

**The Concept of *jihād*
in the Writings of Abdessalam Yassine**



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Note on transliteration:

The transliteration of Arabic letters in this thesis shall follow the standard system, with the following exceptions:

ح = h

ص = ṣ

ض = ḍ

ط = ṭ

ظ = ḏ

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1) Introduction

Abdessalam Yassine and *al-‘adl wa al-ihsān*

Abdessalam Yassine is a Moroccan Islamic intellectual, the founder and spiritual leader of a movement nowadays called *al-‘adl wa al-ihsān* (“Justice and Spirituality,” henceforth *al-‘adl*). The movement is the largest and most active politico-religious association in Morocco. Apart from recruiting new followers, its activities range from participating in demonstrations, organizing Islamic charity and welfare societies, providing social services, food, and medicine to the poor, and arranging marriages.¹ All attempts to gain legal recognition for the movement have so far been rejected.

Yassine was born in 1928 in Marrakesh, even though the secondary sources contradict each other in terms of the precise month, or even location. The following account of his life is based mainly on the official version provided on his website.² His father was a poor farmer of Berber extraction, but the family claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad. This peculiarly Moroccan mixture of Sharifian and Berber identity was also highlighted by Yassine in his famous open letter to King Hassan II of Morocco, entitled *al-islām aw al-tūfān*,³ presumably to cast doubts on the legitimacy of the monarchy, which is officially based on claims to Sharifian lineage.

Yassine commenced his career as a government official (Inspector of Arabic Language) even before Morocco regained its independence, a fact which is not

¹ Laskier, M. M.: *A Difficult Inheritance: Moroccan Society under King Muhammad VI*, MERIA (Volume 7, No. 3 - September 2003), p. 5.

² *nubdha min sīrat al-ustādh ‘abd al-salām yāsīn*: <http://www.yassine.net/yo12/Default.aspx?book=bio>

³ “Islam or the Deluge” – in the tradition of the *naṣīḥa*-genre, i.e. pious admonitions addressed to the ruler. For a detailed discussion of the epistle and its contents in historical-cultural perspective, cf. Munson, H. Jr.: “Religion and Power in Morocco,” New Haven (Yale, 1993). for the full, original texts of Yassine’s epistles, cf.: *rasā’il al-ustādh al-murshid*: <http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=117&ChapterID=1&Lang=1256>

mentioned explicitly on his official website, since co-operation with the French might be seen as embarrassing.⁴ On this career path he continued for ten years, inclusive of various journeys abroad for training purposes (around the Arab-Muslim world, but also to the USA, and France). As has been remarked by Tozy, Yassine's direct exposure to the West on these journeys could be interpreted as reminiscent of Sayyid Qutb's sojourn in the US, after which he turned to religion, appalled by the perceived depravity of infidel society.⁵ However, no such associations are made explicitly in the official biography, or in fact elsewhere.

1965 marked the first major turning point on Yassine's way to assuming leadership of an Islamist movement. While his critics insist that he suffered a nervous breakdown, Yassine is adamant that he experienced a spiritual crisis. Whatever the case may have been, his experience prompted him to join the Butshishiyya Sufi order, of which he remained a member for nearly seven years, until the death of its shaykh, Hajj Abbas, in 1972. Yassine quit the order under mysterious circumstances, either because he aspired to establish himself as leader and was thwarted in his ambitions, or because he criticized the order for becoming "superficial" and ostentatious in their mysticism, and for failing to commit themselves to social issues. The former view is advanced by Yassine's critics; the latter is the "official version."⁶

Immediately before his break with the Butshishiyya, Yassine started writing his first books.⁷ Then, in 1974 he published the above-mentioned letter addressed to the king (cf. footnote 3), which earned him fame and recognition, as he was detained at a psychiatric hospital for more than three years on account of the missive. In the

⁴ Mohamed Tozy points out as much about Yassine's official biography which was distributed, duplicated by mimeograph, during the 1980s (cf. Tozy, M: "Monarchie et Islam Politique au Maroc" (Paris, 1999), p. 188, footnote 2, and p. 190).

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 190

⁶ *ibid.* p. 192

⁷ *al-islām bayna al-da'wa wa al-dawla* – Islam between Da'wa and State (1971), and *al-islām ghadan* – Islam Tomorrow (1972). Unknown location and publisher.

official history of *al-‘adl* up to the present, this period of time is styled the first of five phases. Each of these phases is associated with a particular *mihna* (“trial,” i.e. tribulation from God), in this case that of the letter. These “trials” seem to be accorded religious significance in the historical progress of the movement, even though they do not always correspond to the phases into which its development may be divided by academic observers.⁸

In 1981, the second of these “phases” begins, with the inception of “Organized Activism.” That is to say Yassine founded the movement, albeit under a different name. However, the various name-changes it was forced to undergo before finally settling on *al-‘adl wa al-ihsān* in September 1987 were all due to official pressure from the authorities, and did not reflect internal changes in terms of the message or ideology. The timing for the foundation of the movement is significant, since 1982 marked the beginning of the 15th century AH, which event caused King Hassan II of Morocco to issue a proclamation to the effect that he was the “Renewer of Religion” promised the Muslim community by God at the beginning of each century in a *ḥadīth*⁹ report. Yassine challenged this allegation in an article published in his periodical “*al-jamā‘a*” which resulted in his second term in detention. Not only does Yassine allude occasionally to the notion of a “renewer” of Islam in his writings; the official statement of mission on his website cites the text of the *ḥadīth* report and confirms that *al-‘adl* seeks to be among those through whom God renews religion for the *umma*.¹⁰

Throughout the 1980s, the movement concentrated on publishing a number of periodicals and papers, most of them banned shortly after they had been launched.

⁸ *tārīkh jamā‘at al-‘adl wa al-ihsān*:

http://www.yassine.net/yo12/default.aspx?book=jamaa_hist&sm=21

⁹ traditional accounts normally of the Prophet’s (or his companions’ / successors’) behaviour.

¹⁰ *ta‘rīf*: http://www.yassine.net/yo12/Default.aspx?article=jamaa_aw_ta3rif

Towards the end of the decade, official attempts at disbanding the movement culminated in Yassine's being put under house-arrest on 30th December 1989, which was only lifted more than ten years later, on 16th May 2000.

Only four months before his release, his official website had been launched. Ever since, *al-'adl* has been trying to exploit the internet as a medium to propagate their message. Another indicator of the movement's increasingly international character is its publishing house in Iowa City, called "Justice and Spirituality Publishing."¹¹

Overview of Secondary Literature

The secondary literature written about Abdessalam Yassine and *al-'adl* in English is rather scarce. There are more extensive bodies of academic writing on the topic in the languages of the former colonial powers which controlled Morocco, i.e. French and Spanish; however, a comprehensive review of this material is outside the scope of this thesis. Most of the Anglophone literature approaches the movement's ideology from a political perspective. It is generally perceived as a kind of thwarted political party, and consequently analysis concentrates on *al-'adl*'s or Yassine's views on such issues as democracy, Western economic systems, and various ideologies (nationalism, secularism, etc.). Alternatively, writers have attempted to classify the movement on a scale from "harmless" to "violent" and thereby locate it on a map of Moroccan Islamist movements, normally assuming them to be primarily political. The following section aims to provide a brief overview of this literature in chronological order, starting from 1993 up to the present.

¹¹ www.jspublishing.net. So far, the company has only published two books of Yassine's, one translated from the French ("Winning the Modern World for Islam," 2000), and one from the Arabic ("The Muslim Mind on Trial," 2003).

In his book “Religion and Power in Morocco”¹² Henry Munson Jr. dedicates one chapter to “Fundamentalism in Late 20th Century Morocco,” in which he attempts a broader classification of the country’s Islamist movements into three categories: “sunni,” radical, and mainstream. Munson labels the sunni trend a “movement,” but then portrays it as various politically insignificant splinter groupings who are by definition traditionalist and quiescent. The other end of the spectrum, radical Islamism, is exemplified in Munson’s categorization by *al-shabība al-islāmiyya*, an Islamic Youth movement whose inflammatory rhetoric drew heavily on revolutionary communist discourse. The mainstream, finally is represented exclusively by Yassine and *al-‘adl*.

For his analysis of Yassine’s thought – and, by implication, the ideology of the movement as a whole – Munson relies heavily on *al-islām aw al-tūfān* (footnote 4). He then links it to the Moroccan tradition of *naṣīḥa*, an epistolary genre employed by mediaeval holy men to criticize the ruler, thus creating a theoretical historical-cultural continuum against which to measure Yassine’s letter. This analysis is followed by a factual account of the movement’s development up to the early 1990s and Yassine’s being placed under house-arrest.

Emad Eldin Shahin contributed a chapter entitled “Secularism and Nationalism: The Political Discourse of ‘Abd al-Salam Yassin” to John Ruedy’s book “Islamism and Secularism in North Africa.”¹³ Shahin neatly breaks down the main influences upon Yassine’s discourse into three components: firstly, he identifies Sufism as the origin of Yassine’s “emphasis on socialization, moral education, and spiritual preparation;” secondly, he traces the importance which Yassine attributes to organized activism and the “socio-political dimension of change” to the precedent

¹² Munson, op. cit.

¹³ Ruedy, J. (ed.): “Islamism and Secularism in North Africa,” (Macmillan 1994).

case of the Muslim Brotherhood; and finally, he characterizes Yassine's ideological discussions as derived from the greater tradition of *salafiyya* thought, since they are "based on the fundamental sources of Islam," i.e. the Quran and Sunna.

In terms of the nature of his methodology, the remainder of Shahin's chapter is somewhat similar to this thesis, with the exception that he concentrates on Yassine's reactions to Western encroachment, cultural and political. His analysis focuses on nationalism, secularism, the ideology of development, and Yassine's perception of socio-political issues such as Berber identity and the position of women in society. As such, Shahin does not examine Yassine's message in and for itself, but reduces it to a variety of reactions to external stimuli.

Shahin returns to the topic of Yassine and *al-'adl* three years later in his book "Political Ascent."¹⁴ In chapter five, "Under the Shadow of the Imam," he gives an account of the various Islamist movements in Morocco at the time. A few pages are also dedicated to *al-'adl*, but from the brief factual history of events there is no insight to be derived beyond that which Munson and Shahin himself had already published on earlier occasions.

In the chapter of his book "Islam, Democracy and the State in North Africa,"¹⁵ entitled "Political Islam in the Maghreb – The Non-violent Dimension," John P. Entelis classifies *al-'adl* as "reformist," by contrast to the other two categories which he proposes for analysis, i.e. "religious" and "radical." This classification seems loosely to follow Munson's, whom he summarizes extensively. In addition, Entelis outlines the socio-economic context of Morocco, against which Islamist movements define themselves.

¹⁴ Shahin, E. E.: "Political Ascent : Contemporary Islamic Movements in North Africa," Boulder, Colorado (Westview, 1997).

¹⁵ Entelis, J. P. (ed.): "Islam, Democracy and the State in North Africa," Bloomington (Indiana University Press, c1997).

Mohammed Taha el-Wardi's Master's thesis, "Islamists and the Outside World"¹⁶ focuses on Yassine's, and by extension *al-'adl's*, perception of the West, especially with relation to democracy and economic systems. For his research, el-Wardi concentrated exclusively on such publications of Yassine's as are considered by the members of *al-'adl* to be subsidiary to his main works, and reflect Yassine's attitude towards particular topics at the time of writing without necessarily defining the movement's policy.¹⁷

In his portrayal of *al-'adl*, Michael Willis is mainly concerned with determining the movement's position in the wider field of non-violent Islamist movements in Morocco.¹⁸ To this end, he concentrates on the interplay of political forces both within Morocco and on the international level. However, Willis also describes *al-'adl* as a movement in its own right as centred on the "writings and ideas of Abdeslam Yassine," a characteristic which he identifies both as a strength and a weakness, since the powerful personality of Yassine lends the movement coherence and appeal, while also putting it at risk when that leadership figure eventually dies.¹⁹ In terms of the movement's agenda and objectives, Willis' analysis is confined to short-term political goals.

¹⁶ el-Wardi, M. T.: "Islamists and the Outside World – The Case of Abdessalam Yassin and Al Adl Wal Ihssan," Al Akhawayn University Research Paper Series, No. 19 (2003).

¹⁷ *al-shūrā wa al-dimuqrāṭiyya* (Shura and Democracy, 1996), *fi al-iqtisād* (On the Economy, 1995), *hiwār ma' al-fuḍalā' al-dimuqrāṭiyyīn* (Dialogue With the Honourable Democrats, 1998), and *miḥnat al-'aql al-muslim* (The Muslim Mind on Trial, 1994). bibliography, p. 98. The view that these books are subsidiary explanations to *al-'adl – al-islāmiyyūn wa al-ḥukm* (Justice – The Islamists and Government), which in itself is subject to review according to historical, social, economic, and political circumstances, was expressed by both Abdelwahed Mutawakkil (secretary-general of *al-'adl's* Political Circle, and member of the Guidance Council) and Fathallah Arsalan (official spokesperson of the movement, and member of the Guidance Council). Author's interviews A and B: Salé, Morocco, 21st March 2007, and Rabat, Morocco, 22nd March 2007).

¹⁸ Willis, M. J.: Justice and Development or Justice and Spirituality? The Challenges of Morocco's Non-Violent Islamist Movements, awaiting publication.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 17.

In his article “A Difficult Inheritance: Moroccan Society under King Muhammad VI,”²⁰ Michael Laskier includes a section on the so-called “Islamist challenge” in which he also acknowledges Yassine and *al-‘adl*. Laskier gives a factual account of Yassine’s biography and the history of the movement’s development, including an overview of some of its practical activities, followed by an analysis of the “Memorandum to Whom it May Concern,”²¹ which according to Laskier was addressed to the “King of the Poor,” i.e. Muhammad VI in 1999 (Yassine’s official website gives the 28th of January 2000 as the date of publication).

In her Master’s thesis,²² Philippa Hannah Newman argues for a gradual shift in *al-‘adl*’s ideology as concerns the movement’s position towards democracy. She maintains that Yassine’s outlook was originally anti-democratic, and that the movement has now adopted democracy as one of its values.

One notable exception to the predominantly political approach scholars have taken in the study of Yassine’s thought is to be found in Henri Lauzière’s article “Post-Islamism and the Religious Discourse of ‘Abd al-Salam Yasin.”²³ Lauzière argues that spirituality occupies at least an equally important place in Yassine’s discourse as do political, social, and economic issues, and that “post-Islamist theory is unable to account for the fact that spirituality has been central to [...] Yasin’s discourse since 1972 ...”²⁴

This Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the extent to which Yassine’s thought has been misrepresented in Western, and especially Anglophone, academic writing.

²⁰ Laskier, op. cit.

²¹ modelled on “Islam or the Deluge” (cf. footnote 3, this thesis).

²² Newman, P. H. ‘Filling The Void: An Investigation Into Abdessalam Yassine’s Relationship With Democracy,’ MA Thesis. Durham University, 2005.

²³ Lauzière, H.: Post-Islamism and the Religious Discourse of ‘Abd al-Salam Yasin, IJMES 37 (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 241-261.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 243

Whilst his message certainly has political implications in its ultimate ends, these ends and the programme Yassine proposes in order to achieve them are primarily religious. The general outlines of this message, and its ultimate aims shall be sketched in this work, since they have been virtually neglected so far.

Studying *al-‘adl* is particularly worthwhile owing to the peculiarities of the movement. It is, e.g., the main Islamic extra-parliamentary opposition movement in an Arab state which is generally viewed as amongst the most promising in terms of political reform. Furthermore, its origins and structure differ from most other “Islamist” movements, mainly due to Yassine’s emphasis on spiritual education and the transformation of the individual as a prerequisite for social and political change.

