addition to his own view. He stated that the four *madhhabs* had required physical presence in the mosque for Jumʿah in particular. Nevertheless, the congregation for other mandatory prayers such as the five daily prayers, Shafiʿi school considers it *farḍ kifāya* (collective duty), Ḥanbali school considers it *farḍ ʿayn* (individual duty), Ḥanafī school considers it *Wājib* (duty), and Mālikī school considers it Sunnah *Mu'akkadah* (strongly recommended).[266]

Gad al- Ḥaq starts his argument by elaborating on the spatial requirement for the valid performance of prayers, which basically stipulates that a *ma'mūm* (follower) must be familiar with the movements of *Imam* (leader of the prayer) whether by hearing or seeing him even if through an assistant. Then, based on the Mālikī's tolerance of spatial requirement of allowing the following Imam in a separate ship, he deemed the *Radio Prayer* in prayers other than *Jumʿah* prayer is valid. Gad al-Haq made it clear that the majority juridical opinions invalidate the following of the Imam via radio in *Jumʿah* only because the physical

[266] Gad Al-Ḥaq Ali, "Fatwa Dar al-Iftaa". *Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah*, (1979) Series No. 3125. Accessed Jan., 12, 2021. https://dar-alifta.org/Home/ViewFatwa?ID=12572&title=-20%المذياع20%خلف20%الجمعة20%صلاة
=20%فضيلة20%الشيخ20%جاد20%الحق20%علي20%جاد20%الحق

attendance at the mosque is a strict condition for the validation of prayer. However, other congregational prayers, such as the five daily prayers and *Taraweeḥ* prayer, Gad al-Ḥaq validated the following of Imam via radio by analogy with the Mālikī and Ḥanbalī's validation of the following of *ma'mūm* to Imam with a barrier of a road or river. However, he confirmed that the most proper view is to drop the congregational prayer as long as there is valid excuse to be absent from the congregational prayer.[267]

Al-Ghumāri's Theory of Radio Prayers

To develop his masterpiece of distant prayer, the twentieth-century mufti built on precedent examples of distant prayer. Through his work, he was able to design a role model that could be followed by future generations. In the radio prayer, the same restrictions-free approach followed by Maliki in the ship prayer's model is replicated with many creative ways of applying it. As ship prayer is made legitimate regardless of connecting rows, unity of space, or order of Imam and followers, radio prayer's example is freed from these restrictions and even added a legitimacy for the mandatory congregational prayer such as Friday prayer which has never been allowed whether by previous example (i.e., ship prayer) or following examples (i.e., the Internet prayer).

As part of his argument, Al-Ghumāri severely criticized the strict requirements provided by the four *madhhabs* for performing Jumʿah prayer, maintaining that these requirements are unsupported by the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Several of these requirements, such as holding the *Jumʿah* prayer only in large mosques and determining the number of participants by forty,

---

[267]Ibid.,

twenty, or even three, lack strong proof, according to Al-Ghumāri. The foundation upon which al-Ghumāri constructed his unique argument was the determination of the actual *'Illa* (cause or rationale) for *Jumʿah* to listen to the sermon. *Jumʿah* is fulfilled once this cause has been achieved. The sermon of *Jumʿah* is what differentiates *Jumʿah* prayer from other obligatory prayers. This *ʿIlla* is clearly stated in the Quranic verse of *Jumʿah*: "O ye who believe! When the call is heard for the prayer of the day of congregation, haste unto remembrance of Allah and leave your trading. That is better for you if ye did but know." (Q, 62:9). By interpreting the remembrance of Allah in this verse as an indicator to sermon of *Jumʿah* and suggesting that the term "Saʿi (haste)" cannot be used except for attending sermon of *Jumʿah* of prohibition of running to prayer as in the Ḥadīth of prayer "when you come to prayer, do not run but instead quietly walk and whatever you catch in prayer join, and what you miss, make it up."[268], Al-Ghumāri solidified his argument. Therefore, this *'Illa* has been used to support the argument that *Jumʿah* can be conducted over the radio.

By undermining the consensus of the classical jurists on conditioning the space for the validity of Jumʿah prayer, al-Ghumāri stipulated two conditions instead. First, there shall be an agreement in time between Imam and *ma'mūm*. Second, the location where *ma'mūm* prays shall be behind the location of Imam (But this condition can be undermined by Mālikī's flexibility about prayer's rows order). Although al-Ghumāri's argument could help people who have no access to mosques or those who have medical, political, or social obstacles to virtually take part in congregational prayer, it may cause serious harm to Muslim communities, as some Western Muslim scholars maintain. For instance, in his Fatwa about

---

[268] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl Al-Bukhārī. *Saḥiḥ al-Bukhari*. Ed, Muḥammad Nasir, (No. 1952), Vol.1, (Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1993), 228.

the prohibition of performing online congregational prayer through the broadcast of T.V. or the Internet, Khaled Ḥanafy; the vice president of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, was concerned about the permissibility of such kind of prayer would threaten the existence of mosque in the Muslim community by diminishing the mosque's role in shaping the Muslim community.[269] Similarly, it may also be argued that even in the majority-Muslim countries, Muslims would not need mosques if they have been allowed to pray their individual and congregational prayers at home. However, al-Ghumāri responded to such concern by inquiring that if his Fatwa would close mosques, what about the permissibility of having congregational prayer at homes that were endorsed by classical jurists such as Maliki scholars who considered the congregational prayer as Sunnah *Muakkadah* (optional)? Why have mosques not been closed because of such Fatwa?[270]

Instead of limiting himself in the legal evidence, an approach that is rare among jurists, Al-Ghumāri expands his polemical anchor to include mystic evidence. He bases his argument on the Ḥadīth stating that all the sins Muslim previously committed will be forgiven whenever anyone utters *Ameen* in prayer simultaneously with the angels in the heavens uttering *Ameen*.[271] This Ḥadīth further stated that when any prayer is held on earth by humans, the angels in the sky will synchronize such prayer by having same rows with same movements and speech. Al-Ghumāri uses it to undermine the Shāfi'ī's three-hundred-arms-maximum-space condition between Imam and *ma'mūm* in congregational prayer. He maintains that

[269] Hegazy, Muslim Online Prayer in a Sociocultural Context.

[270] Ahmad Seddiq Al-Ghumari, *Al-Iqnaʿ fi Seḥat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyaʿ (The Persuasion of Veracity of Friday Prayer Following the Radio)* (Cairo: Dar al-Taleef, N.D).

[271] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjaj (d. 875), *Al-Jame' al- Saḥiḥ: Saḥiḥ Muslim,* Vol., 2, (Turkey: Dar al-Tiba'ah al-Amerah, 1916), 17.

angles in the sky, that are thousands of miles away from the earth, would follow Imam, so how *ma'mūms* could not do that? By analogy on the angels' prayer behind the earthy Imam, distant prayer would be definitely valid, according to al-Ghumāri. While this kind of evidence is not common among classical nor modern jurists who used to distinguish between juridical *Dal*ee*l* which is usually taken from a clear concise Qur'anic verse, Ḥadīth, consensus, or analogy, this mystic approach is hardly, if not impossible, used in jurisprudential discussion. The angels' prayer example resembles Ibn Arabi's idea of *Barzakh* (the Afterlife) as a metaphor for unlimited imagination. By analogy on the life of *Barzakh*, with its unlimited, and enlightened vision, Ibn Arabi portrays the Sufi *Kashf* (intuitive knowledge), a highest stage attained after a long-term of strive and abandonment of worldly gains. Ibn Arab says:

> The Real is sheer Light and the impossible is sheer darkness. Darkness never turns into Light, and Light never turns into darkness. The created realm is the *barzakh* between Light and darkness. In its essence it is qualified neither by darkness nor by Light, since it is the *barzakh* and the middle, having a property from each of its two sides. That is why He "appointed" for man "two eyes and guided him on the two highways" (Koran 90:8–10), for man exists between the two paths. Through one eye and one path he accepts Light and looks upon it in the measure of his preparedness. Through the other eye and the other path he looks upon darkness and turns toward it. (Ibn ʿArabî, *al-Futûhât*, 1911 edition, 3:274.28)[272]

By quoting the angel's prayer, Al-Ghumāri did not only innovate a new approach juridical *Istidl*āl (inference of rulings), but rather he set a model to follow by following

[272] William Chittick, "Ibn 'Arabî", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/ibn-arabi/>.

generations. In the "*Internet Prayer"* (in chapter three), Muḥammad Fawzy, an Azhari scholar, applied the same approach to legitimize it. He quoted the Prophet Muḥammad 's symbolic prayer at *Aqsa Mosque* during the night of *al-Isrā' Wal-Mirāj* (the Night Journey and Ascension) whereas the deceased prophets followed him. The point of similarity is embodied in that the Prophet Muḥammad acted as the Imam from the actual life while the prophets were *ma'mūms* from the afterlife. As the prayer of both Imam and *ma'mūms* from different worlds was valid, the *Internet Prayer* which implies two distinct spaces shall be consequently valid, as Fawzy argues.[273]

Space Theory in al-Ghumāri's Fatwa

Al-Ghumāri's discussion of the permissibility of performing *Jumʿah* via radio broadcast has raised questions about the value and status of space in Islamic rituals. It appears that space is an essential component of many Islamic rituals, such as *Jumʿah* prayer, congregational prayer, and *I'tikāf*. In contrast to the prophetic principle that any spot on the earth is a proper place for prayer, the condition of the mosque is strictly added later by classical jurists for *Jumʿah* prayer. The mosque is a condition for holding *Jumʿah* prayer according to most classical *madhhābs*. One of the merits of Al-Ghumāri's argument on radio prayer is that it has demonstrated the irrelevancy of the spatial requirements mandated by classical *madhahab* for prayer's validity. Examples of these conditions are the Ḥanafī's condition of *Miṣr Jame'* (big city) and thus people in villages, small regions, or towns are not required to have *Jumʿah*. The Maliki's strict condition is embodied in having a mosque in form and content, i.e., tents,

---

[273] Muḥammad Fawzy, "Fatwa Wa Ahkam; al- Ṣalāḥ behind al-Bath al-Mibashir".

a mosque without a roof, and free areas are not applicable for holding *Jumʿah* prayer. In addition, Shāfiʼī's stipulations of a specific number of performers (forty people) are additional to *Jumʿah* requirements. Exceptionally Ḥanbali school does not require city or mosque for holding *Jumʿah*, but instead they allow it anywhere. However, they stipulate a number of forty participants to hold *Jumʿah*.

Uniquely, al-Ghumāri criticized such additional condition of place for holding *Jumʿah*, arguing that it is valid to be held in any building, an empty space, or anywhere because the first *Jumʿah* that was held by the Prophet Muḥammad was in an empty space.[274] By building on the Māliki argument that validity of ma'mūm's prayer in a congregational is based on his awareness of Imam's movements, Al-Ghumārī made the most of this flexibility and expand it to support his spaceless prayer theory. By rejecting Shāfiʼī excessive requirements of "*Istiṭrāq"* or "*mushāhadah*", al-Ghumāri stated that the congregational prayer is valid as long as *ma'mūm* is aware of Imam's movements by whatever means (hearing, or seeing). By rejecting the excessive Shāfiʼī over conditions of "*Istiṭrāq"* or "*mushāhadah*", Al-Ghumārī argued that as long as *ma'mūm* can be aware of Imam's movements by any means (hearing, or seeing), the congregational prayer is valid. Al-Ghumārī does not find any difference between *Jumʿah* and other kinds of prayers, and that is why he rejected the requirement of place in validating *Jumʿah*. By drawing such similarity between *Jumʿah* and other prayers, al-Ghumāri does not find "Place" condition makes sense for validating prayer. On the contrary, because the place is very crucial in *Jumʿah* for Gad al-Ḥaq, as it is for classical scholars, he did not allow holding it via radio. However, he allowed performing other

[274] Al-Ghumari, *Al-Iqna' fi Sehat al-Juma'ah Khalf al-Medhya',* 20.

congregational obligatory prayers via radio because the mosque is not a condition for holding them. Another anchor al-Ghumāri bases his argument on was making use of similar relevant cases that overrides the space conditions such as prayers in separate rooms following Imam in the mosque, which was mandated by the Prophet himself for his wives. Performing prayer over the roof of at the mosque while following the Imam inside and having a road that separates the Imam from the *ma'mūms* were other examples strengthened al-Ghumāri's theory of distant prayer while ignoring the spatial requirements. Although the sever criticisms al-Ghumāri's fatwas received from his counterparts and contemporary Muslim scholars, his argument is solid and still vivid so that it has been intensively quoted by later generations for legalizing integrating technology in worship due to his foreseeable vision of Islamic rituals.

In his treatise dated early of twentieth-century, he predicted that Muslims would engage more in technology, and even integrate it into worship. This made it easy for twenty-first-century various acts of worship such as online recitation of Qur'an, online sermons, online Sufi *ḥadra* (ritualistic circle with movements and remembrance of God), remote *Iʿtikāf*, and even online prayer (which will be detailed in the following lines).

Online Prayer

Although the internet has existed for over three decades, religious users were not confident enough to take advantage of this opportunity to infiltrate such a massive space and reach such a wide audience. Bloggers (not necessarily religious authorities) have had such confidence to inhabit this virtual space and use the internet for religious purposes. Yet, until recently, the most common use of the internet among Muslims was "religion online" of

Christopher Helland's classification. In 1999, Christopher Helland distinguished between two categories of internet use for religion. The first category is merely comprised of websites that provide information about faith without providing any opportunity for interaction between users or even with the content developers themselves. In contrast, online religion, allows users to interact, communicate, and even practice rituals online.[275] While we may hear about some attempts of simulating Islamic rituals, such as Ḥajj websites which tried to offer a virtual experience to pilgrims, no serious attempt of practicing rituals has been made until Covid-19 occurred. With Covid-19, the debate heated among Muslim official and non-official authorities about the legitimacy of having congregational prayer separated by a screen. "Some scholars give *fatwa* for holding prayer at home until the end of the Covid-19 pandemic and others give *fatwa* for having an alternative online prayer. This is the subject of the debate and the point of the following discussion".[276]

Despite the more than 70-year interval between the *Radio Prayer* and *Online Prayer*, the *Radio Prayer* appears to still be relevant. As stated in the *Radio Prayer's* section earlier, Allah's remembrance in the verse of *Jumʿah* (Q, 62:9) is interpreted as a strong indicator of the sermon of *Jumʿah*. In addition, the term "Saʿi (haste)" is argued to be only used for attending *Jumʿah khuṭbah* because of the prohibition of running to prayer as stated in the Ḥadīth of prayer, "when you come to prayer, do not run but instead quietly walk and whatever you catch in prayer join, and what you miss, make it up."[277] The same evidence is currently used by another prominent Mauritanian scholar Muḥammad al-Hassan Ould al-

---

[275] Christopher Helland, Online Religion as Lived Religion Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet, *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, (2005): 1.1. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/rel.2005.1.380.
[276] Hegazy, *Muslim Online Prayer*, 66.
[277] Al-Bukhārī, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 228.

Dadaw al-Shanqīṭī (born 1963), who validated the congregational prayer following Imam through the Internet. Al-Shanqīṭī has argued that sermon of *Jumʿah* is a great *maqṣid* (purpose) of *Jumʿah*, and that is why the Muslim shall be waived from attending ʿ Eid prayer that includes a sermon if he had listened to the sermon of *Jumʿah*.[278] Moreover, the 9th-century Ship Prayer paradigm is still extensively quoted here. Ayat Said, Moroccan jurist, depend on the proofs provided in *al-Mudawna al-Kobra* to strengthen his argument about the legitimacy of congregational remote prayer. He quoted the over-roof prayer while Imam inside the building to prove that connecting of rows in congregational prayer is not required.

In addition, he finds the relevancy of quoting the issue of separation between Imam and *ma'mūm* with wall, river, or road, which is overridden by the Mālikī school. Ayat Said found that the only strict condition must be provided in the congregational prayer is communication of *ma'mūm* with his Imam by whatever possible; hearing, seeing, or seeing who are behind Imam.[279]

In other words, these contemporary revolutionary scholars did not find any problem keeping the past in communication with the present as relevancy still there. While opponents of online prayer find discrepancies between old examples of ship and radio prayer, the proponents find them very relevant. For them, online prayer would provide *ma'mūm* with more than one way of following Imam, i.e., hearing and seeing.

---

[278] Muhammad al-Hassan Ould al-Dadaw al-Shanqīṭī. These are the conditions of online prayer in the age of Corona. *Aljazeera*. (April, 2020): Accessed May 3, 2021. https://www.aljazeera.net/programs/shariah_and_life_during_ramadan/2020/4/24/الددو-هذه-شروط-الصلاة-عبر-البث-في-زمن.

[279] Ayat Said, "Al-Docto al-Alamah al-Hussain Ayat Said wa Masalat Ṣalāt Al-Taraweeh An Bu'd Fi Z aman Cornoa" (Al-amah Dr. Said and online Taraweeh prayer in time of Corona), *Al- Itiḥād, Accessded Nov. 22, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/zyu76k9z.*

Does Virtual Space replace Physical Space?

The question of replacing physical space with virtual space is very problematic among contemporary scholars. While some revolutionary scholars imagined the full absence of space or at least flexibility of replacement with a virtual one, others seem to be intolerant to waive the space from the scene. "The Covid-19 pandemic brought the jurists' discussion on the suspension of congregational prayers and the closing of mosques to the fore again. This time, however, the discussion got complicated as the current technology advancement opened the space for virtual gatherings and performances".[280] Some contemporary scholars such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), The Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA), The Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia, Council of Senior Scholars of al-Azhar declared that online spaces should not change the ritual format and gave fatwa for holding prayer at home until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other scholars such as al-Shanqīṭī Ayāt, Mohammad Fawzy Abdul-Hay (a former head of Islamic studies at al-Azhar university and a member of fatwa center at al-Azhar), Ahmad al-Ghāmdi (the former head of the Commission of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice), and Khaled M. Abou El-Faḍl, however, gave a different fatwa for having an alternative online prayer.[281] The proponents of online prayer prioritize the rituals over than place of worship while the opponents prioritize the place over the rituals. Still, the unanswered question is, why does "Place" occupy such a high status in performing Islamic ritual performance? For the opponent team, "it is not only the mosque that has been considered as central in the worship life of Muslims but the physicality of rituals as a whole. Physical attendance in the

[280] Hegazy, Muslim Online Prayer, 2020.
[281] Ibid.,

place of worship is viewed as crucial as the worship itself. It is also seen as if it shall not be replaced by an alternative even in urgent cases".[282]

However, the proponent of online prayer showed leniency towards the spatial requirement of prayer. It seems that Shāfi'ī restrictions on congregational prayer which stipulate watching Imam by his followers (*ma'mūms)* are not welcomed by contemporary Muslim scholars who override the spatial conditions for having valid congregational prayer. Likewise, the Ḥanafī's strict spatial restriction, which is known as "*Mutaba'ah Makāniyah"* (spatial following) is not appropriate to revolutionary scholars who view the Islamic rituals beyond the limits of space and place. By quoting the Mālikī school, whose position about the secondary role of space in constituting congregational ritual is still relevant. In an interview dated April 2020 on Al-Jazeera, Al-Shanqīṭī legitimized the online prayer based on the absolute permissibility of *Iqtidāa* (following the Imam by *ma'mūm*) given by the Prophet Muḥammad for blind followers who used to follow him in prayer and for those who are in a big gathering and could not see him such as those in the farewell pilgrimage that he made a few months before his death.[283] In addition, the Prophet Muḥammad allowed people especially women to pray in their homes following an Imam in the mosque. The only condition Al-Shanqīṭī asserts is the prayer shall be live (no recorded prayers shall be allowed) and no time interval between the Imam and the *ma'mūm*. Therefore, if Imam's time zone is different from *ma'mūm's* one, the congregational prayer is invalid.[284] It seems that Al-Shanqīṭī is, to some extent, influenced by

[282] Hegazy, Online Muslim Prayer, 2020.
[283] Muḥammad al-Hassan Ould al-Dadaw al-Shanqīṭī. These are the conditions of online prayer in the age of Corona. *Aljazeera,* (April 2020): Accessed May 3, 2021.
https://www.aljazeera.net/programs/shariah_and_life_during_ramadan/2020/4/24/الددو-هذه-شروط-الصلاة-عبر-البث-في-زمن.

[284] Muḥammad al-Hassan Ould al-Dadaw al-Shanqīṭī. These are the conditions of online prayer in the age of Corona. *Aljazeera*.

al-Ghumāri's radio prayer, however, he went beyond and over by overriding the condition of rows' order in congregational prayer. While al-Ghumāri strictly stipulates that *ma'mūms* shall be in a place behind the Imam in the same city, Al-Shanqītī did not find this relevant in the online prayer based on the Mālikī's flexibility of row's order in prayer.

Uniquely, Mohmmad Fawzy, Azhari jurist and former head of fatwa center at Azhar, revolutionizes the conception of space in making the Islamic rituals by raising the following question: Do classical scholars imagine the possibility of communication with Imam by *ma'mūm* in the absence of body and space? The most revolutionist *madhahab* Mālikī (i.e., in distant rituals) did not even imagine it. To approach this, Fawzy asked a further question about whether the physical connection between Imam and *ma'mūm* in terms of rows is required. He maintained that in addition to the precedent examples of permissibility of having barriers (wall, river, market, or road) which made the physical communication possible, the other requirements of communication such as seeing, or hearing would be impossible in case of blind and deaf *ma'mūm*, and therefore, they must not be conditions for validity of prayer. In addition, he found many precedent cases regarding the validity of prayer while having huge space gap between Imam and *ma'mūm* such as Farwell pilgrimage where the Prophet Mohammad led prayer with more a hundred thousand people. This applies to contemporary big mosques as in Saudi Arabia, Aqsa Mosque in Palestine, and Shah Faisal Masjid in Islamabad which are enough for thousands of people and maybe a million. What makes all of these prayers in these mosques valid regardless of the space gap between Imam and *ma'mūms*?

Obviously, Fawzy conceptualizes the concept of rituals beyond the space and spatiality restrictions as he made it clear that not all Islamic rituals are confined by place or time. Very

few rituals are confined by space and time such as "Standing at Arafa Mountain" which is defined by time (ninth day of *dhul Ḥijjah*) and place "ʿArafa Mountain" and others are confined by space but not time as Umrah (minor pilgrimage) or *ṭawaf* around *Kaʿbah*. However, congregational prayer or even prayer itself is not confined by space, thus it could be performed remotely. There are also other rituals have nothing to do with place such as recitation of Qur'an, remembrance of God, and sessions of knowledge. All classical and contemporary Muslim scholars unanimously agreed that these acts of worship are not defined by space or time, therefore remote practice would be definitely allowed. But what about rituals that are closely connected to place such as *Iʿtikāf* that must be done not only in *muṣla* (small mosque), but rather in large mosque (Jame ʿ), as some scholars maintained?[285] In fact, *Iʿtikāf* is one of the foremost Islamic rituals that has never been conceptualized outside of space limits in the classical juridical minds. Over the course of fifteen hundred years of Islamic history, the idea of distant *Iʿtikāf* has not only been practiced but also has not been imagined. This has created a challenge for twenty-first century Muslims to practice this important rite during the month of Ramadan that followed the COVID-19. However, the exceptional view of Ḥanafī school for the veracity of allowing women performing *Iʿtikāf*[286] at her home has opened the door of hope for the contemporary scholars to replicate this Fatwa on the current situation following the lockdown of the COVID-19. The majority of classical Muslim jurists went against this Fatwa of permitting the Muslim women to perform *Iʿtikāf* in their homes. Although the classical Fatwa of Ḥanafī school has been exclusively issued for women, the current Fatwa issued by The International Union of Muslim Scholars

---

[285] Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf An-Nawawī. *Al-Majmu' Sharḥ al-Muhadhab*, Vol., 6, (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1928), 486.
[286] Moḥammad Bin al-Ḥasan Al-Shaybanī, *Al-Aṣl (Al-Mabsūt)*, Vol. 2, (India: Majlis Daerat al-Maaref, 1966), 247.

