

2. Egypt, India and Iraq (1921-1927): Early Polemics with Sufism and Shi'ism

2.1. Early Polemics with Sufism

In Egypt, where Al-Hilālī remained from 1922 to 1923, among his other activities he served as a deputy imam, standing in for another Salafī preacher, named ‘Abd al-Zāhir Abū al-Samḥ (1882-1951), in the city of Alexandria for two months. This man had been accused by a group of people of being Wahhābī and of preaching a fifth *madhhab* (legal school), which they considered one of the greatest blasphemies he could possibly have committed. They wrote a letter to the governor of Alexandria requesting he stop Abū al-Samḥ from preaching.¹ I am inclined to date this activity to the first months of Al-Hilālī’s time in Egypt, because later his puritanical Salafistic inclinations, which might have reduced his chances of replacing an *imam* who had been dismissed for similar convictions, had come out into the open.

Al-Hilālī’s own conversion immediately aroused in him a great interest in calling other people to ‘pure’ Islam and therefore logically in (*da‘wa*). This missionary activity as a Salafī preacher would continue to occupy a great deal of his time throughout the rest of his life. As he writes in his autobiographical notes, he was still inexperienced and in 1922 was at a loss to know how to preach true Islam to a group of Tijanis in Egypt, who sent him money and supported him. He acted as if he was still a Sufī, but in the end he realized that the moral duty of a true Muslim was to be true to his own beliefs. He made a commitment to Allāh that he would never dissemble and would always tell the truth. He stated that his personal dedication was that he would call people to Allāh’s Oneness and to the *Sunna* of the Prophet, wherever he might happen to be.² Finally, he sent a message to the Tijanis in Algeria who still thought that he was a member of their group, sharing their beliefs. In it he thanked them and offered them proof that the Tijani doctrine could not live in the heart of man simultaneously with the *Sunna* of the Prophet.³

He then returned to Cairo and began to attend Rashīd Riḍā’s lectures. In view of his lack of financial resources, a certain Muḥammad al-Kharshī al-Shanqīṭī advised him to go to Upper Egypt where he could find some financial support.⁴ He was invited to a village called

¹ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 15.

² Al-Hilālī (2005a), 12-14.

³ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 17.

⁴ Ibid.

al-Raymūn to preach in his house by a certain Ismāʿīl al-Sayfī. According to Al-Hilālī's own notes, many people responded to his call and turned to adhere to the teachings of the *Sunna*. Al-Hilālī remained in the village for three months until the time for the Pilgrimage, hoping that he would receive some financial support which would allow him go on *Hajj*. When he returned to Cairo, *Shaykh* Yūsuf, the mayor of al-Raymūn and a prominent Sufi *shaykh* who had converted to Salafism through the intervention of Al-Hilālī, sent him 13 Egyptian Pounds which was sufficient for both he and his younger brother, Muḥammad al-ʿArabī al-Hilālī who had been accompanying him during his time in Egypt, to be able to perform the pilgrimage.⁵

Apparently, Al-Hilālī's preaching had an impact. In that same year, 1922, he began to gain some influence in another village in Upper Egypt. He even claimed to have converted half of its population to Salafism within eight days.⁶ This was to be his first experience not only as a Salafi preacher but also as a *mufti* whose duty was to answer questions put by the followers of Salafism. In early 1927, Al-Hilālī returned to the region for a short period and was pleased to hear that many of the inhabitants who had attended his preaching had remained faithful to Salafism after his departure and an even greater number of people had abandoned Sufism and had begun to follow the *Sunna*.⁷

In 1923, Al-Hilālī set out for his first pilgrimage in the company of some Salafi converts from al-Raymūn.⁸ In the same year he went to India, primarily to further his studies of *ḥadīth* under scholars of the group known as the *Ahl- al-Ḥadīth*, a reformist movement in the Indian subcontinent. They had made their first appearance as a distinct sect a century earlier, when they espoused the teaching of *Sayyid* Nadhīr Ḥusayn (d. 1902), an eminent theologian who specialized in the science of *ḥadīth* and lectured on it in Delhi for more than half a century, and also through the influence of Mawlawī Abū 'l-Wafā Thanā' Allāh (d. 1948), who edited the weekly *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* until 1947 and made a great name for himself as a controversialist and an expositor of the views of the school. The *Ahl-al-Ḥadīth* did not consider themselves bound by *taqlīd* or obedience to any of the four recognized *imāms* of the *fiqh* schools. They were convinced that the authentic traditions in conjunction with the

⁵ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 33.

⁶ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 32.

⁷ Al-Hilālī remained in contact with those converts and in 1947 he wrote articles about his Upper Egyptian brothers in the Salafi journal *Lisān al-Dīn*. See Al-Hilālī, "Muṣāb 'Ālīm", April 1947, 85-87.

⁸ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 23-25.

Qur'ān were the only worthy guide for true Muslims. They also made every effort to eradicate customs whose origins might be traced to any innovation (*bid'a*).

In Delhi, Al-Hilālī met Nawāb Ṣadr ad-Dīn, who offered him a post as an Arabic teacher in his own local *madrasa*. In spite of his limited budget, he spent fifteen months there and studied under several Ahl-al-*Hadith* scholars, among whom were Ḥusayn ibn Muḥsin al-Anṣārī al-Yamanī (d.1925) and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpurī (d.1935). Al-Hilālī himself states that the latter was one of the six '*ūlama*' who, apart from the Prophet, had influenced him. At his request, in Rabī' al-Thānī 1343/ November 1924, he wrote four poems dealing with the *Ahl- al-Hadith*, entitled *Al-Hādiyāt* (The Guiding Prophetic Traditions).⁹ Al-Hilālī's *Shaykh* Al-Mubārakfūrī mentions the poems in the introduction to his *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwādī* (Masterpiece of the Diligent).¹⁰ These poems were among the first which Al-Hilālī composed.¹¹

After spending some time in Delhi, Al-Hilālī travelled to Calcutta to visit Abū al-Kalām Azad¹² (1888–1958), a famous Indian scholar of literature and politics. He enjoyed the latter's hospitality for fifteen days during which he wrote three articles about the history of the Berbers in Morocco, in which he protested against French rule in that country in general and in the region where the Berbers were located in the south in particular. These articles were published by Abū al- Kalām Azad's publishing house.¹³ Al-Hilālī postulated that one of the covert goals of France was to convert the Berbers away from Islam, robbing them of their religion.¹⁴

⁹ They were published in India, Al-Hilālī mentioned them in his book *The Call to Allah* (2005, p.170). The poems are also to be found in Al-Hilālī (2010b), 570-577. One of these poems, entitled *al-Mimiyya* begins as follows: 'He who missed the chosen Prophet from Mudar' (Man Fātahu al-Muṣṭafā al-Mukhtār Min Mudar). Al-Hilālī also included the poem of Ḥamīd al-Qurṭubī which al-Qaṣṭallānī quoted in the introduction to his '*Interpretation of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī*'. The poem begins as follows: 'The light of the *hadīth*...' (*Nūr al-Ḥadīth*).