Yassine’s written works are of central importance to the movement.²⁵ In his official capacity as its “General Guide,”²⁶ he ranks at the very top of *al-‘adl*’s pyramidal hierarchy, above the Guidance Council of very limited membership (fewer than ten persons), and the Consultative Council which has a little more than 100 members. His writings are used in study circles to induct new members into the movement, and thereby ensure ideological homogeneity.²⁷

The movement also organizes various other group-activities in which Yassine’s influence and that of his writings are defining ingredients. These include summer-camps devoted to learning about the correct way of life, or spiritual training sessions that last 40 days and are governed very strictly according to a schedule elaborated by Yassine (based on *ḥadīth* reports) that regulates every minute of the day

²⁵ cf. Willis, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁶ *al-murshid al-‘āmm*, a term for which Yassine is indebted to Hasan al-Banna.

²⁷ Tozy, op. cit., p. 199. Tozy goes so far as to call *al-minhāj al-nabawiyy* the movement’s “*petit livre rouge*.”

and night, and prescribes in painstaking detail all the minutiae of prayer, which verses to recite, which invocations to use, etc.²⁸

jihād as the pinnacle of spiritual education, and physical expression of the highest ideals of faith, represents the nexus between the external and internal, communal and individual dimensions of Yassine’s message – in other words, it is the vital link between *‘adl* and *ihsān*. Therefore, an examination of Yassine’s conception of *jihād* provides a clear and comprehensive statement of the ultimate goals of the movement.

Primary Sources

This thesis is based mainly on a detailed reading of two of Yassine’s books, namely *al-minhāj al-nabawiyy – tarbiyatan, tanzīman wa zaḥfan* (1981, henceforth: *al-minhāj*) and *al-ihsān* (1998). They belong to the so-called *ummahāt al-kutub* (lit. Mothers of Books, i.e. the most important and comprehensive works), of which Yassine has authored four in total. The remaining two, *al-‘adl – al-islāmiyyūn wa al-ḥukm* (2000), and *tanwīr al-mu’mināt* (1986) were not used.²⁹ The former is concerned primarily with the social and political realities of which the movement complains, and offers hypothetical solutions in terms of practical organization. As such, it is considered subject to changing historical circumstances and does not represent part of Yassine’s essential, unchanging message which informed the movement from its inception.³⁰ The latter concentrates particularly on such issues arising from Yassine’s message as concern women.

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 204-5.

²⁹ The dates given are those of first publication. For two books, Yassine’s website provides an additional, earlier “date of composition”: *al-ihsān* (10th January 1994), and *al-‘adl* (9th July 1998). This is significant to put into perspective certain allusions to current political events, esp. in *al-ihsān*, which was written over a period of seven years. Thus, Yassine had begun working on it well before the fall of the Soviet Union.

³⁰ Interview B.

Whilst *al-minhāj* is the most important, programmatic text Yassine has written, *al-ihsān* is by far the longest and most detailed. Much like *al-minhāj*, it follows the structure of the ten Characteristics that combine to shape the Godly Personality to which every Muslim should aspire.³¹ Thus, *al-ihsān* could be described as a supplementary text, elaborating on *al-minhāj*.

In addition to the books, extensive use was made of Yassine's official website. As mentioned above, the movement is trying to use the internet to its best advantage, and the resources available on the various sites associated with it³² are extensive. Yassine's own website now has nearly all his books available to read and print off free of charge, in addition to other documents such as his letters, video and audio recordings of lectures he has given or events that he has presided over. Visitors to his site can even participate live via webcam and chat in certain regular activities.

Of particular benefit to the uninitiated reader of Yassine's writings is a glossary of technical phrases and expressions he uses.³³ It is not entirely clear to which extent these are his own coinages, but he definitely wants them to be understood in precisely this way. Neither does he expect native speakers of Arabic to have a sufficient grasp of his terminology, since the glossary is monolingual.

The structure of *al-ihsān*

al-ihsān is divided into ten main chapters, each one of them devoted to one of the ten Characteristics of the Godly Personality. *jihād* is the tenth Characteristic, which is to indicate the highest degree of priority; the fact that *jihād* permeates the other nine Characteristics; and that certain aspects of *jihād* cannot be undertaken

³¹ cf. "The Godly Personality – Characteristics and Affluents," this thesis, p. 15.

³² the movement's: <http://www.aljamaa.info/ar/index.asp>, that of the women's branch: <http://www.mouminate.net/>, and that of Yassine's daughter Nadia: <http://nadiayassine.net/ar/index.htm>

³³ *mafāhīm minhājīyya*: <http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mafahimes/mafahimes.asp>

unless the other nine are assimilated in the personality of an individual to a sufficient degree.³⁴ Thus, the last chapter presents extensively Yassine's understanding of the concept of *jihād*.

The chapter itself is then subdivided into eleven sections as follows:

- 1) *tarīq al-mujāhada* (The Way of Fighting [the desires of the self]),
- 2) *tarīqat al-shukr* (The Way of Gratitude [for God's grace]),
- 3) *al-mahdawiyya* (Mahdism),
- 4) *jihād fī al-ḥitna* (*jihād* in Times of Disunity),
- 5) *huwiyya iḥsāniyya* (The Muslim Identity),
- 6) *faḍl al-jihād* (The Merit of *jihād*),
- 7) *rijāl* (Men)³⁵
- 8) *al-qawma* (The Uprising),
- 9) *binā' al-dawla al-islāmiyya* (Building the Islamic State)
- 10) *al-waḥda* (Unity),
- 11) *shu'ab al-īmān* (The Affluents – or Tributaries – of Faith)³⁶

Yassine's writing is structured by extraneous elements such as verses from the Quran, *ḥadīth* reports, or historic traditions upon which he either comments, or which serve to illustrate his argument. Interestingly, Yassine concludes each subsection with a selection of verse, both famous and anonymous, before finishing with a few lines of his own.

³⁴ Interview B.

³⁵ *rijāl* in Yassine's discourse is a technical term derived from Quranic usage.

³⁶ cf. "The Godly Personality – Characteristics and Affluents," this thesis, p. 15.

2) *al-minhāj al-nabawiyy*

Introduction

Before discussing Yassine's concept of *jihād* in *al-minhāj*, a brief introduction to the book and the meaning of its title are indispensable, since it is the most central text which has informed the ideology of *al-'adl* throughout the movement's history. It is furthermore the name of Yassine's entire programme for Islamic change. The following overview is based on a summary of the book which Yassine provides on his official website.³⁷

The "Way of the Prophet," according to Yassine, leads to meeting God. However, he wants the word *minhāj* to be understood in a more complex manner. The word is formed on the *mif'āl* pattern, which, according to Yassine, is used either as the name of a tool (e.g. *miftāh*, key = tool for opening), the name of a location (e.g. *mirṣād* – observation post), or a verbal noun (for which he cites *mi'rāj* as an example, i.e. Muhammad's legendary Night Journey to the Seven Heavens). The basic meaning of the root *n-h-j* is that of "following a path," as well as "being clear." Consequently, Yassine's *minhāj* is meant to be at least three things simultaneously: a) a tool for clarifying things, b) the actual way on which to proceed, and c) the progress on this way.³⁸

The origin of Yassine's technical term *minhāj* is to be found in the Quran:³⁹

"We sent down the Book with the Truth, confirming all that went before it of the

³⁷ *mukhtaṣar al-minhāj al-nabawiyy*:

http://www.yassine.net/yo12/Default.aspx?article=Minhaj_summary_2

³⁸ Lauzière mentions only two of these, cf. Lauzière, op. cit, p. 251.

³⁹ Translations from the Quran are my own. Occasionally, the choice of words was influenced by: Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali, Muhammad, and Muhsin Khan, Muhammad: "The Noble Qur'an – English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary," King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an (1417 AH). Reference to suras shall be made by Roman, to verses by Arabic numerals. Quran henceforth: Q.

Book. Rule (or: judge) them by that which God has sent down, and do not follow their desires away from that which has come to you of the Truth. For each of you We have made a Law and a Path (*minhāj*).”⁴⁰ Yassine’s understanding of the verse is based on a *ḥadīth* report attributed to Ibn Abbas: “*shir‘a* (Law) is that which is mentioned in the Quran, and *minhāj* is that which is mentioned in the Sunna (i.e. *ḥadīth*, specifically about Muhammad).”⁴¹ Both *shir‘a* and *minhāj*, Yassine points out, literally mean “way” or “path.” Furthermore, Yassine maintains that Q – V:48 contains God’s promise of the Quran’s “hegemony over all thought, that of God’s command over all other commands [...]” In other words, Islam and Muslims are promised leadership of the world if they obey God’s commands and follow Muhammad’s example.⁴² Quran and Sunna contain all truth.⁴³ However, the way to translate them into practical action is not clear from them in themselves.⁴⁴ This project of “translation” Yassine proposes to undertake in writing *al-minhāj*.

Muhammad’s *jihād* elevated the early Muslim community to the peaks of faith and *iḥsān*. Likewise, it instituted the proper caliphate amongst them by organizing the community into a state.⁴⁵ This interpretation of history encapsulates neatly Yassine’s dichotomous conception of Justice and Spirituality, and their being contained in *jihād: tarbiya* is the method to achieve personal development towards the highest humanly-attainable degree of spiritual perfection (*iḥsān*); and *tanzīm* (the process by which pious individuals are “organized” into an effective movement) is linked directly to the

⁴⁰ Q – V:48.

⁴¹ *minhāj al-nubuwwa*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=3&ChapterID=270&Lang=1256>

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ cf. Shahin’s chapter in Ruedy, op. cit. for a discussion of *salafīyy* influences on Yassine’s thought.

⁴⁴ *minhāj al-nubuwwa*, op. cit.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

affairs of the community or state, and as such concerned with social, political and economic justice (*'adl*).⁴⁶

One and the same path will lead the individual believer towards God, and the community towards ending its enslavement to its enemies. Since Muslims are required to spend their money and their lives for the sake of God in *jihād* as a means for personal salvation, communal salvation is part and parcel of the spiritual journey of the individual.

Despite the technological and scientific advancements of the present age, Muslims should not forget that the actual, practical model to follow is still Muhammad's. Yassine even mentions that the spiritual education of the nascent Muslim community around Muhammad at Mecca, i.e. their greater *jihād* (in the most specific, "preparatory" sense), lasted thirteen years. Thereafter, he says, the greater *jihād* accompanied the lesser (i.e. Muhammad's raids on Meccan caravans, etc.) over the following ten years. He furthermore points out that raids against Quraysh during that period were carried out on average "every two months or so" in order to allow for adequate preparation of the next operation in between.⁴⁷ Yassine's reasons for including these details are not clear. One explanation could be that he intended to model the formation of his own organization strictly based on the time-table as laid out by Muhammad's historic example. Given his literalistic reading of *ḥadīth* in other contexts,⁴⁸ the idea does not seem inconceivable.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Yassine, Abdessalam: "*al-minhāj al-nabawiyy – tarbiyatan wa tanzīman wa zahfan*," 4th edition, *dār al-āfāq*, (Casablanca 2001), p. 342.

⁴⁸ cf. e.g. *yawm al-mu'min wa laylatuhu*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=118&ChapterID=1&Lang=1256>

The Godly Personality – Characteristics and Affluents

According to Yassine, the true *mujāhid* is the believer who has complete faith. Far from being an empty phrase, Yassine conceptualizes complete faith as an entity which can be subdivided into 77 *shu‘ab* (usually translated as “branches,” but Yassine thinks of them as rivulets that flow into the greater river of faith, thereby inverting the conventional understanding of the term).⁴⁹ In Muslim’s *ṣaḥīḥ* (compilation of sound *ḥadīth* traditions), the tradition is commented upon by ranking the affluents from the loftiest (defined as “[saying and believing that] there is no god but God”) to the lowliest (which is “removing an obstacle from the road”).

In order to give his followers a clearer picture of the 77 affluents, Yassine groups them into ten “Characteristics” (*khiṣāl*).⁵⁰ Without giving a reference, Yassine states that the ten *khiṣāl* are not his own invention, but taken from *ḥadīth* literature, where they are enumerated. In Yassine’s view, a Muslim should strive to combine in himself all ten Characteristics to the greatest possible degree, and thereby aspire to the Godly Personality (*al-shakhṣiyya al-rabbāniyya*). Yassine does not teach that humans can actually attain to the level of divine qualities. However, every human being should take them as guiding ideals in moulding his or her character.⁵¹ Each of the ten *khiṣāl* has its group of affluents that strengthen and constitute it.⁵² Yasin has grouped

⁴⁹ Yassine traces back his understanding of faith to a saying attributed to Muhammad in a *ḥadīth* report: *al-īmān biḍ‘ wa sab‘ūn shu‘ba* (in Muslim, i.e. “seventy-something.” In Bukhari: *biḍ‘ wa sittūn*, i.e. “sixty-odd”)

⁵⁰ They are: 1) *al-ṣuḥba wa al-jamā‘a*, 2) *al-dhikr*, 3) *al-ṣidq*, 4) *al-badh*, 5) *al-‘ilm*, 6) *al-‘amal*, 7) *al-samt al-hasan*, 8) *al-tu‘da*, 9) *al-iqtīṣād*, and 10) *al-jihād*. For the specific significance of each, cf. *al-khiṣāl al-‘ashr*: http://www.yassine.net/yo12/Default.aspx?book=alminhaj_part5_04&m=1&sm=17

⁵¹ hence the unusual adjective *rabbāniyy* (divine). Interview B.

⁵² Even though the 77 affluents by themselves are more important than the Characteristics into which they are divided for purposes of “organization.” *ibid*. Yassine groups six affluents together as belonging to *jihād*. They are: 1) the greater and lesser pilgrimage to Mecca, 2) fighting the holy war [of defending the realm of Islam in this world] for God’s sake, 3) emulating the Prophet and his companions in *jihād*, 4) Caliphate and “Emirate,” 5) the pledge of allegiance and obedience [to the

and ranked them to outline his programme of action for education, organisation of the movement, and eventually *jihād*.⁵³

jihād, in relation to the other nine Characteristics (*khiṣāl*) of the Godly Personality, is the culmination and product of following the Affluents of Faith. In fact, the very aim of all Islamic spiritual education ought to be to produce soldiers to fight *jihād* for the sake of God.⁵⁴

The other nine Characteristics, however, should not be neglected even in *jihād*. They ought to be as “permanent tributaries that strengthen the river of faith.” All 77 Affluents should combine as a driving force to motivate believers for *jihād*. Only in this way, claims Yassine, can “the virtues of faith become manifest in events that determine the course of history.”⁵⁵

Each of the ten Characteristics supports the others, and each prepares the initiate for the next. Thus, his journey commences by making the acquaintance of the members of “the community,” i.e. *al-‘adl*, and culminates at the pinnacle, which is *jihād*. Yassine furthermore stresses the importance of the first steps on the individual and communal road towards *jihād* as a condition upon which the entire spiritual journey depends. The results, he writes, cannot be better than the preparations.⁵⁶

In my interviews with Abdelwahed Mutawakkil and Fathallah Arsalan,⁵⁷ both were keen to emphasize that the Characteristics and Affluents should be understood as a coherent whole rather than a journey in clearly delineated stages. In the light of Yassine’s description, the main intention behind their remarks appears to have been to

Islamic government], and 6) calling people to God. cf. *al-jihād - shu‘ab al-khaṣla*:
http://www.yassine.net/yo12/Default.aspx?book=alminhaj_part5_14_3

⁵³ *jihād* being the tenth of the *khiṣāl* for various reasons. Firstly, being defined as “any effort for the sake of God,” *jihād* permeates the other nine. Secondly, it enjoys the highest priority out of the ten. Interview A.

⁵⁴ Yassine, op. cit., p. 332.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 332.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 333.