(IAMS) has addressed both genders.[287] By agreeing on the permissibility of having *Iʿtikāf* at home (even if it is just for women), the contemporary Muslim jurists found no issue to apply the Ḥanafī rule overlooking its gender-based limits. The head of IAMS, Al-Qaradaghī (b. 1949) skipped the spatial boundaries set in performing *Iʿtikāf*, and allowed it out of mosques, which has never been endorsed before (for men). However, he stated made it clear that the distant *Iʿtikāf* is an emergent fatwa whenever Muslims are not allowed to physically access the mosque.[288] In the same vein, another prominent Bahraini scholar Sheikh Hesham al-Romaithy, has taken the COVID-19 as an urgent case (*Darora*) to legitimize performing *Iʿtikāf* at homes.[289] To formulate his fatwa, he took into consideration the consequences of letting people perform *Iʿtikāf* at homes instead of the mosques. By doing so, he considers that Muslims will have an opportunity to preserve the ritual sacredness and continue performing it even in case of urgency. He argued that this is not the ideal way of performing *Iʿtikāf*'; however, *Iʿtikāf's* symbolic performance at home is better than canceling it. He set clear standards for such distant *Iʿtikāf*:

- It must be in a spot dedicated only for prayer, usually known as "House's Mosque".
- The person shall stay in this space all the time of *Iʿtikāf* except in urgent cases.
- He/she shall spend his time in *I'badah* (such as prayer, recitation of Qur'an, and dhikr).

[287] Ali Al-Qaradaghi. "Al-Qaradaghi: Yajūz Al-Iʿtikaf fī albyūt Idha Kant Almasajid mughlaqa" (Al-Qaradaghi: It is permissible to do *I'tikaf* at home if the mosques are closed). May 5, 2020. Accessed [November 4, 2020], https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/1838764/تركيا/القره-داغي-يجوز-الاعتكاف-في-البيوت-إذا-كانت-المساجد-مغلقة.
[288] Ibid.,
[289] Hesham al-Romaithy, al-Iʿtikaf fi Al-Manzel Ḥukm khas Fi Zaman Khas" (Staying at mosque, a special ruling for a special time). *Al-Watan website*, May 16. 2020. Accessed [November 2, 2020], https://alwatannews.net/article/877227/Bahrain/الاعتكاف-في-المنزل-حكم-خاص-في-زمن-خاص .

What helped these revolutionary scholars who allowed the distant *Iʿtikāf* is two things: First, it is not mandatory, and therefore, they would not expect sever criticisms from the opponents. Second, *Al-Ḍarūra* (necessity) is a strong justification that made it easy for them to find an excuse for skipping the limits set at regular cases.

Is Space Secondary only in Urgent Cases?

While Radio prayer fatwa is made legitimate at any time, not just at urgent case, online prayer appears to be different. With no exceptions, all proponents of online prayer support it only during emergencies. For instance, al-Shanqṭi, and Fawzy made sure that their fatwas about legitimacy of distant prayer with internet or television as mediums under urgent circumstances or in other words "*Al-Ḍarūra"* (necessity). *Al-Ḍarūra* appears to be a competitive approach for most of recent *masael* (matters), such as those of medical, political, or economic nature. Al-Suṭi (d. 1505) even broadens the *Al-Ḍarūra* principle to include the need as well, where he states an *Uṣuli* maxim "Need shall be treated as necessity be public or private".[290] This may maximize the chances of waiving the restrictions due to a need and provide an excuse for allowing unallowable matters. Intensively, *Al-Ḍarūra* or *al-Ḥajah* (need) open an avenue for allowing the unallowable things during the times of urgency, which the Covid-19 may seems the best time for it. Many problematic issues, especially those about medical or hygienic emergencies, such as abstaining from washing infected dead bodies or burning these infected bodies, have been unanimously received flexibility among jurists.

[290] Jalal al-Din al-Suyūti, *Al-Ashbah wa al-Naẓaer*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 1983), 88.

However, the opponent group, who go against the legitimacy of online prayer, kept away from using *Al-Ḍarūra* to temporarily allow it. “Even if blocking of mosques remains for years, the prohibition of virtual form of prayer was the absolute and unified *fatwas* recurred among the Muslim scholars in the conservative team. The answer that I received when I raised this question for a scholar[291] from this team was that how we could prevent people from staying at home and leaving mosques after the end of the temporary situation of the current pandemic. He added that we do not have a remote-control button to ask people to go back to mosques after we let them to abandon them by providing the alternative solution of online prayer during the urgent times”.[292] Although the proponents of online prayer tend to be more tolerant in adjusting to new circumstances, the opponent's team seems to be more logical because once you get the gene in the body, you can never take it out. People would never keep away from following their Imams or religious leaders to perform rituals whether in easiness or hardships. Thus, the permissibility of online prayer widely opened new avenues for approving more acts of worship that Muslim never thought of them to be remotely practiced. Examples of these religious acts are online *Jalsat Atilāwah* (circle of Qur’an recitation), *Dhikr ḥalaqas* (remembrance of God), *Iʿtikāf* (Staying at mosque), and even virtual experimental pilgrimage (not actual one, but as simulation). In fact, the fatwa of online prayer created a model for future virtual practices that may exceed the limits set in the current one. Therefore, the radio prayer seems to be more reasonable as it substantially evaluated the spatial requirements in composing the Islamic rituals.

[291] Khalid Ḥanafī, professor of Islamic law at al-Azhar and vice-president of the European Council for Fatwa and Research.
[292] Hegazy, Muslim online prayer, 72.

In another way of legitimizing the online prayer, the proponent team found in *al-Rukhṣah* (concession) is a strong base upon which they could build their argument. Islamic law recognizes two kinds of juristic rulings on any juridical issue: *al-ʿazimah* (obligation) and *al-Rukhṣah* where the juristic ruling can be lightened to a lesser degree. For instance, the resident must pray *dhuhr* prayer four *rakaʿas*, while traveler can pray only two *rakaʿas* and can combine them with the following prayer *al-ʿAsr*. The same applies to most of Islamic acts of worship where the original form of rulings can be decreased to an easy, and lenient form. While the physical and spatial form of prayer is presented as an original and full prayer, the online prayer is justified as a lighter form of prayer. In his elaboration on the evidence of legitimacy of online prayer, Fawzy draws a comparison between it and the sitting position of prayer, where Imam can lead congregational prayer instead of being standing (in case of incapability due to sickness or so). Even in supererogatory prayer, the sound person can pray sitting, as Fawzy noted. For him, congregational prayer can be led online than individually because this is better for lay people who do not know how to properly pray.[293]

Furthermore, both teams; proponents and opponents of the internet prayer use an alternative tool to support their attitudes. "After analysis of the contemporary debate on this issue, it seems that there are two juridical ends that Muslim scholars have reached out. The defendants of this online prayer support it based on one fundamental principle of *Shariah* (Islamic Law) which is "protecting faith". On the other hand, the opponents of this online prayer base their opposition on the same *uṣuli* principle, but through another approach."[294] Proponents of virtual prayer recognize the centrality of mosques to Muslims' social and ritual

---

[293] Muhammad Fawzy, "Fatwa Wa Aḥkam; al- Ṣalāh behind al-Bath al-Mibashir (Fatwas and rulings: Prayer through broadcasting),".
[294] Hegazy, Muslim Online Prayer, 66.

lives. In light of this, the blockage of mosques during pandemics, which may last for years, without an alternative virtual mosque that holds congregational prayer and provides other rituals even during this urgent time would undermine the religion in young Muslim generations' consciousness.[295] Proponents of virtual worship hold that "we can extrapolate from this, that an action which keeps up the intent and spirit of *Jumʿah* that we can institute in the extraordinary situation we find ourselves in, such as praying together online, will be an effective temporary measure that will allow us to maintain the practice or the habit of *Jumʿah* until it is reinstated as normal".[296] Protecting faith is one of the five "essential *maqāsid* (purposes) of *Shari'ah*, namely faith, life, lineage, intellect, and property. These are, by definition, essential to normal order in society as well as to the survival and spiritual well-being of individuals, so much so that their destruction and collapse will precipitate chaos and collapse of normal order in society."[297] Opponents of online prayer have the same point of departure i.e. protecting faith from distortion and *Bidʿah* (innovation). For them, allowing people to innovate a new form of performing prayer, such as virtual one would pave the way for more innovations, modifications, and changes.[298] In addition, they unanimously agree it is an unprecedented action that can never be accepted because *ibādāt* is more taken for granted and not subject to *ijtihād* (legal reasoning).[299] But, it is well known that "building a ruling on the opinion of previous scholars is widely acceptable, but building respective authenticity on

---

[295] Muhammad Fawzy, "Fatwa Wa Aḥkam; al- Ṣalāh behind al-Bath al-Mibashir (Fatwas and rulings: Prayer through broadcasting)," *YouTube* (2020), Accessed [May 23, 2020], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1jFNHK2etQ.
[296] Ibid.,
[297] Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Maqaṣid al-Shari'ah Made Simple*, *the International Institute of Islamic Thought,* (2008): https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvkc67vz.
[298] Masoud Sabry, *Fatwas of scholars on Corona,* (Cairo: Dar Al-Bashir for Printing and Publishing, April 2020).
[299] Ibid.,

the recurrence of similar precedents is somewhat disputable. *Fatwa* is like a living being that evolves to accommodate the space and the time. It shall not be constant and fixed for everyone at every time and everywhere except in rare cases. One may acknowledge conservative scholars' avoidance of *fatwa* renewal under new circumstances as a preference of *Taqlid* (imitation), which implies prioritizing the precautional and the easier option, though without agreeing with such argument. By doing that they left a vacuum for the lay people to follow. By blocking the door for renewing *fatwas* based on new circumstances, they create a method of necessitating the following of predecessors. Further, it would raise this question; why shall every fatwa have a similar precedent to acquire authenticity?"[300]

In the same vein, protecting faith as expressed by opponents of online prayer as such kind of remote worship would find an excuse for people to keep away from mosques. Al-Ghumāri's radio prayer fatwa has faced the same concern, but he responded by inquiring that if his fatwa would close mosques, what about the permissibility of having congregational prayer at homes that was endorsed by classical jurists such as Maliki scholars who considered the congregational prayer as strongly recommended Sunnah (optional), *not* mandatory? Why have mosques not been closed because of such fatwa?[301] Rather, virtual form of worship would encourage people of different classes to engage more in mosque activities, even if just virtually. Women, who are not required to participate in *Jumʿah*, disabled people, who are unable to commute to mosque, and even kids who can be trained by their guardians to be aware of rituals, as Abu El Faḍl argued.[302] Although mainstream Muslim scholars did not

[300] Hegazy, Muslim Online Prayer.
[301] Al-Ghumari, *Al-Iqnaʿ fi Seḥat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyaʿ*.
[302] Khaled Abou El Faḍl, "Usuli Institute First Virtual Khuṭbah with Dr. Khaled Abou El Faḍl", *YouTube*, (2019) Accessed August 13, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDhUoay0WTg.

think about virtual rituals except in times of emergency, Abu El Faḍl went beyond this and allowed such virtualization of Islamic rituals even before the Covid-19, broadcasting his first virtual *khuṭbah* on January 25, 2019, under the title "Usuli Institute First Virtual *Khuṭbah* with Dr. Khaled Abou El Faḍl".[303]

Further, proponents of remote Islamic rituals find it a great opportunity to connect the Muslim Ummah with previous nations. The idea of remote rituals is not an innovation of Muslims, but it is a continuation of the divine law from the previous nations. For example, Faisal Abdullah points out, "one Azhari-trained scholar in America posted the following message on Facebook: "Make your homes a *qiblah*…" His post then featured a verse from the Qur'ān: "We revealed to Moses and his brother: 'House your people in Egypt and make these houses places of worship [qiblatan]; keep up the prayer; give good news to the believers! (Q: 10: 87)".[304] The message was clear and well understood. The Israelites went through a trying time where they had to maintain their prayers in their homes, and so too could the Muslims in the midst of the pandemic. Even though the legal justification for mosque closures was ultimately based on other evidence and not this, the example nonetheless spoke to the practical meanings that Muslims could derive from an ancient community of believers, who, in Islamic theology, were similarly "Muslim" in their submission to the One God".[305] In the early beginning of his dissertation on "*Pre-Muḥammadan Law and the Muḥammadan Sharīʿah: Muslim Theories and Implementation of Biblical Law and the Laws of Prior Religious Communities*", Faisal Abdullah found the pre-

[303] Ibid.,
[304] Faisal Abdullah, "Pre-Muḥammadan Law and the Muḥammadan Sharīʿah: Muslim Theories and Implementation of Biblical Law and the Laws of Prior Religious Communities" PhD diss., (University of California Los Angles. 2020).
[305] Ibid.,

mandated non-spatial ritual on the Jews which continued to be active for Muslims is a relevant example for the Islamic law which connects Muslim Ummah with ancient nations through a means of "The Law of Those Who Preceded Us" (*sharʻ man qablanā*).

Muslim exegetes expanded on this incident about switching the Qibla of prayer, mandated on Jews, from the destructed temples to their houses. While Moses's nation was allowed only to pray at temples (spatial condition), Pharoah destructed all of their temples in Egypt. Therefore, God has commanded Moses and Aaron to let their people use their houses as places of worship instead of temples. Al-Jawzī (d. 1201) enumerated four views regarding using their houses as temples or mosques (based on Muslim exegetic terminology): First; it means use them as temples for prayer (according to Mujahid, ʿIkremah, Ibn Abbas), second; it means use your houses for prayer towards the Qibla of Mecca (according to al-ʿoufi), third: it means make your homes face each other (Said Ibn Jubair), and fourth, make your houses in Egypt face the direction of your houses in Levantine (Ibn Bahr) which is currently the Qibla of Jews.[306] Till today, the significance of such quotation from Jewish tradition would denote that the bridge that can be built between the Islamic faith and preceding Abrahamic religions by means of Islamic law and especially Islamic acts of worship. Virtualization of Islamic rituals has created a wide space for participants of many religions, ideologies, ethnicities, and races. Due to borderless cyberspace platforms, the virtual religious space has opened a democratic avenue for inter-faith dialogue that includes users from religious and non-religious communities (this will be detailed in chapter three).

Itiḥād al-Majlis (unity of spatial session) in E-Nikaḥ

[306] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, Al-Jawzī (d. 1201), *Zad al-masir Fi ilm al-Tafsir*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 2001), 345.

Classifying nikaḥ (marriage) as an act of worship would surprise some people, but for jurists, nikaḥ (juridical term of marriage) is defined as a way by which a person can come closer to God, and this is the essence of ‘*ibādah*. Ḥanafī and Ḥanbali schools would opt for this option that marriage is a form of *ibādah* and should be discussed in fiqh books under the *ibādāh* category. For this reason, when the question about whether *nikaḥ* is better or supererogatory *ibādah* is raised, both *madhhabs* answered that nikaḥ is more rewarding than supererogatory *ibādah*. For instance, al-Kāsāni contends that *nikaḥ* is *farḍ* (mandatory) or *wajib* (necessary) and having it alongside a commitment to other duties is preferable to skip it and being free for additional *nafilah* (optional acts of worship). However, Shāfi'īs and Mālikīs, on the other hand, are not convinced of its obligation and prioritize supererogatory ‘*ibādāh* over it.[307]

This study goes with the opinion that considers *nikaḥ* as a form of *‘ibādāh*, hence it should be subject to the same standards as other acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage. As mentioned earlier, these rituals are regulated by spatial and physical regulations, according to the mainstream of classical juridical scholars. However, some innovative endeavors defied these spatial and physical restrictions. In his study about the idea of E-Nikaḥ; *Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh,* which swept not just the Muslim world, but also the whole globe assisted by the multitude of dating websites, Mansur Ali, explored this spatial requirement in *nikaḥ*. Under the concept of "*Itiḥād al-Majlis*" (unity of session), he went over this condition that was set by classical Ḥanafī scholars. While the term "*Itiḥād al-Majlis*" is the main concept in this regard, other

[307] Ministry of Awqāf and Islamic Affairs, *Al-Mausu'ah al-Fiqhiya al-Kuwaitiya*, Vol., 42, (Kuwait: Dar al-Salasel, 2006), 217 – 219.

related terms have also been used such as *Itiḥād al-makān* (spatial union), *Itiḥād al-zamān* (time union), *ḥudūr* (to be present).[308]

The significance of this study lies in the absence of the additional physical space requirement from the scene. The author composed his narrative by highlighting the debate over having cyber-space as a medium among the groom, the bride, the *wali* (guardian of the bride as a prerequisite of marriage validity according to the majority *madhahabs* excluding the Ḥanafī school), and the two witnesses. What happens if one or more of these people (the groom, the bride, or the two witnesses) are physically absent from the session of the contract? the author asked. He did not digress in the case of having the *wali* absent due to the fact that his presence is secondary and can be skipped, according to the Ḥanafī school. By describing it as legal gymnastics, he seems to be unconvinced by the common traditional remedy suggested by some mufti who suggested that the bride could utilize her right of delegation to assign anyone who can physically attend the contract session, including the groom himself, to marry her on her behalf. Furthermore, he urged the muftis to be more creative and to break out from the deadly loop of fatwa-transmitter to fatwa-producer by considering alternate solutions that would never have occurred to traditional legal minds.[309]

Is *Itiḥād al-Majlis* a Pillar of Nikaḥ?

The story of *E-nikaḥ* article started with "a question submitted to "AboutIslam" fatwa website, a Muslim end user asked the resident scholar the following question: 'Is getting married over Zoom permissible?"[310] While the Ḥanafī Shaykh mufti Dr. Yasir Qadi

[308] Mansur Ali, E-Nikah *Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh*, BRAIS, 2022.
[309] Mansur Ali, E-Nikah *Tying the Knot Virtually*.
[310] Ibid.,

answered the questioner on the permissibility of having *nikaḥ* over zoom, the author criticized the opposing responses on other fatwa websites. These fatwa websites prioritize the old classical opinion of requiring the physical presence over the recent one that skipped it at the time of *nikaḥ* contract.

The opponents of E-*nikaḥ*, in reality, are concerned about the potential of fraud when defrauders impersonate someone else for money or a visa (which happens frequently). While these are all true and important concerns, the objection to virtual *nikaḥ* would be riskier and more damaging. That is why its supporters preferred to develop acceptable safeguards and other ways to guarantee the process of holding it virtually rather than forbidding it. For instance, "Somebody from whichever side is doubtful, should send an actual physical person in that city to make sure the family, the *wali*, whoever is basically living flesh and blood they are whom they say they are and everything is legit."[311] In fact, E-Nikaḥ is no longer unusual; it has been widely accepted among individuals, authorities, and institutional structures. "In April 2020, Malaysia witnessed its first state-sanctioned online *nikāḥ*[312] that was supported and backed by a fatwa from the National Fatwa Council for Religious Affairs in Malaysia (MKI)", as Mansur argued.[313]

Furthermore, Mansur Ali looks unimpressed not just by the opponents of E-Nikaḥ argument regarding the possibilities of fraud and scams, but also by the emphasis put on

---

[311] Yasir Qadi, "Is Getting Married over Zoom Permissible?", *AboutIslam*, Nov. 20, 2020, https://tinyurl.com/mrxa7j5u.
[312] 'Couple exchanges vows in virtual 'akad nikah' ceremony' *The Star*, April 18, 2020, https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/04/18/couple-exchanges-vows-in-virtual-039akad-nikah039-ceremony accessed November 2022.
[313] Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, *Decision of Muzakarah fatwwa committee of National Council of Islamic affairs*,3rd ed. (Putrajaya: Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, 2012), pp. 123-124. Quoted from Mansur, *E-Nikah*, 2022.

space as a fundamental aspect of *nikaḥ*. According to their fatwa, space is an essential component of marriage, and its loss will undoubtedly weaken its validity. Mansur, on the other hand, did not believe that this mentality had a better understanding of classical perspectives that approached space differently. Taking the spatial requirement as secondary, Mansur sets the marital criteria in a very different manner. Based on the classical Ḥanafī school, the consecutiveness of *Ijāb wa Al-Qabūl* (proposal and acceptance) is more important than the physical space, as Mansur maintains. Consequently, "if two people are in a physical space, the witnesses are present, and the groom proposes to the bride. The bride does not answer, gets up and walks to the corner of the room and sits down, then accepts. The *nikaḥ* is not valid because despite both being in the same room, the *majlis* has been interrupted."[314] Since each *madhahb* specifies the pillars of *nikaḥ* differently, which basically revolves around the presence of the *wali* (the guardian of the bride), and the two witnesses, the Ḥanafī school places much more emphasis on *Al-Ijāb wa Al-Qabūl*. Therefore, the *Ijāb wa Al-Qabūl* must be done in the same session and cannot take place in two different sessions, or even be separated by a conversation of *khuṭbah*, or anything else, as al-Kasani argues:

Here is the text from *Badaiʿ al-Sanaiʿ* by al-Kasani*:*

[314] Mansur Ali, E-Nikah *Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh.*

شَرْطُ الِانْعِقَادِ فَنَوْعَانِ:.

نَوْعٌ يَرْجِعُ إلَى الْعَاقِدِ، وَنَوْعٌ يَرْجِعُ إلَى مَكَانِ الْعَقْدِ بِالْفِعْلِ، فَلَا يَنْعَقِدُ نِكَاحُ الْمَجْنُونِ وَالصَّبِيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَعْقِلُ؛ لِأَنَّ الْعَقْلَ مِنْ شَرَائِطِ أَهْلِيَّةِ التَّصَرُّفِ فَأَمَّا الْبُلُوغُ: فَشَرْطُ النَّفَاذِ عِنْدَنَا لَا شَرْطُ الِانْعِقَادِ عَلَى مَا نَذْكُرُ إنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَأَمَّا تَعَذُّرُ الْعَاقِدِ فَلَيْسَ بِشَرْطٍ لِانْعِقَادِ النِّكَاحِ خِلَافًا لِزُفَرَ عَلَى مَا مَرَّ.

(وَأَمَّا) الَّذِي يَرْجِعُ إلَى مَكَانِ الْعَقْدِ فَهُوَ اتِّحَادُ الْمَجْلِسِ إذَا كَانَ الْعَاقِدَانِ حَاضِرَيْنِ وَهُوَ أَنْ يَكُونَ الْإِيجَابُ وَالْقَبُولُ فِي مَجْلِسٍ وَاحِدٍ حَتَّى لَوْ اخْتَلَفَ الْمَجْلِسُ لَا يَنْعَقِدُ النِّكَاحُ، بِأَنْ كَانَا حَاضِرَيْنِ فَأَوْجَبَ أَحَدُهُمَا فَقَامَ الْآخَرُ عَنْ الْمَجْلِسِ قَبْلَ الْقَبُولِ، أَوْ اشْتَغَلَ بِعَمَلٍ يُوجِبُ اخْتِلَافَ الْمَجْلِسِ، لَا يَنْعَقِدُ؛ لِأَنَّ انْعِقَادَهُ عِبَارَةٌ عَنْ ارْتِبَاطِ أَحَدِ الشَّطْرَيْنِ بِالْآخَرِ، فَكَانَ الْقِيَاسُ وُجُودَهُمَا فِي مَكَانٍ وَاحِدٍ، إلَّا أَنَّ اعْتِبَارَ ذَلِكَ يُؤَدِّي إلَى سَدِّ بَابِ الْعُقُودِ؛ فَجُعِلَ الْمَجْلِسُ جَامِعًا لِلشَّطْرَيْنِ حُكْمًا مَعَ تَفَرُّقِهِمَا حَقِيقَةً لِلضَّرُورَةِ، وَالضَّرُورَةُ تَنْدَفِعُ عِنْدَ اتِّحَادِ الْمَجْلِسِ، فَإِذَا اخْتَلَفَ تَفَرُّقُ الشَّطْرَيْنِ حَقِيقَةً وَحُكْمًا فَلَا يَنْتَظِمُ الرُّكْنُ.