¹⁰ Al-Mubārakfūrī (2005), 10-12.

¹¹ Al-Majdhūb (1977), Vol.1, 209.

¹² On him see Kumar (1991).

¹³ In these articles, Al-Hilālī argues that the Berbers originated from the Arabian Peninsula. From there they had moved to Syria where they had founded a kingdom. The name of their king was Jālūt (Goliath; his name is mentioned in the (Qur'ān 2:251). Eventually, they had moved to North Africa. See Al-Hilālī (1985), 95-96. See also Al-Hilālī, "Dhikrā al-Ṣāḥir al-Barbarī," 16 May 1939, 1-4.

In this same period, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Māliḥ ‘Abādi, an employee at Abū al- Kalām Azad’s publishing house, asked Al-Hilālī about what rules should apply to a person who does not perform the prescribed prayers.¹⁵ Al-Hilālī answered by adducing the arguments of the scholars, but also not forgetting to explain their disagreements in this matter.¹⁶ Al-Hilālī, was personally convinced that there was not a shred of doubt that such a person was an infidel. Nonetheless, he was impressed by the reaction of the person who had asked him the question. The questioner produced the argument that a person who does not pray is still a Muslim and not an infidel. This man told him: ‘I have real proof that he is not an infidel: I do not pray, but I have no doubt I am a Muslim.’¹⁷

2.2. Polemics with Shi’ism

In 1925 Al-Hilālī moved to Basra where he met *Shaykh* Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shanqīṭī (d.1933),¹⁸ who ran a local *madrasa* named the al-Najāt school in the al-Zubair district of Basra, whose daughter he subsequently married. During the time he spent in Iraq between 1925 and 1927, *Shaykh* Muṣṭafa Āl-Ibrāhīm¹⁹ suggested that Al-Hilālī should settle down and remain in Basra with him. In return for this decision, Al-Hilālī would be offered his own private school, with a high salary plus accommodation. Al-Hilālī accepted his offer and commenced teaching the *Shaykh* and a group of students the principles of Arabic grammar and literature. He also preached in the mosque, advising the congregation to abjure all kinds of heresies and adhere to the *Sunna* of the Prophet.²⁰

It was in Basra that Al-Hilālī launched his battle against Shi’ism. After reading some of their books, he had meetings with some Shiite clerics. He debated with ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Kāzīmī (1871-1935)²¹ and Al-Mahdī al-Qazwīnī (1855-1939),²² two famous religious

¹⁵ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 175.

¹⁶ Al-Hilālī (1982), 15-19.

¹⁷ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 175.

¹⁸ For his biography See Al-Hilālī, “Rukn yanhadimu”, (1933): *Al-Fath*, 7/304, 291-292.

¹⁹ *Shaykh* Muṣṭafa Āl-Ibrāhīm also sponsored Al-Hilālī’s marriage in Iraq to the daughter of his mentor, Muḥammad ibn Amīn al-Shanqīṭī, by contributing the sum of 2200 Rubia. See Al-Hilālī(2005a), 229.

²⁰ Al-Hilālī (2005a),150-151.

²¹ I was not able to find a detailed biography of ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Kāzīmī, apart from the following information from Wikipedia:

http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF_%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86_%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B8%D9%85%D9%8A. accessed 27-04-2014.

scholars who were adherents of Twelver Shi'ism. The debate²³ between Al-Hilālī and 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Kāzimi took place in the year 1343/1924. In it Al-Kāzimi claimed that the Qurayshis had often changed elements of the *Qur'ān* in order to prove their right to be the successors of the Prophet and to his leadership of the Muslim community.²⁴ Al-Kāzimi claimed that when the Twelfth Imam entered the state of occultation, the Muslim community lost its contact, not just with the Imam, but also with the true *Qur'ān*. He argued that the *Mahdī*, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Mahdī, who was believed to be the Twelfth Imam, would bring back the original text when he manifested himself at the End of Time.

The *Mahdī* is not mentioned in the *Qur'ān*, only in the *Hadith* and Al-Hilālī countered this by arguing that the Shiite *ḥadith* was not a reliable source of knowledge and therefore could not be used to reach the truth about Islam,²⁵ most notably the al-Kulaynī collection, the Shiite equivalent of Al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Al-Hilālī's argument was that this claim was contradictory to the sayings of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt and their scholars, for instance, the *al-Ṣadūq* of Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, a Twelver Shi'a scholar (d. 381/991) who protested that the *Qur'ān* had never been altered one jot from the way in which it had been revealed.²⁶ Al-Hilālī argued that all the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, and likewise all those of Al-Hilālī al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ, believed that no *tahrīf* (tampering) had occurred with the *Qur'ān*.²⁷ His second argument was that this statement had been confirmed by the Shiite scholar *Shaykh* Al-Mahdī al-Qazwīnī, who had stated that he did not believe that the *Qur'ān* had been changed. Al-Hilālī said that Al-Qazwīnī belonged to the Uṣūlī School of the Twelver Shi'a, which takes human reasoning as a fundamental principle in their studies and debates.²⁸

On 7 February 1927,²⁹ Al-Hilālī entered into a written discussion with the Shiite scholar Al-Mahdī Al-Qazwīnī from Basra, whose name has been mentioned earlier. The background to the debate was the publication of a series of anonymous anti-Shiite essays published in *al-Manār*, the famous Cairo journal. The first of these was entitled *Kalimāt 'an al-'irāq wa ahlihi* (Words on Iraq and its People), published in 1326/1908 by an anonymous

²² For his biography see, Al-Ziriklī (2002), Vol. 7,313.

²³ For a detailed report of this debate see Al-Hilālī (2005a), 186-193.

²⁴ On this subject see al-Ṭarabulusī (1983).

²⁵ Al-Hilālī, "Munāzara," 1927, 267. See also Al-Hilālī (2009), 13.

²⁶ Al-Hilālī(2005a), 186-193.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 186-193.

²⁹ The letter was dated on the 4th of Sha'bān 1345.

scholar who merely describes himself as ‘a scholar who is jealous of Iraq and the Sunni doctrine’. Among the points it raises is: ‘One of the great scourges is the expansion of the Shia doctrine throughout the whole of Iraq, indeed to such an extent that three-quarters of its population have become Shiites, thanks to their diligent scholars and the efforts of the Shiite students, endorsed by the support of the local government, which hampers Sunnite efforts and resists their proselytism.’³⁰ The author added that the city of an-Najaf hosted those Shiite scholars who had reached the degree of *ijtihād*, and 16,000 students who were studying Islamic Sciences. Their practices were spreading all over the country, misleading the people who were worshipping graves and supporting imitation and superstitions.³¹

Another article on the same subject of the expansion of Shia Islam had been published in *al-Manār*.³² It had been sent by a Christian from Beirut named Sulaymān Affandī al-Bustānī and in it he describes the reaction of the Ottoman Empire to the expansion of Shiism in Iraq. Somewhat alarmed, the Sublime Porte had resolved to send some scholars to the provinces of Basra and Karbala to offer guidance to the nomadic tribes which lived there. The Ottoman state had realized the importance taking such a step when it became aware that the Shiites had already sent their preachers and counsellors both there and to other Bedouin tribes. Subsequently, the Christian author claims they had converted most of them to the Shiite doctrine, permitting, among other customs, the practice of marriage with a number women purely for pleasure.³³