⁵⁷ Interviews A and B.

point out that the ten Characteristics do not represent isolated phases that follow each other in mutual exclusion, but that they are built on each other, with *ṣuḥba* and *jamā'a* as the foundation, and *jihād* as the roof of the edifice, to employ an architectural metaphor.

The Eleven Types of *jihād*

Yassine divides the Characteristic of *jihād* into 11 types. They are:

- 1) *jihād al-naḥs* (against the self)
- 2) *jihād al-māl* (by means of one's material possessions)
- 3) *jihād al-ta'līm* (of education)
- 4) *jihād al-amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*
(of enjoining good deeds and forbidding wicked ones)
- 5) *jihād al-kalima wa al-ḥujja* (of word and argument)⁵⁸
- 6) *jihād al-ta'bi'a wa al-binā'* (of mobilization and construction)⁵⁹
- 7) *al-jihād al-siyāsiyy* (political *jihād*)
- 8) *jihād al-tanfīdh* (of implementation)⁶⁰
- 9) *jihād al-kufr* (against unbelief)
- 10) *jihād al-namūdhaj al-nājiḥ* (of successful example)
- 11) *jihād al-tawḥīd* (of unification)

The 11 types shall here be re-grouped under three general headings: 1)

Spiritual Education, 2) Ideology and Indoctrination, and 3) Establishing the Islamic

⁵⁸ Some of these are exemplified by the history of the movement itself. cf. *tārīkh jamā'at al-'adl wa al-iḥsān*, op. cit. The *jihād* of the Word, e.g., is identified with the very first phase (1974 – 1981) whose starting point is Yassine's open letter to Hasan II (*al-islām aw al-tūfān*).

⁵⁹ possibly corresponding to the second phase of "Organized Activism" (1981 – 1985), *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *tanfīdh* describes the third phase (1985 – 1990) during which the movement grew in numbers, and the Executive Council, including branch-committees (students, teachers, etc.), was set up. (*ibid.*)

State. Despite the fact that several types of *jihād* actually span two, some even all three, categories, Yassine's 11 types shall be retained here in order to demonstrate his conceptualization of *jihād* as a whole.

According to Yassine, all 11 types are absolutely indispensable, even though the greater *jihād* (the spiritual struggle to subdue selfish desires) remains incumbent upon Muslims always, whereas the most specific instance of the lesser *jihād* (i.e. the uprising) is its "decisive moment." Unfortunately, there emerges no explicit overlap between these eleven kinds of *jihād* and the titles of the eleven subsections into which the chapter on *jihād* in *al-ihsān* is divided (cf. above), even though the themes recur.

Spiritual Education

The emphasis on the spiritual education of the individual is among the pre-eminent features of Yassine's thought. Under this heading shall be included two types of *jihād*, namely that against the self, and that which is fought by means of material possessions.

jihād al-nafs

This type of *jihād* designates the internal struggle to subdue the desires of the self. It is thus directly related to and dependent on *tarbiya*. According to Yassine, spiritual education is the very foundation of *jihād* considered as a whole. It is the process by which the willingness to sacrifice one's life and possessions is instilled in people.⁶¹

⁶¹ Yassine, op. cit., p. 345.

The collective power of the movement (*jamā'a*) to change history springs from the heart of each of its members. Consequently, Yassine describes spiritual education as the “foremost front in *jihād*,”⁶² referring to the Quran:

“God does not change anything for a people until they change that which is in their selves.”⁶³

Every Muslim must exert his utmost efforts in subduing the desires of the self; however, no-one can be expected to win this struggle completely in their lifetime. Therefore, Yassine insists on the fundamental principle of “forbearance towards Muslims, severity towards unbelievers”⁶⁴ in the greater *jihād*. Said principle is meant to convey the importance of acknowledging one’s own shortcomings, and seeking the assistance of one’s brethren in faith to perfect the soul. In Yassine’s opinion, the meaning of the verse from which he derived the principle has been perverted by the social, political and economic realities in the Muslim world at the very least since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, i.e. by nominally Muslim rulers and elites who allow foreign powers to act on the stage of world-politics as they please, while simultaneously exploiting and oppressing the Muslim masses in their own countries.⁶⁵

tarbiya is not the same as “formal education, or rigid mental drills.” The purpose of *tarbiya* is that people may know God so that they come closer to Him until He loves them and bestows upon them that which he has granted “His friends” (i.e. Muslim saints). Progress in *tarbiya* is brought about by any word, deed or thought pleasing to God, and strict emulation of the Sunna of His Prophet.

Throughout the personal, spiritual development that is the aim of *tarbiya*, believers must continually “renew their repentance, ensure that their intentions are

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 350.

⁶³ Q – XIII:11

⁶⁴ derived from Q – V:54.

⁶⁵ Yassine, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

sound and pure, and always be mindful of God so as not to forget their selves.”⁶⁶ The self must be subdued by means of “purification” or “chastening,” enlightened by acts of devotion, and tamed by doing good deeds. If this is not achieved in each individual, the entire organization (i.e. *al-‘adl*) as well as the *umma* as a whole will “perish” and revert to the state of weakness and illness characterized by a love for this world and fear of death.⁶⁷

jihād al-māl

jihād al-māl refers to the spending of one’s money and giving one’s possessions and money unconditionally for the sake of God and the *umma*. Though ostensibly concerned with the most material aspect of the Islamist movement, this type of *jihād* is included here under the heading of *tarbiya* since it relies heavily on spiritual education to sever the ties which bind the individual to worldly possessions, and as such is related closely to the fourth of the ten Characteristics (*al-badhī*, giving generously).

Once God, and death for His sake, have become a person’s highest goal, he will not hesitate to give his money even in the hour of need. This readiness to give will continue even after the victorious uprising,⁶⁸ so that all expenses of the Islamic state can be met. Yassine argues that God provides for whom He pleases without an invoice. Consequently, those who believe in Him ought to spend of that which they have been given without expecting anything in return, except their due reward after death.

The highest goal of spiritual education with respect to material possessions (and all things of this world, including people of whom one is fond) is to sever one’s

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 352. For Yassine’s use of medical analogies, cf. Lauzière, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁶⁸ *qawma*, cf. “The Uprising,” this thesis, p. 73.

personal attachment to them in order to turn one's whole being towards God. Yassine derives also this principle from the Quran:⁶⁹ “[...] If your fathers, sons, brothers, spouses, and other kinsfolk, if the wealth which you have gained, the trade whose decline you fear, and your houses in which you delight, [if all of this] is dearer to you than God, His Prophet, and *jihād* for His sake, then wait until God pronounces His judgment [...]”

Yassine draws the reader's attention to the verb used in this verse for “to gain” (*iqtarafa*). He states that *iqtarafa* is used five times in the Quran. Once it refers explicitly to licit and praiseworthy gain, whilst three times its connotations are unequivocally negative. Therefore, even if at first sight *iqtarafa* seems to be used in a neutral sense in IX:24, Yassine is inclined to read it as implying that the method of gaining wealth was morally unsound. “If the love for amassing riches distracts from the love for God, and if wealth is spent for purposes other than *jihād*, it is indeed a sinful crime.”⁷⁰

Good and rightful wealth is defined by its being spent for God's sake; it is the “muscle” and material pre-condition of *jihād*. This is the reason why Yassine lists *jihād al-māl* directly after *jihād al-nafs*. Since it is difficult to gauge anyone's sincerity in abstract terms, or judging only by their statements, Yassine proposes to take material expenses, in addition to the remainder of physical efforts undertaken, as one criterion to measure the degree of a person's dedication to the cause. He goes so far as to state that, in terms of factual evidence for true adherence to the stipulations in Q – IX:24, the most important kind is the material contributions made by each

⁶⁹ Q – IX:24.

⁷⁰ Yassine, op. cit., p. 352.

member of the movement. Money is the most important means to convert intention and willpower into tangible results.⁷¹

Even though individual members of the movement are admonished to rid themselves of all personal material concerns, they must not forget that the movement as a whole is in need of money. Yassine lists the specific items on the movement's collective bill as follows: "The one who devotes all his time to *jihād* [i.e. without an independent source of income] requires money to cover the expenses of his family; centres, employees, publications, means of transport, and weapons in the case of an armed uprising all require money."⁷²

Yassine links this type of *jihād* directly with the fourth of the ten Characteristics, i.e. *al-badh* ("giving generously"). The meaning and intent of *al-badh* in terms of spiritual education is to purify God's army of the "disease of avarice." According to Yassine, this is the first step on the road towards salvation, based on a passage in the Quran:⁷³ "Whosoever is saved from the avarice of his self, those are the *muflihūn* [the ones attaining *falāh* / salvation]." In terms of the community of Muslims worldwide, and the movement, *al-badh* means giving generously of one's possessions to further all kinds of *jihād*.

Whereas the greater *jihād* in its strictest sense (the first of the eleven types, *jihād al-nafs*) provides the "spirit," the monetary contributions of the movement's members are necessary to endow the spirit with a "body" which can bring about actual changes in social and political reality. Elaborating on this metaphor, Yassine likens other, non-Islamic political movements which are financially well-endowed to "bodies without souls," mercenary robots who move mechanically but have no understanding of the metaphysical implications of their actions.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 353.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Q – LIX:9.

The other extreme is faith devoid of material means of expression. Such a kind of faith, maintains Yassine, “remains silent when people speak, absent when they congregate, ignorant when they learn, indifferent when they incite public opinion against it, and unarmed when they acquire the deadliest weapons:”

“We cannot fight a soldier carrying a machine-gun with feathered arrows. Neither can a reticent word counterbalance the enemy media.”⁷⁴

Anyone joining the movement must be taught rationally at first that no-one is entitled to worldly possessions. By means of *tarbiya*, this rational understanding will eventually be transformed into an emotional appreciation of the fact that everything which people think they own is bestowed upon them by divine grace. The highest level of understanding is the unshakeable certainty that everything in creation belongs to God alone, and that human beings have only been put in charge of it as God’s trustees. However, this certainty should not prevent Muslims from striving for licit gain and the legal increase of their wealth if this is done with the benefit of the *umma* and the necessary collective expenses of *jihād* in mind.

The particular importance of *jihād al-māl* to Yassine lies in its role as a source of income for the movement. It is especially important that *al-‘adl* remain financially independent, since “he who feeds you is your master.” In terms of the particulars of organizational structure (*tanzīm*),⁷⁵ the general funds of *al-‘adl*, as well as the funds of the Families and Branches⁷⁶ are replenished by the regular contributions of their members. In addition, they receive voluntary donations, and a portion from the *zakāh* tax.

⁷⁴ Yassine, op. cit., p. 353.

⁷⁵ which changes according to social and political circumstances, as both Abdelwahed Mutawakkil and Fathallah Arsalan were anxious to emphasize. Interviews A and B.

⁷⁶ local and regional “cells” of the movement, cf. Tozy, op. cit., pp. 199-201.

Ideology and Indoctrination

Four types of *jihād* belong into this category. They are the *jihād* of education, of enjoining good things and forbidding wicked ones, of word and proof, and that against unbelief. Even though it may not be obvious from their names, they are mainly concerned with the ideological purity of the Islamic discourse, and the effort to imbue people with a Muslim identity that is devoid of Western influences.

jihād al-ta'lim

The *jihād* “of education” covers two general areas: firstly, it is concerned with spreading the message of Islam, and “teaching people about the Truth;” secondly it encompasses formal education in the conventional sense of the word, both in terms of elementary skills such as literacy, as well as the Islamic fields of learning.

Yassine’s conception of education is coupled with the notion of *tablīgh* (spreading the message of Islam).⁷⁷ The *da‘wa* (i.e. those people who are actively calling others to God conceptualized as a coherent group) have shrunk in numbers and influence since the first centuries of Islam, when “seeking knowledge and passing it on were considered a religious obligation.”⁷⁸ Due to the historical development of Islamic politics, claims Yassine, the *da‘wa* had the choice between rallying round the unjust rulers or withdrawing completely from the sphere of public influence. The direct connection between *da‘wa* and *ta'lim* becomes eminently clear in the following quote:

“The one thing which the rulers of today fear the most – and especially after the Iranian revolution – is a movement calling people to God (*jamā‘at da‘wa*)

⁷⁷ *tablīgh* can also mean “conveyance or revelation of a message (by a prophet), cf. Cowan, J.M. (ed.): “The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,” 4th ed. (Ithaca 1994). This meaning underlines Yassine’s implicit notion that the movement (*al-‘adl*) inherited from Muhammad his mission to deliver the message of Islam.

⁷⁸ Yassine, op. cit., p. 355.

who instruct the *umma* and strengthen its ranks (*tu'allim al-umma wa tuqawwi şufūfahā*).”⁷⁹

Today, those who teach people goodness (*mu'allimū al-nās al-khayr*) play a marginal part in public life, when they ought to be the very backbone of the *umma*. They should be given the opportunity and the means to save the Muslim community from its “spiritual and intellectual barrenness, from lack of faith and manliness, and to lead it to the light out of the darkness of ignorance.”⁸⁰

Yassine envisages the “vanguard of the *umma*, God’s army in *jihād*” (i.e. *al-adl*) as the above-described teachers. In this context, he spells out the otherwise implied parallel between the role of *al-adl* and that of Muhammad: “They were sent in order to teach, as God’s Prophet was sent as a teacher.”⁸¹ Yassine sees his mission as the direct inheritance of Muhammad’s message.

jihād al-ta'lim in this light is, essentially, the re-delivery of God’s message to the Muslim community. It is the formal instruction in Islamic knowledge that complements the spiritual education which is *tarbiya*. Both combine to form the complete Islamic education. Yassine distinguishes between them conceptually, but does not advocate two parallel “systems” of education. In fact, Yassine’s description of the methods of *ta'lim* does not sound formal or systematic at all: “We must form an organized, wide-spread army to teach and spread the word (*yu'allim wa yuballigh*) in the cities and villages, in mosques and schools, in houses and the streets, in the workplace and during break-times, causing people to love Islam and faith.”⁸²

According to Yassine, the only educational efforts undertaken by the governments in the Muslim world today are aimed at eradicating illiteracy. He claims

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*

that the motivation behind these efforts is purely economic, since “the educated produces more than the ignorant.” The issue of elementary education is of particular relevance and urgency in Morocco, where especially in rural areas the illiteracy rate remains significantly higher than in other countries of the Arab world. Hence, Yassine’s accusation that the incumbent authorities fail even in their attempt to bring about such fundamental improvements is especially applicable to the Moroccan context.⁸³ *jihād al-ta’līm* should cover also this area of education, i.e. the spread of literacy and knowledge of elementary arithmetic. It is part of the improvement of daily life and social relations which is subsumed in the greater Islamic project.

After the successful uprising, and subsequent establishment of the Islamic state, *jihād al-ta’līm* will be extended in scope to include such tasks and projects as the complete re-structuring of the system of education, including the “purification” of all related institutions from the “propagators of atheism.” The aim of this project is to rectify public opinion, to spread “the word of Truth,” and to anchor Islamic concepts in people’s way of thinking.⁸⁴

jihād al-amr bi al-ma’rūf wa al-nahy ‘an al-munkar

“Enjoining good deeds and forbidding wicked ones” (henceforth: *amr* and *nahy*) in Yassine’s conception is a mutually complementary code of behaviour which draws upon two kinds of authority. The first is the internal, implicit authority of the Quran in the hearts of believers, and the other is the external authority of the state. According to Yassine, both employ “stick and carrot” (*al-targhīb wa al-tarhīb*) to “exact voluntary and involuntary obedience.”⁸⁵ As such, this type of *jihād* is extremely amorphous and therefore difficult to classify. It takes different forms before

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 356

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 357

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

and after the uprising, and ought to be exercised differently by individuals and the community as a whole. Since it requires sufficiently wide-spread “education” in both senses of the word, Yassine lists it after *tarbiya* and *ta’līm*.