(Al-Kasanī, *Badai' al-Sanai'*, Vol., 2, p. 232)

The Contract (of nikaḥ) conditions are of two kinds:

The first kind pertains to the contractor, and the second kind pertains to the ***space of the contract****. So, nikaḥ of the insane or the minor is invalid since the intellect is a requirement for Ahliyat at-taṣarof (eligibility for performing an act). Puberty is not a condition of the contract, but it is a requirement for consummation, as we will discuss later. Contrary to Zufar, the contractor's incapacity is not an issue for conducting the contract. As for the condition of the place of the contract, it is the unity of the session as the contractors must be present and the proposal and acceptance must occur at the same session. Therefore, if there are two separate sessions for the contract, nikaḥ is invalid. For instance, if both contractors are present, and one of them proposes the other, but the other one leaves the place or gets busy with something that necessitates the separation of the session, nikaḥ is invalid. This is because the validity of the contract basically depends on the association of both contractors with one another, which ideally can be achieved by their presence in the same place.*

Nonetheless, this condition would block the means of making any kind of contract, so the session is necessary as it gathers both parties superficially, but they are genuinely separated due to necessity. This necessity will be eliminated in case of unity of session, but if they are different superficially and genuinely, this pillar (of the proposal and acceptance) will be undermined.[315]

While Abu Ḥanifa (d. 767) and Al-Shaibanī (d. 805), strictly did not allow any proposal and acceptance outside of physical session, Abu Yousuf (d. 798) did.[316] For instance, if either the groom or bride made a proposal in a physical session, and the other party was absent, the contract is valid once he/she got aware of it (via receiving a written proposal), and accepts it with the presence of two witnesses. Based on this view, the idea of the unity of the physical session would be expanded to a virtual session i.e., as long as the proposal or acceptance is suspended, the session is considered as if it is holding or as Mansur puts it, "this immediately gave birth to the bubble or the majlis which preserves the proposal".[317] Masur builds on this later argument that spatial physicality is not as important as "the proposal or acceptance" itself. Hence, it may be skipped or at least substituted by another method (like the virtual one). Further, he also relies on Ibn 'Abdin's (d. 1836) argument that the written proposal is more effective than the verbal one since is temporal. "The verbal proposal is temporal. The moment it is uttered it disappears into oblivion, thus the *itiḥād al-majlis* ensures that the proposal is connected to the acceptance".[318] On the contrary, the written proposal survives as long as the written letter is not damaged. As a result, the other party can open this written proposal at any moment and accept it in a

[315] Al-Kasani, *Badaiʿ al-Sanaiʿ*, Vol., 2, p. 232.

[316] Ibid.,

[317] Mansur, *E-Nikah*.

[318] Ibid.,

subsequent session.[319] Mansur broadens this example to include text messages, emails, WhatsApp, chat, and other forms of communication as long as the durability is open.[320] Ibn ʿAbdin's conception of written acceptance widely influenced most current Muslim institutions and authorities, both official and non-official. The following is an example of a pertinent fatwa issued by The Council of the Islamic Fiqh Academy about this issue:

علمائنا السابقين، وقد قرر مجمع الفقه الإسلامي عدم صحة ذلك، وهذا نص القرار تحت عنوان (حكم إجراء العقود بآلات الاتصال الحديثة): إن مجلس مجمع الفقه الإسلامي المنعقد في دورة مؤتمره الرابع بجده في المملكة العربية السعودية من 17-23 شعبان1410هـ الموافق 14-20 آذار (مارس) 1990م، بعد اطلاعه على البحوث الواردة إلى المجمع بخصوص موضوع إجراء العقود بآلات الاتصال الحديثة، ونظراً إلى التطور الكبير الذي حصل في وسائل الاتصال وجريان العمل بها في إبرام العقود لسرعة إنجاز المعاملات المالية والتصرفات وباستحضار ما تعرض له الفقهاء بشأن إبرام العقود بالخطاب وبالكتابة وبالإشارة وبالرسول، وما تقرر من أن التعاقد بين الحاضرين يشترط له اتحاد المجلس -عدا الوصية والإيصاء والوكالة- وتطابق الإيجاب والقبول، وعدم صدور ما يدل على إعراض أحد العاقدين عن التعاقد، والموالاة بين الإيجاب والقبول بحسب العرف، قرر ما يلي:

أولاً: إذا تم التعاقد بين غائبين لا يجمعهما مكان واحد ولا يرى أحدهما الآخر معاينة، ولا يسمع كلامه وكانت وسيلة الاتصال بينهما الكتابة أو الرسالة أو السفارة (الرسول)، وينطبق ذلك على البرق والتلكس والفاكس وشاشات الحاسب الآلي (الحاسوب) ففي هذه الحالة ينعقد العقد عند وصول الإيجاب إلى الموجه إليه وقبوله.

.[321]

> *Under the title of (The Juristic Ruling on Conducting Contracts Using Modern Communication Means), The Council of the Islamic Fiqh Academy held its fourth conference session in Jeddah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 17-23 Shaaban 1410 AH corresponding to 14-20 March 1990 AD, after reviewing the research submitted to the Academy regarding the issue of conducting contracts with modern communication means, and due to the great development that occurred in the means of communication and its effectiveness in conducting contracts for the speedy completion of financial transactions and actions, and by recalling what the jurists have been exposed to regarding making of the contracts by speech, writing, signals,*

---

[319] Mansur, *E-Nikah*,

[320] Ibid.,

[321] Marriage Contract Through Modern Means of Communication…Shari'i Vision, *IslamWeb*, Accessed Dec. 5, 2022. shorturl.at/gvTXY.

and messaging. What was decided is that the unity of the session combines the attendees is required for conducting the contract - with the exception of the will, and proxy - and the conformity of the proposal and acceptance, and the lack of evidence indicating the reluctance of one of the contracting parties toward the contract, and the continuity between the proposal and acceptance according to custom. Accordingly, it is decided as follows:

First: If the contract is made between two absentees who are not gathered in one place and one of them does not see the other, and does not hear his words, and the means of communication between them happens through texting, messaging, or the (messenger), telegraph, telefax, and computer screens (computer), then in this case, the contract is valid once the proposal reaches to the addressee and is accepted.

However, the classical idea of the *Itiḥād al*-Majlis, which requires the unity of the physical session, is still welcomed by the contemporary Muslim fatwa centers that endorse the Shāfi'ī's attitude. The following case is an example:

[322] *The Question: Is it legal to make a marriage contract via an internet camera? According to what I have heard, it is not permissible since one of the conditions of the marriage contract is the union of the physical session.*

The Answer: Praise be to Allah! Al- Ijāb wa Al-Qabūl (*The proposal and acceptance*) *are one of the pillars of marriage, and marriage is not valid without it. The proposal is the expression issued by the guardian or his representative. Acceptance is the expression issued by the husband or his representative. It is required that the proposal and the acceptance happen in one sitting. In Kashf al-Qinā' (5/41): "If the acceptance of the proposal is not immediately articulated, the contract is valid so long as they are in the same session and they are not involved in what normally cut it off, even if the separation remains long. If they get separated or preoccupied with something that ordinarily cuts the session off, the proposal shall be invalid since this is regarded as a refusal. Attendance of witnesses is also required for the validity of the marriage.*

Obviously, Mansur would fall somewhere in the middle, regarding the unity of the session as a simple means of communication as he said, "The physical space is only important insofar as it facilitates the connectivity of *Al- Ijāb wa Al-Qabūl*".[323] While his reasoning appears to be in favor of *E-Nikaḥ*, he is hesitant to completely accept it. He acknowledges that as long as *Itiḥād al-Majlis* is a tool for facilitating the proposal and acceptance of the couple, the internet may play the same role by acting as a mediator for facilitating communication and connectivity among couples. He says, "The cyberspace can either be

[322] The Juristic Ruling of having *Nikah* over the Internet or the Phone, *IslamQ&A*, Accessed Dec. 5, 2022, shorturl.at/gmqrD.
[323] Mansur, E-Nikah.

used as a tool, which is a means to an end, and therefore has no agency, or is an environment, a sacred space where religion is experienced, and legal Islamic rulings are enacted".[324] However, he seems to be skeptical that cyberspace can compete or replace the physical space even in urgent cases. He says, "Whilst there is a near consensus amongst Muslim scholars on the permissibility of using the internet as a tool for learning about Islam, the discussion on whether 'cyberspace' can act as a substitute for physical space is heavily contested".[325]

Having said that, Mansur's research suggests three possibilities for ritualistic spatial requirements. First, the spatial constraints shall be marginalized, or at the very least leveled as a secondary optional condition. Second, it prioritizes the rationale behind the physical space over the space itself, namely connectedness and communication. Third, it implicitly promotes, if not encourages, the takeover of real space by virtual space. Therefore, the pertinent question would be, if the physical space is not so substantial in constituting the Islamic rituals, would it be possible to replace it with something else? This will be thoroughly examined in the next chapter.

Conclusion

If I were a person who was born in the pre-modern times, I would be surprised if I have read this chapter, not because of its myriad irregular forms of worship, but rather because the main question about the significance of space in Islamic rituals is irrelevant. While the classical juridical minds suggested some hypothetical instances where the ritual could be conceptualized in the absence of space, they did not imagine that there would be a day when

[324] Mansur, *E-Nikah*, 11.
[325] Ibid.,

people would entirely transition to a non-spatial setting. Still, their theories about non-spatial forms of worship demonstrate how innovative their comprehension of the underlying principles of Islamic rituals as a whole is. As a result, the notion of conceding space as a necessary component of Islamic rituals is not unique to modern Islam but rather has a long history dating back to pre-modern and even classical Islam. In the pre-modern Islam, distant rituals took many different forms, including "Ship Prayer," "Radio Prayer," and, most recently, "Internet Prayer". These and other instances show that in the structure of the Islamic rituals, space was secondary.

By combining these occurrences, it would be possible to gain a deeper understanding of the potential for interaction between the past and the present. Yet, it demonstrates the classical maxims' relevance in the contemporary setting. The ninth-century model of ship prayer mirrors the eighteenth-century model of the non-spatial session (absence of physical unity in marriage), the twentieth-century model of radio prayer, and the most advanced distant form of rituals, virtual prayer. Natural disasters may give birth to certain types of worship to emerge, necessitating modern muftis to innovate and overcome the "fatwa-transmitter" to "fatwa-originator" paradox, as Mansur Ali contends.

In the following chapter, I have outlined more advanced forms of distant rituals that include those that are freed from physical and spatial requirements (such as online ḥadra, virtual ḥalaqas of Qur'an, and virtual Hajj) along with real-world examples from contemporary Muslim communities who conduct them. Putting these rituals into practice has significantly impacted Muslim communities on multiple levels including authority, authenticity, and identity. In the following chapter, these factors will be discussed in more detail.

Chapter Three:

The Impacts of Body and Space Absence from Islamic Rituals on Muslim Communities

(Authority, Identity and Authenticity)

The preceding two chapters has laid the foundations for the theoretical framework surrounding the distant Islamic rituals, which can be traced back to the ninth century when the classical Muslim jurists conceptualized the Islamic rituals in the absence of physical and spatial constraints. Out of their progressive outlook of the worship in Islam which transcends the confines of physicality and spatiality, they succeeded in formulating unconventional forms of remote rituals such as Ship Prayers, *salat al-sūq* (Market Prayer) and *al-salat min warāʾ al-ḥā'iṭ* (Prayer behind walls). These groundbreaking forms of worship served as role models for the post-modern generations who not only exceeded these revolutionary steps but also embraced Radio Prayer.

The relevance of these original forms of distant rituals persists for Muslims in the 21st century and can be readily summoned when needed. Online Prayers is the most updated form, not the final iteration, of distant ritual that have garnered approval and adoption by contemporary Muslim scholars in different parts of the world. For instance, in the U.S during 2020, phone prayers were led by *Shikha* Ḥakima, a Sufi religious leader at The Shadhiliyya Sufi Center in Pope Valley. As the appointed leader of the order's branch in San Diego, Ḥakima is in charge of leading various spiritual and religious endeavors. She conducts Dhikr sessions and numerous Sufi prayers through phone conferences and zoom rooms, including light prayer, God's 99 names prayer, and meditation sessions. Male and female participants

from a variety of faiths and beliefs participate in such phone spiritual and religious activities guided by Ḥakima.

Imam Amr Dabour, an Azhari scholar affiliated with the Salam Islamic Center located in Sacramento, California, is the second example of the American Muslim scholar who practiced the Internet prayers. His remarkable contribution goes beyond the context of American Islam, reaching the entire Islamic community as he led the first-ever internet prayer in history. During the sacred month of Ramadan in 2021, Imam Dabour displayed extraordinary proficiency as he led the collective night prayer, broadcasting it in real-time to his audience whose numbers exceed 3000 followers. The live stream, which was available through his own Facebook page, got viewers or online performers from various regions including California, and Canada.[326]

In Egypt, the Sufi order Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammadiya, along with its institutionalized branch Al-Ashira Al-Muhammadiya, accomplished an important milestone in the Egyptian Sufism by launching the first online Ḥadra. On Saturday, October 24, 2020 the official website of both the Egyptian Sufi order Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammadiya and Al-Ashira Al-Muhammadiya *(Established by the Egyptian presidential decree No. 750 in 1930)* bearing the name of its founder Sheikh Muhammad Zaki Ibrahim (d. 1996) streamed its *Hadra* online with over 16,000 followers and 500 simultaneous users participating and commenting with their chanting words and *Dhikr* (God's remembrance) prayers. This transformation is seen as an unprecedented and revolutionary departure because it signifies a fundamental shift from the prevailing offline method of performance to a highly sophisticated virtual format of ritual

[326] Dabour, Amr, "Livestream of Ishaa and Taraweeh Juzu' 16 Livestream", Facebook, May 8, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/profile/1206849357/search/?q=taraweeh%20livestream.

expression. Further, it is considered a very significant shift, especially in the context of one of the world's most firmly embedded and traditional Sufi orders.

In Indonesia, “The idea of holding a virtual Friday Prayer started when Wawan Gunawan Abdul Wahid and other young Muhammadiyah activists organized the Eid al-Fitr online on 24 May 2020. Following that event, the Friday Prayer was conducted on 29 May 2020”.[327] In contrast to the approval and adoption of virtual performance of supererogatory prayers and similar acts such as circles of the recitation of Qur'an by multiple Muslim scholars and leaders in Egypt, the United States, and Europe, the Indonesian religious leader Wawan Gunawan Abdul Wahid took an exceptional initiative by performing the obligatory Friday prayer virtually, exceeding the prevailing practices. “Wawan Gunawan argues that the main reason for conducting a virtual Friday Prayer is to address the diverse demands on Islamic worship (at-tanawwu' fil ibadah) in a time of crisis”. [328] However, he uses the same argument that other scholars such as Mauritanian scholar Muḥammad al-Hassan Ould al-Dadaw al-Shanqītī, and Mohammad Fawzy Abdul-Hay about the legitimacy of having distant prayer as long as communication channels are established. In their article, *Digital Islam in Indonesia: The Shift of Ritual and Religiosity during Covid-19*, Wahyudi and Burhani delve deeper on the three primary reasons that were the basis upon which Wawan Gunawan builds his argument; First, he highlights the Prophetic permission of using the house as a mosque, or in other words, any spot of the earth is legitimate for holding the prayer. Second, the permissibility of virtual marriage, which is also an act of worship. Third, Wawan Gunawan

---

[327] Akmaliah, Wahyudi and Burhani, Ahmad Najib, “Digital Islam in Indonesia: The Shift of Ritual and Religiosity during Covid-19”. *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*. Singapore. 12 August 2021. ISSUE: 2021 No. 107, ISSN 2335-6677.
[328] Ibid.,

draws a parallel between the valid collective prayer with a river that separates the Imam and Ma'mum as long as the voice of the Imam can be heard by the Ma'mum, and the virtual prayer with a screen separates both Imam and Ma'mum as well.

Formalists may see the rise of online rituals, also known as Internet rituals, as innovative or even departing from traditional Islamic practices. An in-depth understanding of the traditional Islamic literature, on the other hand, reveals an unexpected fact: online rituals are only extensions of remote rituals that have existed in the Islamic tradition. Nonetheless, the virtual performance of Islamic rituals has resulted in a number of repercussions, which are the focal points of this chapter. These ramifications include issues of authority, identity, and authenticity.

Authority is a multifaceted concept that can manifest itself through different avenues such as individual, scripture, structure, or hierarchy. It is a divine legitimation "granted to religious structures, gatekeepers or representing the sentiments and decision making of God on earth, trust-based relationship given to institutional professionals, or self-appointed leaders".[329] Islamic authority is intricately linked to tradition, and this is why it is widely accepted as traditional. Tradition is often used to portray the behaviors seen within a given community as being resistive to modernity or unable to accept change, however this is not totally accurate.[330] The word "tradition" is not a rejection of change or Regressivism, or backwardness.[331] Instead, "tradition is, as Shils put it, "a traditum. . . . anything which is

[329] H.A Campbell, *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*, (New York: Routledge, 2020), 20,
[330] Hamdeh, Emad. Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā', and Self Learning. *American Journal of Islam and Society*. 2020. 37(1-2), 67–102.
[331] Graham, W. (1993). Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation. The Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 23(3), 495-522. doi:10.2307/206100.

transmitted or handed down from the past to the present" and it is also anything perceived to have been passed from one generation to the next; or, as Acton defined it: a belief or practice transmitted from one generation to another and accepted as authoritative, or deferred to, without argument".[332] Until the eighteenth century, traditional Islamic authority stood as the only form of recognized Islamic authority. This particular model of authority was the dominant form across the Muslim world until the advent and widespread use of print technology in the nineteenth century, followed by the rapid rise of the Internet in the 1990s. Until recently, individuals had to wait in line at the Ministry of *Iftaāʾ* to receive a fatwa from the "religious authorities" (juridical verdicts).[333] However, the extensive availability of online religious information, as well as the reliability it attained over time, has changed the dynamics of religious authority, resulting in an enormous change in the religious landscape. New authorities are generated, challenging the existing authorities (although these are not completely eliminated), which is seen as an advantage and disadvantage. In this cutting-edge space of the Internet, traditional authorities did not give up, but hardly found any satisfactory platforms. As a result, they seek to collect their already fragmented and distractible audiences, those who are attracted to z-authorities (authorities that are appropriate for a generation as fast and spontaneous as that of the z generation).

The phenomena of Sheikh Google or machine fatwa poses an increasing threat not just to the validity of the online religious experience, but also to traditional religious authority. A user seeking a fatwa on a certain issue may access a broad selection of both traditional and modern fatwas with the option of prioritizing and selecting what is most relevant to his or her

[332] Ibid.,

[333] Bunt, Gary R. *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority,* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

circumstances with the touch of a finger. Text authority presents a challenge for existing authorities. The Internet allows religious blogs, websites, and social media platforms to emerge into information sources, therefore undermining religious power structures by introducing new religious authority.[334] This enables unqualified authorities to compete with established authorities. Bloggers and content producers are becoming powerful, if not more so than traditional religious leaders.[335]

In terms of authority and gender, the digitalization of Islamic rites may provide an opportunity for Muslim women to regain their historical standing within the religion. Women had a variety of roles in Islam's early history, including jurists, Hadith narrators, mystics, and religious leaders. Currently, websites that provide online Khutbah (sermons) and prayer services allow women, children, and people with disabilities to participate in vital rituals that would otherwise be unavailable to them.[336] Moreover, Shikha Ḥakima serves as a notable example of an esteemed American female religious figure within a Sufi faction, leading the virtual religious engagements of the al-Shadhilya Sufi order based in California. Ḥakima oversees the order's San Diego branch and has a higher education licensing in the realm of spiritual treatment. Through teleconferences and online platforms like Zoom and teams, she has successfully orchestrated several spiritual practices, encompassing Dhikr sessions and an array of Sufi prayers such as the prayer of illumination, invocation of God's 99 names, and meditation sessions.

---

[334] Campbell, Heidi. Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 80, Issue 1, March 2012, Pages 64–93, https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074.

[335] Ibid.,

[336] Khaled Abou El Fadl, "The First Usuli Institute Virtual Khutbah", *Usuli Institute for advanced Usuli Studies*, accessed November 13, 2021. https://www.usuli.org/khutbahs-1.

Digitalization of religious experience including the Islamic rituals has also affected the identity-making process for religious cyberspace users. While offline identity is inherently fluid and changing, the internet has made it much more fluid and volatile. In addition, the shift to the online format is claimed to pose a fundamental challenge to the traditional idea of space-based identity, which has been closely associated with physical place. Throughout sociological and anthropological literature, place has been represented as a critical part of religious identity. This picture may be found in important works such as Emile Durkheim's writings in 1915 and Victor Turner's in 1969, as well as more contemporary additions by Catherine Brace, Adrian R. Bailey, David C. Harvey in 2006, and Erika Summers-Effler in 2007. Nonetheless, these works portray the link between religious identity and spatial aspects as a result of communal goals rather than an inherent trait. The depiction of place as holy does not imply its intrinsic holiness, but rather highlights its function in fostering social cohesiveness and a shared sense of identity among community members.

This study, on the other hand, departs from the preceding perspective by emphasizing the significance of space as both a reservoir and a catalyst for religious identity. The mosque, in particular, holds such great reverence and holiness in the lives of Muslims that it is often seen as the guiding force of Muslim's life. As a result, the virtual domain of the internet cannot replace the physical space held by the mosque, which acts as a key motivator of religious identity. Instead, it should be seen as a digital extension of it. Despite its virtual aspect, the effectiveness of cyberspace should not be underestimated, as it serves as a tool to promote not just communication among religious groups, but also the conduct of worship itself.

As for the genuineness of the online religious experience, the process of digitizing Islamic rituals has brought back the ongoing concern about the authenticity of the entire online religious encounter, fueling a heated dispute about its validity. Although some revolutionary Islamic authorities have not only issued fatwas on its legitimacy but also put them into practice, a considerable number of Muslims worldwide, including both authorities and their followers, remain skeptical of these innovative expressions of religious observance. The word "virtual" has significant ramifications in the way that people think about religion when it is mediated by a computer. Frequently, online rituals are hampered by the dichotomy between the online and offline domains, which creates a divide between the authentic physical world and the digital realm, as well as between actions conducted through physical means and those facilitated by technology. Consequently, the mediated reality is frequently regarded as inferior to the unmediated counterpart.[337] This chapter delves deeply into the two primary factors that that is claimed to undermine the authenticity of the online religious experience. Firstly, it examines the perceived deficiency in social ties among community members. Secondly, it analyzes the perceived incongruity between the profane nature of the online space and the sacred content it seeks to accommodate.