A third, and by far the most important article in this series was written by an unnamed scholar from Bahrain, referred to as a ‘correspondent of *al-Manār* in Bahrain’. It was entitled *al-Bida‘ wa-al-khurāfāt wa-al-taqālīd wa-al-‘adāt ‘inda al-Shi‘a* (Innovations, superstitions, traditions and common practices of the Shiites) and was published in *al-Manār* in 1328/1910. Its author had made a study of the issue of the veneration of graves in Shia Islam³⁴ and he claims that all the *imams* of *Ahl al-Bayt* tradition, as did the imams of the *Al-Salaf al-Ṣaliḥ*, believed that worshipping at the tombs of the *imams* was strictly forbidden and contradictory

Anonymous (al-Muḥarram 1326/February 1908): “Kalimāt ‘an al-‘Irāq wa-ahlihī,” *Al-Manār*, Vol.11, 45-46.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Anonymous (5 Ramadan 1317/ 7 januari 1900): “Al-Akhhbār wa al-’Arā’ : Nashr Madhhab al-Shi‘a,” *Al-Manār*, Vol.2, 682-683.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Anonymous (1328/1910) , “Al-Bida‘ wa-al-khurāfāt wa-al-ṭaqālīd wa-al-‘adāt ‘inda al-Shi‘a,” *Al-Manār*, Part 4 Vol.13, 303-313.

to the pronouncements of the *imams* of *Ahl al-Bayt* themselves, whose precepts Shiites were bound to follow.³⁵ He states that he had travelled all around Iraq which had enabled him to become well acquainted with the Iraqis, whether they be Sunnites or Shiites. He lists the ideas that the Shiite preachers propagated among the villagers and ‘those who dwelt in huts’. This author from Bahrain states that he had read the above- mentioned article ‘Words on Iraq and its people’ and that he wanted to draw Rashīd Riḍā’s attention to the fact that their preachers had indeed failed to teach them the Islamic commandments.³⁶ He added that it was strange that no Shiite scholar condemned the veneration of graves, even though in the literature related to Shia jurisprudence it was mentioned that it is unlawful to build structures on graves, on the grounds of the statement of *Shaykh* Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī (d. 1266/1849), who reported that ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib had told some of his companions: ‘Shall I not send you on the same mission as the one on which the Messenger of Allāh sent me? Demolishing graves and pulling down the sculptures.’³⁷

The author from Bahrain confirms the prohibition with a saying of Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq(702-765) on this matter: ‘Everything you put on a grave with the exception of dust is indeed a burden on the deceased.’³⁸ The author wrote it was really astonishing to note that modern Shia scholars made the following comment when they report in their books the inadmissibility of building structures on the graves or putting lamps on them:

The graves of the Holy *Imams* should be excluded from this ruling, because their shrines are among the houses which Allāh has ordered to be raised, in them His Name is remembered. This is the grounds they adduce to legitimate worshipping the graves and transforming the tombs into idols to be worshipped alongside Allāh. Nevertheless,

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Al-Hilālī (2009), 183.

³⁷ Al-Najafī (1992), Vol.4, 335. See also al-‘Ālamī (1409), *Wasā’il al-Shī’a*, 202. The author from Bahrain also quotes from *al-Kāfī fī ‘ilm al-dīn* (What is Sufficient in the Knowledge of the Faith), written by Muhammad ibn Ya‘qūb al- Kulaynī (864-941). On the authority of Sama’ah, who is reported to have said: ‘When I asked Al-Ṣādūq about visiting graves and building structures on them, he told me: “There is nothing wrong about visiting graves, but mosques should not be built on them.” Actually, the Prophet said: “Do not make my grave a mosque! Indeed, Allah cursed the Jews and the Christians, for they took the graves of their Prophets as places of worship.”’

³⁸ Al-Najafī (1992), Vol.4, 335, 351. see also al-‘Ālamī (1409), *Wasā’il al-Shī’a*, 202.

See also Al-Kulaynī, “Al-Kāfī,” Vol.2, 203.

they turn a blind eye to the reports of the family of the Prophet which are reported in their literature.³⁹

The correspondent from Bahrain goes on to remark, ‘In the literature of the Twelver Shia Sect we come across many *ḥadiths* and numerous statements of the *Imams* they consider infallible, which clearly show that it is forbidden to build upon graves, and that it is compulsory to destroy whatever has been built on them.’⁴⁰ He wishes that one of the Shiite scholars who might also happen to be a reader of *al-Manār* will wake up after he has looked into this article, and launch a reform in the Shia faith.⁴¹ He argues that the Shia are strong polytheists, who show an exaggerated devotion to the family of the Prophet. To prove his arguments, he invites people to visit the shrine of Ḥusain ibn ‘Ali. He adds: ‘How much do I wish that ‘Ali ibn Mūsa al-Kāẓim would arise from his grave and see the pagan profanities these people commit at his tomb, even though his grandfather, the Prophet, was sent to expunge paganism!’⁴² After Rashīd Riḍā received the afore-mentioned essay, he decided to publish it in the hope of exposing any latent confusion about this matter.⁴³ In his comments, he argues that since the founding of *al-Manār* in 1315/1897, he had done his best to encourage unity between Muslims and the non-Muslims who co-habit with them. He adds that one of his objectives in the publications of *al-Manār* was that those who contributed to it should criticize the religious group or sect to which they personally belonged. If one was sometimes obliged to criticize the opposing group, the criticism should be made gently in order to avert the worst consequences of fanaticism.⁴⁴

In his letter, Al- Hilālī asked Al-Qazwīnī, whom he thought had reached the status of *ijtihād*, whether the claims made by the unnamed author from Bahrain were correct, and whether the *ḥadiths* to which he referred were authentic. If they were authentic, were there any other reports which contradicted them, thereby rendering them invalid to be taken into account when issuing legal opinions and in calling people to comply with the teachings they contained? If, however, these *ḥadiths* were correct, what was preventing Shia scholars from

Anonymous (Rabī‘ al-Thānī 1328/ April 1910): “Al-Bida‘ wa-al-khurāfāt wa-al-taqālīd wa-al-‘adāt ‘inda al-Shi‘a”, *Al-Manār*, Vol.13, part 4, 303-313.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

Riḍā, Rashīd (Dhū al-Hijjah 1345/June 1927): “Mas’alat al-Qubūr wa al-Mashāhid ‘Inda al-Shi‘a: Munāzara bayna ‘ālim Shi‘ī wa ‘Ālim Sunnī”, *al-Manār*, Vol.28, 349.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

preaching their message? How could they bury their heads in the sand and say nothing about those huge decorated shrines in al-Najaf and Karbalā’? Was this not contradictory to the sayings of the *imams* of Ahl al-Bayt who it was their duty to follow?⁴⁵ Al-Hilālī, who had previously met al-Qazwīnī, knew he nurtured the desired to encourage harmony between Muslims through compliance with the content of the religious texts and the abandoning of sectarian intransigence.⁴⁶ Apparently, Al-Mahdī al-Qazwīnī was far from satisfied with the anonymous 1910 article in *al-Manār*. Two and a half weeks after the date of Al-Hilālī’s letter, on February 25 1927,⁴⁷ he sent a long reply which opens with the following lines:

Greetings to and peace be upon His Excellency, the righteous *Shaykh* Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Hilālī. May Allāh preserve him from harm, and support me, him and all the Muslims in accomplishing what pleases Allāh. Well, we have dealt carefully with your honourable letter, dated 4 Sha‘bān, and we have also examined the article to which you have referred, which one of *al-Manār’s* correspondents has published in *al-Manār*.⁴⁸ We have received your questioning of the truthfulness of the article with pleasure and delight. Our aim is to uncover the confusion and to remove the misunderstanding between Muslims. This is the reason we have examined every paragraph of the article meticulously, even though this has taken a great deal of time; but, I believe, you will forgive us for this, if Allāh is willing. Finally, we hope that you will scrutinize this reply and think deeply about it. Then it is up to you to pass judgement between the Shiites and *al-Manār* and its correspondent. Which of the two groups is on the Right Path? Which of the two is in need of advice? Which of the two deserves forgiveness? I likewise hope that you will not cease your communication with us and disclose the facts and survey the views of the two parties.⁴⁹

Al-Hilālī immediately replied:

⁴⁵ Al-Hilālī, (2009), 52.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ 22 Sha‘bān 1345.

⁴⁸ Anonymous (Rabī‘ al-Thānī 1328/ April 1910): “Al-Bida‘ wa-al-khurāfāt wa-al-taqālīd wa-al-‘adāt ‘inda al-Shi‘a,” *Al-Manār*, Vol.13, part 4, , 311.

⁴⁹ Riḍā, Rashīd (Dhū al-Hijjah 1345/June 1927), 349.

In the name of Allāh the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. To the great scholar, the noble investigator, Al-Mahdī al-Qazwīnī, may Allāh preserve him from harm, and make his wishes come true, the peace and the mercy of Allāh be upon you! I acknowledge receipt of your letter, dated 22 Sha'ban, 1345 [25 February, 1927]. I read it with admiration and deep satisfaction. I praise your stern determination and your sublime care which are compatible with the position Allāh has bestowed upon you. One token of your perfect kindness and sublime wit is the fact that you have allowed me to give a long reply to what has been reported in *al-Manār*. Moreover, how splendid are your noble qualities, resembling gardens, fresh water sources, the fruits of your research, written in an eloquent and colourful style, whet the appetite. [Endowed] with all those qualities, you should feel proud of yourself, and not have to apologize. Since you have requested me to be a judge between you and *al-Manār*, and after reading the reply you wrote in answer to the journal carefully, I feel obliged to accede to your request. However, I should acknowledge my ineptitude and my lack of knowledge. Nevertheless, I shall do all I can not to be governed by whim. My guidance can have no other source but Allāh. I shall not personally take the side of one doctrine against another, because I do not follow any doctrine except that of the Truth. The message I am writing here in answer to your request is the same I intend to use if Allāh, may He be exalted, asks me [about it] on the Last Day, - the Angels, the Prophets and the Saints shall be [my] witnesses. If you have no doubt about my sincerity, I do not think my discourse will offend you, even though it might contradict your doctrine.⁵⁰

Al-Hilālī composed his answer to Al-Qazwīnī in the form of a booklet entitled *al-Qāḍī al-'adl fī ḥukm al-bina' 'ala al-qubūr*; (The Just Judge on the Ruling of Building on Tombs), which was published in Cairo in 1927 at the request of Rashīd Riḍā, who mentioned that Al-Hilālī had visited him in June of that same year. Rashīd Riḍā took the rough copy and ordered it to be printed immediately without any changes. Al-Hilālī had also given him the reply of the Shiite scholar.⁵¹ In this reply, among other points, Al-Qazwīnī accuses Rashīd Riḍā of having published false allegations. Al-Qazwīnī had even cast doubt about the fact that *Aal-Manār* had a correspondent in Bahrain.⁵² Rashīd Riḍā decided to publish the text of Al-Qazwīnī's reply

⁵⁰ Al-Hilālī, "Munāzara," 1927, 439.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

and commented upon his decision in the form of short footnotes saying: ‘We are publishing some brief notes on this pamphlet, before publishing the reply of the Sunni scholar [Al-Hilālī], to avoid a situation whereby some non-polytheist might read it and be influenced by the logical fallacies it contains without having the opportunity to read the reply to the latter pamphlet.’⁵³

With Al-Hilālī’s permission, Rashīd Riḍā also published the former’s complete refutation of Al-Qazwīnī in his journal *al-Manār*, in six parts between 1927 and 1928, under the title *Munāẓara bayna ‘ālim shi‘ī wa ‘ālim sunnī* (A debate between a Shi‘ī and a Sunni scholar [Al-Hilālī]).⁵⁴ Because Al-Hilālī was on the point of travelling to Mecca for the Pilgrimage, he requested Rashīd Riḍā send him the original manuscript in Mecca, after its publication in *al-Manār*.⁵⁵ According to Ṣādiq ibn Salīm ibn Ṣādiq, who edited *al-Qāḍī al-‘adl fī ḥukm al-bina’ ‘alā al-qubūr* in 2009, the contents of the articles are identical to those in the booklet *al-Qāḍī al-‘adl*.⁵⁶

In fact, Riḍā would have liked to see an answer of some contemporary Shiite scholars stating their evidence on this issue. However, only Al-Hilālī was prepared to step into the breach. In his booklet, *al-Qāḍī al-‘adl fī ḥukm al-bina’ ‘alā al-qubūr* (The Just Judge on the Ruling of Building on Tombs), Al-Hilālī assumes the role of a judge between the Shiite *Shaykh* Al-Mahdī al-Qazwīnī and the Salafī *Shaykh* Rashīd Riḍā. Al-Hilālī says he has judged properly, using the correct arguments and adducing the right evidence, free of bias.⁵⁷ In order to answer the arguments of Al-Qazwīnī, Al-Hilālī had to respond to thirty-three major questions on the ruling of the building on graves, taking into account the most authoritative Shiite sources.⁵⁸ In this study I shall focus on four main arguments, namely: (a) Al-Qazwīnī’s

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ For the publication of the first part, see *al-Manār*, 28 (22 ṣafar 1346/ 27 August 1927), 439-440; for Part Two, see *al-Manār*, 28 (Rabī‘ al-‘Awwal 1346/ 26 September 1927): 512-533; for Part Three see *al-Manār*, (30 Rabī‘ al-‘Akhīr I 1346/ 26 October 1927): 595-601; for Part Four see *al-Manār*, 28 (Jumādā al-Ūlā 1346/ 24 November 1927): 684-692; for see Part Five see *al-Manār*, 28 (30 Rajab 1346/ 23 January 1928) : 772-781; for Part Six see *al-Manār*, 29 (30 Ramadan 1346/ 22 March 1928) : 57-62.