According to Yassine, the Islamic state is not an end in itself. He accuses of muddling the facts and contradicting the Quran those who claim that the ultimate goal of Islam as a religion is to set up a state. The Islamic state must be established as a tool to ensure that Muslims abide by God’s revealed law.

Until the day when the Islamic state will become a political reality, Yassine urges Muslims to act according to a *ḥadīth* report attributed to Muhammad which runs as follows:

“Everyone of you who sees an evil [deed, condition, etc.] ought to change it with his hand. If he is incapable of that, then [he should change it] with his tongue. And if he is incapable of that, then with his heart, and that is the weakest [kind of] faith.”⁸⁶

That is to say that Muslims ought to intervene and prevent actively other people’s sinful behaviour. Speaking out to criticize it is the next best option, and silently condemning it in one’s heart is the least valuable of the three.

This type of *jihād* cannot precede *jihād al-ta’līm* because Muslims need to know first precisely what is good and what is wicked according to the formal teachings of their religion. On the level of individual believers, the duty to “enjoin good things and forbid wicked ones” takes the form of daily, specific instances of good and bad, whereas the state or the community as a whole is entrusted with upholding the totality of God’s commands everywhere.

⁸⁶ cf. e.g. al-Shawish, Z. (ed.): “*sharḥ matn al-arba’īn al-nawawīyya – min al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa fī qawā’id al-dīn – li al-imām yaḥyā b. sharaf al-nawawīyy*,” *al-maktab al-islāmīyy*, (Beirut 1993). *al-ḥadīth al-rābi‘ wa al-thalāthūn*, p. 107.

Yassine's understanding of *amr* and *nahy* at times seems to approximate the principles according to which certain socialist secret services used to ensure superficial ideological homogeneity among the people.⁸⁷ During the centuries of un-Islamic rule, says Yassine, the kind of behaviour associated with *amr* and *nahy* has fallen into disregard, and is generally considered the domain of a minority of zealous individuals without official support. In the Islamic state, the masses shall be educated to participate in public vigilance to ensure proper Islamic behaviour at all times.⁸⁸

Yassine condemns the “misguided excesses” to which a faulty understanding of this type of *jihād* has led under un-Islamic rule. He mentions especially attacks by Muslims on Muslims on grounds of dogmatic or sectarian differences, which distract them from the greater evil (*al-munkar al-akbar*) as embodied in the unjust government itself. He also expresses displeasure at the “misapplication” of the principle to justify violent action against superficial symptoms of Western influence, such as attacks on bars, cinemas or night-clubs:

“We must not squander our energies in pursuing the symptoms of the disease [...] We cannot gag those profligate mouths, neither suppress adulterers and drunkards, nor close down bars and cinemas [...].”⁸⁹

Despite the fact that such actions are actually the strongest expression of faith (cf. *ḥadīth*), they are not advisable because they oftentimes provoke negative reactions, and therefore prove counterproductive. Furthermore, they do not solve the problem: “Killing a prostitute in the street or raiding a bar cannot be aims in themselves.”⁹⁰ Yassine urges Muslims not to waste their lives in a futile struggle

⁸⁷ notably the East German Staatssicherheit with its extensive system of “internal collaborators.”

⁸⁸ Yassine, op. cit., p. 358.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

against the “poisonous fruit,” but to cut down the entire tree upon which they grow, i.e. to end un-Islamic government.

jihād al-kalima wa al-ḥujja

The *jihād* of “word and proof” is the effort to counteract a perceived propagandistic media campaign against the Islamic cause, and the project to elaborate a completely self-contained Islamic “discourse,” under which heading Yassine includes the adaption of classical jurisprudence to the present age.

Yassine claims that propaganda campaigns in the media directed by both blocs in the Cold War, as well as the incumbent governments of the nation states in the Muslim world, were launched to obscure the truth about the “Islamic awakening” in Iran and Afghanistan, and to deepen the existing sectarian and national rifts in the *umma*. In this campaign, Yassine alleges, Imam Khomeini was portrayed as a “blood-thirsty Satan,” and the Shi’ite *‘ulamā’* as “murderous savages.”⁹¹

According to Yassine, the *umma* must be re-educated to appreciate that the Islamic Revolution in Iran was wider-reaching and more profound than any other historical revolutionary movement. To him, it demonstrated the potential of the “oppressed” when their faith has been rekindled. First the “spirit of *jihād*” became apparent when the Iranian people were confronted with the tanks of the Shah’s regime, and then when the Iranian army faced the Western conspiracy with Saddam Hussein as the “fist of the infidels against Islam.”⁹²

If the “searchlights” of international attention in the 1980s were trained on the “Islamic awakening” in Iran and Afghanistan, as Yassine expresses it, then the continuing international preoccupation with and growing awareness of the role of

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 360

⁹² *ibid.*

Islam in politics in the region today provide ever changing “frontlines” for this kind of counter-propaganda project, which is the main element of the *jihād* of word and proof.

However, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, rectifying the allegedly distorted portrayal of Islamism in the media is not the only aim of this type of *jihād*. In addition, it signifies also the ambition to elaborate a purely Islamic discourse (which ought to consist exclusively of theories and concepts derived from the Islamic literary tradition).⁹³ Yassine complains that Muslims continually fall short of the desired level of purity in terms of their conceptual means of apprehending life in this world. In this context, he refers to a Quranic verse⁹⁴ to prove that everything is contained in the sacred scripture of Islam: “We did not neglect anything in the Book.”

One problem which in Yassine’s view contributed to the deterioration of the “Islamic discourse,” is that the ‘*ulamā*’ were forbidden to express themselves freely whilst they were “harnessed to the cart of the ruler, and flung into the corner of disregard”⁹⁵ for centuries. Yassine rejects the academic study of Islam in the framework of the Western university as a means of reviving such a discourse. Neither does he approve of those who call for absolutely independent reasoning to create a contemporary “version” of the Sharia, as he sees the positive rules of applied *fiqh* which the ‘*ulamā*’ of the past have established, as an immortal heritage to the *umma*.⁹⁶ Moreover he contends that unbridled *ijtihad* (the exercise of individual reason for the derivation of new laws within the framework of Islamic Law) leads to complete arbitrariness, since people who claim that nothing but Book and Sunna have

⁹³ another indication of Yassine’s *salafīyy* tendencies, cf. Shahin in Ruedy, op. cit.

⁹⁴ Q – VI:38.

⁹⁵ Yassine, op. cit., p. 361.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

been left to the present generation of Muslims by definition imply that their own interpretation of the two is the only valid one.⁹⁷

This does not mean, however, that Yassine advocates a literalist traditionalism (*taqlīd*), which he condemns for failing to take into account the changing times. In spite of their achievements in defining positive law, he says, the ‘*ulamā*’ of bygone centuries had no notion of the issues facing the Muslim world today, such as that of infidel rule without a functioning caliphate.

In order for the *jihād* of word and proof to be effective, it must be coupled with that of education. Yassine speaks vaguely of “knowledge and education” that address, in their totality, “workers and peasants, men and women, friends and enemies, and tell them how the Quran can be made into a practical law to govern everyday life, distribute wealth, organize the economy, industrialize the country, and ultimately lead to the triumph of God’s religion on earth.”⁹⁸ In this quote it becomes clear that Yassine is trying to establish an Islamic “ideology” to rival those of Communism and Capitalism, divided into which he viewed the world.

He then sub-divides the Islamic ideology further into the spiritual and secular spheres. While the discourse of spirituality is aimed at those who are already Muslims, the discourse of justice (including education, healthcare, employment, etc.) can be addressed directly to all mankind. Thus, the “Quranic discourse” encompasses the spiritual as well as the material, and speaks to “the soul in its yearning [for God], the self in its depths [where passions lurk], the mind in its abstraction, and the body in its needs.”⁹⁹

“Translated thought” in the form of imported, non-Islamic ideology and philosophy undermines the *umma*, saps its strength, and diverts it from Islam. Yassine

⁹⁷ for fiqh as a “residual issue” in Yassine’s thought, cf. Lauzière, op. cit., 245 pp.

⁹⁸ Yassine, op. cit., p. 362.

⁹⁹ ibid., p. 363

admonishes Muslims not to be fooled by the fact that the discourse of westernized intellectuals is written in Arabic, the language Islam. The ideas of such intellectuals, he claims, are “replete with meanings and concepts which the Quran condemns.”¹⁰⁰

He criticizes non-Islamic ideologies especially for their complete “disregard for the fate of the soul after death.” The Quranic discourse must not be divested of its transcendental ingredients (Heaven and Hell, etc.) to be made compatible with the discourse of the westernized elite, lest it should lose its Islamic nature and enter the debate “half-crippled from the outset.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 364

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

jihād al-kufr

Yassine's definition of *kufr* in this context relies heavily on a *ḥadīth* report attributed to Ali, linking unbelief directly with poverty.¹⁰² He argues that the Muslim masses have deliberately been miseducated over the course of centuries to believe that their religion forces them to succumb to the powers that be, and accept their miserable existence silently. While Yassine acknowledges abstemiousness and contentment as virtues in the individual, he condemns them as aberrations and vices that “need to be fought” if applied to the social, political, and economic sphere. In the latter case, he argues, they serve only to justify the exploitation of the oppressed.

The “misunderstanding” which associates Islam with the “herd-mentality”¹⁰³ instilled in the people by un-Islamic governments lies at the very bottom of the popularity of socialism in Morocco since independence. In Yassine's thinking, Socialism – whether avowedly atheistic or not – is not Islam and therefore tantamount to unbelief. Thus he manages to apply the *ḥadīth* about the relation between poverty and unbelief to Cold War political realities.

Yassine furthermore maintains that the theory which divides societies into classes is essentially an Islamic idea. Some Muslims might not appreciate the importance and gravity of the division of societies into classes, and dismiss it as a Marxist invention. However, all prophets of God's true religion throughout the history of humankind have advocated the fight against oppression. In this way he adapts concepts formulated in the context of secular ideologies to Islam.¹⁰⁴

In terms of the social and economic grievances of the Moroccan people, Yassine complains about the quality of public medical provisions, and the fact that

¹⁰² *kāda al-faqr an yakūn kufran*

¹⁰³ cf. *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.: *al-dhihniyya al-ra'awiyya*. the populace seen as a multitude without willpower who follow the ruler unquestioningly.

¹⁰⁴ Yassine, op. cit., p. 382. cf. Shahin's discussion of the connections between Yassine's thought and secular ideologies in Ruedy, op. cit.

only a “fortunate” class of people has access to them. He also disparages the school system, not only because of the vast difference in quality between private and state-schools, but mostly because the majority of people cannot afford to send their children to any kind of school at all. He includes in this list furthermore the blatant discrepancy between the slums and the palaces of the opulent classes.¹⁰⁵

Whereas some Islamists fail to address these issues and only speak of Islam in its “heavenly purity,” the Marxists are more adept at exploiting social and economic ills for their purposes. According to Yassine, it is the duty of the Islamist movement to teach the people the truth about their oppressors. In this sense, the *jihād* against unbelief appears as part of the *jihād* of education.¹⁰⁶

Establishing the Islamic State

The third and final group comprises five types of *jihād*, whose primary subject-matter is the establishment of the Islamic state. They are the *jihād* of implementation, of recruitment and construction, political *jihād*, the *jihād* of successful example, and that of unification. The process of establishing the Islamic state is envisaged by Yassine in two stages: the gradual re-Islamization of government state by state will be followed by an effort to unify the entire Muslim world under a global caliphate.

jihād al-tanfīdh

According to Yassine, Hasan al-Banna used to speak of three phases of activism: Propaganda, Preparation, and Implementation (*tanfīdh*). Yassine’s own definition of *tanfīdh* is “the rising of the movement within the confines of the nation

¹⁰⁵ Yassine, op. cit., p. 382.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

state,” either making its activities public or concealing them.¹⁰⁷ In order to determine the best means for attaining the goal of establishing an Islamic government in Morocco as a preliminary step towards the Second Caliphate,¹⁰⁸ Yassine discusses three political strategies as hypothetical examples: 1) entering a pluralistic party-system, 2) extremist violence, and 3) “implementation by force after proper preparation.”

The first strategy, i.e. to launch a party and apply for official permission to compete in a pluralistic system, obviously requires nominating candidates for elections. Yassine sees several disadvantages to this course of action, including the fact that the activities of the organization would have to be made public. Furthermore, permanent flexibility and patience would be required of the party. He argues that real democracy does not exist under the governments of *jabr*,¹⁰⁹ whose leaders do not allow properly Islamic parties to enter the system.

In principle, Yassine claims, Islamic law does not forbid party pluralism. He cites from *sīra* literature as well as the Quran to prove this point: Muhammad not only signed the truce of al-Hudaybiyya with Quraysh, he also concluded a pact with the Jews of Medina when he first arrived there. The Quran contains a passage in which Yusuf (Joseph) asks to be made minister of storehouses in Egypt.¹¹⁰ Yusuf, according to Yassine, was an infallible messenger of God. Therefore, it must be lawful to request an official position in an infidel political system so as to exert as much influence for the good as possible.¹¹¹ Participation in the political system need not mean submission to official containment if the members and leadership of the Islamist party know the rules of the political game. Especially in the time before the critical

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 374.

¹⁰⁸ cf. “The Second Caliphate,” this thesis, p. 94.

¹⁰⁹ Yassine, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

¹¹⁰ Q – XII:55.

¹¹¹ Yassine, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

mass of combatants necessary for a successful uprising has been recruited, they have to be prepared to engage in political “competition and trickery.”¹¹²

After the uprising, the Islamic state ought to open up the political system completely in order to prevent its political enemies from engaging in clandestine activities, which would be “a golden chance for them to indulge in their lowly inclinations [of conspiracy, etc.].”¹¹³ The past conformism and hypocrisy of political parties in Morocco makes Yassine confident that before long they would all be thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the majority.¹¹⁴

At first sight, this attitude appears to contradict Yassine’s impassioned criticism of Islamist parties who join the political process in *al-ihsān*.¹¹⁵ However, Yassine’s reflections on pluralism are applicable only to non-Islamic parties. The fact that he is writing from within the Moroccan political context clearly informs his statements when he complains that “in some countries there are indeed numerous Islamic organizations, some of whom strive to unite with others [referring presumably to his own efforts at creating a unified Moroccan movement], whilst others accept the principle of political pluralism.”¹¹⁶

Again, Yassine uses both Quran and *sīra* to argue that the unity of God’s army (“party,” in this case) is a necessity based on divine commandment and Muhammad’s precedent: “If two parties from among the Muslims fight with each other, then make peace between them.”¹¹⁷ The same verse also contains the command to fight the “unjust party,” which is defined by Yassine as “the party which left the community”

¹¹² *al-qawma al-islāmiyya*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=3&ChapterID=273&Lang=1256>

¹¹³ Yassine, op. cit., p. 376.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *faḍl al-jihād*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=170&Lang=1256> cf. also: “The Lesser *jihād* – Unarmed,” this thesis, p. 62.

¹¹⁶ *al-minhāj*, p. 376.