Regarding the first reason for considering the virtual realm as unrealistic, inauthentic, and deceptive, it centers on the alleged absence of a communal sense within it. Online Islam, like other religions, is regarded as less validated and reliable. This idea is bolstered by the fact that both classical and modern Islamic scholars have highlighted the significance of physical space in most Islamic rituals, emphasizing the communal dimension of space that

[337] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning" in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed., Daniel Enstedt, Göran Larsson, and Enzo Pace (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 35.

contributes to the authenticity of these rites. The communal nature of these rituals provides a compelling argument for the necessity of a physical location for their execution. This is evident in the congregational prayer and the pilgrimage, both of which seek to foster social cohesion among Muslims by physically convening in a single location to engage in various Islamic practices, while also nurturing an essential feeling of solidarity among all Muslims. Nonetheless, the current chapter elaborated on the idea that the digitization of rituals, including those in the Islamic context, does not pose a threat to the social element. The line between the digital and actual worlds is now almost impossible to draw. In this regard, a third sphere known as "onlife" has emerged effectively fusing the online and physical realms into a single entity.[338] Using a variety of real-world examples from Egypt, Indonesia, and the United States, the study demonstrated how efficient and effective the virtual performance of Islamic rituals is in terms of strengthening the social connections between ritual performers.

The second suggested cause for the decline in the authenticity of digital religious experiences is the deficiency of this profane space that is embodied in cyberspace for facilitating sacred religious interactions. This aspect elucidates the opposition expressed by certain religious authorities, such as the al- Muaḥmadiyah Sufi order and other Sufi sects in Egypt, to the incorporation of technology into religious activities. Unlike its institutionalized branch al-Ashira al-Muaḥmadiyah, al- Muaḥmadiyah order steadfastly refused to broadcast their spiritual practices or consider the use of digital media as mediator between the master and his disciples. Despite the premise of the interconnectedness of both online and offline spheres, this study asserts that both realms mutually supplement one another, akin to two

[338] Evolvi, G., & Giorda, M. C. (2021). Introduction: Islam, Space, and the Internet, *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, *10*(1), 1-12. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-bja10047.

facets of a single coin, as they progressively intertwine. Furthermore, the credibility of online *Iʿtikāf*, traditionally tied to a physical space, namely a mosque, has been approved by the fatwa issued by Al-Qaradaghī and The International Union of Muslim Scholars (IAMS).[339] This recognition reflects the amount of faith and trust that Muslim authorities have put in cyberspace as a platform for religious experience.

Authority: This section will discuss the following points:

1. **Definition of Authority**
2. **Islamic Authority and Tradition**
3. **Online Authority**
4. **Authority and Gender**
5. **Neo-Traditional Authority**

1. Definition of Authority

In her recent study *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*, Heidi Campbell elaborated on the definition of the term "religious authority". According to her, sociologists of religion defined it as "a particular form of legitimation, often linked to a unique or a divine source".[340] Authority is not linear, but it can be manifested in various forms; individual, scripture, structure, or hierarchy. It is a divine legitimation "granted to religious structures, gatekeepers or representing the sentiments and decision making of God

[339] Ali Al-Qaradaghi. "Al-Qaradaghi: Yajūz Al-Iʿtikaf fī albyūt Idha Kant Almasajid mughlaqa" (Al-Qaradaghi: It is permissible to do *I'tikaf* at home if the mosques are closed). May 5, 2020. Accessed [November 4, 2020], https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/تركيا/القره-داغي-يجوز-الاعتكاف-في-البيوت-إذا-كانت-المساجد-مغلقة/1838764.
[340] Campbell, H.A. *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*, (New York: Routledge, 2020), 20.

on earth, trust-based relationship given to institutional professionals, or self-appointed leaders".[341] The main feature of the religious authority that distinguishes it from other forms of authority is "calling on some supernatural referent".[342]

In Islam, the religious authority is defined by Bruce Lawrence as one of the three kinds: scriptural, charismatic, and juridical.[343] The scriptural is embodied in the Qur'an as a divine revelation. The second kind of authority is charismatic, which is represented in the Prophet Muhammad (his sayings, deeds, and even tacit).[344] The juridical authority is the one manifested in the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) and the custodians of the *Shari'ah* i.e., ulema.[345]

The history of Islamic authority may aid understanding the shift that happened to it via the concept's dynamism and evolution. Until the nineteenth century, traditional Islamic authority was the most acknowledged form (compared to scientific, academic, or political authority) of Islamic authority. Each sect or group has placed its faith in its own Imam, Mulla, or Marje'. This type of authority was prevalent in the Muslim world until the growth and adoption of print in the 19th century, and then the fast expansion of the Internet in the 1990s. Until recently, people used to stand in lines waiting for fatwa from the "religious authorities" in the ministries of *Iftaāʾ* (juridical verdicts).[346] The term authority was very connected to tradition as a way and a means of attaining the Islamic knowledge. The Islamic

---

[341] Ibid.,

[342] Ibid.,

[343] Bruce Lawrence, Allah On-line: The Practice of Global Islam in the Information Age, In "*Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture, "*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 237.

[344] Bruce Lawrence, Allah On-line: The Practice of Global Islam in the Information Age, 237.

[345] Bruce Lawrence, Allah On-line: The Practice of Global Islam in the Information Age, 237.

[346] Bunt, Gary R. *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority,* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

authority is not only connected to the tradition but also to the traditional ways of seeking the Islamic knowledge.

2. Islamic Authority and Tradition

The Islamic authority is very connected to tradition. Tradition is frequently used to describe behaviors of a certain group that are opposed to modernity or embracing change, although this is not totally accurate.[347] As William Graham (b. 1943) puts it, the word "tradition" is not a rejection of change or Regressivism, or backwardness.[348] Instead, "tradition is, as Shils put it, "a traditum. . . . anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present" and it is also anything perceived to have been passed from one generation to the next; or, as Acton defined it: a belief or practice transmitted from one generation to another and accepted as authoritative, or deferred to, without argument".[349] When traditionalists invoke the past, they are similar to American jurists who attempt to determine the original intent of the Constitution or Bill of Rights as established by the forefathers.[350] Further, Qasim Zaman argues that the way through which the traditional scholars defend their authority is by means of traditional religious institutions such as Madrasas which served as keepers and preservers of the authentic authority.[351] In support of their stance on the distinct interpretation

[347] Hamdeh, Emad. Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā', and Self Learning. *American Journal of Islam and Society*. 2020. 37(1-2), 67–102.
[348] Graham, W. (1993). Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23(3), 495-522. doi:10.2307/206100.
[349] Graham, W. (1993). Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation. The Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 23(3), 495-522. doi:10.2307/206100, 496.
[350] Hamdeh, Emad. Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā', and Self Learning. *American Journal of Islam and Society*. 2020. 37(1-2), 67–102.
[351] Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).

of tradition, traditional authorities argue that throughout Islamic history, the validation of Islamic religious knowledge has primarily depended on two key elements: the transmission of knowledge through chains of narration (isnad) that trace back to the Prophet and the acquisition of licenses (ijaza) that establish a direct link between a contemporary teacher and a renowned past scholar ultimately tracing back to the companions of Prophet Muhammad and, subsequently, to Prophet Muhammad himself.[352] The conferral of an "Ijaza" or license happens only after the students have read the text in the presence of their scholar, who subsequently evaluates their comprehension and grants approval accordingly.[353] An ongoing dialogue between the present and the past characterizes the dominant concept of Islamic authority. This may explain the traditional authorities' steadfast adherence to traditional methods of conveying Islamic knowledge while concurrently criticizing the use of technological approaches in education. The advent of print technology posed a significant challenge to traditional authority, according to Zaman, as it increased the availability of Islamic knowledge sources and provided alternatives for those seeking religious guidance.[354]

Likewise, in his *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied knowledge, and History in West Africa*, Rudolph T. Ware argues that in the Senegambia region in West Africa, the classical Qurʾan schooling, which dominates the Islamic schooling in West Africa are still using the traditional tools for teaching the Islamic knowledge and the Qur'an. In the 21st century, the 19th century's tools of learning, such as a wooden tablet, ink, and feathers,

352 Hamdeh, Emad, Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr.
353 Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*.
354 Ibid.,

are only the authentic tools of education in the Qurʾan schools.[355] This reinforces the notion that Islamic authority, as manifested in Islamic knowledge, is inextricably intertwined with traditional methods of acquiring knowledge. Therefore, instructors in Western African Quran schools consistently discredit foreign educational institutions in Africa, portraying them as threatening to Islamic knowledge and the larger Islamic community.[356] In a similar vein, Francis Robinson argues in his book *Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print* that the advent of printing, which the 15th-century Western society hailed as a transformative force in the dissemination of knowledge, was met with distinct reactions in the Islamic world. The Islamic world initially resisted the adoption of printing due to its belief that oral transmission was the only authentic means of transmitting Islamic knowledge. In addition, printing was viewed as a threat to the authority of Muslim scholars, which might weaken their standing. He says, "it was an erosion of the authority of the ulama as interpreters of Islam".[357] The same sense of strict adherence to tradition applies not only to Islamic authority, but also to the very methods used to pursue knowledge is reaffirmed in Hamdeh's work. In his work titled "Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā', and Self Learning," Emad Hamdeh elucidates that proponents of this exclusive understanding of tradition contend that throughout Islamic history, religious knowledge was validated primarily through its connection to the past. The connection is made through a chain of narration (isnad) that begins with the Prophet Muhammad and ends with his companions or the Prophet himself, and through licenses (ijaza) that can be traced

---

[355] Ware, Rudolph T., *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa,* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
[356] Ware, Rudolph T., *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education*.
[357] Robinson, Francis. "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print." Modern Asian Studies 27, no. 1 (1993): 229-51.

back to a teacher who can establish a direct link to esteemed past scholars or Sheikhs, and so on and so forth.[358]

Further, modern scholars of Islam had to follow traditional ways of proving their scholarly worth by relying on these old authorities. Hence modern seekers of traditional knowledge, such as American Muslim youth and college students, were highly encouraged, by some of their Sheikhs, to travel to Muslim countries to receive traditional Islamic knowledge through the verbal method "*Talaqqi*" or *Sama'* (verbal). A more effective method of bridging the gap between Islamic authority and the traditions and conventional methods employed in the pursuit of Islamic knowledge is demonstrated by a following case study examining the experiences of American Muslim youth and college students who were strongly urged by conservative Sheikhs to embark on such travels. In her anthropological study *Islam Is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, Zareena Grewal recounted several stories about American Muslim students who traveled abroad to seek the traditional Islamic authority. Although these young Muslim Americans had access to various methods of seeking Islamic knowledge in their local communities, such as online Islamic schools, local Sheikhs, and Islamic studies programs in American colleges, they preferred to receive education via the ostensibly more authentic "traditional" method. In their view, or rather their traditional Sheikhs' view, oral education, and traditional *Ḥalaqas* are not only highly advantageous but often regarded as the sole methods for acquiring Islamic knowledge. This preference stems from the belief that these methods faithfully replicate the

[358] Hamdeh, Emad, Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr.

approach to Islamic education utilized by the companions and followers of the Prophet Muhammad, as well as subsequent generations.[359]

Similarly, in Elliot Bazzano's *Varieties of American Sufism: Islam, Sufi orders, and authority in a time of transition*, another significant example illuminates the influence of traditional religious authorities and their traditional ways of acquiring knowledge within American Sufism. Bazzano utilizes the metaphor of a garden to describe the many forms of American Sufism, classifying them as perennials, hybrids, and transplants. The term "perennial Sufism" is used to describe the long-standing presence of Sufi groups in American culture, such as the Inyati order (established in 1920 and led by the Indian immigrant Inyati Khan, who died in 1927). In this regard, Bazzano analyzes how Indian immigrants assimilated into Western esotericism and incorporated it into their Sufi practices, similar to indigenous cultures that originated on Western soil.[360] The category of hybrid Sufi movements includes groups that uphold Islamic practices and principles while also incorporating adaptations to the distinctive American context, particularly with regard to gender, authority, and practices. Numerous Sufi movements were led by Muslim immigrants who were born and raised in predominantly Muslim societies. Bawa Muhaidyin Fellowship, Shadhilyah Tariqa, Qadiri Refai', and Tijani are examples of these hybrid Sufi movements. These movements demonstrate a synthesis of Islamic spirituality with adaptations made to accommodate the specific cultural and social dynamics of the American context.[361] The transplant Sufi movements are those that originated in broader civilizations but were

---

[359] Grewal, Zareena, *Islam Is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, (N.Y.U. Press, 2014).
[360] Bazzano, Elliott, and Marcia K. Hermansen. *Varieties of American Sufism: Islam, Sufi Orders, and Authority in a Time of Transition*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020), xxi.
[361] Ibid.,

subsequently adapted in the American setting. "They are mostly co-ethnics and their followers affiliate based on patterns in their native societies, such as Sengales Muridun in New York City, Deobandi and Barelvi Sufi sects".[362] Within the transplanted category of American Sufism, adherents continue to rely on imported traditional religious authorities. Similar to other American religious groups, certain Sufi communities rely on external traditional authorities to guide their spiritual practices. Consequently, the concept of authority remains constrained by traditional forms and ideas, frequently revolving around charismatic figures who exemplify physical authority. This emphasis on established authority structures may inhibit the development of new, transformative forms of authority. Nonetheless, the proliferation of internet-based religious content and its effect on authenticity have substantially altered the dynamics of religious authority, resulting in a shift in the religious landscape as a whole.

Online Authority

The emergence of the internet has posed a significant challenge to the extant traditional religious authority, possibly paving the way for its transformation or replacement. With the proliferation of online platforms, a new type of Islamic religious authority has emerged. This new authority, as described by Gary Bunt in his book *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority*, is "immediate, digital, and live religious authority."[363] Text authority is a challenging kind of authority against traditional authorities. In this regard, Peter Mandivalle believes that Muslims have become more open to

[362] Bazzano, Elliott, and Marcia K. Hermansen. *Varieties of American Sufism,* xxiv.
[363] Bunt, Gary R. *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority,* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

developing their own interpretations of Islam, drawing on their own interpretations of traditional sources or embracing reformist intellectuals who reject conventional ideas and the ulama's (scholars) assertions that they are the only trustworthy sources of religious knowledge.[364] "The technology goes a long way to bridging the 'knowledge gap' between an 'alim and a lay Muslim by placing all of the relevant texts at the fingertips of the latter".[365] The digital age has caused, according to Emad Hamdeh, a shift from the need for a teacher to alternative methods of providing knowledge.[366]

The emergence of Sheikh Google or machine fatwa presents a huge challenge not just to the authenticity of the online religious experience, but also to traditional religious authority. Individuals seeking religious judgments on particular themes may easily access a huge selection of old and contemporary fatwas, with the option to prioritize and pick those most pertinent to their personal circumstances, with the touch of a finger. This easy access helps consumers to avoid the time-consuming procedure of submitting queries or questions to religious authorities and waiting for a response. As a result, the ease of access to varied sources of information has generated concerns about diminishing the role of traditional religious authorities in providing fatwas and giving guidance within their respective communities. In this sense, in her scholarly investigation titled *Understanding the Connection between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society*, Heidi Campbell elaborates on the concept of "shifting authority". This term refers to the situation in which people, such as religious bloggers and Islamic scholars, take independent and autonomous

[364] Peter Mandaville, "Digital Islam: Changing the Boundaries of Religious Knowledge?" *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World,* March, 1999: 1–23, https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2716928/view.
[365] Peter Mandaville, "Digital Islam: Changing the Boundaries of Religious Knowledge?".
[366] Hamdeh, Emad. Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr, 102.

responsibilities of authority. Campbell contends that the Internet is a facilitator for this shift, as religious blogs, websites, and social media platforms become significant information sources, therefore undermining traditional religious power structures and establishing innovative forms of religious authority.[367] This paradigm shift makes it feasible for unqualified authorities to compete with traditional ones, as bloggers and content creators obtain significant influence, sometimes surpassing that of traditional religious leaders. Consequently, they are assuming increasingly significant roles in the religious landscape.[368]

Individualized authority is intrinsic to online authority, distinguishing it from collective unified authority. Despite the fact that Islam does not have a central figure of authority comparable to the Pope, it recognizes religious leaders such as Imams, Mullahs, and Marje's who guide and direct their respective communities. In contrast, the Internet has facilitated an environment in which individual authorities can compete for prominence by establishing their own websites and issuing independent fatwas. The "virtual mosque" paradigm created by Imam Suhaib Webb, an American Muslim convert, provides a concrete illustration of this phenomenon. Having embraced Islam in 1992 after his conversion from Christianity, Webb exemplifies the paradigm of individualized authority, whereby individuals such as himself can establish personalized platforms and effectively disseminate their interpretations of Islamic teachings to a larger audience. "Webb is not only involved in the traditional way of doing *da'wah* but is also participative in social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. His website "virtual mosque" received recognition as the

---

[367] Campbell, Heidi. Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 80, Issue 1, March 2012, Pages 64–93, https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074.

[368] Ibid.,

Best Blog of the Year for 2009 by Brass Crescent Awards. A year later, he won the Best Muslim Tweeter with the highest vote".[369] Through Webb's initiative, Muslims can participate in information exchange, feedback, discussions, and remote collaborations. This individualized approach to interpreting Islam, as exemplified by the internet-based distribution of fatwas and precepts, is regarded as a formidable threat to established sources of authority. However, the lack of regulatory oversight by multiple authorities on the website presents a potential barrier to evaluating the authenticity and credibility of the content hosted on the platform. Furthermore, a lack of different opinions might hinder a community's development and advancement since its members may not be exposed to a broad variety of perspectives and ideas. To acquire an in-depth understanding of Islam, individuals must engage with online Islamic resources with a critical mindset and actively pursue information from multiple sources. In his article "New Media, New Publics: Reconfiguring the Public Sphere of Islam," Jon W. Anderson claims that the internet has contributed to the rise of new interpreters of Islam who hold significant influence in religious discourse and understanding within Muslim communities despite not necessarily being affiliated with traditional religious authorities such as clerics or scholars.[370] These new interpreters avoid using traditional religious leaders as mediators by communicating with a larger audience on their own.[371] Anderson believes that this shift in authority could have a significant impact on offline and

---

[369] Salinayanti Salim, An Exploration of Media Work of A Convert da‘i: Specific Reference to Imam Suhaib Webb. *Malaysian Journal of Media Studies*. Vol. 20, No. 1, 2018: 1-13.
[370] Ibid.,
[371] Jon w. Anderson, New Media, New Publics: Reconfiguring the Public Sphere of Islam. *Social Research*, Vol. 70, No. 3, fall 2003, pp. 887-906, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40971646.

online Muslim communities, as it could challenge traditional religious authority and encourage the development of alternative interpretations and practices.[372]

Two eminent Azhari scholars exemplified individual authority by disagreeing with the Azhar's prevailing position that online prayer is invalid. As the designated Imam of the SALAM Islamic Center in Sacramento, sheikh Amr Dabour emerged as one such figure. In 2010, Dabour relocated to the United States after receiving a master's degree in Islamic studies from Al-Azhar University in Egypt. In March 2020, when lockdown procedures for Covid-19 were put into effect, the SALAM Islamic Center in Sacramento, like many other mosques throughout the United States, temporarily halted holding Friday prayers. Imam Dabour, rather than following the widespread fatwa accepted by Muslims worldwide, decided to take part in the developing trend of individual authority and reshape the religious landscape in the United States. Imam Dabour, rather than following the widespread fatwa accepted by Muslims worldwide, decided to take part in the developing trend of individual authority and reshape the religious landscape in the United States. In a novel move, he began praying with the crowd through Facebook and YouTube live streams. His online following of approximately 3,000 individuals responded enthusiastically to this novel endeavor. In addition to leading congregational prayers, Imam Dabour also serves as an online Islamic educator, giving lessons on topics such as Islamic law (Fiqh), the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Hadith), the life of Muhammad (Sirah), and Qur'an recitation. Notably, Imam Dabour stands as the 21st American Imam and scholar who has initiated revisions to long-standing Islamic rituals, which have historically remained untouched over the years. Dabour

[372] Jon w. Anderson, New Media, New Publics: Reconfiguring the Public Sphere of Islam.

has a distinct viewpoint that strengthens the validity of this developing form of prayer, although many Imams prefer to abstain from departing from the broad consensus of Muslim scholars, especially on controversial issues like online prayer. Imam Dabour is among a minority of religious authorities who reject the consensus position that virtual prayer is forbidden in favor of exercising independent reasoning (Ijtihād).

Muhammad Fawzy Abdulhay, a respected religious figure, stands out as one of the few proponents of virtual prayer. Dr. Fawzy holds the position of assistant professor specializing in Islamic law and comparative religions at Al-Azhar University. In addition, he was the head of the fatwa center at Al-Azhar Sheikhdom back in 2017. Notably, in an episode on his official YouTube channel, Dr. Fawzy addressed a query regarding the permissibility of engaging in prayer behind a remote imam, such as via a radio broadcast. He clarified that classical jurists did not consider the possibility of observing or hearing from a remote location.[373] It is worth noting, nevertheless, that traditional jurists did provide lengthy justifications for instances involving spatial distance. The Maliki school, for instance, allowed worshippers to pray in tandem behind an imam despite physical barriers like rivers or roadways. In a similar manner, the Shafi'i school permitted the performance of prayers when the imam and ma'mums were separated by walls but connected by open doors or windows. Fawzy emphasized the legitimacy of these prayers by employing an analogy to the prayers conducted by individuals who are blind or deaf, emphasizing that despite their lack

[373] Fawzy, Muhammad. April 21, 2020. "Fatwa Wa Ahkam; al-Salah behind al-Bath al-Mibashir (Fatwas and rulings: Prayer through broadcasting)." YouTube. Accessed May 23, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1jFNHK2etQ.

of sight or hearing, their acts of worship are legitimate.[374] According to Fawzy, the symbolic significance of virtual rituals resides in maintaining the connection between Muslims and their prayers, thereby ensuring continuity.[375] Fawzy and Dabour offer contrasting views on a number of Islamic organizations and individuals, including the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA), the Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia, and the Council of Senior Scholars of al-Azhar. These entities have declared that the format of rituals in online spaces should not be adjusted. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, these institutions have issued a fatwa allowing for prayers to be conducted at home until its conclusion.[376]

Conversely, the emergence of individual online authority has brought forth an extra dimension - cyber extremism. Although the internet facilitates easy access to religious information for those interested in it, it also fosters a setting where radical views on religion may flourish. “The overload of Islamic information available today has allowed people to learn without leaving their homes. While access to information is a great benefit to many, it comes with some pitfalls”.[377] The lack of control over religious materials is one of the main concerns, which may lead to "proliferation of misinformation and disinformation".[378] In recent years, social media platforms have been increasingly employed to disseminate extremist ideologies associated with ISIS, Al Qaeda, and similar organizations. Online extremist authorities utilize technology to attract and recruit inexperienced Muslims to join

---

374 Fawzy, Muhammad, "Fatwa Wa Ahkam; al-Salah behind al-Bath al-Mibashir.

375 Ibid.,

376 Hegazy, Wael, Muslim Online Prayer in a Sociocultural Context.
377 Hamdeh, Emad. Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr, 82.
378 Lorne L. Dawson, Douglas E. Cowan, edit., *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*” edit., (Routledge, 2004).

extremist groups. "Muslim parents in some contexts found it difficult to stop their children from being influenced by the jihad-oriented messages viewed online. In one of the numerous cases that emerged, social media was seen as influential in the recruitment of two teenage girls from Austria. The girls were apparently later regretful of their actions but were unable to escape their weddings to I.S. activists. They are easily manipulated because they have no idea what Islam really is".[379] According to Jonathan Brown, this concept of individual authority involves a departure from tradition, as he argues that "Responding to the frequent calls today for a 'Muslim Martin Luther,' medieval ulama would suggest that much of the violence and extremism found in the Muslim world results precisely from unlearned Muslims deciding to break with tradition and approach their religion Luther-like 'by scripture alone".[380]

Authority and Gender

In his 2019 virtual sermon, Aboul Fadl offered a scathing critique of the patriarchal interpretation of the obligation of Friday prayer, marking the first instance of an online sermon validating the practice of remotely following Imams. He stated that the prevalent traditional justifications centered primarily on the notion that *Jumʿah* prayer is obligatory only for male adherents, thus contradicting earlier Muslim customs that treated female participants in Friday prayers equally to their male counterparts. Therefore, the Usuli Institute's official website announced the availability of the online Khutbah (sermon) and prayer, allowing women, minors, and people with disabilities to participate in these essential

[379] Gary Bunt, *Hashtag Islam_ How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 127.
[380] Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy*, (Oneworld Publications, 2014), 28.

rituals that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.[381] The digitization of Islamic rites might pave the way for Muslim women to reclaim their rightful places in history. Female jurists, Hadith narrators, mystics, and religious leaders all existed in the early history of Islam. They were respected leaders who greatly benefited their communities. Notable female Sufi authorities such as Rabia al-'Adawiyya (d. 801) and 'Aishah bint Yusuf al-Bauniyyah (d. 1517) were widely respected and influential. 'Aishah bint Yusuf al-Bauniyyah even authored a seminal work, "The Sufi Principles," which was translated into English by Th Emil Homerin in 2014.