⁵⁵ Al-Hilālī (2009), 183.

⁵⁶ Al-Hilālī (2009); See also Al-Hilālī, “Munāẓara,” 1927. I have indeed made a comparison between Al-Hilālī’s booklet and the collection of the articles published in *Aal-Manār*. The contents of the articles are identical to the booklet *al-Qāḍī al-‘Adl*, with the exception of a few small changes which I mention at the end of this chapter.

⁵⁷ Riḍā, Rashīd (ḍi al-Hijjah 1345/jun 1927), 349.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

accusation of defamation and falsification against the author from Bahrain; (b) the building of domes on graves; (c) the views of Shia versus Sunni Muslims; and (d) the issue of independent reasoning (*ijtihād*).

Al-Qazwīnī severely criticizes the anonymous author from Bahrain, accusing him of defamation and falsification. He also states that this correspondent of *al-Manār* had done all this to discredit the Shiites and tarnish their reputation, especially among those who were not acquainted with them and their doctrines.⁵⁹ In his notes on Al-Qazwīnī's article, Rashīd Riḍā states that it was in fact he, Al-Qazwīnī, who had falsified the texts of the *Imams*. The correspondent of *al-Manār* had not used any words to deserve such a rebuke, associating *al-Manār* with his opinions on this issue and tarnishing its history.⁶⁰ Al-Qazwīnī also casts doubt on the fact that *al-Manār* even had a correspondent in Bahrain. He goes as far as to insinuate that the author of the letter from Bahrain which had been published in *al-Manār* was indeed Rashīd Riḍā himself.⁶¹ Rashīd Riḍā merely restricted himself to the following comment: 'This sentence is unequivocal evidence of the scepticism of the fact that *al-Manār* has attributed the article to its correspondent.'⁶² Al-Hilālī asserts that Rashīd Riḍā was far too elevated to tell lies, even should it be necessary to tell lies for the sake of religious dissimulation! Why would he have done this, if the situation did not necessitate telling any lie at all?⁶³

On the main subject of the debate, namely: the building of domes on graves, Al Qazwīnī states that indubitably worshiping, supplication, reciting the *Qur'ān* and all forms of the invocation of Allāh and the prescribed Islamic acts at holy places were more likely to be accepted than those performed in ordinary locations. Indeed, he thought that this was the reason that praying in the mosque was better than praying somewhere else.⁶⁴ Rashīd Riḍā riposted that this was not true for two reasons. First of all, knowledge of the religious acts Allāh would be most likely to accept from Muslims can only be reached through the concrete texts of the *Qur'ān* and the statements of the Prophet, because this is a matter related to piety which excludes all forms of rational interpretation. In fact, the Prophet had clearly stated in a way which left no room for interpretation that the three Holy Mosques [in Mecca, al-Madīna

⁵⁹Ibid. See Al-Hilālī (2009), 52.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Al-Hilālī, "Munāzara," 1927, 439.

⁶⁴ Riḍā, Rashīd (ḍi al-Hijjah 1345/jun 1927), 349.

and Jerusalem] were more efficacious than all the other places. Therefore, he prohibited making journeys for the sake of worshipping to places other than those three. Therefore, it was a religious invalidation to draw an analogy with other places. The second argument was that the Prophet himself had sharply reprimanded and fiercely condemned the act of glorifying the shrines of saints, let alone worshipping there or decorating these buildings by hanging big lamps on them.⁶⁵

Al Qazwīnī claims that the pious Muslims of the first generations and the Muslim *imams* used to pray and make supplications alongside the grave of the Prophet. Rashīd Riḍā retorted that this statement was utterly wrong. He claimed that Al-Qazwīnī would not be able to produce any authentic text to substantiate his claim. Moreover, the acts of the righteous Muslims who succeeded those of the first generations, especially those who lived after the heresies had gained predominance, should not be taken into account.⁶⁶ Al-Hilālī argues that building domes on graves and exaggerated care of them were recent innovations of the Shia sect, in a similar vein to the other innovations they had introduced earlier, among them obsequies to commemorate the death of a member of the family of the Prophet such as Imam Al-Ḥussein. Beating their chests on ‘*Ashūra*’ and slapping their cheeks, striking their shoulders with chains and cutting their heads with swords so that blood would flow are all innovations which have no basis in Islam. He adds that the Shia scholars were the first to introduce the innovation.⁶⁷

Attacking the argument that the Sunnites held the same opinion about building upon a grave as the Shiites, Al-Qazwīnī criticizes Rashīd Riḍā, accusing him of being prejudiced against the Shia community.⁶⁸ He argues that both the correspondent of *al-Manār* from Baḥrain and its editor, Rashīd Riḍā, had not levelled the same criticism against those Sunni Muslims who had been constructing buildings and domes on graves for more than 900 years.⁶⁹ Rashīd Riḍā comments that the Bahrani correspondent of *al-Manār* had censured such behaviour not because the Shiites committed it, but because it contradicted the precepts of Islam. Any Sunnite who behaved like the Shiites would be equally censured for their his conduct. Al-Hilālī says that the author of the article in *al-Manār* was not tolerant of the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Al-Hilālī, “Munāzara,” 1927, 439.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Sunnites at all; on the contrary, he blamed them more than he blamed the Shiites.⁷⁰ Moreover, Rashīd Riḍā was a reasonable person, he neither discredited the Shia community nor tolerated the mistakes of the Sunni community. In fact, the reverse was true, anyone who read his journal was aware of the fact that he criticized the Sunnites more than the Shiites.⁷¹

Al-Hilālī comments that Rashīd Riḍā had not failed to criticize those who considered themselves to be Sunni Muslims for building domes on graves and worshipping at them. The criticism he levelled against the Shiites was much gentler than his censure of the Sunnites. Al-Hilālī maintains that Rashīd Riḍā was a known advocate of civility and tolerance as long as religious duties were not trespassed upon. He argues that his behaviour towards the Shiites was peaceable and cordial to the extent that he used to accept the invitation of the Shia community to attend the annual memorial they organized in Cairo, which marks the period of the martyrdom of Husayn and his followers at Karbala, to express their grief and commemorate the events in processions and passion plays (*taziyah*).⁷² Al-Hilālī was convinced that Rashīd Riḍā believed that refusing their invitation would lead to discord and create a rupture in inter-Muslim relations; and this was more harmful to Muslim unity than attending a memorial ceremony at which a heresy was celebrated.⁷³ Al-Hilālī points out that Rashīd Riḍā had never been a fanatical adherent of any doctrine or a religious community at the expense of another doctrine or another community! He would rather look for the most telling evidence in favour of this or that point of view. He also had many friends among Shia scholars. He wonders how Al-Qazwīnī could ever accuse him of intransigence. Nonetheless, Al-Hilālī did not pretend that Rashīd Riḍā was infallible, as nobody except the Prophet Muḥammad was infallible.⁷⁴ Al-Hilālī admitted that many Sunnites worshipped at shrines in the same fashion as the Shiites. It was well known that the graves Sunni Muslims had built in Mecca, Al-Madina, Al-Ṭāʾif, Egypt, the Levant, Iraq and in many other places were more numerous than those the Shi'i Muslims had erected. Indeed, we have noticed, says Al-Hilālī, that building of mosques on tombs is a common phenomenon in Egypt, Iraq and Morocco. Examples in Morocco were the tombs of the second ruler of the Idrisid dynasty, Moulay Idrīs ibn Idrīs and that of Aḥmad al-Tijānī, both in the city of Fez. A mosque had been built on all

⁷⁰ Al-Hilālī (2009), 117.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Anonymous, "Al-Bida' wa-al-khurāfāt wa-al-ṭaqālīd wa-al-ʿadāt 'inda al-Shi'a," *al-Manār*, Part 4 Vol.13, 312.