¹¹⁷ Q – XLXI:9.

in the first place. In fact, Yassine calls the command to remain a united community, and to fight those who part with it “one of the most certain things we have inherited from God’s Prophet.” The multiplicity of political Islamic movements is a potential source of divisive enmity, and is consequently incompatible with the Sharia. It would therefore be tantamount to *jabr* (*ḥukm bi-ghayr mā anzala allāh*).¹¹⁸

Yassine draws the conclusion that it is incumbent upon the differing Islamist organizations to form a single movement within each country first, before entering the political process and the phase of *tanfīdh*. Later, the movements which led the uprisings in each country will have to be united into one organization at the level of the caliphate. In the final shape of the Islamic state there may exist such “pluralism” as allows differing opinions to enrich *ijtihād* (Islamic legal reasoning) and make for meaningful good advice between Muslims. This type of pluralism would remain under the auspices of “the ones in power,” who have been elected by general *shūrā* (consultation). Essentially, the political system would be homogenized, and “pluralism” relegated to the strictly religious sphere.¹¹⁹

The second strategy, i.e. that of extremist violence, is described by Yassine as embodied mostly in the phenomenon of “young Muslims who are left to their own devices, read Mawdudi and Qutb,” and start seeing *jāhiliyya*¹²⁰ in “the mother who does not pray, the uncle you drinks alcohol, and the sister who dresses immodestly.” Yassine criticizes the impetuosity of youth which disregards the wisdom of “those endowed with reason, patience, and mildness.” He does not see any justification, nor future, for a violent course of action that relies on political assassinations. However,

¹¹⁸ Yassine, op. cit., p. 377.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 378.

¹²⁰ *al-jāhiliyya* in Yassine’s usage is derived from *jahl* as the antonym of both of *‘ilm* / knowledge, and *ḥilm* / clemency. It is any society ignorant of the Truth, i.e. Islam, and characterized by brutality (incl. the violation of the “rights of believers” (*ḥuqūq al-‘ibād*), which could be read as an Islamic echo of “human rights.” *mafāhīm minhājiyya*, op. cit.

he does make excuses for such actions: they are simply “stirrings of an energy which is generated by the upheavals of the Islamic renewal.” According to Yassine, these energies need a valve, and a means of expression. Therefore, “no blame attaches to these young men if they find as a valve only ferocious bitterness, and no other [way of] expression than by muscle [i.e. force].”¹²¹

Yassine expresses a clear preference for the third and last strategy, which he describes as more mature than either joining the legal political process or resorting to methods of destructive violence. He calls this manner of *tanfidh* the “implementation by force after proper preparation.” It is distinguished from the violent course of action presented above mainly by being more effective due to thorough planning. The only fault of the extremist youths is that they are too rash.¹²² Again, Yassine points to the example of the Iranian Revolution as a successful forerunner. Imam Khomeini, he claims, acted correctly and waited until his movement had reached a sufficient size and influence with the people to seize power by force.

jihād al-ta‘bi‘a wa al-binā’

The *jihād* of “mobilization and construction” refers to the efforts of recruiting a sufficiently extensive base of followers for the movement in order to ensure a stable transition from non-Islamic government to the provisional Islamic state at the national level. *binā’* designates the project of “building” the Islamic state on the ruins of the previous system. As such it spans the entirety of the uprising, from the preparations to the construction of the Islamic state afterwards.

Before the Islamic state is established, discourse and movement remain a more or less powerless expression of opposition to injustice and arbitrary rule. After the

¹²¹ Yassine, op. cit., p. 379.

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 380

uprising, the Islamic movement will need the support of all people in order to avoid collapse and chaos. Therefore, recruitment and mobilization must begin well in advance, i.e. before the inevitable downfall of the un-Islamic governments of today, so that “events do not overtake us [e.g. in the form of a socialist *coup d'état*].”¹²³

Yassine foresees that the Islamic state will inherit from the un-Islamic governments that preceded it all the obvious political and social problems, exemplified clearly in the case of Iran: the remainders of the system which has been overthrown in the form of parties, and privileged sections of society who “plot to bring back the past.”¹²⁴ At the inception of the Islamic state, the ill-distribution of landed property, and the corruption of the previous regime will continue to exist in residual form, since the economy, which was designed to benefit the opulent classes, will have to be reformed radically. Furthermore, adultery, alcohol, gambling, and all other “deadly sins” which have become wide-spread cannot be abolished overnight.

Yassine refers to this process of reform after the uprising as *binā'*, i.e. re-building the structure of the *umma* on the level of individual countries before they can be reunited in the caliphate. Yassine underlines that wide-reaching goals like these cannot be accomplished by means of government authority alone. To realize them, the Islamic government requires the unconditional support of the oppressed masses and those who repent from all social classes. Such a “coherent front of God’s army” cannot be created out of thin air by means of legislation, media campaigns, sermons or other types of official agitation after the uprising. Therefore, the efforts of the movement today must be concentrated on “drafting” soldiers for this army through *tarbiya*.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 369

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

However, spiritual education in itself is not sufficient to guarantee a successful uprising, and subsequent stable transformation of the state. Therefore, “God’s army” must be trained not only in their souls and hearts, but also in the necessary practical skills to “bear the arms of opposition, the pick-axe of destruction, and the tools of production and construction.”¹²⁵

Yassine alludes to the story of the “battle of the trench” (*yawm al-khandaq*), in which Muhammad himself is reported to have helped to dig the trench around Medina to ward off the Quraysh attack. Reportedly he worked harder than anyone else, incessantly reciting poetry to urge on his followers. The Islamic movement today must follow this example and get involved in the practical implementation of their ideology: “Getting dusty for the sake of God is one of the decorations of *jihād*.” Yassine interprets the fact that Muhammad recited poetry to remind his followers of their mortality and complete dependence on God as an indication that he carried on the effort of *tarbiya* whilst fighting the battle. Consequently, the spiritual education of the individual must not be interrupted by the practical efforts spent to carry out the uprising.

al-jihād al-siyāsiyy

Despite the name which Yassine chose for this type of *jihād*, it is not exclusively concerned with politics. On the one hand, he sets forth in some detail the institutions of the Islamic state as he anticipated them in the early 1980s, and on the other he characterizes the “political *jihād*” as related to education and indoctrination prior to the uprising.

¹²⁵ Yassine, op. cit., p. 369.

Based on a verse from the Quran¹²⁶ Yassine argues for the necessity of an “elite among the masses, a coherent movement characterized by solidarity.” Throughout Islamic history there have always been attempts at uprisings and revolutions, he claims. However, they have generally left the masses, which ought to have been their base, unaffected. As a consequence, the “herd-mentality” of the people (cf. footnote 103) prevented the success of such movements. Yassine maintains that the “herd-mentality” still prevails today, despite the efforts of the Islamic movement to remove these “chronic blinkers.”¹²⁷

The political *jihād* envisaged by Yassine must be based on teaching the *umma* about the Quranic concept of the “community within the community” (footnote 127) prior to the uprising. The people must be made to understand that belonging to this special community (i.e. the Islamic movement) is a deed that is greatly pleasing to God. They must furthermore learn that the first and foremost goal of this community is to eliminate the greater evil, which is un-Islamic government or, conversely, to command the greatest good, which is to re-establish the caliphate according to the model of the Prophet.¹²⁸ Seen in the light of these comments, the “political *jihād*” appears as a particular instance of the “*jihād* of education,” related closely also to *jihād al-kufr*.

Yassine’s definition of the “political *jihād*” in the aftermath of the successful uprising, however, blends into that of *binā’*. He elaborates to some extent the political system of the Islamic state as he anticipates it. This part of his thought, i.e. the one which is concerned with the practical organization of the movement and the state, is today regarded by the movement’s leadership as provisional and subject to

¹²⁶ Q – III:104: “Let there be from among you a community [...]”

¹²⁷ Yassine, op. cit., p. 371.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 372.

alterations.¹²⁹ In contrast to the fixed principles of *ihsān*,¹³⁰ the strategies relating to the implementation of *‘adl* may be adapted to changing circumstances.

Nonetheless, since these reflections of Yassine’s are still included in the most recent editions of *al-minhāj* they deserve mention here. In the Islamic state, the political elite will comprise two distinct parts: the *da‘wa*¹³¹ and the state (*dawla*). The domain of the first (being a body of institutions that remain undefined by Yassine) is mainly *tarbiya*, and the supervision of the practical implication of policy. The state, on the other hand, is represented by a number of institutions, and “apparata of administration,” whose function will be to control the day-to-day running of practical affairs. The state remains under the supervision and direction of the *da‘wa*. Both state and *da‘wa* shall be subordinated at first to the leadership of the Imam within the confines of national boundaries as defined by the colonial past, and eventually, after the gradual liberation of all Muslim countries, the leadership of the Caliph on a global level.¹³²

The Imam and Caliph shall have the power to appoint and dismiss Men¹³³ to and from all positions and offices. He will be bound to take counsel with the two branches of government, but the final decision on all matters of any importance lies with him. Ultimately, the Caliph will only be bound by the dictates of his personal faith. If, however, he fails in being pious and adopts an un-Islamic course of action, he must be removed from office by force. Yassine quotes a *ḥadīth* report in which one

¹²⁹ Interview B.

¹³⁰ *mabādi’ al-ihsān al-thābita*, ibid.

¹³¹ The corrupt counterpart to the *da‘wa* in relation to the state as we have it today is “Official Islam,” i.e. the Islam of the “Palace *‘ulamā’*”

¹³² Especially Abdelwahed Mutawakkil, with whom I spoke in English, emphasized that titles as “Imam,” “Emir,” and “Caliph” were simply matters of terminology. Such remarks were absent from the interview with Fathallah Arsalan, which was conducted exclusively in Arabic.

¹³³ It is not clear from the context whether Yassine uses the word *rijāl* in his own, technical sense, or whether he simply means to imply that women will not hold official positions.

of the Muslims addresses Abu Bakr, the rightly-guided caliph: “By God, if we see in you any crookedness, then we’ll put it straight with our swords.”¹³⁴

Yassine concludes his remarks concerning the organization of the state with a kind of disclaimer, foreshadowing the attitudes which prevail amongst the membership of *al-‘adl* today: The Islamist movement has every right to “vary its methods,” he writes, bearing in mind changing circumstances and times, as long as the means do not contradict the principles of revealed law. However, Yassine likens the *qawma*, and the entire Islamist project, to war: “we act on the principle that it [the *qawma*] is a war, and that war is deception.”¹³⁵

jihād al-namūdhaj al-nājih

The *jihād* of the “successful example” is a two-fold concept, encompassing both the duty to follow the successful example set by Muhammad and the early Muslim community, and to set a successful example to humanity in the present age.

According to Yassine, the world in the 1980s was a showroom of political ideologies and economic systems. Mankind was in an unprecedented position to observe the experiences of different nations and compare them to each other directly. In Yassine’s diagnosis, the capitalist experiment had failed, it had “become a golden cage, all its wealth [...] diseased, and from within one can hear the wails of the inmates.” Likewise, socialism failed to bring about the workers’ utopia it had promised. At the same time, people ought to be shown the sun of Islam rising, as a shining example of justice and brotherliness.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Yassine, op. cit., p. 373.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 374. Yassine refers to a *ḥadīth* report, roughly: “all is fair in war.”

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 386.

Yassine points to Albania for an exemplary solution to the economic difficulties which he expects the nascent Islamic state to face.¹³⁷ He maintains that Albania is the only state in the world during the 1980s which did not borrow money from anyone because it had managed to “rein in thoughtless consumerism.” Yassine advocates a planned economy in order to minimize state expenditure, and to isolate the state from money markets which only bring inflation. In his view, the ideal economy ought to be completely autonomous:

“When one day we will realize that it will not hurt us to stop importing luxury cars and start manufacturing our own bicycles [...] that will truly be a step forward.”¹³⁸

Bicycles and cars are only a *pars pro toto*, of course. The full meaning of Yassine’s statement is that the import of useless luxury goods must cease; and that an indigenous economy and industry must be established to provide the people with the necessities of daily life such as food, clothing, shelter, and medication.¹³⁹

Yassine would prefer communism and capitalism to “die a natural death,” being discredited by the effect of their actions. “But if the hypocrites form an army and bear arms, then God’s command is to use force against them.” Again Yassine turns to the Quran to support his assertions: “The punishment for those who fight God and His messenger, and who spread corruption on earth is that they be killed, or that their hands and feet be cut off on opposite sides (*min khilāf*), or that they be exiled from the land.”¹⁴⁰ Whoever opposes the uprising, such shall be his end.

jihād al-tawhīd

¹³⁷ cf. *jihād al-ta’bi’a wa al-binā’*, this thesis, p. 37

¹³⁸ Yassine, op. cit., p. 386.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 390

¹⁴⁰ Q – V:33.

tawhīd here does not refer to the theological concept of God's singularity and unity, but rather to the political unification of the entire Muslim world under the leadership of the Second Caliphate. The caliphate would be a decisive power in determining the course of history, and as such an instrument of God's power in the world.¹⁴¹

Yassine identifies a number of factors internal to the Islamic movement that render the project to unify the Islamic world politically difficult, such as differences arising from diverging trends or opinions in legal thought (*ijtihād*), or remainders of past sectarian differences. He claims that the enemies of Islam attempt to exploit these rifts and widen them. Also, the efforts necessary to bridge the gap between different movements, let alone countries, makes the Islamists conspicuous and exposes them to suppression by force.

As Yassine puts it, "the mother of disunity is nationalism, and its father colonialism." In the Muslim world today, the westernized political elites serve no function but to safeguard the disunity imposed by colonialism. Amongst the Arab peoples, he singles out especially the Christians as the propagators of Arab nationalism. He presents the war of Saddam Hussein's Iraq against Iran as an attempt of the "Christians and Apostates" of the Baath party to widen the rift between Shiism and Sunnism. Yassine disagrees with the interpretation of the war as a conflict between Arabs and non-Arabs. Rather, he sees it as a war against Islam waged by the forces of *jāhiliyya*.¹⁴²

Neither will the unification of the Muslim world be a matter entirely of diplomacy and propaganda. There are many signs pointing towards further violence. Yassine mentions especially the issue of Israel and Palestine, in which the Arab

¹⁴¹ Yassine, op. cit., p. 391.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 394

Muslims have so far failed to defeat even “the most despicable of enemies.” The *jihād* in Israel, Afghanistan, and Iran symbolize to Yassine the fight against the trinity of the enemies of Islam in the world: Zionism, Communism, and Capitalism.

Taken as a whole, the eleven types of *jihād* in *al-minhāj* give a comprehensive outline of Yassine’s understanding of the term. In contradistinction to the populist definition of *jihād* as “holy war,” Yassine sees it as a much wider effort which is rooted in the spiritual advancement of the individual, as well as the re-education of Muslims to disentangle them from Western, secular modes of thinking and instil in them an identity entirely based on the Islamic literary and historical heritage. Collective action of whichever nature is effectively viewed as a corollary to these internal transformations.

3) Greater and Lesser *jihād*

The previous discussion of the 11 types of *jihād* is based mainly on Yassine's central text, *al-minhāj*, and as such was intended to convey an impression of his general conceptualization of *jihād*. The following chapter, by contrast, draws mostly on material from *al-ihsān*. As explained in the introduction to the secondary sources, *al-ihsān* is a supplementary text which expands on *al-minhāj*. Since Yassine himself does not retain the classification of the 11 types in *al-ihsān*, the more conventional distinction between the greater and lesser *jihād* offered itself to structure the material.

Individual and Communal *jihād*

Tellingly, the chapter on *jihād* in *al-ihsān* commences with the following *hadīth* report: “We have returned from the lesser *jihād* to the greater.”¹⁴³ The lesser *jihād* is traditionally identified with the actual combat against non-Muslim aggressors, whilst the greater *jihād* is the struggle with one's own self and its desires that contradict religious prescriptions. In our day and age, this report has become famous and widespread due to its popularity with apologetic intellectuals who use it in order to mitigate the impression of belligerence that might be created by a literalist reading of many Islamic traditions and passages from the Quran concerned with the topic of *jihād*.¹⁴⁴ Yassine, however, is not affected by such scruples. Instead, he vehemently denounces those who adduce this particular report so as to argue the case that “struggling with the self” may replace actual combat with physical enemies in this world.