In contrast, contemporary female aspirants have been harmed by the prevalent notion of authority within Sufism. Notably, Egyptian Sufi orders have intentionally barred women from ascending to positions of leadership within their respective organizations. This is a notable illustration of the difficulties that women confront in their quest for equal participation and recognition within the Sufi tradition.[382] In the late 20th century, the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders in Egypt banned women from holding official positions within Sufi orders, citing the Islamic legal principle that discourages the mingling of genders. Additionally, during my research in 2019 on 'Ashira Muhammadiyah, a Sufi group established by Sheikh Zaki Ibrahim in 1930, I noticed the issue of gender equality in Sufi leadership. The Sufi elders in this community fiercely opposed the idea of a female Sufi serving in authority. The setting is reflective of the restrictions placed on Muslim women in other orthodox societies.

[381] Khaled Abou El Fadl. “The First Usuli Institute Virtual Khutbah”. *Usuli Institute for advanced Usuli Studies*. Accessed November 13, 2021. https://www.usuli.org/khutbahs-1.
[382] Kamel Kamel, Sufi Woman Disclosed "The life of Female Sufi lovers of God". March 11, 2019. *Youm7*. Accessed on April 20, 2021. https://www.youm7.com/story/2019/3/11/امرأة-صوفية-تكشف-فى-حوار-لـ-اليوم-السابع-حياة-الهائمات/4169030.

However, the rise of the Internet has had a profound influence on shaping Sufi religious authority, resulting in remarkable structural changes. The online domain, which functions as a public sphere, has provided a venue for the propagation of gender equality. The Islamic internet, in particular, presents enormous potential for female religious authority to challenge male religious leaders' control. The new cyberspace settings can accommodate the growing demand among women for exclusively female religious figures to lead virtual spaces. This represents a significant shift in the dynamics of religious authority and paves the way for greater inclusion and empowerment of women in the domain of spirituality. "In doing so, they are using their understanding and interpretation of Islam to participate in the public sphere actively and to have a strong presence in different domains, which contradicts the notion of the public sphere as envisioned by Habermas, which largely excluded women as active or visible participants".[383] Nabil Echchaibi's study, "*Muslimah Media Watch: Media Activism and Muslim Choreographies of Social Change*," examined the role of Muslimah Media Watch, a female Muslim blog, as an activist tool in driving social change.[384] The blog, along with other similar female Muslim blogs, "has also become a prime discursive and performative space where young Muslims debate and contest what it means to be modern in transnational settings."[385]

Shikha Ḥakima serves as a remarkable example of an American female religious authority within the Sufi tradition. She now serves as the head of the al-Shadhilya Sufi order

---

[383] Mohammed El-Nawawy, and Sahar Khamis, *Islam Dot Com: Contemporary Islamic Discourses in Cyberspace, (*Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 107.

[384] Nabil Echchaibi, "Muslimah Media Watch: Media Activism And Muslim Choreographies Of Social Change". *Journalism*, (2013) https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1464884913478360.

[385] Nabil Echchaibi, "Muslimah Media Watch: Media Activism And Muslim Choreographies Of Social Change".

in California, in charge of all online religious activities. The Shadhilya Sufi order was founded in California in the 1990s thanks to the efforts of Jamal al-Refai al-Shadhili, a Palestinian Sufi immigrant. As the leader of the San Diego branch of the order, Ḥakima possesses a university degree in spiritual healing, which bolsters her qualifications and expertise in this field. Her leadership and educational background demonstrate the evolving landscape of Sufi religious authority, particularly in terms of female representation and expertise in spiritual healing. Shikha Ḥakima offers Dhikr sessions and other Sufi prayers over the phone and in virtual spaces like Zoom. Light prayer, reciting the 99 names of God, and meditation are all examples of such activities. These spiritual and religious activities are led by Ḥakima and are attended by men and women of various faiths and philosophies. Individuals from Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, and other spiritual backgrounds actively participate in these online and phone meetings, demonstrating their inclusive nature.

The advent of the internet has increased the opportunities for American Muslim women to advocate for empowerment, progress, support, and freedom. These women have created a forum through which they can convey their concerns and share their experiences regarding the daily obstacles they face, despite cultural or traditional restrictions that may have previously impeded their ability to do so. The internet has supplied these women with new opportunities to amplify their perspectives and participate in discussions that contribute to their individual and collective development. There has been progress in the American Muslim community in recent years, paving the way for women to fully participate in religious and social roles. For instance, "Ingrid Mattson became the first woman to occupy an Executive Council position when she was elected Vice President of ISNA. Mattson again made history in 2006 when she was elected as president of ISNA, the first female, and

indigenous Muslim convert to hold this position a top one of America's largest and most influential Muslim organizations".[386] In addition, in an unprecedented step towards supporting American Muslim women and their equal religious and civil rights, ISNA published in June 2005 "Women Friendly Mosques and Community Centers: Working Together to Reclaim Our Heritage" along with the Islamic Social Services Associations (ISSA) and Women in Islam (W.I.I.).[387] Further, the United States of America is witnessing an increase in a growing number of women organizations. "KARAMA, the Muslim Women Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights, devotes itself to helping Muslim women understand and work for their legal rights" and "IMAN, the International Muslimah Artists Network, created by and for Muslim women artists, and the World Council of Muslim Women Foundation, a nonprofit organization whose goals are the teaching of women's rights, global peace, and interfaith education from a worldwide perspective".[388]

Similarly, Muslim women are able to advocate for their equal rights to participate in Islamic rituals because to the symbolic importance of the virtual Islamic experience. Hegazy's study, titled "Muslim Online Prayer in a Sociocultural Context," focuses on how the digitalization of religious activities has given previously marginalized groups, such as Muslim women, more opportunities to participate in and take on leadership positions within their faith communities. I'tikaf is one example of a virtual Islamic ritual that has had a positive effect on its female participants. Traditionally, I'tikaf entails spending the last ten evenings of Ramadan in a mosque. Nonetheless, some Western Muslim philosophers, such as

---

386 Cesari Jocelyne. "Islamic Organizations in the United States", In *Oxford Handbook of Islam*, ed. by Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, (Oxford Online Publication, 2015).
387 Ibid.,
388 Jane I., Smith, *Islam in America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 70 and 71.

Al-Qaradaghi, the former leader of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, have issued fatwas permitting virtual I'tikaf, allowing individuals to consecrate themselves wholly to perform worship from any location, including their residences. The fatwa of Al-Qaradaghi is based on the Hanafi position, which permits Muslim women to observe I'tikaf at home instead of in a mosque. In practice, the Islamic Society of Santa Barbara (ISSB) continues to hold Friday prayers online based on a variety of fatwas, including Al-Qaradaghi's. This online observance of Islamic rituals has given Muslim women, who are not required by Islamic law to attend Friday prayers, a way to take part in religious observances. It removes barriers to participation in religious rites for those who would otherwise be unable to physically attend mosque services, such as those with disabilities.

The Internet, on the other hand, would be a curse for women. According to Janet Morhan-Martin, the lack of regulation on the Internet creates an unsafe environment for women, leading to oppression, harassment, and discrimination. According to her, the online environment exacerbates the difficulties women experience by providing a platform for organizations that perpetuate and even endorse their disrespectful, inappropriate, and discriminatory behavior.[389] She uses the pornographic industry as an illustration of how it objects and victimizes women. In this context, the Internet exacerbates the difficulties women experience by allowing these organizations to flourish and perpetuate harmful practices that are detrimental to the well-being and rights of women.[390] Furthermore, unregulated behaviors that reinforce and maintain existing gender-based social, political, and economic disadvantages are a major contributor to the online world's obvious power

[389] Jane I., Smith, *Islam in America,* 70 and 71.
[390] Ibid.,

imbalance. The marginalization and disadvantage endured by women offline are exacerbated by the online power imbalance. The unfiltered nature of online interactions enables the perpetuation of discriminatory practices and the reinforcing of gender inequalities, thereby impeding progress toward a more equitable society.[391] David Bell also notes that although computer-mediated communication (CMC) may appear to be a promising new frontier for women to pursue, it represents yet another arena in which they will be marginalized and dominated.[392] Cyberspace masculinization is a primary concern within the field of digital gender studies. In her paper titled "Freedom to Create: Women's Agenda for Cyberspace," Arizpe encourages cyber feminists to advocate for their rights and use new modes of communication and expression to improve the well-being of humanity as a whole, rather than perpetuating existing power structures. Her work emphasizes the importance of challenging and transforming cyberspace's dominant narratives and power structures in order to create a more inclusive and equitable online environment.[393]

Neo-Traditional Authority

Traditional religious authorities are concerned about the transition from physical to virtual domains, perceiving it as a threat to their entrenched dominance within their respective religious congregations. This sentiment is reflected in the issuance of a fatwa prohibiting internet-based prayer, which has received widespread support from numerous Fiqh institutions across the globe, transcending national boundaries, including those of the United

[391] Janet Morahan-martin, "Women and the Internet: Promise and Perils", *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*. Volume 3, Number 5, 2000.
[392] David Bell. 'Identities in Cyberculture', in "*An Introduction to Cybercultures"*, pp. 113-136, London: Routledge, 2001, 122.
[393] Arizpe, L. "Freedom to create: women's agenda for cyberspace" in W. Harcourt, (ed.) *Women@Internet: creating new cultures in cyberspace*, London: Zed Books, 1999, xv–xvi.

States.[394] "These institutions include The Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA), European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), The Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia, Council of Senior Scholars of al-Azhar, and others".[395] The aforementioned groups were concerned that the spread of religious information online may weaken established religious institutions. In their book "Islam Dot Com," El-Nawawy and Khamis claim that the internet has become a place where a volatile combination of opposing perspectives flourishes, leading to heated debates over "who possesses the legitimate voice of Islam."[396]

Cyberspace opens up new opportunities for contesting traditional authority and rivaling the emerging authorities, even infiltrating the online religious spaces to control their audiences.[397] “Despite their criticism of self-learning, traditionalists have embraced the internet in order to remain relevant and to compete with non-experts”.[398] Pauline Hope Cheong argued, "With the growing adoption of digital communication technologies, the renewed interest is cast upon the changing nature of authority, including how religious leaders appropriate new media to derive, enact, and extend their authority and social influence".[399] It is, as Heidi Campbell argues in *Religious Authority and the Blogosphere*,

---

[394] Sabri, Masoud. *Fatwas of scholars on Corona*. Cairo: Dar Al-Bashir for Printing and Publishing. 2020. The European Council for Fatwa and Research. 2020. *al-Bayan al-Khitami lil Dawrah al-Tareah al-Thalathin lil Majlis al-orobi lil Iftaa wal Buhuth al-Munaqedah beteqniyat zoom al-Tawasoliyah that enwan ‘al-Mustajedat al-Fiqhiyah li Nazelat Virus Corona Covid-19 (Final Statement: The 30th Urgent Session of Entitled the Jurisprudential Developments Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic)*. Held in Online Via Zoom, March 25–28. Accessed June 10, 2020, https://www.e-cfr.org/blog/2020/04/01/البيان-الختامي-للدورة-الطارئة-الثلاث/.

[395] Wael Hegazy, Muslim Online Prayer.
[396] Ibid.,
[397] Heidi Campbell. Digital creatives and the rethinking of religious authority. UK: Routledge: 2021. Khamis Islam Dot Com, and Alphia Possamai-Inesedy and Alan Nixon, ed., *The Digital Social: Religion and Belief,* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, December 2, 2019).
[398] Hamdeh, Emad. Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr, 102.

[399] Cheong, Pauline Hope. Religious Leaders, Mediated Authority, and Social Change. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 39, No. 4, November 2011, pp. 452_454.

inaccurate to assume that traditional religious authorities have been impacted or replaced by online religious authorities.[400] Rather, she argues that certain traditional offline religious leaders construct cyberspace as a sphere "enhances their control over their audiences and their positions in their societies".[401] In their study *Shari'a in Cyberspace: An analysis of Australian and U.S. Internet Sites*, Australian researchers Adam Possamai, Joshua Roose, et al. examined six Australian and American fatwa websites: Darul Ifta Australia (Australian Institute of Islamic Jurisprudence), Darul Fatwa Australia (Islamic High Council of Australia), Sydney Muslim Youth "Ask the Sheikh', Fatwa Centre of America, Shariah Board of America, and Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America. Their findings revealed that the six selected Australian and American Islamic websites were used to consolidate the authority of subcontinental traditional Salafi muftis, Imams, and mullahs, leaving individuals with few opportunities to engage with website content or receive responses to their inquiries.[402] "The flow of information and its mediation serves only to reinforce the power of the scholars through utilizing technology".[403] Traditional authorities have successfully used social media to influence and govern their audiences. Scholars from more conventional backgrounds have come to see the value of the Internet and are using it as a tool to help them compete with others who lack expertise in the religious field.[404] Therefore, they are not using the Internet to

[400] Heidi A. Campbell, Religious Authority and the Blogosphere, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Volume 15, Issue 2, 1 January 2010, Pages 251–276.
[401] Campbell, Who's Got the Power? Religious Authority and the Internet. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*.1043–1062. 2007.

[402] Emad Hamdeh, Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr, 67–70.

[403] Alphia Possamai, *The Digital Social: Religion and Belief,* 137.
[404] Emad Hamdeh, Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr, 102.

build a new authority, but rather to maintain the one they already have and exert control over their followers.

Identity:

This section will discuss the following points:

1. **Nature of Online Identity**

2. Heterogeneous Identity

3. Spatial Identity

1. **Nature of Online Identity**

Identity, according to Goffman, is mainly an acquired, construed quality rather than an inherent or innate one, and is therefore the product of one's social interactions.[405] Identity is always "relational and incomplete, and under construction"[406] as Grossberg defines it, or "Imagined, constructed, and then articulated in narratives: dynamic assemblages of stories about the self and its relation to others"[407] as Rozehnal puts it. It is an endless human pursuit that is infinite and without bounds, regardless of the foundation, it is built on, gender, color, religion, language, or philosophy. It is always "fluid and contingent".[408] Zygmunt Bauman elaborated on the identity issue by saying, "If the modern problem of identity was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the postmodern problem of identity is primarily how to

[405] Goffman, Erving, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959.
[406] Lawrence Grossberg. Identity and cultural studies: Is that all there is? In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*. Sage Publications, Inc. 1996. 89.
[407] Robert Rozehnal, 12.
[408] Ibid.,

avoid fixation and they keep the options open".[409] With the proliferation of the Internet and its multiplicity of its uses, identity has become more vulnerable to change and alteration.

Due to this changeability and volatility of the Internet-shaped identity, Internet users have clearly adopted a religious identity based mostly on a "storied identity," as described by Heidi Campbell. This technique is often regarded as the most effective tactic for attaining their goal to find and create coherence amidst the fluidity of the internet."[410] According to Campbell, blogging is the act of keeping an online journal that largely comprises personal information and is generally meant for a larger readership. Although blogs can cover a wide range of topics, from parenting advice to sports fandom, religious bloggers frequently document their spiritual journey, provide a prophetic perspective on their individual religious goals, engage in apologetics, and occasionally express their opinions on religious controversies.[411]

As an example, Wajahat Ali, is an American Muslim columnist, blogger, and the author of *Go Back to Where You Came From* (2022). Wajahat is an author of other comic books where he detailed the live stories that American Muslim immigrants face on daily basis. Through his comic style, he shared his life details on his social media pages. Through his posts on his pages, Wajahat sheds light to islamophobia, white supremacy, hate-speech and other issues that American Muslim immigrants face within the American society. Further, his blog documents most of his daily life routines as a sort of resistance to social exclusion of American Muslims

---

[409] Zygmunt Bauman. In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*, 18.
[410] Campbell, Heidi A. "Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80 (1): 64–93, 2012. https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074, 71.

[411] Campbell, Heidi A. "Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society.

and assertion of the multilayered identity.[412] For instance, he introduces his book, *Go Back to Where You Came From*, by the following words:

> Awkward, left-handed, suffering from OCD, and wearing Husky pants, Ali grew up on the margins of the American mainstream, devoid of Brown superheroes, where people like him were portrayed as goofy sidekicks, shop owners with funny accents, sweaty terrorists, or aspiring sweaty terrorists. Driven by his desire to expand the American narrative to include protagonists who look like him, he became a writer, and in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks, an accidental activist and ambassador of all things Muslim-y.[413]

Wajahat also shares his TED talks, YouTube videos, and conferences through his blogs detailing his routines, lifestyle, in the form of funny narratives.

Muslimah Media Watch: Media Activism and Muslim Choreographies of Social Change by Nabil Echchaibi is another instance where the potential of Muslim women's blog, "Muslimah Media Watch," is explored as a powerful instrument for promoting social change via the use of storytelling tactics.[414] "Grappling with My Muslim Identity During Ramadan" is the title of one of these blogs. As part of her integration into the academic community, an American Muslim convert student living in Beijing describes her experiences finding halal food, dining at restaurants, and seeking a Muslim social circle. Her story revolves around her identity as a black convert, which is revealed at the conclusion. Based on her findings, white converts are regarded differently from black converts, as well as those who are born Muslim. The blog, which is an example of other similar female Muslim blogs, "has also become a prime discursive and performative space where young Muslims debate and contest what it means to be modern in transnational settings."[415]

---

[412] Wajahat Ali, https://www.wajali.com/, accessed March 20, 2023.
[413] Ibid.,
[414] Nabil Echchaibi, "Muslimah Media Watch: Media Activism And Muslim Choreographies Of Social Change". *Journalism*, (2013) https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1464884913478360.
[415] Ibid.,

In addition, the use of narrative tactics by modern Muslim bloggers in the Western context has a dual purpose: it not only allows them to express their unique identities, but it also challenges the assumption that Islam is incompatible with Western culture and society.[416] By employing this technique, they not only campaign for social and institutional reform, but also demonstrate their capacity to successfully integrate Islam into Western societies.[417] Furthermore, Muslim bloggers have emerged as an effective instrument for countering the prevalent misunderstandings perpetuated by the Western media. According to a study titled "*Muslim bloggers in Germany: an Emerging Counterpublic*" by Stine Eckert and Kalyani Chadha, German Muslim bloggers are using their online platforms to oppose the prevalent, erroneous representation of Muslims in culture and history. These bloggers are helping to create a new counter public by offering contrasting opinions and counter-discourses.[418]

2. Heterogeneous Identity

Similarly, the fluctuating nature of online identity coincides with the perspectives of scholars of digital religion who are skeptical regarding identities formed in online environments. According to Gary Bunt's study *Virtually Islamic: Computer-mediated Communication and Cyber Islamic Environments* (2000), the virtual domain may include individuals who do not have a distinct identity. He emphasizes that this vast cyberspace does not need networked involvement and is accessible to all audiences, regardless of faith or allegiance. The idea that online identities are more fractured and warped than physical identities is commonly thought

[416] Giulia Evolvi, Hybrid Muslim identities in digital space: The Italian blog Yalla, *Social Compass*, April 25, 2017, Volume 64, Issue 2, https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768617697911.
[417] Ibid.,
[418] Stine Eckert and Kalyani Chadha, Muslim bloggers in Germany: an emerging counterpublic, *Media, Culture & Society* 35(8) 926–942, 2013, DOI: 10.1177/0163443713501930.

to be a result of anonymity.[419] In Lövheim's work *Young People, Religious Identity, and the Internet*, online interactions can also play a significant role in the development of identity, as well as face-to-face contacts; however, they are less stable.[420]

American Sufism is illustrative of this identity, which is characterized by its lack of uniformity and accessibility to individuals regardless of their faith or inclinations. "The 21st-century Sufi cyberspace now serves as critical sites and alternative spaces for the American Muslim narratives and networking, identity-making and community building, experience and expression".[421] Shikha Ḥakima, the previously cited example, is the leader of the California branch of the al-Shadhilya Sufi order in San Diego. She has organized and led numerous spiritual gatherings via phone conferences and Zoom rooms, including Dhikr sessions, Sufi liturgies (including the recitation of God's 99 names), meditation sessions, and light prayer. Notably, Ḥakima's online and phone-based religious and spiritual events have attracted a diverse group of participants in terms of gender, religious traditions, and beliefs. Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and spiritualists, among others, have actively participated in these online and telephone conferences. Through its primary website and various social media platforms, the al-Shadhilya Sufi Center in San Diego engages in a number of online activities. These events feature notable racial, ethnic, gender, and religious diversity. Notably, the majority of these activities are directed by female Sufi disciples under the leadership of Ḥakima, the branch's leader. These disciples may also recite specific petitions and litanies with their online followers. The month of Ramadan is an ideal time to organize

[419] Hegazy, Muslim Online Prayer, 2020.
[420] Mia Lövheim, Young People, Religious Identity, and the Internet in *"Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet"* ed., Lorne L. Dawson, Douglas E. Cowan, London: Routledge, 2004, 60.
[421] Robert Rozehnhal, *Cyber Sufis: Virtual Expressions of the American Muslim Experience (Islam in the Twenty-First Century),* UK, Oneworld Publications, 2019, 20.

such activities, which are separated into daytime sessions during fasting hours and nighttime sessions after Iftar (the breaking of the fast) or after night prayer. During these gatherings, petitions and litanies from a collection recommended by the late Palestinian originator of the order, Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id al-Jamal ar-Rifa'i, are consistently recited. In 1994, Sheikh ar-Rifa'i emigrated to the United States from Palestine and established al-Shadhilya's primary center in Pope Valley.[422] Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id al-Jamal ar-Rifa'i is revered by followers as a religious and political leader because of his experience as a political activist in Jerusalem who defended the Al-Aqsa Mosque from Israeli army attacks before he emigrated. Sheikh Ar-Rifa'i's identarian philosophy is reflected in the statement prominently displayed on their website's homepage, which new Sufis are strongly urged to read first. The website's homepage features photographs, audio recordings, and videos showcasing activities involving people of diverse ethnicities, races, and backgrounds. Following their Sheikh's lead, the disparate identities of these participants based on gender, language, and ideology unite as they collectively proclaim and repeat "Allah" in the Arabic dialect and manner. This exemplifies the emergence of a new "spiritual identity" that unifies people regardless of their religious or ideological differences. The relinquishment of attachments to mundane concerns, the ego, and any identity that inhibits the merging into this new spiritual experience appears to be a prerequisite for beginning the Sufi path. In this regard, Sheikh Ar-Rifa'i modestly asserted, "I am just a poor slave of Allah" or "I am smaller than an ant, I am the same as you, Allah is great."[423]

---

[422] The Biography of Sidi Muhammad, *Shadhiliyya Sufi Communities*, https://suficommunities.org/sufi-library/about-our-guide/sidi-muhammad-al-jamal/, accessed 3/13/2023.
[423] Ibid.,

Similarly, Robert Rozenhal's research on the Inayati Sufi Order (dated 1911), the oldest Sufi order in the United States and the West, emphasizes how the spiritual activities performed by the Sufi leader Pir Zia (b. 1971), the grandson of the founder Inayati Khan (1882–1927), unite people from several backgrounds both online and offline. Pir Zia's leadership is critical in bringing together individuals who, despite their differences, share a common aim of pursuing a spiritual path. By these words, "We open our minds, open our hearts, open our souls to receive the rays of light that are streaming through the cosmos, upwelling from the light of lights, and cascading through the plains," Pir Zia launches the spiritual sessions.[424] The Inayati Order promotes the universality of all faiths and values diversity among its members. It accepts individuals of all faiths and none at all, and there is no compulsion to conform to any particular set of beliefs or to perform any particular religious rites or ceremonies.[425] The heterogeneous identity that distinguishes Sufi spiritual activities across the globe is common in offline settings, but the digital format has amplified it, as illustrated by the following example:

On October 24, 2020, the Egyptian Sufi order Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammadiya and its institutionalized branch Al-Ashira made history by launching the first online Ḥadra in the history of Egyptian Sufism. The ceremony was hosted on the website of the order, which was named with the name of its founder Sheikh Muhammad Zaki Ibrahim (d. 1996). With more than 16,000 followers and 500 simultaneous users, participants engaged in recitation and Dhikr (God's remembrance) prayers, actively participated, and provided comments. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Egyptian Sufi order Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammadiya

[424] Robert Rozenhal, *Cyber Sufis*, 84.
[425] Ibid.,

emerged during the modernist reform era and was constituted by presidential decree 750 in 1930. As of March 2023, the online ḥadra remains to be held every Sunday on the Egyptian Sufi order's official Facebook page. The ḥadra attracts a diverse audience from Egypt as well as neighboring countries including Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Morocco. Muhammad Jalal, an accountant in the Ministry of Finance, is in charge of the ḥadra after Nourudin Essam, the grandson of Sheikh Mohammad Zaki Ibrahim, passed away in 2020. It is essential to note that, unlike other Sufi orders, this particular order's spiritual leadership is not founded on a hierarchical structure. The online ḥadra, which began prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, has persisted uninterrupted to the present day.