⁷⁴ Al-Hilālī (2009), 168.

these tombs and they had become the object of popular veneration.

The last part of the debate is devoted to the concept of *ijtihād* (the principle of the independent reasoning of qualified religious scholars in Islam). Al-Qazwīnī argues that Sunni Muslim were not qualified to exercise *ijtihād* in their attempts to derive Islamic laws from the authoritative sources, because Sunni scholars had reached a consensus on the obligation to follow one of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence.⁷⁵ As far as Al-Hilālī was concerned the issue at stake had nothing to do with the concept of *ijtihād*, because, without exception there was not one single scholar who was allowed to give independent legal opinions on standard issues (*uṣūl*). Indeed, the unlawfulness of building domes on graves and the obligation to destroy them was one of these conclusive issues, as was proven by irrefutable and definitive texts. Al-Hilālī wonders what the argument of the Sunni Muslims would be if they had recourse to *ijtihād* on this issue, be they qualified to give legal reasoning independently or unqualified as claimed by Al-Qazwīnī? What could prevent them from issuing legal opinions independently if they had a full knowledge of Islamic law, and after they had mastered the tools required for the exercise of judgement in legislation? Al-Hilālī says that Al-Qazwīnī's statement limited the independent reasoning to Shiite scholars, even if Sunni scholars were qualified to exercise *ijtihād*.⁷⁶ Al-Hilālī issues a rebuke saying that, assuming that the sciences necessary for *ijtihād* did not exist within any Muslim, it would still have been unlawful for the Sunni scholars throughout all those centuries to accept ignorance of the proofs required Islamic law. Furthermore, Al-Hilālī argues that Sunni scholars had travelled everywhere to meet the scholars who had the monopoly on the exercise of judgement in legislation and to learn from them whatever would enable them to derive the rulings of the Islamic law related to different issues, and to be able to distinguish lawful and the unlawful acts on the basis of firm evidence.⁷⁷ (In 1960, Al-Hilālī again dealt with this issue. He wrote an article in the Moroccan official religious journal, entitled *Hal ikhtaṣṣat al-imāmiyya bi-faṭḥ bāb al-ijtihād*, (Is the opening of the gate of *ijtihād* exclusively limited to the Shiites?) In it, Al-Hilālī argues that the Shia confined the faculty of independent reasoning to the Shiite scholars in order to discredit the Sunnites, pretending that there was nobody among them who could derive the Islamic Laws from the legal sources, and could, moreover, be able to distinguish lawful and unlawful acts simply because Sunni Muslims were precluded

⁷⁵ Al-Hilālī (2009), 157.

⁷⁶ Al-Hilālī (2009), 159.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

from reaching the status of *ijtihād*).⁷⁸

It is worthy of note that Al-Hilālī continued his argumentation by saying that the Righteous Predecessors and their posterity never ceased to invite scholars to practice *ijtihād*, but they did persist in prohibiting and disparaging imitation. As-Suyūfī surveyed those scholars who urged the practice of *ijtihād* and spoke slightly of imitation. He mentions the opinions of scholars on the prohibition of imitation, especially the viewpoints of the four *Imams*.⁷⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya had also written a book on the disparagement of imitation. These scholars stated unequivocally that there is a consensus among the Sunni scholars on the prohibition of *taqlīd* (imitation).⁸⁰ Scholars should only pronounce their judgement on any legal matter, especially if the latter is new, after they have carried out a careful inquiry.⁸¹

In the end, Al-Hilālī proclaimed Riḍā the winner of the debate. There is some reason to wonder how fair Al-Hilālī was in his judgement. It seems to me that the main goal of Al-Hilālī's booklet was to show the errors and the logical fallacies that the Shiite scholar (Al-Qazwīnī) had committed. Rashīd Riḍā rewarded Al-Hilālī by sending a letter to King Ibn Sa'ūd requesting this ruler take special care to him. In his book *al-Da'wa ila Allāh*, Al-Hilālī says: 'I travelled to the Hijaz for the pilgrimage and Rashīd Riḍā wrote to King Ibn Sa'ūd requesting him to host me in the Kingdom and telling him: "Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn Al-Hilālī is one of the best scholars to come to your country."⁸² In his book, Muḥammad al-Majdhūb (1907-1999) mentions that Rashīd Riḍā wrote to King Ibn Sa'ūd: 'Al-Hilālī, the Moroccan, is among the best *'ulama'* who have come to you from far away. I recommend you take advantage of his knowledge.'⁸³

In confirmation of Riḍā's recommendation and at the request of the local authorities, Al-Hilālī re-edited his booklet *al-Qāḍī al-'adl fī ḥukm al-bina'* *'ala al-qubūr*, which he completed on the 25 August 1927.⁸⁴ Al-Hilālī said that the major difference between the first version, published in Egypt, and this second, published in Arabia, was that the language of the former was moderate (*layyina*), whereas the language of the latter is rather harsh (*khashina*),⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Al-Hilālī, "Al-Imāmiyya," October 1960, 1 –2 .

⁷⁹ As-Suyūfī (n.d), 42.

⁸⁰ Al-Jawziyya (2004). 168-207.

⁸¹ Al-Hilālī (2009), 165.

⁸² Al-Hilālī (2005a), 127.

⁸³ Al-Majdhūb (1977), 187.