¹⁴³ *tarīq al-mujāhada*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=165&Lang=1256>

¹⁴⁴ meeting with Dr Christopher Melchert, Oxford, 5th March 2007.

By refuting the tradition of the greater and lesser *jihād* in this way, Yassine does not mean to deny the worth of piety and asceticism. His intention is rather to emphasize that all of these exercises of individual faith are only one part of the whole of *jihād*, and that God will grant the highest ranks of salvation to those who combine them with tangible activity that influences the course of events in this life.

According to Yassine, Quran and Sunna are both brimming with accounts of and praise for the archetypal *jihād* which consisted of the efforts spent by the Prophet and his companions to found and further the Muslim community at Medina.¹⁴⁵ The results and merits of these efforts, Yassine is keen to point out, go beyond the sphere of the individual, and could only be undertaken communally. They were the formative force of the *umma*, and its source of strength. Consequently, he who limits his religious efforts to struggling with his own self falls short of fulfilling God's commandment. Nevertheless, all communal efforts ultimately depend on the correct spiritual preparation of the individuals which make up the community, i.e. on *tarbiya*.

Greater *jihād*

The Greater *jihād* in the widest sense could be described as the education of the individual in terms of the ten Characteristics set forth by Yassine. The *umma* is in urgent need of spiritual education because it has become like “the dry pieces of vegetation and foam being swept along on the surface of a desert wadi after a spring downpour” (*ghuthā'*). Yassine consistently employs this metaphor, and even derives from it the name for the “illness” which has caused the Muslim community to lose its strength, i.e. its love for this life and fear of death (*al-ghuthā'iyya*).¹⁴⁶ Yassine

¹⁴⁵ cf. Shahin in Ruedy, op. cit. for *salaḥiyy* influence on Yassine's thought.

¹⁴⁶ *min al-amāniyy al-mā'sūla ilā al-jihād*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=3&ChapterID=271&Lang=1256>

differentiates between the two pairs of *tarbiya* and *huwiyya* (spiritual education leading to the true Muslim identity), and *tathqīf* and *thaqāfa* (indoctrination along rigid ideological lines, and “culture” as its arbitrary product).¹⁴⁷

According to Yassine, the ultimate aim of spiritual education is to produce men and women fighters in *jihād*, who are not swayed by the temptations and vanities of this world. Yassine wants his *mujāhidūn* to be “strong” in the sense of the word as defined by al-Ghazali in his *ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*.¹⁴⁸ this particular kind of strength for which Yassine hopes is manifest in the *mujāhid*’s steadfastness. He will not be influenced by greed, neither will the accusations and slanders of people impede his progress towards God. He will not fear people, and therefore will have no need for dissimulation towards them. He will not mingle with people in a way that distracts him from God. He will be in complete control of the desires of his self, and “subdue Satan.”

In another passage, Yassine uses a *ḥadīth* report attributed to Muhammad in which he defines “strength” as follows: “He is not strong who prostrates his adversaries in wrestling. Rather, he is strong who controls his self in anger.”¹⁴⁹ All these attributes of “strength,” according to Yassine, are essential prerequisites to forming a community within the community which will influence the course of history without being influenced by external events.

Before society can be changed, the elite of *jihād*¹⁵⁰ must change “that which is in their selves,” i.e. subdue their selfish desires and ambitions in this world. Essentially, the self has to be forced to accept God’s judgment, abide by His law, and be removed from the “trifles and vanities of the world” in order to follow the soul in

¹⁴⁷ *al-qawma al-islāmiyya*, op. cit.

¹⁴⁸ Yassine, op. cit., p. 337.

¹⁴⁹ cf. *ibid.*, p. 338.

¹⁵⁰ *al-talī’a al-mujāhida*, i.e. the leadership and active members of “proper” Islamist movements such as *al-‘adl* – near-synonym of *jund allāh*.

its longing for God. Yassine makes this difference between the self (*nafs*) and the soul (*rūh*) consistently. The heart (*qalb*) as the seat of faith in this conception is closer to the soul than it is to the self, even though the heart alone is not enough to safeguard faith from becoming “threadbare.” The struggle with the self for the subjugation of its desires is the greater *jihād*.¹⁵¹

Yassine chooses to comment on two of the ten Characteristics in particular to demonstrate the way in which they will contribute to the success of the Islamist movement. *ṣidq* (sincerity), e.g., is necessary so that the leaders of God’s army are incorruptible, and able to withstand all attempts at containment. Yassine refers to the attested practice of the Moroccan monarchy to co-opt forces of opposition within the country by offering safety from persecution and rewards in terms of money and official positions if they acknowledge the king’s claims to an Islamic legitimacy for his rule.¹⁵²

badhl (giving generously), by contrast, emphasizes the importance of personal detachment from worldly possessions to the most advantageous effect: “Seek the Hereafter with that (wealth) which God has bestowed on you, but do not forget your portion of this world.”¹⁵³ Yassine provides a brief *tafsīr* of his own on the verse. On the one hand, he dismisses such interpretations of it as are used to justify wealth and luxury in this world. Qarun’s people demanded that he spend some of his enormous wealth “for God,” i.e. for the cause of God’s true religion. However, they were wary not to exaggerate their admonitions in order not to make Qarun turn away completely from faith. That is the only reason why they spoke to him of his “portion of this world.”

¹⁵¹ cf. Yassine, op. cit., p. 337.

¹⁵² *al-qawma al-islāmiyya*, op. cit.

¹⁵³ Q – XXVIII:77.

On the other hand, Yassine quoted the verse to demonstrate that every Muslim has certain rights in this world, namely the right to that which he needs to stay alive and prosper, to pay the legally required Islamic taxes (*zakāh*, *kharāj*, etc.), and to prepare for the Afterlife. As such, the verse to him condemns also the complete renunciation of the world as practiced by some mystic orders. In fact, he proposes that the spiritual progress of the individual is determined directly by his or her actions in this world. As Yassine points out, this notion is the exact opposite of pious withdrawal from the world, which he criticizes as escapism and an excuse for laziness.

Greater *jihād* in the Mystical Sense

Despite his attacks on traditional Sufism, Yassine devotes a considerable portion of his discussion of *jihād* in *al-ihsān* to the topic of ascetic practices and terminology. According to Yassine, the *murīd*¹⁵⁴ must pass through three stages on his way to spiritual enlightenment. The first one (*mujāhada*) is characterized by the burning fervour of the *murīd*, his keen ambition, and reliance on his self. During this phase, the *sālik*¹⁵⁵ “walks with wild beasts and spectres.”¹⁵⁶ Its defining moral attributes are fettering the self and endurance; and its motivation is following the straight path.

During the second phase (*shukr* – Gratitude), the spark of fervour remains while the *sālik*'s confidence in his own power disappears. His own weakness and

¹⁵⁴ traditionally a disciple and follower of a Sufi shaykh, used by Yassine in keeping with his concept of *irāda* – i.e. *murīd* = he whose ultimate desire it is to become as close to God as possible, and to experience His countenance. cf. *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.: *irāda*.

¹⁵⁵ another traditional Sufi term adapted by Yassine – *sālik* technically designates one who follows the mystic path. Here used more or less interchangeably with *murīd*.

¹⁵⁶ *tarīqat al-shukr*,

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=166&Lang=1256>

impotence are revealed to him, and he realizes that there is nothing he can achieve except that which God grants him. The defining moral attribute of this phase is gratitude; and its motivation is guidance. In the third and final phase (un-named by Yassine), God's truth becomes great in the *murīd*'s heart, and his own self dwindles to insignificance. The matters of this world, to which he used to attach importance, all but disappear and give way to God. This stage is the “vestibule of knowledge, and the prelude to the full realization of one's status as God's slave.”¹⁵⁷

This triptych is reminiscent of another equally hierarchical trinity in Yassine's thought, namely that of *islām*, *īmān*, and *ihsān*. *islām* (submission [to God's will]) in this context signifies the mere profession of the creed, and the formal adherence to its external manifestations in terms of ritual observances, etc. *īmān* (faith) is the next higher rung on the ladder, adding the proper spiritual content to the otherwise hollow and superficial *islām*. *ihsān*, whilst commonly translated as either “charity” or “doing good,” has been rendered by Yassine himself in the French as “spiritualité.” In fact, it is a concept too complex to be rendered by a single equivalent term in any language. *ihsān* is the culmination resulting from the combination of *islām* and *īmān* under the appropriate circumstances. It describes a person's complete fulfilment of God's religion expressed in every aspect of the believer's life. Lauzière calls it “a superior stage of consciousness (*maqām*).”¹⁵⁸ He furthermore points out that “the notion of *ihsān* implies a framework of mystical gradation that is typical of Sufism.”¹⁵⁹

The origin of the three terms is to be found in *ḥadīth* literature. A famous tradition relates the story of Gabriel visiting Muhammad whilst in the company of several of his followers.¹⁶⁰ The visitor, unknown to the companions, proceeds to

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Lauzière, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 247.

¹⁶⁰ *cf.* e.g. al-Shawish, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

interrogate Muhammad, amongst other things, on *islām*, *īmān*, and *ihsān*. His answers, according to the *ḥadīth*, are as follows: *islām* is bearing witness to the fact that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is His messenger. It is performing prayers, giving alms, fasting during Ramadan, and going on the pilgrimage to Mecca if possible. *īmān* is believing in God, His angels, books, and messengers, Judgment day, and fate, both good and bad. *ihsān* is “to worship God as though one were able to see Him, for even if we do not see Him, He surely sees us.”

The three phases of progress described above (*mujāhada*, *shukr*, and the third) are accepted by Yassine as a necessary prerequisite to complete Islam that is self-evident. He simply presents them as facts, devoid of any argument in their favour or against them. However, the manner in which the *murīd* passes through the three phases is a matter of interest to him. In this regard he praises the order of al-Shadhiliyy. According to Yassine, the Shadhiliyya brotherhood makes the *murīd* progress through the three stages in the fastest possible manner, “without being negligent in anything, and without exaggerating *mujāhada*.”¹⁶¹ Yassine is particularly wary of the first stage, because of its focus on the self. He implies that the *murīd*, by concentrating exclusively on his own self in an attempt to mortify its desires, becomes distracted from God and the greater goal of coming closer to Him.

Yassine furthermore describes the way of *mujāhada* as being predominant in the first six centuries of Islam, and reiterates that the most important aspects of *mujāhada* were the actions of the *murīd*, his ritual and supererogatory prayers, and the “forging of his self as though he were a blacksmith.”¹⁶² In this type of Sufism the condition of *ṣuḥba*¹⁶³ was considered a complementary adjunct. (It is obvious that

¹⁶¹ *tarīqat al-shukr*, op. cit.

¹⁶² *ibid.*

¹⁶³ the concept of Company as a necessary component of the individual’s progression towards complete Islam. cf. Lauzière, op. cit., pp. 245/6 for its Sufi origins and the ways in which Yassine transformed it.

Yassine applies the term “*tarīq al-mujāhada*” both to a stage in the spiritual development of individual believers, and to an historical phase of the development of Sufism.) By contrast, the way of Gratitude appeared in Sufism only since the time of al-Shadhiliyy, says Yassine. This type of Sufism attaches greater importance to the condition of *ṣuḥba*, the personality of the shaykh, and his spiritual glow that “carries the hearts of his disciples from the lands of danger as though it were Noah’s ark.”¹⁶⁴

Another quote from al-Shadhiliyy further specifies the essence of the three stages. al-Shadhiliyy reportedly divided people into three categories: 1) the ones who consider everything they have to give to be God’s (corresponding to *mujāhada*), 2) the ones who consider everything they receive to come from God (*shukr*), and 3) the ones who know that everything belongs to God and must return to God.

But Yassine’s understanding of the greater *jihād* is not only spiritual, or technically mystical. Rather, he blends cultural and political concepts into the spiritual quest of the individual: “In the heart, mind, and soul of every individual Muslim, in his morals and virtues rages the decisive battle between Islam and *jāhiliyya*.”¹⁶⁵”¹⁶⁶ Only education¹⁶⁷ provides the individual with the necessary weapons for this struggle. The strength of generations brought up according to the principles of *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān* will be necessary to translate the victory of the inner struggle into a political victory.

Identity and education

Yassine uses the example of the greater pilgrimage to Mecca to demonstrate the extent to which secular ideologies have shaped public discourse even on religious

¹⁶⁴ Yassine describes specifically al-Shadhiliyy himself. *tarīqat al-shukr*, op. cit.

¹⁶⁵ cf. footnote 120.

¹⁶⁶ *shu‘ab al-īmān*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=175&Lang=1256>

¹⁶⁷ *tarbiya* rather than *ta‘līm*

topics. Commenting on a magazine article entitled: “The Hajj – A Religious Ritual Which Connects the *umma*’s Past With its Present,” Yassine is inflamed. He condemns both the language and the thought that informs it as blatantly nationalist, and even idolatrous.¹⁶⁸ Since it portrays the pilgrimage as some kind inherited ritual in which the practitioner becomes acquainted with his identity by imitating his ancestors, the article neglects the religious nature of the hajj and presents it only as a means of strengthening the pilgrim’s “national identity,” as Yassine puts it.¹⁶⁹

In contrast to such modern, westernized interpretations, Yassine sees the hajj as an eternal duty, as imposed by divine command in the Quran: “Complete the greater and lesser pilgrimages for God.”¹⁷⁰ That is not to say that going on pilgrimage is a purely individual obligation: “so that they may witness things that are of advantage to them,”¹⁷¹ and amongst the most glorious benefits of performing the pilgrimage, says Yassine, is meeting one’s brethren in faith from around the world to experience a feeling of unity, and a glimpse of life in the Hereafter, but also to seek knowledge from the learned men of the community, and other more practical benefits.¹⁷²

Such advantages as the pilgrim may derive from the communal dimension of the hajj remain secondary. The first objective is being faithful to God in one’s worship. Yassine has nothing but unmitigated scorn for “superficial Westernized thought” that has Muslims speak of the pilgrimage only in terms of a “global

¹⁶⁸ *shu‘ab al-īmān*, op. cit. To Yassine, both pilgrimages (lesser and greater) constitute an affluent of the tenth virtue, i.e. *jihād*. To a certain extent, the two types of pilgrimage may even be understood to reflect the division between the lesser and greater *jihād*: whilst the *‘umra* may be performed at any time of year (and therefore may take the form of an individual effort), the hajj proper takes place on certain fixed dates of the Muslim lunar calendar (and therefore unites large numbers of pilgrims from around the world in Mecca, giving the events a much more communal character).

¹⁶⁹ Despite the fact that this identity would encompass all Muslims, it would not be “Islamic” in Yassine’s sense.

¹⁷⁰ Q – II:195.

¹⁷¹ Q – XXII:28.

¹⁷² *shu‘ab al-īmān*, op. cit.

conference” of which they can boast because of its extensive rituals and the great multitudes participating.

As mentioned above, this is only an example employed by Yassine to demonstrate the extent to which the discourse of many Islamists and Muslims has become influenced by “imported ideologies.” According to Yassine, their language and thought are devoid of spirit, and all that remains is a “cultural body,¹⁷³ breathing the air of *jāhiliyya* and speaking with its tongue.”¹⁷⁴ To Yassine, the issue of identity as manifest in the way history and society are interpreted is of special importance. He explicitly warns his readers not to use “imported terminology or imported intellectual tools and methods to analyse Muslim reality.” To do so would be trying to fight fire with fire, since secular ideologies are the very fabric of *jāhiliyya*, and the tools by which it is propagated. Consequently, any attempt to change the *umma* according to “schemes proposed by those whose minds are thoughtless,” i.e. those reformers and politicians basing their arguments on secular ideologies, is leading the *umma* further astray. As Yassine puts it: “Any political or social project dreamt up, [...] and imposed on the *umma* by those who do not believe in God is nothing but a maze within a maze.”¹⁷⁵ Yassine attacks especially any attempt to make sense of the present situation of the Muslim world by means of polarities such as “Heritage and Present,” or “Arabism and Islam” as irrelevant. He sees the only meaningful polarity in Sayyid Qutb’s distinction between Islam and *jāhiliyya*.¹⁷⁶

But Yassine does not interpret secular ideologies as encroaching only intellectually upon Muslims. Rather, their co-existence with materialist civilization, and the influence of materialist thinking, positivism, and the dialectical conception of

¹⁷³ the implication is that Islam, in this way of thinking, is stripped of all religious attributes and thereby “perverted” into a mere “culture.”