Sheikh Mohammad Zaki Ibrahim (d. 1998) was a poet and an Azhari Imam. He descended from Sufi *Silsila* (initiation) of Sheikh Mahmoud Abu Ilyan (d. 1908), the Axis[426] (as he was described by the Muhammadiyah *Tariqah*) and from Sheikh Ibrahim Ibn al-Alkhalil (d. 1946). Egyptian Sufis perceive Sheikh Mohammad Zaki Ibrahim as one of the most influential modern reformers of Sufi practices. He assumed responsibility for correcting what he perceived to be erroneous and deviant Sufi practices. In 1950, he outlined his vision for reforming Sufism and its practices in a comprehensive proposal titled the "Sufi constitutional project" which he presented to the relevant governmental authorities.[427] Moreover, Sheikh Mohammad Zaki Ibrahim was profoundly concerned with global Muslim transnational issues. His reform initiative entailed a comprehensive purification of Sufi intellectual thought of any traces of pre-Islamic heresies. It is evident that his reformist ideas

[426] According to Sufi theology, each period is guided by a scholar or great saint who serves as its axis.
[427] Mohmmad Zaki Ibrahim, *Kalimat al-Raeed; an editorial of al-Muslim Journal for more than fifty years,* issue 8, November., 1952, Cairo: Amanat al-Da'wah, 2003, 131.

were influenced by prominent Muslim reform advocates such as Afghani (d. 1897), Abdu (d. 1905), Reda (d. 1935), and Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988).

In pursuit of his pan-Islamic and reformist ideology, he founded his Sufi order Al-Tariqa Al-Muhammadiya and its institutionalized branch Al-Ashira Al-Muhammadiya that has now several branches in a wide variety of Arab, Islamic, and European countries. Religious reform offered by the Ashira is summarized in six aims as Julian Johnsen explains: “the first aim is to eradicate the religious illiteracy”.[428] One of the primary goals of the Ashira, as stated by its founder, is to learn and teach the true teachings of Islam and Sufism. The following is an expansion on this dedication to learning. “The second one is to establish the God’s law”. [429] Because of his concern for the spread of Shariah, Sheikh Mohammad Zaki Ibrahim convened Egypt's first-ever conference on the subject. Sheikh Ibrahim al-Dusuqi, who represented the Egyptian Ministry of Endowment (Al-Awqaf), was present at the meeting as well. Also in attendance were the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Abdul-Halim Mahmoud, and the Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Muhammad Khatir. The goal of the meeting was to examine and solve problems with Shariah's actual implementation in Egypt.[430] “The third aim is to concern about Muslims in general and the Sufis in particular. The fourth and fifth aims are to go back to the Book of Allah and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. The sixth and final goal is achieved by reviving Muslims at the levels of individuals, families and society by returning to the *Rabaniyah* (Dedication to Worship) of Islam”.[431]

---

[428] Muhammad Essam Ibrahim, “Activities and Accomplishments of Al-Ashira Al-Muhammadiyah”, *Elnady*, http://elnady99.tripod.com/resalah.html, N.D, access date: December 31, 2019.
[429] Ibid.,
[430] Ibid.,
[431] Julian Johnsen, *Sufism and Islamic Reform in Egypt*, (Oxford, Clearndon press, 1996), 62.

Sheikh Mohammad Zaki Ibrahim did not live to see the incorporation of the Internet into his Sufi organization, but his successors have successfully incorporated this innovation following the Covid-19-related closure in 2020. Sheikh Ibrahim's vision for the order and its non-governmental organization (NGO) branch, Ashira Muhammadiyah, has been substantially advanced by the implementation of digital platforms for spiritual activities. These objectives include fostering unity within the Ummah and eliminating divisions. The online ḥadra is an expression of the founder's desire for a unified and cohesive community.

3. Spatial Identity

The process of forming an identity is not only flexible and dynamic, but also intricately intertwined with the concept of location. In social and anthropological literature, space as a locus of religious identity has been depicted repeatedly. This portrayal can be found in seminal works such as Emile Durkheim's writings from 1915 and Victor Turner's from 1969, as well as in more recent works by Catherine Brace, Adrian R. Bailey, David C. Harvey, and Erika Summers-Effler from 2006 and 2007. However, these works focus predominantly on the relationship between religious identity and spatial elements as a consequence of communal purpose rather than as an inherent quality. The depiction of space as sacred does not necessarily imply its inherent holiness but rather emphasizes its role in nurturing social cohesion and a shared sense of identity among community members. Likewise, in his study, *Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shīʿī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa*, Najam Haider examines the connection between ritual performance, ritual space, and the development of religious identity. In doing so, he sheds light on the complex link between religious rituals, the physical environment in which these activities occur, and the construction of one's religious

identity by examining how these aspects interact and impact one another.[432] In this context, he gave examples of pilgrimage sites, shrines, and festival grounds as unmistakable markers of a well-defined collective identity.[433] Haider also referenced Pierre Bourdieu's seminal book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* which emphasizes the role of practice and space in the construction of one's identity.[434] Bourdieu argues that cultural preferences, or "taste," play a significant role in establishing social obstacles and separating French society into distinguishable strata.[435] In addition, he argues that the creation of group identity is closely linked to the performative enactment of distinguishing behaviors in contexts that are adapted and unique to the new social group.[436]

In the case of Muslims, the mosque plays an important role in your conception of religious identity. For Muslims, their local mosque is not just a place of worship, but also a spiritual center and source of inspiration. The Prophet's activities on his journey from Mecca to Medina are the origin of the mosque's historical and symbolic significance. The mosque was essential in the development of the Muslim community and in the formation of Muslims' unique identities. It laid the groundwork for the Muslim community, emphasizing the significance of its role in the formation and expression of Islamic identity. My research strengthens the aforementioned argument by emphasizing the influence of spatial elements on the construction of Muslim identity, especially in terms of perceiving spatial indicators as

---

[432] Najam Haider, *Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shīʿī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa*, *Islamic Law and Society 16*, no. 2 (2009): 151–74.
[433] Ibid.,
[434] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984) is quoted in Najam Haider, *Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shīʿī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa,* 173.
[435] Ibid.,
[436] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 173.

identity markers. In addition, my research analyzes the conceptualization and implications of the absence of these spatial elements. Threatening such spatial elements of identity can have a substantial impact on the constituent aspects of one's identity, if not endanger it entirely. As was previously indicated, modern religious authorities insist that the Internet cannot replace the physical mosque in terms of its significance in the formation of religious and national identities. A clear and united rule has been issued by hardline Muslim authorities clearly barring virtual prayer, notwithstanding the lengthy shutdown of mosques. This position emphasizes the idea that the mosque building itself is crucial to the integrity of the religious experience and the maintenance of cultural traditions. When I asked some members of this group about it, their reaction was, "How can we prevent people from staying at home and not visiting mosques until the present pandemic has passed?" [437] This implies that the act of *Ibadat* (worship) has been tied to the mosque, not only for religious reasons, but also to highlight the significance of the mosque in establishing Muslim identity.

Cyberspace has nonetheless emerged as a formidable competitor to physical spaces. Its non-physical nature does not diminish its efficacy, as it functions as a potent instrument for facilitating communication between religious organizations and enabling worship. Cyberspace is aptly described as a social space, despite the fact that it cannot be viewed as a direct substitute for physical space. This is consistent with the viewpoints of scholars such as Mia Lovheim and Alf G. Linderman.[438] It offers new avenues for religious expression and community involvement by facilitating social interactions and supporting religious activities. Borrowing

[437] Hegazy, Muslim Online Prayer, 2020.
[438] Mia Lövheim and Alf G. Linderman, “Constructing Religious Identity on the Internet,” *Religion and Cyberspace* ed., Morten T. Hojesgaard, and Margit Warburg, London, New York: Routledge, 2005.

this term "*social space*" from the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu[439], however in a different meaning still relevant. As Pierre Bourdieu finds social agents can come together though this non-physical social space, the cyborgs[440] can unite and share same ideas, concerns and thoughts within the social digital space. Social interaction, according to Emile Durkheim, can pave the way for "shared religious beliefs and practices to provide a support and legitimacy for individual as well as collective processes of constructing identity and meaning.[441] Despite this, the Internet has emerged as a parallel social domain, exerting a significant influence on a global scale and providing simple access to enormous quantities of digital information. According to Mia Lovheim and Alf G. Linderman, the Internet has the potential to improve the process of constructing identity by increasing access to information, resources, and outlets for self-expression. This is especially pertinent in the context of modern society, which is characterized by heightened insecurity and ambivalence.[442] The Internet serves as a platform that equips individuals with the tools and opportunities to engage with disparate perspectives, acquire knowledge, and assert their identities in a world that is swiftly changing.[443]

The digital space provides an alternative route for the formation of spatial identity, which Lovheim and Linderman termed social capital. Through online interactions, communities, and networks, it enables individuals to develop trust, forge relationships, and influence their sense of individual and collective identity.[444] This study provides empirical evidence from American and Egyptian Muslim communities to show how social capital can

---

[439] Pierre Bourdieu, Social Space and Symbolic Power, *Sociological Theory*.
[440] It is a concept that combines technology components with a biological framework, making the line between man and machine less clear.
[441] Mia Lövheim and Alf G. Linderman, "Constructing Religious Identity on the Internet," 123.
[442] Ibid., 125.
[443] Ibid.,
[444] Ibid, 126.

be developed in cyberspace via interactions among social media users, both with administrators and within the community. For instance, on the sites devoted to the online prayers led by Sheikh Amr, Imam of the Salam Islamic Centre in Sacramento, several conversations and disputes have arisen. Regarding their opinions on online prayer within the Muslim community, individuals can be divided into two groups. The traditional group views online prayer as a novel practice that is inappropriate for the Muslim community. These individuals are essentially present in a particular community, but they may prefer to follow Imams from abroad. The revolutionary team, on the other hand, views the digitalization of religious experience not as an innovation, but as an integral element of religion that accommodates and even promotes modernity. As individuals are likely to be drawn to either the traditional or revolutionary team, there is no intermediate team that can adopt a neutral position. This dynamic influences how social capital promotes identity formation within these teams. Similarly, the Egyptian Sufi community of the Muhammadiyah order is divided over the practice of online Hadra. Opponents and proponents of incorporating technology into spiritual activities hold divergent views, with those who oppose it displaying a lack of interest in the ḥadra Facebook page. On the other hand, revolutionary individuals are permanent page members and supporters. This suggests that the Internet offers parallel to the physical environment new avenues for identity formation. In the future years, it will become clear to what extent Muslim internet consumers participate and indulge in the online religious experience. Consequently, online identity construction will be subject to the dynamics of the online sphere, either entirely or partially.

Authenticity:

The section designated to discussing the authenticity of Online Islamic Rituals can be divided into two important points that explain why the online religious experience lacks authenticity:

- **Lack of Social Bonds**
- **Sacralizing the Mundane Space**

This section will not only explore the question of whether or not religious practices conducted online are authentic but will also give a thorough analysis of the factors that contribute to the authenticity (or lack thereof) of such acts. It will also make analogies between the veracity of online rituals and the broader idea of digitizing religious activities generally. In this sense, a great deal of this section will be a historical overview of cyberizing religion alongside its various kinds of codification.

The subsequent explanation delineates the factors that threatens the authenticity of the digital religious practices:

1. **Lack of Social Bonds**

Online rituals are frequently perceived to be less genuine, real, and efficient than offline rituals. However, scholars such as Christopher Helland argue that online rituals are not merely replicas, but rather have their own distinct characteristics molded by the real world. Understanding the authenticity and significance of online rituals requires an awareness of the interaction between the digital and corporeal worlds. They provide creative possibilities for

religious participation and community formation.[445] For him, the offline and online lives of persons who engage in online religious activities are inseparable, and the same holds true for their religious practices and beliefs.[446] Many people use the Internet as an extension of their real-world lives and communities, and as such, they bring their religious rituals and beliefs online with them. With the internet, people are able to transfer their religious practices and beliefs into the virtual world and have meaningful conversations about them.[447] To take the case even farther, Dawson and Cowan claim that the Internet serves a dual function in that it reflects the reality of the offline world while simultaneously casting a shadow that spreads its influence beyond its boundaries.[448] Therefore, creating the validity of an online ritual is primarily dependent on the framework of earlier ritualistic experiences gathered in the offline realm.[449]

In his book *Cyber Sufis: Virtual Expressions of the American Muslim Experience*, Robert Rozehnal examines the transformative nature of online religious practices within the Islamic Sufi community. According to Rozehnal, the digital domain has become a significant space for American Muslims to construct their identities, form communities, and share their experiences and perspectives in ways that differ from traditional religious practices. Rozehnal contends in this work that the Sufi cyberspace of the twenty-first century plays a crucial role in enabling American Muslims to engage with their religion, resulting in the

---

[445] Helland, Christopher. "Online Religion as Lived Religion: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet," *Online – Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet,* Volume 01.1, 2005, DOI: 10.11588/heidok.00005823.
[446] Ibid., 12.
[447] Ibid.,
[448] Lorne L. Dawson, Douglas E. Cowan. *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, (Routledge, 2004), 6.
[449] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning" in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed., Daniel Enstedt, Göran Larsson, and Enzo Pace, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015, 34.

emergence of new narratives and modes of expression that reflect the complexities of contemporary society. This book explores the potential for digital technology to revolutionize the ways in which American Muslims engage with their faith and discover new avenues for religious expression.[450]

Exploration is required to investigate the intrinsic nature and authenticity of internet-based rituals. In their article titled *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, Göran Larsson, Enzo Pace, and Daniel Enstedt explain why people are skeptical of the authenticity of online rituals. This section focuses solely on the first reason (lack of social bonds); the second factor (Cyberspace is a mundane space) will be discussed in subsequent sections. According to the researchers, the authenticity of online rituals is frequently questioned because traditional rituals are typically perceived as physical and communal gatherings, making their digital counterparts appear unreal due to their lack of physical presence and increased emphasis on individual experiences.[451] This pertains to the remote performance of Islamic rituals. Classical and modern Islamic authorities have emphasized the significance of physical space in the majority of Islamic rituals, emphasizing an additional aspect of space that contributes to the authenticity of these practices, which is the social aspect. The social aspect of these rituals is a compelling factor for the necessity of a physical location for their performance. Therefore, an in-depth review of relevant fatwas[452] questioning the invalidity of online prayer reveals that being physically present at the mosque serves a communal function. For instance, congregational prayer is necessary for

[450] Robert Rozehnhal, *Cyber Sufis*, 2019, 20.
[451] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning" in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, 35.
[452] Masoud Sabry, *Fatwas of scholars on Corona*, (Cairo: Dar Al-Bashir for Printing and Publishing, April 2020).

accomplishing social goals because of its communal aspect, which justifies the need for physical presence. Although Islamic rituals can be perceived within the context of global religions, they exhibit a lesser amount of social influence than other faiths, as Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner discovered in their research on Australian and African traditional religions as well as Christianity. In practice, however, Islamic rituals are susceptible to alterations or adaptations, even if only in format, in response to societal conditions, as evidenced by the ongoing discussion regarding the role of physical space in the observance of these rituals. Despite the primary spiritual and religious motivations of Islamic rituals, the communal aspect is of great significance. According to the Quran, prophetic traditions, and the teachings of Islamic scholars, congregational prayer is more significant and revered than individual prayer. It is believed that the value of communal prayer is approximately twenty-seven times greater than the value of individual prayer.[453] Congregational prayer in Islam has several purposes, one of which is to strengthen ties between individual Muslims and the larger Muslim community.[454] This is in line with the core message of Islam, which emphasizes the importance of unity and condemns discord or division (The Qur'an, 3: 103). In a similar vein, the Hajj, or pilgrimage, is an excellent example of a communal ritual that brings people together. Gathering Muslims together in one physical place to conduct religious rituals is intended to strengthen their community and foster a sense of shared identity. This distinguishing feature gives the Hajj an unparalleled

---

[453] Al-Albanī, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Mukhtasar Sahih al-Imam al- Bukhari,* Riyadh: Maktabat Al Maarif Lil Nashr Wa Al Tawzi, 2002, 209.
[454] Muhammad Salama al-Ghonimi, *IslamWay*, 2014. https://ar.islamway.net/article/23230/أسرار-صلاة-الجماعة-وفوائدها-على-الفرد-والمجتمع. Access date: 22 December 2020.

value as an Islamic rite, for which no replacement or alternative has been presented, even in the most challenging circumstances.

Similarly, the optional Islamic rites that complement the mandatory ones emphasize the necessity of participating in one's society. Halaqas (circles) of recitation of the Qur'an are preferable over individual recitation for a number of reasons. Unique blessings, divine care, and compassion are granted via group recitation of the Qur'an. It is said in a hadith that "any group of people gathering in one of Allah's houses (mosques) to recite His book, study it by learning and teaching, will receive tranquility, be surrounded by angels, and be mentioned by Allah to a group of angels in His proximity."[455] This demonstrates the value of the social aspects of Islamic rituals and the benefits gained from participating in them.

In a broader sense, the inherent social dimensions of Islamic rituals align with Erika Summers-Effler's theory of rituals. Rituals generate collective emotions through symbols and shape the basis of beliefs, thoughts, morals, and culture, according to her argument. Individuals use their cognitive abilities, beliefs, and strategic reasoning to create future emotional encounters. As a result, a cycle is created in which interactions generate emotions, which are then associated with symbols and used to drive further interactions. These interactions serve as the fundamental structural force that over time organizes society.[456] In this sense, her argument echoed with the Durkheimian conception of rituals that "ritual is the fundamental mechanism that holds a society together".[457] For Emile Durkheim, Rituals are

---

[455] Translated by Sunnah.com, Riyad as-Salihin, 1023, https://sunnah.com/riyadussalihin:1023#:~:text=The%20Messenger%20of%20Allah%20(%EF%B7%BA,angels)%20in%20His%20proximity.%22. Accessed March 31, 2023.

[456] Erika Summers-Effler. "Ritual Theory," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*.

[457] Erika Summers-Effler. "Ritual Theory," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*,

defined "as a unified set of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, which unite into one single moral community all those who adhere to them".[458] In his analysis of the rites of indigenous Australian communities, Durkheim emphasized society as the only source of religious manifestations. Therefore, those rites played a vital role in consolidating the social bonds among the society members.[459]

However, in light of Donna Haraway's thesis (1991) about the transformation of humans into "cyborgs", it can be said that we are all chimeras - conceptual and constructed hybrids of machines and organisms.[460] The separation between the online and offline worlds has become extremely difficult, if not impossible. A third space, also known as "onlife" , has emerged, which combines online and offline spaces into a singular entity.[461] With the emergence of the blended realm and the digital world's increasing dominance over physical interactions, a new era has emerged characterized by a distinctive understanding of social interactions and traditions. Substituting online communities for in-person gatherings, especially for religious purposes, has garnered widespread acceptance. This legitimacy is backed up by both historical legal justifications, like those presented in the context of ship prayer, radio prayer, and online prayer (as described in Chapters One and Two, respectively), and contemporary fatwas that sanction religious practices performed over great distances using digital media. For example, salat al-jama'ah (the congregational prayer) meets various purposes, including promoting social integration among those gathered for prayer. The

[458] Durkheim, Émile, 1858-1917, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, a Study in Religious Sociology*, London: New York: The free Press, 1995, 46.
[459] Durkheim, Émile, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, a Study in Religious Sociology*.
[460] Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (New York: Routledge, 1991), 150.
[461] Evolvi, G., & Giorda, M. C. (2021). Introduction: Islam, Space, and the Internet, *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, *10*(1), 1-12. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-bja10047.

permissibility of conducting supererogatory congregational prayers via radio broadcasts was determined, however, by Gad al-Haq, the former Grand Imam of Al-Azhar (d. 1996). While the unanimous agreement among jurists goes against the practice of following the Imam via radio transmission during Jum'ah prayers, Gad al-Haq approved the practice during the five daily prayers and Taraweeh prayer.[462]

In addition to the theoretical foundations of various forms of digital social-based worship, there are practical instances of their implementation in real-world contexts. For instance, while many Muslim scholars and leaders in Egypt, the United States, and Europe permitted the virtual format only for supererogatory prayers, the Indonesian religious authority Wawan Gunawan Abdul Wahid went one step further by conducting the most important obligatory prayer for Muslims, the "Friday prayer," in a virtual format. “Wawan Gunawan argues that the main reason for conducting a virtual Friday Prayer is to address the diverse demands on Islamic worship (at-tanawwu' fil ibadah) in a time of crisis”.[463] The rationale behind such legitimacy was the Prophetic permission to use the home as a mosque, or, alternatively, that any location on earth is permissible for prayer.