⁸⁴ 26 Safar 1346/August 1927 See Al-Hilālī (2010), 532-533.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

because, in his own words, in Arabia there was no need to worry about how the Shi'a in Iraq would react.⁸⁶ For instance, Al-Hilālī does not hesitate to accuse Al-Qazwīnī of not being a true scholar. He comments that Al-Qazwīnī was set on an unremitting quest to uncover the defects in the Sunni group.⁸⁷ Another difference was the use of insinuations, accusations and polemics in the second version. Al-Hilālī bluntly says that Al-Mahdī al-Qazwīnī had presented an ambiguous interpretation of numerous *ḥadīths*. He had tried to falsify their meaning and interpret them according to what he wanted them to say.⁸⁸ Furthermore, commenting on the fact that Al-Qazwīnī accused the author from Baḥrain of falsification and ignorance, Al-Hilālī states that commencing a debate by insulting and underestimating one's opponent was a token of defeat and, moreover, cursing was the refuge of the weak. Al-Hilālī stresses this was indeed the capital offence of the Shiites (whom he calls here by their nickname *Rafidites*), because even the Great Companions of the Prophet, whom Allāh praised in the *Qur'ān*,⁸⁹ were not spared their vituperation; they cursed people with whom Allāh was well pleased, and they assigned those for whom Allāh had prepared Paradise to Hell. They promised good to those whom Allāh had promised evil. Yet, it was the Will of Allāh's which would prevail, whereas what the the Rafidites hoped for would not come about.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Al-Hilālī accuses the Shi'a of invariably and ubiquitously resorting to the technique of *taqiyya* (religious dissimulation).⁹¹

Al-Hilālī considers Al-Qazwīnī's statement that the Sunni scholars were not capable of deriving Islamic Laws because they lacked the capacity for *ijtihād*, as a most grievous and bitter defamation. Not only did Al-Qazwīnī deny the Sunni scholars the ability to extrapolate legal judgments, he also repudiates their capacity to have knowledge of lawful and unlawful acts. He says sarcastically that this implies that the judges and the *muftis* of Sunni Islam used to shed blood, legalize fornication, use people's property unlawfully, because they were ignorant of the distinction between lawful and the unlawful acts.⁹² Al-Hilālī wondered if this was the right way to summon Muslims to seek conciliation. He asks them to leaving

⁸⁶ Al-Hilālī, (2009), 25.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Al-Hilālī (2009), 37.

⁸⁹ (Qur'ān 9: 100), (Qur'ān 48:18), (Qur'ān [57:18]).

⁹⁰ Al-Hilālī (2009), 134.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

intransigence and dissension behind them!

In the second version, Al-Hilālī also praises Arabia. In his own words, he states that there was no land freer of polytheism than the Najd. It was for this reason that Allāh had bestowed on its inhabitants His love, had granted them victory and made His sanctuary secure in their hands.⁹³ Al-Hilālī's statement that making a construction upon a grave was an act of disbelief was derived from the books of Ibn Taymiyya, who argued that nobody builds anything upon a grave unless he exceeds the proper bounds in loving the person who is buried in that tomb. Indeed, it is tantamount to the gateway into polytheism. The Prophet, says Ibn Taymiyya, feared that his nation would relapse into polytheism, therefore he refused to allow his people to use graves as the sites of mosques because prostration was an act of worship exclusively reserved for Allāh, and this country should not become a haunt of polytheism.⁹⁴ Remarkably enough, Al-Hilālī's view on this matter did not waver throughout his whole life.

In the Arabian version, Al-Hilālī discusses the concept of innovation, wondering how Muslims could hope to become close to Allāh by disobeying and contradicting the Prophet, belittling his commands and interdictions. He was convinced that Allāh cursed all the places at which shrines and idols were worshiped, and heaped opprobrium and misery on them. He would also send against them their enemies, who would enter the very innermost corners of their dwellings, and afflict on them a horrible torment.⁹⁵ In fact, in his own words, Al-Hilālī is expressing the tenets of the Wahhābī doctrine, namely: religious practices which had not been considered acts of faith by the three first generations of Islam (the period of the Companions and the Followers), cannot be considered true articles of faith at the present time. This blanket statement applies to all innovations. For instance, had building domes on the tombs of the saints been a sign of faith, the Prophet would have done it or would have recommended it. Furthermore, if there were religious texts from which the legality of building domes might be inferred, or the fact that the latter is a good act might be understood, the Best Three Generations would have never abandoned this practice. Whoever wanted to be the first to boast a virtue which even the Prophet and the Three First Best Generations did not have or act in contradiction to acts of the Prophet and the pious predecessors, was deviating far astray from Islamic monotheism and is spreading vices and heresies.⁹⁶

⁹³ Al-Hilālī (2009), 110.

⁹⁴ Ibn Taymiyya (1999), Vol.1, 334-335.

⁹⁵ Al-Hilālī (2009), 137.

⁹⁶ Al-Hilālī (1965), 86.

Another difference in the second edition of his booklet *al-Qādī al-‘adl* is Al-Hilālī’s wish to present it to King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, which he did, praising him in a famous poem while seated beside him.⁹⁷ The King ordered the Chief Judge *Shaykh* ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥasan to print and distribute a thousand copies immediately.⁹⁸

Shaykh Al-Mahdī al-Qazwīnī must have at least had a glance in this book, because Al-Hilālī was informed that Al-Qazwīnī was writing a book in response to it. However, Al-Hilālī had not been able to have a look at this response.⁹⁹ To some extent this book did him some harm. In Al-Hilālī’s own words, the publication of this volume was the reason lurking behind the feeling of enmity the Shiites nurtured against him and that, as he had been registered as an enemy of the Shia community, it was the reason he was unable to procure Iraqi citizenship in the late 1940s.¹⁰⁰ It is worthy of note that in 1942 Al-Hilālī wrote another book on the same subject entitled *Ziyārat al-Qubūr wa-l-istinjād bi-l-maqbūr* (Visiting the Graves and Supplicating the Entombed), in which he uses the same proofs from the *Qur’ān* and the *ḥadith*.¹⁰¹

In late 1927, Al-Hilālī decided to remain in Saudi Arabia in order collaborate with his Salafī brothers in the propagation of ‘Authentic’ Islam. After he had enjoyed the hospitality of the King for four months, *Shaykh* ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥasan, the incumbent Mufti of Saudi Arabia, offered Al-Hilālī the post of *imām* in the Holy Mosque in Mecca, an office which, he said himself, he turned down for religious reasons. He had stipulated that during prayers, people should perform ten praises or *tasbīḥ*-s in prostration and kneeling. *Shaykh* ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥasan did not agree with this because, he thought that it was a gruelling exercise in which people would not acquiesce.¹⁰² He was then appointed a lecturer at the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina.¹⁰³ Al-Hilālī stated that in 1928 he earned a monthly salary of ten gold *Dinars*¹⁰⁴ and,

⁹⁷ For the content of the poem see Al-Hilālī, (2009), 25.

⁹⁸ Al-Hilālī (2010b), 532-533.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ In 1942, Al-Hilālī released a commentary on the same subject, in a discussion of Ibn Taymiyya’s book on the visiting of the shrines, *Ziyārat al-qubūr wa-l-istinjād bi-l-maqbūr*, (The Visiting of Graves and the Supplication of the Entombed), which he published later, see Al-Hilālī (1949), “Ziyārat al-qubūr wa-l-istinjād bi-l-maqbūr,” *Lisān al-Dīn*, 3, 4, 27-30.

¹⁰² Al-Hilālī (2005a), 160.

¹⁰³ My personal conversation with Al-Hilālī’s grandson, ‘Abd al-Ghānī Muhammad Būzakrī, in the Moroccan city of Meknes on 11 aug 2010.

as the cost of living in Medina was cheap, three gold *Dinars* were sufficient to live comfortably¹⁰⁵.