¹⁷⁴ *shu‘ab al-īmān*, op. cit.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

the history of human societies, have made most Muslims lose their very soul. Their manner of speaking indicates a spiritual vacuum, tantamount to complete estrangement from religion and religious preoccupations.

The Quran, and the Sunna as its clarification and practical application, should be the only source for analytical categories, as they used to be with the pious ancestors, before secular philosophies and ideologies invaded the Muslim mind.¹⁷⁷ Yassine is particularly severe in his disapproval of the human sciences, which, according to him, analyze human behaviour in terms of the behaviour of animals, and view societies with the Western model as the standard of perfection in mind.

In this regard, Yassine specifically attacks Marxism which he identifies as the source of class-based analysis of human societies, and the origin of the concept of a revolutionary elite whose actions determine the course of history. It would appear that, to a certain extent, Yassine constructs his Islamist view of the world with Marxism in mind. Regardless of the fact that he assiduously traces his theory of history and society to Quran and *hadīth*, it oftentimes appears as a mirror-image of dialectic materialism. This is not to say that Yassine slavishly imitates Marxist ideas and simply renames them. Rather, the structural parallelisms arise from his permanent desire to set his own thinking apart from Western ideology. If anything, they bear witness to the pervasive influence of European thought on the educated portion of Moroccan society, and their concomitant condescension towards alternative models of history that are informed by religion. Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that, at least until the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, the most important rival of Islamism as an expression of discontent with the political status quo in the Moroccan context was the country's socialist opposition. Yassine's frequent referral

¹⁷⁷ *rijāl*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=171&Lang=1256>

to and aggressive criticism of Marxist ideas are not always devoid of defensive overtones:

“[They] consider any categorization not based on the class model to be a kind of limp moralism, or unrealistic idealism.”¹⁷⁸

In that subsection of *al-ihsān* which is entitled *huwiyya ihsāniyya*, the considerable extent to which cultural identity is part of religion in Yassine’s view becomes clear. Instead of elaborating the true Muslim identity¹⁷⁹ in universal, human terms, he defines it by distinction against Western cultural encroachment. Contrary to current expectations, this discussion does not take into account the phenomenon of globalization. Rather, its starting point is European colonialism throughout the wider Muslim world during the 19th century.

Instead of concentrating on Morocco’s own colonial past, Yassine explains to his readers how Thomas Macaulay introduced an Anglophone system of education to India in order to “produce generations of Indians with a transformed identity.”¹⁸⁰ To demonstrate that his allegation is not unfounded, Yassine provides a direct translation into the Arabic from Macaulay’s “Minute on Indian Education,” delivered in 1835:

We must [...] form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.¹⁸¹

Yassine stipulates that even nowadays the lasting heritage of such colonial measures in the form of Westernized elites in both politics and culture cannot be

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ shall be used as a loose translation of *huwiyya ihsāniyya*, as an inadequate counterpart to the cluster of meanings to which *ihsān* refers in Yassine’s thought

¹⁸⁰ *huwiyya mamsūkhā* - according to his glossary of Concepts (*mafāhīm minhājiyya*, *op. cit.*), Yassine’s notion of *maskh* is related to passages in the Quran which describe God transforming people who disobeyed him into monkeys and pigs (cf. Q – II:65, V:60, and VII:166).

¹⁸¹ Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1st Baron Macaulay: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Macaulay

ignored and must be taken into account when devising an educational counter-programme of “renewal” in the quest for the obliterated Muslim identity. From Macaulay’s quote, Yassine adopts the term of “Interpreters” to describe Westernized elites, both intellectual and political, in the Muslim world today, whom he sees as a direct product of European imperialism. However, Yassine does not call for violence against the class of “interpreters.” He emphasizes that they are “our compatriots, of our flesh and colour” with whom one must enter into dialogue, even if that may take a long time. Eventually, he asserts, they will be “swept away by the waves of events like foam on the *umma*’s surface.”¹⁸²

Yassine singles out for special scorn the kind of language the “interpreters” speak. Sarcastically, he uses expressions borrowed from horse-racing and gambling to describe the supposed reaction of the incumbent elites to the realization that their political influence is under threat. Thus, in supporting nationalism (and any concomitant political ideology) they realize that they have “placed their bets on a losing horse,” and have started to affect an Islamic façade, having noticed that Islam is “the card that takes the trick.”¹⁸³ The currency of calques from European languages such as these lead Yassine to the conclusion that the language of the “interpreters” is ruined (*makhrūb*).¹⁸⁴

Perhaps influenced by his professional career prior to his Sufi experience, Yassine sees the antidote to this “poison” of superficiality in education alone. Therefore, the Muslim identity, whose destruction was initiated by the introduction of an educational programme, can only be restored by similar means in the opposite direction. As mentioned above, Yassine points to Sayyid Qutb’s discourse as the most

¹⁸² *huwiyya ihsāniyya*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=169&Lang=1256>

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

fundamental ingredient of such an educational project. However, the rectification of the idiom in which reality is perceived is, by itself, insufficient. After its propagation as the only valid way of viewing the world, it must be translated into action and be made manifest in terms of social and political realities. In fact, both justice (*'adl*) and spirituality (*ihsān*) depend entirely upon education, which is the only cure for the “chronic disease of weakness,”¹⁸⁵ defined by Yassine as love for this world and fear of death.

The Persistence of Secular Ideologies in the Muslim World

One aspect of the issue of identity is the persistence of secular ideologies in the Muslim world. Yassine sees the Christian and Alawite minorities, along with Baathist and hypocrite “devils” as allies of capitalist imperialism, and accuses them of stirring up feelings of nationalism around the Arab world in order to uproot the Islamic identity and establish minority rule which would subject the Arab-Muslim peoples to the infidel West.¹⁸⁶ In order to design an effective educational programme with the aim to exterminate Western ways of thinking, Yassine asks himself the question why so many educated and cultured Moroccans and Muslims in general today are swayed by secular ideologies to the extent that many of them deny religion and tend towards atheism.

The answer at which he arrives is complex. In some cases, Yassine claims, the Cultural Transformation¹⁸⁷ with its moral laissez-faire attitude is to blame. Those afflicted by it regard religion as shackles that restrict their freedom, which to Yassine indicates that they have a fundamentally flawed idea of freedom and equate it to a

¹⁸⁵ *shu'ab al-īmān*, op. cit.

¹⁸⁶ Yassine, op. cit., p. 340.

¹⁸⁷ Yassine has in mind a metamorphosis of identity akin to the disobedient whom God transfigured into pigs and monkeys according to the Quran, cf. *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.: *maskh*.

boundless lack of restraint. Others may have only encountered religion as personified in unjust rulers and the opulent classes (a barely veiled attack on monarchy) who “reject the orphan and do not feed the poor.”¹⁸⁸ Their excuse, according to Yassine, is based on a faulty interpretation of Q – XVI:71,¹⁸⁹ which they use to justify their selfish desires. Therefore, people turn towards secular ideologies to express their discontent with social injustice because they see religion as part of the problem.

The question of nationalism is at the forefront of Yassine’s mind when he discusses secular ideologies. He sees nationalism as the greatest single obstacle on the way to an eventual political unification of the Muslim world. Yassine cites a *ḥadīth* in which Muhammad is reported to have called those who advocate tribal affiliations and loyalties “malodorous and putrid.”¹⁹⁰ By contrast, Muhammad’s biography and the first caliphate are usually described by Yassine as fragrant. The distinction between loyalty to Islam, and loyalty to things other than Islam, represents the connection between the issue of identity and the issue of political unification of the Muslim world.

The degree of disunity (*fitna*) can be measured by the number of factors which oppose unity, and the depth of their psychological impact on the lives of Muslims. According to Yassine, disunity has become the norm, whilst unity is nowadays thought to be “a lost dream, an impossible demand, and a pointless topic for debate.”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ *binā’ al-dawla al-islāmiyya*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=173&Lang=1256>

¹⁸⁹ “God favoured some of you over others in their livelihoods.”

¹⁹⁰ *al-waḥda*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=174&Lang=1256>

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

The deeper ingrained such modes of thinking which suggest the impossibility of political unity become, argues Yassine, the greater must be the Islamist effort to educate people spiritually so that their ambitions may “soar above earthly considerations.” Faith must be strengthened as the sole determining ingredient of identity, and all other forms of identity must be uprooted. Yassine likens them to polytheism: since there is only one God in Islam, the community must be unified in one Islamic state.

But whereas the ultimate goal of unification belongs to the sphere of the Lesser *jihād* (i.e. the outer, communal effort that is concerned with the idea of justice), the method of attaining that goal is anchored in the inner, individual issue of identity. Harmony and reconciliation between the hearts (*ta’līf al-qulūb*) of believers on the global level can only be achieved as a grace from God, maintains Yassine.¹⁹² It cannot be brought about by political negotiations, nor imposed from above. Rather, it needs to come from within, and therefore the spiritual re-education of the individual must be “the foundation of everything.”¹⁹³

Islamic Virtues

As mentioned previously, Islamic virtues of Faith and Spirituality, which form an integral part of the Muslim identity, cannot be imposed from above. To introduce his concept of the virtuous believer, Yassine refers to his accounts of good Sufis and ‘*ulamā*’ and their ways of *jihād*, and arrives at the conclusion that the global Muslim community was never completely devoid of *rijāl* (truly virtuous believers, in this context) at any point in time. However, the most complete manifestation of the ideal

¹⁹² *ta’līf al-qulūb* cf. Q – VIII:63 “He made peace between their hearts. Even if you spent everything there is on earth, you cannot make peace between their hearts.”

¹⁹³ *al-wahda*, op. cit.

is found, according to Yassine, in *ḥadīth* accounts describing the behaviour of the Prophet and his companions.¹⁹⁴

In order to illustrate these virtues, he adduces five relatively lengthy *ḥadīth* reports. In the first, Muhammad enumerates nine of his companions as each especially distinguished by a particular virtue. They include the first three caliphs and Ali, and five less well-known figures. Since Yassine is not interested in establishing matters of doctrine,¹⁹⁵ his reason for citing this report is to present a list of virtues for emulation, rather than a list of names. They are: mercy towards Muslims, severity in implementing God's commands, a pronounced sense of shame, decisiveness, knowledge of lawful and unlawful things, a thorough grasp of Islamic law, and truthfulness. Interestingly, the companion singled out for truthfulness is likened to Jesus for his piety.¹⁹⁶

The other four traditions illustrate the virtues associated with the rightly-guided caliphs, including Ali. Abu Bakr is described as the closest of the companions to Muhammad,¹⁹⁷ Umar as the most severe in implementing God's commands (according to the *ḥadīth*, he carried a whip to chastise people),¹⁹⁸ and Uthman as the one with the strongest sense of decency.¹⁹⁹ The account of Ali's virtues is by far the most elaborate, being longer than the three previous reports together. Much of the

¹⁹⁴ In this respect, Yassine's thought is more complex than pure Salafism which tends to disregard entirely the intervening history of Islam between Muhammad's time and the present day.

¹⁹⁵ To him it is plain that Ali was the last rightful pretender to the caliphate. With the war between Ali and Muawiya, the disintegration of the Muslim community began. Simultaneously, un-Islamic forms of government became established. For Yassine, the question of determining which historic political manifestation of Islam continued in the spirit of the original community does not pose itself.

¹⁹⁶ *rijāl*, op. cit.

¹⁹⁷ of importance to Yassine for two reasons: a) to demonstrate that the concept of *shūrā* worked in the early Muslim community, and that the First Caliphate was indeed a "spiritual meritocracy." and b) to support his own concept of *ṣuḥba* – by virtue of being the closest companion, Abu Bakr would have "imbibed" Muhammad's faith and character to the greatest extent.

¹⁹⁸ Aside from being credited with writing the first history of Islam and collecting the Quran in codex-form, his achievements are mainly of a military nature: leading the conquests, founding garrison towns, drafting the military pay-register, etc.

¹⁹⁹ The report relates an anecdote about Muhammad covering his exposed thigh before letting Uthman enter, despite being in the company of Abu Bakr and Umar already. When asked about it, he is said to have exclaimed: "Should I not feel ashamed in front of him who makes even angels feel ashamed?"

praise lavished on Ali here has a fairly formulaic ring to it, but certain attributes are worthy of special attention. He is described, e.g., as “estranged from this world and its dazzle, feeling at home in the darkness of the night,” “crying copiously [...], and admonishing his self. He liked coarse clothes and simple food. He was, by God, like one of us...” It would appear that Yassine felt inclined to cite this account at length to prove that Ali was in fact the archetypal warrior-Sufi.

The Lesser *jihād*

Whereas the greater *jihād* refers to the internal struggle with the desires of the self and the temptations of the devil, the lesser *jihād* is the struggle against evils and wrongs (*munkar*) outside the believer’s person. The lesser *jihād* will become a perfectly natural reaction to external circumstances once a certain stage in the greater *jihād* has been attained, since all *munkar* will become truly intolerable to the believer on a very personal level instead of merely as a theoretical prescription derived from scripture or sacred law. However, Yassine concedes that not all people are equal in their capabilities for subjugating their selves. On the contrary, Yassine’s view of humanity in this respect is rather skeptical, as becomes eminently clear when he states that “the masses of the populace have greater potential for hate and anger than for following these lofty morals.”²⁰⁰

Unarmed

Much of Yassine’s discussion of the lesser *jihād* concentrates on precedent examples set by Sufi shaykhs. He goes to considerable lengths to prove that historical Sufism was by no means the quietist, otherworldly phenomenon it is commonly

²⁰⁰ cf. Yassine, op. cit., p. 338.

perceived as, and aims to rehabilitate it in the popular imagination as a factor which determined the course of history. However, organizing their followers into a force for combat was not the only avenue Sufi shaykhs explored. According to Yassine, the practice of interceding with an unjust ruler on behalf of the people was most widespread in Egypt during Mamluk times, and among the non-Arabic speaking Sultans, who were supposedly fearful of the imprecations of these holy men, and the miracles which God was believed to work through them.²⁰¹

Given the divided nature of the *umma* into nation states, Yassine argues that every sincere group of believers has to fight its own *jihād*, for the time being limited to their country and their possibilities. The most important rule of this type of *jihād*, according to Yassine, can be found in a *ḥadīth* attributed to Muhammad: “The [type of] *jihād* dearest to God is a word of truth spoken to an unjust ruler.” To this Yassine adds “enjoining good deeds and forbidding wicked ones, recruiting people [for the cause] to gain influence, organizing them into a movement, and educating them spiritually.” He who combines all of these in his actions comes closer to *al-ihsān*.²⁰² One hardly needs to point out the parallels between these ideals which Yassine presents in a non-specific manner and his actual biography. He is alluding to his open letter to king Hasan II entitled “Islam or the Deluge” when citing the *ḥadīth* about the “*jihād* dearest to God;” and his subsequent religio-political activism matches the definition of assembling people into an effective organization and educating them religiously

Even if Military *jihād* becomes necessary, Yassine insists, it does not abrogate Political *jihād* which needs to precede the former, and be resumed after the struggle

²⁰¹ *al-mahdawiyya*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=167&Lang=1256>

²⁰² *faḍl al-jihād*, op. cit.

with arms is fought and won. Oftentimes, he continues, political, educational, and constructive *jihād* is more difficult to conduct than actual warfare for the Muslim cause, since the believer, in military *jihād*, can expect either martyrdom or divine intervention in the form of miracles.²⁰³ By political *jihād* Yassine does not mean entering into the legitimate political arena as defined by the laws of the nation state.²⁰⁴ On the contrary, he explicitly states that those who exert their efforts for the sake of Islam differ greatly from those who “plunge into the battlefield of politics,” by virtue of their loyalty to God and enmity towards *al-jāhiliyya*.²⁰⁵ Those who become involved in the political system imposed by colonialism are automatically transformed into “interpreters” of *al-jāhiliyya*, joining the ranks of “Macaulay’s Children,” whilst the true Islamic opposition from outside the system are “interpreters of God,” translating His truth and delivering His message to humankind.²⁰⁶

This is an instance of rather harsh, if entirely implicit, criticism directed at *al-‘adl*’s rivals of the PJD (the Islamist Justice and Development Party, who have entered the formal political process in Morocco). On the other hand, it is a criticism fairly difficult to reconcile with past applications submitted by *al-‘adl* to form a party associated with the movement.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ in contrast to Yassine’s earlier statements (discussed in *jihād al-tanfīdh*, this thesis, p. 33) which precede these passages in *al-ihsān* by at least a decade – if anything, this seems to contradict Newman’s argument for a gradual “democratization” of Yassine’s discourse.