Another concrete example is the virtual Jummah (Friday) prayer organized by the Islamic Society of Santa Barbara (ISSB). In order to preserve the symbolic significance of the physically performed Jumu'ah prayer in the consciousness of community members who were accustomed to praying Jumu'ah and engaging in social interactions afterward every Friday, they opted for an Imam to deliver

[462] Ali, Gad Al-Ḥaq. “Fatwa Dar al-Iftaa”. *Dar al-Ifta al-Miṣriyyah*, (1979) Series No. 3125. Accessed Jan., 12, 2021. https://dar-alifta.org/Home/ViewFatwa?ID=12572&title=صلاة%20الجمعة%20خلف%20المذياع%20-%20فضيلة%20الشيخ%20جاد%20الحق%20علي%20جاد%20الحق
[463] Akmaliah, Wahyudi and Burhani, Ahmad Najib, “Digital Islam in Indonesia: The Shift of Ritual and Religiosity during Covid-19”, *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, Singapore, 12 August 2021. ISSUE: 2021 No. 107, ISSN 2335-6677.

a statement instead of a sermon. The Islamic Society of Santa Barbara (ISSB) continued in arranging the online sermon, which attracted members of the community every Friday, despite the widespread rejection of online congregational prayer by scholars. In addition, to accomplish a hybrid format, the ISSB encouraged individuals to perform four rak'as of dhuhr prayer on their own. Within the constraints of a limited format, the ISSB intended to maintain a certain level of social connection and reduce the risk of a complete breakdown of social bonds among community members by adopting this strategy.

The Maqra'ah (circle of Qur'anic recitation) run by the Islamic Center of Glendale is another illustration of online-based rituals. Sheikh Abdulghany, an Egyptian Azhari Imam who relocated to the United States in 2019, is now the religious authority of the Muslim community in Glendale. In the past, he used to serve as an Imam at the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf where he conducted all of his religious and spiritual activities in person. However, after the COVID-19 closure, he ended up having to adapt to the online environment. He grasped the opportunity and began delivering sermons, administering the Maqra'ah, and delivering lectures through the Islamic Center of Glendale's official Zoom account, despite his initial skepticism of cyberspace as a legitimate platform for religious practice. The Maqra'ah, a key religious activity, continued to be conducted online with over 15 male and female participants. Even after the closure of Covid-19 was lifted, the Maqra'ah continued to attract even participants from neighboring communities. This online Maqra'ah played a crucial role in nurturing interconnections between members of the community who had relocated to other locations but continued to attend the sessions daily after morning prayer. Attendees of Maqra'ah celebrated the monthly completion of reciting the entire Quran in both virtual and physical gatherings. Once they had completed reciting all the chapters, they

arranged a physical gathering to share food and beverages and exchange congratulations. The importance of this digital Maqra'ah resides in the fact that it may serve as an assembly spot for other online gatherings of a spiritual or social nature. The Mosque in Glendale, inspired by the success of the Maqra'ah online, has now started offering Hadith and Tafsir lessons for women and hosting online fundraisers. These online social and religious meetings have been running strong for almost three years, proving the viability of cyberspace as a stand-in for real-world locations. As long as the internet is there, events like this will serve to prove that virtual ones are just as good as, if not better than, their physical/spatial counterparts.[464]

The introduction of new examples of Islamic rituals that provide alternatives to traditional practices raises challenges about the physical and spatial circumstances that validate rituals, perhaps opening the door to disembodied and distant alternatives. This exemplifies the idea that the connection between rituals and worship places is a social construction that is molded by the community. Therefore, not just inside Islam but also across other international religions, there is a potential to broaden the common experience of disembodied and distant religious rituals. In their research paper titled "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning," Tetske van Dun et al. found that despite concerns that virtual rituals may erode social connectedness, there is enough evidence that cyberspace can serve as an appropriate platform for cultivating non-physical and reflective forms of communal bonding. Despite the physical disconnection between participants, virtual rituals can cultivate a sense of community and unity, allowing for the creation of a shared experience.[465]

---

[464] Islamic Centre of Glendale, Homepage, accessed June 8, 2023, http://icglendale.org/khutbah-videos/.
[465] Tetske van Dun et al., “Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning, 40, and 41.

3. **Sacralizing the Mundane Space**

Concerns have been expressed regarding the use of cyberspace as a platform for religious rituals because it is commonly perceived as a secular space where people predominantly engage in worldly activities such as financial, social, and political endeavors. This mundane and profane environment has prompted doubts about the Internet's ability to effectively convey the sanctity of physical places of worship.[466] The incorporation of technology into religious practices and the dissemination of religious knowledge have historically been met with skepticism. In his work titled *Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā*, Emad Hamdeh argues that in the past, Muslim traditional authorities denied the printing press in the Muslim world. This was due to the belief that the printing press contributed to the decline of oral-based traditional education. Further, Hamdeh argues that the scholarship of the Ottoman Empire relied heavily on the Ijāza (verbal license) system, and that those who lacked this traditional authority were not regarded as reliable sources of knowledge.[467] Zaman also believes that the dissemination of knowledge and the introduction of fresh perspectives made possible by print presented a serious threat to the authority of Muslim religious leaders. Because of the proliferation of printed materials, people were free to investigate Islam from a variety of angles and perspectives. The authority of religious leaders was weakened by the public's increased access to information. Thus, traditional religious authorities were challenged by the free flow of ideas and the democratization of information facilitated by print technology.[468] Francis Robinson, in his book "Technology

---

[466] Ibid.,
[467] Emad Hamdeh, *Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā', and Self Learning*, 82.
[468] Emad Hamdeh, *Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr.*

and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," discusses how, in contrast to the Western world, the Islamic world had a different response to the arrival of printing presses in the 15th century. Robinson claims that the opposition to printing by Muslims stemmed from the belief that true Islamic knowledge could only be transmitted verbally. Furthermore, the ulama's status as the exclusive interpreters of Islam was perceived as being endangered by the advent of print media. Their ability to maintain a monopoly on religious knowledge and interpretation within the Muslim community was challenged by the widespread availability of written material. Thus, it might be argued that the Islamic world's reluctance to adopt print technology stems from a desire to preserve the ulama's role as the ultimate arbiters of religious understanding and the preeminence of oral transmission of knowledge in Islamic educational institutions.[469]

In parallel, traditional scholars criticize television in a similar manner, arguing that it functions as a malevolent instrument that promotes immoral behavior and disregard for religious principles. Sheikh Abdel Aziz Bin Baz, a prominent Saudi figure who passed away in 1999, described television as an extremely dangerous medium for Muslim viewers, as its negative effects overshadow its positive ones and have the potential to erode the religiosity of observant Muslims.[470] Moreover, he argued that television, comparable to or possibly eclipsing cinema, represents a dangerous device with enormous potential for damage. Corruption of morality, provocative imagery, tempting displays, and atheistic material are only some of the ways in which this medium contributes to a deterioration of ethical ideals,

[469] Robinson, Francis. "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print." *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1993): 229-51.
[470] Al Jawab Al Kafi. January 27, 2015. "Hukm Mushahadat al-Telfaz lil-Sheikh Abdel Aziz Bin Baz (Ruling of watching T.V. by sheikh Abdel Aziz Bin Baz)." *YouTube*. Accessed May 20, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEmtRc9s2js.

beliefs, and social relationships, he added.[471] He sees it as a representation of dishonest, treacherous, and violent behavior against others.[472] Similarly, Mohammed Saleh Al-Munajjid (born in 1960), a later Salafi scholar, has an analogous perspective on the use of television in the Muslim community. In response to a question about the permissibility of watching television and any conditions associated therewith, he stated that watching movies is not permissible due to numerous religious prohibitions. These include concerns regarding music listening, the exposure of nudity, the propagation of corrupt ideologies, and the encouragement of imitating non-believers.[473] Nevertheless, traditionalist scholars who previously issued these fatwas have embraced television as a means of reaching a larger audience for their programs. This shift is most noticeable in the area of entertainment, and one can only speculate on the consequences that might ensue if religious activities were integrated into this supposedly secular medium. This outlook is consistent with how the Muslim world has used the Internet since the late 1990s. There have been demands to avoid using the Internet due to concerns that it may be used to enable immoral conduct and corruption by certain people and religious leaders. Several fatwas have also been declared against communicating with a congregation through radio, television, or the Internet while they are praying.[474]

---

[471] Ibn Baz, AbdulAziz, *Majmoo' Fatawa wa Maqalat Mutanawwi'a (The Collection of Fatawa and Various Articles)*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Presidency of Scientific Research and Ifta, 27 Volume, N.D. 648, and 649.

[472] Ibid.,

[473] Al-Munajjid, Mohammed Saleh. A*l-qism al-'arabi min mauqe (al-'islam, su'al wajawab) The Arabic section of the website (Islam, Question and Answer), Electronic book, 2009, Vol., 5, 363, https://shamela.ws/book/26332*.

[474] Gad Al-Ḥaq Ali, “Fatwa Dar al-Iftaa”. *Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah*, (1979) Series No. 3125. Accessed Jan., 12, 2021. https://dar-alifta.org/Home/ViewFatwa?ID=12572&title=صلاة%20الجمعة%20خلف%20المذياع%20-%20فضيلة%20الشيخ%20جاد%20الحق%20علي%20جاد%20الحق=

In his article titled *Online Religion as Lived Religion: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet*, Christopher Helland examines the concerns held by religious communities regarding the online performance of rituals. He examines the adoption of either a complete transition to an online format or a combination of offline and online elements by various online congregations affiliated with various religious denominations.[475] Christopher Helland recognizes the challenge of verifying the genuineness of online rituals and brings attention to the fact that the religious significance of an activity depends on the underlying purpose rather than the act itself. He does, however, point out that the limited number of people who really take part in these rituals online may be a sign that they are not genuine.[476] He provided extensive detail about the most likely cause of the reservations surrounding the virtualization of religious practices, speculating that the reluctance of institutional religious organizations or individuals to embrace these online rituals might stem from their perception of the internet as merely a communication tool rather than an extension of our social sphere.[477]

Egyptian Sufism is a useful illustration of the skepticism that surrounds virtual rituals due to their evident inauthenticity. During the Covid-19 pandemic, all Egyptian Sufi orders, with the exception of al-Ashira al-Muamadiyah, suspended their activities and fiercely opposed the idea of engaging in online mediation for their spiritual practices. There was a reluctance to hold any online dhikr (remembrance of God) or other spiritual gatherings even within al-

---

[475] Helland, Christopher, Online Religion as Lived Religion Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet, *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 1.1, 2005, https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/index.php/religions/article/view/380/355, 11.
[476] Helland, Christopher, Online Religion as Lived Religion Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet, *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 1.1, 2005, https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/index.php/religions/article/view/380/355, 11.
[477] Ibid., 13.

Muamadiyah, which is the major Sufi Egyptian tradition. Prof. Muhammad Miḥana, a prominent figure in Islamic law at Al-Azhar University and a leader of the broader al-Muamadiyah order, emphasized the rejection of incorporating electronic platforms into their Sufi practices, in contrast to the separate leadership of al-Ashira al-Muamadiyah. He underlined that distant or virtual rituals cannot replace the physicality and spatiality of their rites. Prof. Miḥana raised safety concerns regarding broadcasting Sufi prayers or dhikr circles via the internet, arguing that the network is excessively open and may be used by scammers and corrupt individuals.[478] This Sufi leader's worries are consistent with the fears and concerns stated by other Muslim authorities about alternate types of virtual rituals, such as E-Nika (online marriage).

While exploring the notion of *Itiḥād al-Majlis* whether it is a pillar of Nikaḥ or not, M. Ali expressed his skepticism about the credibility of the Internet as a substitute for traditional practice of religion. He says, "Whilst there is a near consensus amongst Muslim scholars on the permissibility of using the internet as a tool for learning about Islam, the discussion on whether 'cyberspace' can act as a substitute for physical space is heavily contested".[479] This skepticism may stem from people's preconceived notions about the Internet's reliability and legitimacy as a mediator of religious practices. Skeptics of E-Nikaḥ point to the fact that its participants remain anonymous online as a major reason to doubt the reliability of the procedure. Many people are wary about using the Internet for this because of the frequency of fraudulent activities and frauds. In the context of cyber Nikaḥ, impersonating another

[478] Mihana, Muhammad, "Structure of Sufi practices", Sufism in Islamic Scale (class lecture, Institute of al-Bait al-Muhammady, Cairo, July 12, 2021).
[479] Mansur Ali, E-Nikah *Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh*, 11.

person for the sake of getting a visa or financial gain is conceivable, as some critics argue.[480] However, the proponents of E-Nikaḥ would find ways to wipe out all of these worries such as Sheikh Yasir Qadhi. He advocated the implementation of safety measures in such circumstances. His argument underscored the significance of dispatching a reliable individual to the city in question to verify the legitimacy of the family, the wali (guardian of the bride), or anyone professing to be physically present, thereby ensuring their true identity and the legality of the proceedings.[481]

On the other hand, several scholars go against the notion that the Internet is an inauthentic realm and serves as an inappropriate platform for religious expression. Rather, they argue that the online and offline worlds are not distinct entities and should not be viewed as such. Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan considers the Internet as a mirror that replicates and imitates offline reality.[482] Heidi Campbell also notes that the character of Internet technologies and digital culture not only enables the emergence of new religious actors, but also empowers them.[483] Moreover, she contends that it elevates traditional religious systems and their leaders.[484] While these academic perspectives initially appear to support the notion that the Internet is merely an extension of the physical world, a closer look reveals that they actually support the existence of a middle ground between dismissing the online realm entirely and becoming overly dependent on it. This space is frequently referred to as a "hybrid space." The Cyborg Manifesto by Donna Haraway provides a more precise

---

[480] Qadi, Yasir. “Is Getting Married over Zoom Permissible?”, *AboutIslam*. Nov. 20, 2020. https://tinyurl.com/mrxa7j5u.
[481] Ibid.,
[482] Dawson & Cowan, *Finding Faith on the Internet,* 2004, 6.
[483] Campbell Heidi, *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*, (Routledge, 2021), 14.
[484] Ibid.,

description of this hybrid space. Haraway argues that in the modern era, humans have become cyborgs, which are creatures that combine machine and organism.[485] She suggests that we exist as mythical beings, created and conceived composites that are appropriately referred to as cyborgs.[486] Christopher Helland supports the notion of this composite nature by identifying parallels between remote online rituals and offline experiences.[487] He then contends that those who engage in online religious practices do not regard the Internet as a distant environment, but rather as an integral part of their daily lives. They view the digital domain as an extension of their religious meanings and rituals, easily incorporating their religious beliefs and practices into it.[488]

In a similar vein, Tetske van Dun et al. contend in their study *Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning* that the context of prior offline ritual experiences has a significant impact on the authenticity of an online ritual. According to their qualitative research, individuals can imbue their own environments with a sacred quality by excluding profane elements and incorporating the sacred into their domestic and professional environments.[489] In their study of Christian online retreat, the researchers compared the online retreat to its offline counterpart in order to determine the authenticity of the online retreat. They analyzed the situation by evaluating four crucial factors: community, location,

---

[485] Donna Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*, University of Minnesota Press, 2016, 7.

[486] Ibid.,

[487] Helland, Christopher. "Online Religion as Lived Religion: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet," *Online – Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet,* Volume 01.1, 2005, DOI: 10.11588/heidok.00005823.

[488] Helland, Christopher. "Online Religion as Lived Religion: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet.

[489] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning" in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed., Daniel Enstedt, Göran Larsson, and Enzo Pace (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 35.

embodiment, and authority. In addition, they investigated the viability of substituting online rituals for in-person ones. Despite potential discrepancies in practice and experiential aspects between online and offline rituals, practitioners of online rituals perceive them to be genuinely real and authentic, according to the results.[490] The researchers emphasized the inherent connection between the online and offline environments in a compelling argument. They hypothesized that (bodily) experience is the essential link and bridge between these two domains.[491] By engaging in corporeal experiences, individuals bridge the distance between these realms and transform the mundane domestic space into a subjective and meaningful environment, thereby collapsing the traditional boundaries between the mundane and the sacred.

Prayer and *Iʿtikaf* are two Islamic rituals that illustrate the concept of transforming secular spaces into sacred ones by removing secular elements and replacing them with religious ones. This is demonstrated by the scholarly work by Faisal Abdullah titled "Pre-Muhammadan Law and the Muhammadan Shari'ah: Muslim Theories and Implementation of Biblical Law and the Laws of Prior Religious Communities." Abdullah draws attention to a Facebook post by an Azhari-educated scholar who encourages individuals to regard their residence as the qiblah (direction of prayer). The Facebook post contains a verse from the Quran, specifically Q: 10: 87, which states, "We revealed to Moses and his brother: 'House your people in Egypt and make these houses places of worship [qiblatan]; continue praying; proclaim good news to believers!'" This example illustrates the concept of transforming

[490] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning".
[491] Ibid.,

private spaces into sacred ones within the Islamic tradition.[492] Faisal Abdullah contends that the Israelites' example transcends its original historical context and is relevant to modern Muslims facing lockdowns. He asserts that the Quranic verse contains a straightforward and comprehensible message. Muslims can draw inspiration from the tenacity of the Israelites when they were forced to pray in their homes, just as the Israelites did. While the legal justifications for closing mosques during lockdowns may be based on different evidence, this example demonstrates how practical lessons can be derived from the earlier community of believers who, according to Islamic theology, were also considered "Muslim" because of their submission to the One God.[493] Online prayer's legitimacy as a valid medium for Islamic rituals is bolstered by its extensive acceptability and widespread use. Muslims from diverse regions, such as Egypt, Indonesia, Europe, and the United States, participate in online rituals, indicating that a substantial number of Muslims view the virtual medium as a valid means of performing Islamic rituals. This applies to both required "Farḍ" rituals and optional "Nafilah" rituals. The preceding example of prayer pertains to the obligatory Farḍ rituals, while the following example describes the Nafilah rituals.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent suspension of mosques around the globe, Muslims have been granted permission to observe Iʿtikāf (spiritual retreat) at home. This provisional validity is founded on a precedent established by a previous fatwa from the Ḥanafī school that permitted Muslim women to perform Iʿtikāf exclusively at home. The fatwa issued by Al-Qaradaghī, along with the approval of other scholars, has contributed to the temporary legitimacy of performing *Iʿtikāf* at home, based on the analogy to the

[492] Faisal Abdullah, "Pre-Muḥammadan Law and the Muḥammadan Sharīʿah: Muslim Theories and Implementation of Biblical Law and the Laws of Prior Religious Communities".
[493] Faisal Abdullah, "Pre-Muḥammadan Law and the Muḥammadan Sharīʿah: Muslim Theories.

previous Ḥanafī fatwa. Interestingly, the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IAMS) has also issued a fatwa affirming this practice.[494] Muslims may now observe *Iʿtikāf* in a unique way by spending time at home to perform various forms of worship such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and zikr (remembrance of God). They may also join virtual spiritual gatherings led by local Imams and female religious leaders. Most Muslims have mental pictures of the mosque in their heads whenever they think about *Iʿtikāf*. However, the Internet's acceptance as a substitute medium for this physically located act of worship has proven its credibility, opening the door to the virtualization of other acts of worship.

In conclusion, despite the argument that online rituals are less authentic because cyberspace is perceived as a profane or mundane domain incompatible with the sanctity of Islamic ceremonies, the actual practice of these rituals provides a different perspective. The abundance of "on/offline" Islamic rituals, such as online prayer, Maqra'ah (circles of Qur'anic recitation), and I'tikaf (spiritual retreat), demonstrates their authenticity, reliability, and efficacy to be equivalent to their offline counterparts. In addition, the hybrid nature of these online rituals, which includes both online and offline components or is strongly connected to previous offline ritual experiences, reinforces their authenticity.[495]

Closing Remarks

Religion as a whole and particular rituals within it are susceptible to change, though not necessarily in their inherent structure, but possibly in their appearance or execution. As these

---

[494] Ali Al-Qaradaghi. "Al-Qaradaghi: Yajūz Al-Iʿtikaf fī albyūt Idha Kant Almasajid mughlaqa" (Al-Qaradaghi: It is permissible to do *I'tikaf* at home if the mosques are closed). May 5, 2020. Accessed [November 4, 2020], https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/تركيا/القره-داغي-يجوز-الاعتكاف-في-البيوت-إذا-كانت-المساجد-مغلقة/1838764.
[495] Tetske van Dun et al., "Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning" in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed., Daniel Enstedt, Göran Larsson, and Enzo Pace, 35.

changes occur, they may have an effect on those impacted and communities. Regardless of whether we refer to this process as a reform or simply a change, the fundamental query remains: Why do people engage in alteration? Reformation occurs when people recognize they can no longer practice their faith in the same manner as their medieval ancestors.[496] Nevertheless, every transformation comes at an expense. For instance, the incorporation of Islamic rituals into the virtual realm has a variety of effects on individuals and entire communities.

In the realm of religious authority, Muslims have relied on traditional figures such as Mullas, Sheikhs, Maulanas, and Marjiʿs. With the advent of online religious engagement, however, the status and legitimacy of these traditional authorities have been diminished. As a result, new authorities have emerged, posing a challenge to existing ones and bringing both benefits and disadvantages to both parties. Some of these traditional authorities have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by virtual religious spaces, while others have struggled to find a suitable home in this innovative digital landscape. These new platforms allow them to communicate with the younger population in a quick, immediate, and spontaneous manner.

Likewise, the digitalization of religious experiences has had a profound impact on the process of forming the identity of those who participate in these online religious ceremonies. Cyberspace has augmented fluidity and malleability of offline identities, yet it has also led to the fragmentation of religious identity for cyber users due to the presence of anonymity. However, it has also facilitated the formation of collective identities and produced a parallel

[496] John Esposito, *The Future of Islam*, (Oxford University Press, 2010).

space, particularly among diasporic communities that have lost physical connections to their homelands, including their social and religious memories. In addition, cyberspace's free and unrestricted platform has contributed to the advancement of equal rights for disadvantaged minorities by amplifying the voices of those who have traditionally been suppressed due to their gender, race, or ethnicity. People from marginalized groups are now able to express their perspectives and partake in public discourse in ways that were previously impossible or strongly discouraged.

Like rituals in other faiths, online Islamic rituals have also been met with suspicion over their veracity and authenticity. This process of doubting and questioning is not peculiar to any one faith but is rather universal. This chapter has outlined the two primary causes for the perception of a lack of authenticity in online Islamic rituals. The first reason relates to the absence of social ties, which raises concerns regarding the veracity of religious practices in cyberspace. Physical presence is frequently regarded as a crucial factor in attaining communal goals, especially during Islamic collective rituals. This is obvious in practices such as congregational prayers, Islamic pilgrimage, and other optional rituals such as circles of group Qur'anic recitations. However, the Internet has demonstrated its viability as a social alternative by serving as a digital medium that facilitates the practice of congregational rituals. The chapter provides a number of examples from Muslim communities in which online ritual experiences have effectively fostered social and communal connections among community members. The belief that cyberspace is a profane or secular domain unfit for sacrosanct religious experiences is the second reason for doubting the authenticity of online Islamic rituals. It is commonly perceived as a place devoted primarily to global activities, such as finance, social interactions, and politics. The efficacy of the online Islamic

experience, however, contradicts this assertion and undermines the notion that cyberspace is inherently incompatible with religious practices. Successful examples of online Muslim communities engaging in religious rituals, as well as legal rulings from religious authorities, strongly contradict this view and demonstrate that the online domain can, in fact, function as a religious space.

Conclusion

Indeed, the Islamic rituals, commonly referred to as *'Ibadat*, evince a notable constancy and resilience in preserving their fundamental tenets and doctrines. However, such steadfastness should not be misconstrued as an absolute immutability or an imperviousness to transformation. Quite the contrary, there exists a considerable latitude for their accommodation and progression, particularly concerning the modalities through which they are enacted and observed. In tandem with the advancement of societies and technologies, Islamic rituals have manifested an intrinsic capacity for adaptation and flexibility while retaining their foundational essence. This dynamic facet facilitates the incorporation of contemporary contexts and the evolving requisites of Muslim communities, thereby ensuring the enduring relevance and profound significance of these rituals in the contemporary milieu.