After his successful book, *al-Qāḍī al-‘adl fī ḥukm al-bina’ ‘ala al-qubūr*, in which he attacked the Shia doctrine, while he was still in Arabia he addressed the errors of another sect, namely the Tijaniyya, explaining their tenets to the Wahhābīs who were unfamiliar with them. Al-Hilālī discovered that one of the professors in Medina, a certain Alfa Hashim from Mali (d.1932), was considered to be a *muqaddam* (leader) of the Tijaniyya. He wrote a paper in which he explained thirteen errors (*ḍalālāt*) committed by the Tijaniyya and gave it to Chief Judge, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥasan, who confronted the Sufi scholar with Al-Hilālī’s paper. Alfa Hashim agreed with the list of errors and, at Al-Hilālī’s request, printed it and distributed so that other people might be warned against committing what he called the same *ḍalālāt* (errors).¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the present author has not been able to lay his hands on a copy of this publication.

In addition to his battles against such sects as Shi’ism and Sufism, Al-Hilālī acted as an expert advisor for the Wahhābīs and tried to prove their ignorance of different Islamic matters, including doctrines as in the case of the Tijaniyya sect, as well as of scientific matters. He also assumed the role of a *mufti* in some of these matters. For instance, at the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, in Ramadan 1347/ February 1929, while he was still a *murāqib al-mudarrisīn* (supervisor of the teachers) of its institute (*al-Ma’had*) in al-Medina, a group of teachers raised a scientific question, namely: the issue of whether the earth was round or flat. Al-Hilālī explained that, undoubtedly the Earth was round. He supported his claim by referring to the fact that both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya had confirmed this information. At that time, a Wahhābī scholar and former Chief *Qāḍī* named ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Bulayhid (d.1940) happened to visit the mosque, and the teachers asked him the same question. He replied that only misguided Muslims could deny the fact that the Earth was flat.¹⁰⁷ Al-Hilālī did concede that there was indeed a passage in the (*Qur’ān* 88:20) referring to the Earth as having a flattened surface (*suṭṭiḥat*), which some Wahhābīs (like Ibn Bulayhid) had understood literally. Al-Hilālī explained why he was wrong. Among other points, he adduced that the alternation of day and night and the difference in the sunrise and sunset in

¹⁰⁴ At that time one gold dinar was equal to one British pound.

¹⁰⁵ Lauzière (2008), 172; Al-Hilālī (2005a), 167.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 162. See also Al-Hilālī, “Al-Fatāwā al-Hilālīyya,” 1976, Vol.1, 167-168.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 164.

different regions, for example, the fact that the sun rises in Riyadh about half an hour earlier than it does in Medina.¹⁰⁸ Al-Hilālī added: ‘I had another plausible argument. If a traveller heads west in a straight line and keeps to that direction without deviating from it, he will return to the place from which he came.’¹⁰⁹ Hearing these words the Wahhābī scholar grew very angry. Most of the teachers had no doubt about what Ibn Bulayhid had told them, so they accused Al-Hilālī of having lost his mind.¹¹⁰

When Al-Hilālī could finally consult his library,¹¹¹ which had been shipped to him from Iraq, he finally found proofs to support his argument in the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. He underlined the appropriate passages in red and sent them to Ibn Bulayhid, who refused to accept these arguments claiming that not every scholar was able to understand the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. Finally, Al-Hilālī found yet more proof in a book by Ibn Qayyim, entitled *Miftāh Dār al-Sa‘ādah*, in which he mentions that the evidence that the Earth was round was the alternation of day and night in different countries. Despite this evidence, the Wahhābī *shaykh* refused to admit his error and said,¹¹² ‘It is possible that the Earth is round on the other side, but is flat on the side on which we happen to live.’¹¹³ Al-Hilālī mentioned that he later met another Wahhābī scholar named Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Āl al-Shaykh, who argued that not all the ‘*ulama*’ in the Najd believed the Earth was flat.¹¹⁴ In the 1920s the difference in religious points of views between the ‘*ulama*’ of the Najd, who were following the *madhhab* of Imam Ibn Ḥanbal, and Al-Hilālī who saw himself as an independent Salafī, was already apparent¹¹⁵ The way Al-Hilālī chose to sign one of his articles in *al-Manār*, would have appeared strange to most Najdis. He preferred to designate himself as follows: ‘Independent Salafī scholar who does not cling absolutely to any of the legal schools.’¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Lauzière (2008), 157, Al-Hilālī (2005a), 165.

¹¹⁰ Al-Hilālī (2005a), 165.

¹¹¹ This library was originally in the possession of the family of a certain *Shaykh* Ḥasan Ibn ‘Alī al-Qasīmī. After his death, Al-Hilālī had received it as a gift. See Al-Hilālī (2005a), 165.

¹¹² Lauzière (2008), 158, Al-Hilālī (2005a), 166.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ It is worth noting that Al-Hilālī issued a *fatwa* on the issue of the Earth in which he did not change his mind and still expressed the same view See Al-Hilālī, “Al-Fatāwā al-Hilāliyya,” 1976, Vol.1, 76-77.

¹¹⁶ Lauzière (2008), 167; *al-Manār*, 28 (1927):439.

After a dispute with the governor of Medina, the former wrote to King Ibn Sa‘ūd accusing Al-Hilālī of criticizing the laws of the kingdom and ordered his financial secretary not to pay Al-Hilālī’s salary. Al-Hilālī was dismissed and sent to Mecca, where he was appointed a teacher in the Holy Mosque.¹¹⁷ He was also made a teacher in the *al-Ma‘had al-‘Ilmī al-Sa‘ūdī* (the Saudi Scientific Institute). However, it does not seem that he was happy with his situation in Saudi Arabia because the period between 1929 and 1930 was marred by several intellectual disagreements with the Wahhābīs which caused him tension and frustration. Eventually, in 1930 he became so discontented in Saudi Arabia he decided to leave. In his doctoral dissertation, *The Evolution of the Salafīyya in the Twentieth Century through the Life and Thought of Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī*, Henry Lauzière has argued that the reason for Al-Hilālī’s departure from Saudi Arabia was linked to a controversy arising from his appointment by the Consultative Council (*Majlis al-Shūra*), which was not approved by King Ibn Sa‘ūd. This speculation seems to be wrong because, in one of his unpublished *fatwas*, Al-Hilālī declares that the real reason was a letter which he, his colleague Abū al-Samḥ and other fellow Salafīs had sent to King Ibn Sa‘ūd protesting against the celebration of *Īd al-julūs ‘ala al-‘arsh* (the Feast of the Accession to the Throne),¹¹⁸ which they qualified as a reprehensible innovation (*bid‘a*). As a consequence, Al-Hilālī was not able to obtain the authorization from Ibn Sa‘ūd which would have allowed him to leave the country and he decided to ask the help of the French embassy, which was able to convince Ibn Sa‘ūd to let Al-Hilālī leave, although, as he wrote to Ibn Sa‘ūd, he had hated seeking the help of the French embassy against an Islamic government.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Al-Hilālī (2010b), 104.

¹¹⁸ Al-Hilālī, “Al-Fatāwā al-Hilālīyya,” 1976, a letter he sent to Muḥammad al-Zamzamī, dated 05/11/1386 (in 1966, before his settlement in Saudi Arabia in 1968).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.