The driving force behind the adaptability of Islamic rituals lies in the level of trust and reliability associated with these changes. People tend to place a higher degree of trust in practices that have been traditionally established and proven to be authentic through physical interactions. For example, the oral transmission of knowledge, known as *Ijazah*, has been

considered the exclusive and authentic means of acquiring various forms of knowledge for many decades among Muslims. Similarly, the resistance to the adoption of printing in the 14th to 18th centuries was not primarily due to a rejection of the idea of incorporating technology in knowledge dissemination, but rather a lack of trust and reliability in this new method. A similar sense of suspicion and skepticism has been replicated in the contemporary digital era with the rise of virtual space and its function in distributing religious knowledge and supporting ritual practice. As a virtual platform, the Internet confronts obstacles in acquiring general recognition as a legitimate method of religious practice. Concerns about the authenticity of cyber religious experiences and rituals persist, leading to reservations among some religious communities.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to understand that over time, as familiarity with digital technology has grown, the degree of trust and authenticity attributed to online religious practices has undergone a transformation. As technology becomes increasingly integrated into the fabric of daily existence and garners broader societal acceptance, there has been a discernible shift towards acknowledging the credibility and legitimacy of virtual forms for religious participation. Concurrently, as communities develop trust and confidence in these novel modes of religious expression and observance, the assimilation of Islamic rituals onto digital platforms has gained a more pervasive acceptance.

The same principle applies to the example of *Itiḥād al-Majlis* (unity of spatial session) in the context of marriage. In classical times, this concept required the physical presence of the groom, the bride, and two witnesses in the same space as a condition for a valid marriage. This requirement was a reflection of the lack of trust and authenticity in any other means and hence, the high level of trust was placed on physical interactions instead.

However, over time, especially during the pre-modern era, the renowned jurist Ibn ‘Abdin (d. 1836) started to place more trust in the written form of documentation rather than solely relying on verbal communication. With the advent of E-Nikah and its wide acceptance, people have developed a sense of trust and authenticity in the virtual world, which is now controlled by screens. This shift in perception demonstrates how the perception of trust and reliability in technology has evolved, leading to a reevaluation of the significance of physical presence in certain rituals and practices.

Bibliography

Abou El Faḍl, Khaled. “Usuli Institute First Virtual Khuṭbah with Dr. Khaled Abou El Faḍl”, *YouTube*, (2019) Accessed August 13, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDhUoay0WTg.

Akmaliah, Wahyudi and Burhani, Ahmad Najib. “Digital Islam in Indonesia: The Shift of Ritual and Religiosity during Covid-19”. *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*. Singapore. 12 August 2021. ISSUE: 2021 No. 107, ISSN 2335-6677.

Abdullah, Faisal. "Pre-Muḥammadan Law and the Muḥammadan Sharī‘ah: Muslim Theories and Implementation of Biblical Law and the Laws of Prior Religious Communities" PhD diss., University of California Los Angles. 2020.

Al-Albānī, Muḥammad Nasiruddin. *Mawsoʿat al-Albāny Fi al-ʿAqidah (Al-Albāni's Encyclopedia in faith)*. Yemen: Noman for Research and Islamic Studies and translation, 2010.

Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘*īl. Saḥiḥ al-Bukharī*. Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1993.

_______________. *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*. Ed, Muḥammad Nasir. Lebanon: Dar Toq al-Najah, 2001.

Al-Bāqurī, Abu Abdullah. *Tartīb al-Forouq.* Morocco: Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 1994.

Al-Buhūtī, Manṣūr Ibn Yūnus. *Sharḥ Muntaha al-Iradāt*. Beirut: Alm al-Kotb, 1993.

Al-Dosoqī, Muḥammad. *Al-Sharḥ al Kabīr Li al-Sheikh al-Dardīr Waḥashyat al-Dosoqī,* Volume 1. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, N.D.

Al-Farābī, Abu Naṣr Muḥammad. *Al-Madina al fādila (The Virtuous City),* Edit., Ali Wafi. Cairo: al-Nahda al-Misriyah, 1986.

Al-Ghazālī, Abu Ḥamid Muḥammad. *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-dīn*. Beirut: Dar al-Marefa, 2004.

Al-Ghumāri, Aḥmad Seddiq. *Al-Iqnaʿ fi Seḥat al-Jumʿah Khalf al-Medhyaʿ (The Persuasion of Veracity of Friday Prayer Following the Radio)*. Cairo: Dar al-Taleef, N.D.

Al-Hindī, Ali ibn Abd-al-Mālik. *Kanz al-ʻUmmal Fee Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Afʻāl (Treasures of the Doers of Good Deeds).* Beirut: Al-Risalah, 1981.

Ali, Mansur.2022. *E-Nikaḥ Tying the Knot Virtually: the legal status of online nikāḥ in Ḥanafī fiqh*, unpublished Conference paper. Edinburgh: BRAIS.

Ali, Al-Qaradaghi. "Al-Qaradaghi: Yajūz Al-Iʿtikaf fī albyūt Idha Kant Almasajid Mughlaqa" (Al-Qaradaghi: It is permissible to do Iʿtikaf at home if the mosques are closed). May 5, 2020. Accessed [November 4, 2020], https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/1838764/-تركيا/القره-داغي-يجوز-الاعتكاف-في-البيوت-إذا-كانت-المساجد-مغلقة.

Al-ʿIraqi, Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm. *Tarḥ al-tathrīb fi sharḥ al-taqrib* (Beirut: Dar Ihyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, N.D).

Al-Juzairi, Abdul-Raḥman. *Al-Fiqh ʿAla al-Madhahib al-Arbaʿah*. Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ilmiyah, 2003.

Al-Kasānī, ʿAlāa al-Din. *Badā'i al-Ṣanāai' Fī Tartib al-Sharāi.'* Beirut: Dar al-Kotb al-Ilmiyah, 1986.

Al-Makkī, Abū Ṭālib. *Qūt al-qulūb fi muʿāmalat al-maḥbūb wa-wasf ṭariq al-murid ila maqām al-tawhīd*. Cairo: Dar al-Torath, 2001.

Al-Maqdesī, Ibn Qudamah. *Al-Mughnī*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qahirah, 1968.

__________. *Al-Mughnī.* Riyadh: Dar ʿAlm Alkotob for printing, publishing, and distribution. 1997.

An-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī. *Rawdat al-talibīn wa-'umdat al-muftin.* Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991.

________________. *Al-Majmuʿ Sharḥ al-Muhadhab*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, N.D.

Al-Omrāni, Yahya Ibn Abi al-Khayr. *Al-bayān fī Madhab al-Imām al-Shafi'i.* Vol.1. Jeddah: Dar al-Mihaj, 2000.

Al-Qurtubī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr al-Anṣārī. *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī*. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya, 1964.

Al-Qarāfi, Shihāb al-Dīn Abu Al-ʿAbbās. *Al-Furuq*. Saudi Arabia: Ministry of Awqaf. 2010.

___________. *Al-Omniyyah Fī Idrāk al-Niyyah*. Beirut: Dar al-Kotb al-Ilmiyah, N.D.

Al-Qaradaghi, Ali. May 5, 2020. "Al-Qaradaghi: Yajoz al-I'tikaf fi albyot idha kant almasajid mughlaqa" (Al-Qaradaghi: It is permissible to do I'tikaf at home if the mosques are closed). Accessed November 4, 2020. https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/تركيا/القره-داغي-يجوز-الاعتكاف-في-البيوت-إذا-كانت-المساجد-مغلقة/1838764.

Al-Rimi, Jamal al-Dinn. *Al-Maʿani al-Badie'ah Fi Maʿrefat Ikhtilaf Ahl al-Shariʿah*. Beirut: Dar al-Kotb al-Ilmiyah, 1996.

Al-Romaithy, Hesham. al-Iʿtikāf fi al-Manzel Ḥukm khas fi zaman khas" (Staying at mosque, a special ruling for a special time). *Al-Watan website*, May 16. 2020. Accessed [November 2, 2020], https://alwatannews.net/article/877227/Bahrain/الاعتكاف-في-المنزل-حكم-خاص-في-زمن-خاص.

Al-Rāzī, Muḥammad Ibn Zakariya. *Ḥadāeq al-Ḥadāeq (Gardens of Gardens)*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqafah al-Dinyah, 2002.

Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Din. *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb or Kitāb at-tafsīr al-kabir.* Cairo: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 2000.

Al-Shāshī, Al-Qaffāl. *Maḥāsin al-Sharīʿah*. Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ʿilmiyah, 1971.

Al-Shawkānī, Muḥammad. *Nayl al-Awtār*. Cairo: Dar al-Ḥadīth, 1993.

Al-Swaisī, Muḥammad bin Yunis. *Majāl al-Niyyah*. Tunisia: Dar Sahnon for Printing and Publication, 2021.

Al-Suyūṭī, Jalal al-Din. *Ad-Durr al-Manthūr fi Tafsīr bil-Maʾthūr*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, N.D.

____________. *Ḥashiyat al-Sendī ʿala Sunan Al Nasāai*. Aleppo: Islamic Publications Library, 1986.

Al-Sabhānī, Jaafar. *Al-Wudu Ala Daw al-Kitab wal Sunnah (Ablution according to the Quran and Sunnah)*. Qom: Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, 1967.

Al-Shanqītī, Muḥammad al-Dadaw. Hadhihi Hiya Shurūt al-Salah ʿAbr al-Bath Fī Zaman Corona (These are the conditions of online prayer in the age of Corona). *Aljazeera*. (April 2020): Accessed May 3, 2021.

https://www.aljazeera.net/programs/shariah_and_life_during_ramadan/2020/4/24/الددو-هذه-
شروط-الصلاة-عبر-البث-في-زمن.

Al-Tanoughi, Sahnoun. *Al-Mudawna al-Kobra*. 1st volume. Saudi Arabia: Maktabat al-Saadah. 1906.

Al-Suyūtī, Jalal al-Din. *Al-Ashbah wa al-Naza'er*. Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 1983.

Al-Tūsī, Nasir al-Din. *Baqā' al-Nafs Ba'da Fanāa al-Jasad*. Cairo: Ramses Library, 1923.

Al-Zarkashī, Muḥammad Badr al-Din. *Bahr al-Muhit fi Usul al-Fiqh*. Cairo: Dar al-Kotbi, 1994.

Az-Zarkashī, Abū Abdullāh Badr ad-Dīn. *Iʿlam al-Sajid Bi Aḥkam al-Masājid.* Ed., Mostafa Al-Maraghi. Cairo: Supreme Council For Islamic Affairs, 1996.

Arizpe, L. "Freedom to create: women's agenda for cyberspace" in W. Harcourt, (ed.) *Women@Internet: creating new cultures in cyberspace*, London: Zed Books, 1999, xv–xvi.

Bazzano, Elliott, and Marcia K. Hermansen. *Varieties of American Sufism: Islam, Sufi Orders, and Authority in a Time of Transition*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020.

Bell, David. 'Identities in Cyberculture', in *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, pp. 113-136. London: Routledge, 2001.

Brown, Jonathan A.C. *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy*, Oneworld Publications, 2014.

Bunt, Gary R. *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018.

_________. "Decoding the Ḥajj in Cyberspace" in *The Ḥajj Pilgrimage in Islam*, ed., Eric Tagliacozzo and Shawkat M. Toorawa. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Chittick, William. "Ibn 'Arabî". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/ibn-arabi/>.

Cheong, Pauline Hope. Religious Leaders, Mediated Authority, and Social Change. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 39, No. 4, November 2011, pp. 452_454.

Campo, Juan. “The mecca pilgrimage in the formation of Islam in modern Egypt” in *Muslim Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, ed., Rahimi, Babak, and Peyman Eshaghi. University of North Carolina Press, 2019.

Campbell, H.A. *Digital Creatives and the Rethinking of Religious Authority*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

_____________. Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 80, Issue 1, March 2012, Pages 64–93, https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074.

__________. Who's Got the Power? Religious Authority and the Internet. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 1043–1062. 2007.

____________, "Visualizing the Ḥajj: Representations of a Changing Sacred Landscape Past and Present." In *The Ḥajj: Pilgrimage in Islam*, edited by Eric Tagliacozzo and Shawkat M. Toorawa, 269-88. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Daniel Enstedt, Göran Larsson, and Enzo Pace, ed., *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015.

Durkheim, Émile, 1858-1917. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, a Study in Religious Sociology*. London, New York: The free Press, 1995.

Eckert, Stine and Chadha, Kalyani. Muslim bloggers in Germany: an emerging counterpublic. *Media, Culture & Society* 35(8) 926–942, 2013, DOI: 10.1177/0163443713501930.

El-Nawawy, Mohammed, and Khamis, Sahar. *Islam Dot Com: Contemporary Islamic Discourses in Cyberspace*. London, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

Evolvi, G., & Giorda, M. C. (2021). Introduction: Islam, Space, and the Internet. *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, *10* (1), 1-12. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-bja10047.

Farooq Haq, Anita Medhekar. 2017. Is Spiritual Tourism an Innovation in Tourism for India and Pakistan? Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship as Driving Forces of the Global Economy, pages 519-529.

Fawzy, Muḥammad . "Fatwa Wa Ahkam; al- Ṣalāh behind al-Bath al-Mibashir (Fatwas and rulings: Prayer through broadcasting)." *YouTube* (2020). Accessed [May 23, 2020], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1jFNHK2etQ.

Gad Al-Ḥaq, Ali. "Fatwa Dar al-Iftaa". *Dar al-Ifta al-Miṣriyyah*, (1979) Series No. 3125. Accessed Jan., 12, 2021. https://dar-alifta.org/Home/ViewFatwa?ID=12572&title=
صلاة%20الجمعة%20خلف%20المذياع%20-
=%20فضيلة%20الشيخ%20جاد%20الحق%20علي%20جاد%20الحق

Giulia Evolvi, Hybrid Muslim identities in digital space: The Italian blog Yalla. *Social Compass*, April 25, 2017, Volume 64, Issue 2, https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768617697911.

Graham, W. (1993). Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23(3), 495-522. doi:10.2307/206100.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959.

Grossberg, Lawrence. Identity and cultural studies: Is that all there is? In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.). *Questions of cultural identity*. Sage Publications, Inc. 1996. 89.

Grewal, Zareena. *Islam Is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*. N.Y.U. Press, 2014.

Haider, Najam. Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shīʿī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa. *Islamic Law and Society 16*, no. 2 (2009): 151–74.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Haraway, Donna. *Cyborg Manifesto*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

Hamdeh, Emad. Shaykh Google as Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAṣr: The Internet, Traditional ʿUlamā', and Self Learning. *American Journal of Islam and Society*. 2020. 37(1-2), 67–102.

Hart, H. L. A., "INTENTION AND PUNISHMENT," *Punishment and Responsibility: Essays in the Philosophy of Law*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hawting, G. (Ed.). *The Development of Islamic Ritual*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Hegazy, Wael. "Muslim Online Prayer in a Sociocultural Context". *CyberOrient*, Vol. 14, Issue No. 2, (2020): 64-84.

Helland, Christopher. Online Religion as Lived Religion Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet, *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet.* (2005): 1.1. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/rel.2005.1.380.

Humaid Lahmar, Al- Ḥajj Zaman Jāeḥat Corona 2019 (Ḥajj during Corona 2019), *IslamOnline*, Accessed 12/27/2022, shorturl.at/kory3.

Ibn al-Ḥajjaj, Muslim. *Saḥiḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dar Ehia Al Torath Al Arabi, N.D.

Ibn al-Qayyim, Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad. *Madārij al-Salikīn*. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-ʿArabi, 1996.

Ibn Baz, AbdulAziz, *Majmoo' Fatawa wa Maqalat Mutanawwi'a (The Collection of Fatawa and Various Articles)*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Presidency of Scientific Research and Ifta, 27 Volume, N.D.

Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd. *Al Muḥala*. Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ʿ ilmiyah, N.D.

Ibn Rushd, Muḥammad bin Aḥmad. *Bidāyat al-mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid*. Cairo: Dar al-Ḥadīth, 2004.

_____________.*kitab An-nafs*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdah al-Misriyah, 1950.

Ibn Taymiyah, Taqī ad-Dīn ʾAḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Al-Fatawa al-Kubra*. Beirut: Dar al Kotob alʿilmiyah, 1987.

______________ *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwa*. Riyadh: king Fahd complex for the printing of the holy Quran, 1995.

Ibn Nujaym, Zainuddin b. Ibrahim b. Muḥammad. *Al-Ashbāh wa'l-Naẓāʾir' Ala Madhahb Abi Ḥanifah al-Noman*. Beirut: Dar al-Kotb al-Ilmiyah, 1999.

Ibn Muflih, Shamsuldin Muḥammad. *Uṣul al-Fiqh*. Riyadh: Obeikan Publishing, 1999.

Ibn Abi Shaybah, Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad. *Al-Muṣannaf*. Riyadh: Dar Konoz Ishbilia for publishing, 2015.

Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad. *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Beirut: Muasisatur-Risalah, 2001.

Ibn Taymiyah, Taqī ad-Dīn ʾAḥmad al-Ḥarrānī. *Majmoo'al-Fatawa*. Riyadh: king Fahd complex for the printing of the holy Quran, 1995.

Ibn al-Arabī, Abu Bakr. *Ahkam al-Quran.* Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ilmiyah, 2003.

Ibn al-Rifah, Ahmad al-Ansari. *Kefayat al-Nabih Fi Seḥat al-Tanbih.* Beirut: Dar al Kotob al ʿilmiyah, 2009.

Ibn al-Hajjaj, Muslim. *Al-Jame' al-Sahiḥ: Saḥiḥ Muslim.* Turkey: Dar al-Tiba'ah al-Amerah, 1916.

Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī. *Al Muḥala bi'l Athar*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, N.D.

Ibrahim, Mohmmad Zaki. *Kalimat al-Raeed; an editorial of al-Muslim Journal for more than fifty years,* issue 8, November., 1952, Cairo: Amanat al-Da'wah, 2003.

ʿIlish, Muḥammad. *Manḥ Al-Jaleel Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1989.

Janet Morahan-martin. "Women and the Internet: Promise and Perils". *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*. Volume 3, Number 5, 2000.

Jon w. Anderson. New Media, New Publics: Reconfiguring the Public Sphere of Islam. *Social Research.* Vol. 70, No. 3, fall 2003, pp. 887-906, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40971646.

Jocelyne, Cesari, "Islamic Organizations in the United States", In *Oxford Handbook of Islam*, ed. by Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad. Oxford Online Publication, 2015.

Johnsen, Julian. *Sufism and Islamic Reform in Egypt*. Oxford, Clearndon press, 1996.

Kemajuan, Jabatan. *Decision of Muzakarah fatwwa committee of National Council of Islamic affairs*. Putrajaya: Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, 2012.
Larsen, Elena, Cyberfaith: How Americans Pursue Religion Online, in "*Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*" edit., Lorne L. Dawson, Douglas E. Cowan, Routledge, 2004.

Lawrence, Bruce. Allah On-line: The Practice of Global Islam in the Information Age. In "*Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture, "*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Mandaville, Peter, "Digital Islam: Changing the Boundaries of Religious Knowledge?" *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World,* March, 1999: 1–23, https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2716928/view.

Mia Lövheim, Young People, Religious Identity, and the Internet in *"Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet"* ed., Lorne L. Dawson, Douglas E. Cowan, London: Routledge, 2004.

Middle East in 24 English. December 13, 2021. "Saudi Arabia launches an initiative that allows virtual touching of the Black Stone." Accessed December 15, 2021. https://middleeast.in-24.com/News/amp/492979.

Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, *Mausu'a Fiqhiya Kuwaitiya*, Vol., 42, (Kuwait: Dar al-Salasel, 2006), 217 – 219.
Nabil Echchaibi. Muslimah Media Watch: Media Activism And Muslim Choreographies Of Social Change. *Journalism*, (2013), https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1464884913478360.

Possamai-Inesedy, Alphia and Alan Nixon edit, *The Digital Social: Religion and Belief*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, December 2, 2019.

Qadi, Yasir. “Is Getting Married over Zoom Permissible?”. *AboutIslam*. Nov. 20, 2020. https://tinyurl.com/mrxa7j5u.

Qurashi, J. ; Sharpley, r. 2018. “The impact of smart media technologies on the spiritual experience of Ḥajj pilgrims.” Conference paper presented at 9th Annual International Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Conference, Dublin Institute of Technology, Vol.6 No.3 pp.37-48, https://www.cabdirect.org/cabdirect/abstract/20193035646.

Rozehnhal, Robert. *Cyber Sufis: Virtual Expressions of the American Muslim Experience (Islam in the Twenty-First Century),* UK, Oneworld Publications, 2019.

Robinson, Francis, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies 27*, no. 1 (1993): 229-51.

Sabri, Masoud. *Fatwas of scholars on Corona*. Cairo: Dar Al-Bashir for Printing and Publishing. 2020.

Said, Ayat. “Al-Docto al-Alamah al-Hussain Ayat Said wa Masalat Ṣalāt Al-Taraweeh An Bu’d Fi Z aman Cornoa” (Al-amah Dr. Said and online Taraweeh prayer in time of Corona). *Al-Itiḥād. Accessed Nov. 22, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/zyu76k9z*.

__________. Reḥlat al-Mudawana Min Ibn al-Furat Ila Sheikh Khalil “Journey of al-Mudawana from Ibn al-Furat to Sheikh Khalil”. *IslamOnline*. Accessed: November 6, 2022. https://islamonline.net/رحلة-المدوَّنة-ابن-الفرات-الشيخ-خليل/.

Salim, Salinayanti. An Exploration of Media Work of A Convert da‘i: Specific Reference to Imam Suhaib Webb. *Malaysian Journal of Media Studies,* Vol. 20, No. 1, 2018: 1-13.

Šisler, Vit. “Cyber counsellors: online fatwas, arbitration tribunals and the construction of Muslim identity in the UK.” *Information, Communication and Society* , 2011, 14:1136–1159.

Smith, Jane I., *Islam in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Schlosser, Dominik. "Digital Ḥajj: The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Muslim Cyberspace and the Issue of Religious Online Authority". *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, January 2013: 189-203.

Shukri, M.A.M. “Abū Ṭālib Al-Makkī and his Qūt al-Qulūb.” Islamic Studies 28, no. 2 (1989): 161–70. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20839943.

____________ *Fatwas of scholars on Corona*. Cairo: Dar Al-Bashir for Printing and Publishing, April 2020.

Summers-Effler, Erika. "Ritual Theory," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, ed. Jan E. Stets. New York: Springer Science-Business Media, LLC, 2007.

Tantawy, Muḥammad Sayyid. *Al-Tafsir al-Wasīt Lil Qur'an al-Karīm*. Cairo: Nahdet Misr Publishing House, 1998.

Tetske van Dun et al., “Virtualization of Ritual: Consequences and Meaning” in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, ed., Daniel Enstedt, Göran Larsson, and Enzo Pace Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015.

Wahid, Hairunnizam, "Localization of zakat distribution and the role of mosque: perceptions of amil and zakat recipients in Malaysia." *International Zakat Forum* (2011) Accessed June 13, 2020,
http://www.ukm.my/hairun/kertas%20kerja/Paper%20Hairunnizam,%20Radiah%20and%20Sanep-MALAYSIA%20_9__final_28062011.pdf. 2.

Ware, Rudolph T. *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa*. University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.