²⁰⁵ cf. footnote 120.

²⁰⁶ *faḍl al-jihād*, op. cit.

²⁰⁷ The usual explanation given in official accounts of the history of *al-‘adl* and Yassine’s biography is that the applications were submitted in the firm conviction that they would be rejected, and thus were nothing but political statements to expose the hypocrisy of the supposedly pluralistic system.

Armed

The ultimate goal Yassine has in mind for Muslims is to emulate the model of the Prophet's companions, including *ṣuḥba*²⁰⁸ and *jihād*, and thereby pursuing the path towards the Second Caliphate as promised by Muhammad in a *ḥadīth* report.²⁰⁹ Yassine's reading of the traditional sources is literalistic to the extent that his admonition to emulate the Prophet's model in *jihād* encompasses also Muhammad's and his companions' virtues in battle with the pagans of Mecca. He seems to anticipate the necessity of military combat at some stage of the way towards the fulfilment of the prophetic promise of global Muslim unity.

In addition to the combative aspect of the early Islamic community at Medina, the Muslim defence against the Crusades is another obvious historical example to which Yassine refers in order to explain his notion of armed *jihād*. For instance, Yassine mentions an intrigue against Salah al-Din al-Ayyubiyy, whom he praises as “the one who reunified the *umma*, and fought a severe *jihād*.”²¹⁰ On the other hand, his *jihād* fell short of the ultimate goal, named by Yassine as that of abolishing hereditary rule, and rule by force (*‘adā* and *jabr*) since he appointed his sons and brothers as his successors. Yassine nevertheless defends him as “blameless” since his rule “did not abolish the customs of his age in one generation.”²¹¹ Here the reader gains an insight into Yassine's vision of the ideal Muslim ruler. His faults in appointing successors aside, the good Muslim ruler should be willing to use force against foreign aggressors like Salah al-Din did during the crusades, and he should be

²⁰⁸ *ṣuḥba* to Yassine does not only mean ‘companionship’ in the ordinary sense. It is a transcendental means of education – by keeping the company of the correct people (or person), the individual believer imbibes the pure faith of his or her role-model. cf. also footnote 163.

²⁰⁹ *ṭarīq al-mujāhada*, op. cit. cf. also “The Second Caliphate,” this thesis, p. 94.

²¹⁰ *jihād fī al-fitna*:

<http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=168&Lang=1256>

²¹¹ *ibid.*

morally and culturally conservative. Yassine appears to be accusing Morocco's monarchy of failing in both regards when it was faced by European colonial encroachment in the early 20th century.

To Yassine, armed combat to protect the cause of Islam is a duty upon each believer which cannot be shirked. He cites a *ḥadīth* in which a group of people ask the Prophet what deeds may be equivalent to armed combat to defend the realm of Islam. Muhammad replies that it is impossible to substitute anything for this kind of *jihād*, since one would have to fast and pray incessantly from the moment the Muslim soldiers left to go into battle until the day of their return.²¹² Yassine comments on this report by contending that at war with foreign enemies, the Muslim soldier has to struggle with his own self in an even harsher manner than achieved by ascetic exercises, since he has to leave behind his possessions, family, and fatherland, aware of the fact that he may not return. Thus, going into battle inevitably surpasses any form of self-inflicted deprivation as practised by world-renouncing mystics.

As is his custom, Yassine quotes from the Quran to introduce an idea of his, striving to anchor it in the sanctity of scripture: “And you wish that the one unarmed had been yours.”²¹³ Yassine interprets the verse as referring to a raid aimed at the caravan of Abu Sufyan, in which the Muslims encountered the army of Quraysh instead of the unarmed trade caravan. According to Yassine, the passage is another reminder to Muslims that they ought to be prepared to die for God's sake at any moment. To be killed while defending God's religion should be the highest aim of each believer. In this, Muslims should follow the Prophet's model, who “wished to fall in battle, and then be resurrected to fall again.”²¹⁴ According to Yassine,

²¹² *ṭarīq al-mujāhada*, op. cit.

²¹³ Q – VIII:7.

²¹⁴ Yassine, op. cit., p. 344.

martyrdom for the sake of God is the shortest way to the highest ranks in paradise, to “True Life.”²¹⁵

However, this does not mean that Muslim lives and possessions should be sacrificed at random, which would actually advantage the enemy. Neither should property and blood be held in low esteem if they cannot be spent constructively in the way of *jihād*. In order to derive the greatest possible benefit from the readiness to sacrifice oneself, Muslims need to know exactly for what reason, at which time, and in what manner to give their lives so that the sacrifice can harm the enemy and advance the *umma*. Yassine even maintains that it is essential to know in whose company one ought to die so as to “push the wheel of *jihād* forwards.”²¹⁶

As though to prove his point that the Quran is mainly a book of *jihād*, and in order to define the groups of people against whom violence is scripturally justified, Yassine cites from Ibn Kathir’s *tafsīr* his commentary on verses about the “four swords” (Q – IX:5, 29, 73, and XXXIX:9).²¹⁷ Elsewhere,²¹⁸ Yassine adduces two further verses from the Quran (IX:111, and XXXVIII:10), from which he quotes only the first few words each (“God bought,” and “Those who swear allegiance to you”), in the knowledge that members of his movement will have undergone thorough training to memorize the sacred scripture of Islam. The complete text of the two verses which Yassine had in mind is as follows:

“God bought the souls and possessions of those who believe by giving them paradise. They fight for God’s cause, killing and being killed.”

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 346

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 347

²¹⁷ “God’s messenger was sent with four swords: one against the polytheists, one against the unbelievers amongst the people of the book [generally understood to mean Jews and Christians], one against the hypocrites, and one against the unjust (*al-bughāh*)” All four verses contain fairly explicit injunctions to fight or kill the people concerned, which is somewhat difficult to reconcile with Yassine’s emphasis on the exclusively defensive nature of armed *jihād*. *al-qawma*: <http://www.yassine.net/yo12/mishkate/pages/YOChapterDetailPage.aspx?BookID=2&ChapterID=172&Lang=1256>

²¹⁸ *tariq al-mujāhada*, op. cit.

“Those who swear allegiance to you in fact pledge allegiance to God. God’s hand is on their hands.”

Thus, the life of a Muslim is God’s, and he who refuses to sacrifice it for God’s cause in this world is not worthy of paradise. Furthermore, he has broken his pact of allegiance with Muhammad and God, since both of these pacts, as Yassine remarks, are valid until Judgment Day.

As one discrete historical manifestation of armed *jihād* Yassine singles out what he calls Mahdism (*al-mahdiyya*). He defines Mahdism as the historical phenomenon observed among certain Sufi shaykhs who made their followers bear arms, and were convinced of being the Mahdi, a messianic figure expected to appear at the end of time. Yassine praises some of these militant mystics for their success in founding a state (such as that of the Fatimids in Egypt or Almohads in North Africa) or rendering useful services to the wider community of Islam. To Yassine’s mind, the belief in the coming of the Mahdi is not sectarian but universally Islamic, shared by Sunnis and Shi‘is alike. In fact, to Yassine the coming of the Mahdi is an absolute certainty, since many *hadīth* reports attributed to the Prophet exist that have been handed down through a multitude of different channels of transmission (*mutawātir*), at least some of which are sound. One of these reports he quotes to prove his point.²¹⁹

Therefore, Yassine concludes, the coming of the Mahdi is “a certain fact (*khabar yaqīn*) for us and them (i.e. Sunnis and Shi‘is).”²²⁰ Both sides, he maintains, have brought forth men who have rebelled against injustice and claimed to be the Mahdi. Among their number he counts the founders of the Fatimid state in Egypt, and Ibn Tumart who established the Almohad state in North Africa. It is significant that he

²¹⁹ “At the end of my Community, the Mahdi shall come out. God will give him to drink, and the earth will put forth its plants. He will be given sound wealth, the livestock shall multiply, and the Community shall grow mighty. He will live seven or eight, i.e. years.” cf. *al-mahdawiyya*, op. cit.

²²⁰ *ibid.*

terms the military opposition organized by such figures as Ibn Tumart or even the Sudanese Mahdi as “revolutions” (*thawra*) in contradistinction to “uprising” (*qawma*), of which he is an advocate (cf. below).

Owing to the fact that the phenomenon of Mahdism permeates Islamic history, as Yassine claims, Sufis descended from Muhammad (*sufiyy sharif*) have always suffered official persecution as enemies of the state whenever they gathered about them a certain number of followers. Even though he does not spell it out clearly, this idea sheds light upon the personal significance which the previous musings about historical Mahdism carry for Yassine. He evidently thinks of himself as a Sufi Sharif who has gathered followers around him in an organized movement that is perceived as a threat to the state. In this sense, he appears in a quasi-messianic light, with the absence of an explicitly militant dimension as the only distinction between his understanding of Mahdism and his self-definition.

Historically, he writes, Sufi Sharifs could only escape state oppression by means of fleeing, or by divine intervention in the form of miracles (*karāmāt*). In contrast to his criticism of *manāqib* collections for creating a distorted popular image of the Sufi saint as excessively and ostentatiously ascetic, Yassine does not dismiss miracles worked by Sufi holy men (or by God through them) as superstitious. On the contrary, Yassine regards the transcendental component in the form of such miracles as an important factor that contributed to the success of some Mahdist movements.²²¹

Yassine adduces several historical accounts of such movements as he considers to be Mahdist to exemplify the impact of supernatural events. These accounts range from the time of Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhiliyy,²²² to more recent

²²¹ *al-mahdawiyya*, op. cit.

²²² whose invocation of God caused the favourite concubine of the king of Tunis to perish, and a conflagration to consume his palace and possessions, when he tried to retain al-Shadhiliyy against his will.

examples such as Ahmad ibn ‘Irfan’s movement in Punjab, Mahdist Sudan, and even the Islamic revolution in Iran and the first Gulf War. The supposedly heroic willingness amongst Iranian soldiers to sacrifice their lives during the latter, according to Yassine, was proof for the tradition cited by Abu Na‘im in his *hilliyya* that Zayd ibn Ali said: “God casts fear into the hearts of His supporters (*qulūb shi‘atihi*) – but when the Mahdi appears, our men will be more courageous than lions.” This is not to say that Yassine considers Imam Khomeini to be the Mahdi. Rather, he interprets the success of the Islamic revolution in 1979 as the miraculous result of divine intervention which consequently emboldened Iranian Muslims, leading them to believe that Khomeini possessed messianic attributes.

In this context, some political convictions informed by Yassine’s understanding of Islam are easily discernible in his writing. Clearly, he would have wished Iran to emerge victorious from its war with Saddam Hussein (who is portrayed as the protagonist of unholy Baathist nationalism). In fact, only “all the forces of evil in the world,” i.e. Hussein’s regime supported by the US, rendered Iraq capable of defeating the Islamic republic.

Yassine devotes a considerable portion of his exposition on Mahdism to the Sudanese Mahdi, since he sees in him the exemplification of the rebellious Sufi. He quotes two statements attributed to the Sudanese Mahdi, in which he relates his visions, sleeping and waking, of the Lord of Existence,²²³ the Qutbs²²⁴, the rightly-guided Caliphs, and al-Khadir.²²⁵ Such visions, and pious faith in their veracity, are of particular importance to Yassine. He explicitly states that he is “as much interested in

²²³ *sayyid al-wujūd*, here to indicate the Prophet Muhammad.

²²⁴ “poles,” i.e. those men at the pinnacle of the universal religious hierarchy - as conceived by Sufis - who throughout history have preserved the natural order by their prayers.

²²⁵ A legendary figure, often associated with an anonymous companion and teacher of Moses in the Quran. He is believed to be alive still.

historical events, as in their relationship with the transcendental.”²²⁶ This belief in miracles is further commented upon in some of the poetry Yassine chose.²²⁷ By far the most interesting piece Yassine chose to include are seven verses composed by “one who believes in miracles as believing Muslims do.” In these verses, the reader is told of *tayy al-ard*²²⁸ which is presented as a fact by virtue of *tawātur* (the very proof advanced previously by Yassine for the coming of the Mahdi at the end of time, cf. above), of the throne of Bilqis,²²⁹ and of the Antichrist (*al-dajjāl*). The poem ends with the line: “If you have not seen things of which you have heard, the least you can do is believe in the reports.”

Violence and Force

According to Yassine, military *jihād* without the correct guidance is an impossibility. The *mujāhidūn* need to be instructed so that their struggle against internal and external *jāhiliyya* does not turn into a “confrontation of equals,” as political parties, e.g., contend with each other in the same system. Just as one must not borrow the technical language of one’s opponents to refute their arguments, brutal oppression cannot be countered by equally savage violence. In fact, giving in to impulses of revenge of this sort is an indication that the fight against the self has not been won, since vengefulness is an ungodly, and selfish desire. Therefore, Yassine does not advocate the planting of bombs, or political assassinations. Interestingly, he

²²⁶ *al-mahdawiyya*, op. cit.

²²⁷ *ibid.*

²²⁸ “folding up of the earth” – i.e. covering vast distances in an impossibly short period of time.

²²⁹ Q – XXVII:38-40 tells the story of Salomon and the *‘ifrit* who transports the throne of Bilqis (the Queen of Sheba) from her palace to his in a matter of moments.

blames European influences and role-models such as the Red Brigades²³⁰ for the spread of violent tendencies amongst the Islamist youth.²³¹

However, under certain circumstances, Yassine approves of methods that would generally be called terroristic in the Western media. In the context of Palestine and Israel, he supports the practice of suicide bombing as a means of ending the “base existence” Palestinian youths are forced to lead, and which “religion does not tolerate.” Bombings in Israel are permissible also, as far as Yassine is concerned, because the enemy is clearly distinguished, and there is no margin for error.²³²

It would seem difficult to reconcile such attitudes (as well as Yassine’s praise for militant opposition in Afghanistan, Libya, India, and elsewhere) with the oft-repeated declaration that *al-‘adl* are essentially pacifist, and condemn violence as an inappropriate means to achieve lasting benefits. However, a closer look at Yassine’s terminology and understanding of violence reveals that, unlikely as it may appear, there is no internal contradiction between the two sides of his thought.

It has been pointed out that Yassine and *al-‘adl* unconditionally condemned the events of 11th September 2001, as well as the Casablanca bombings in 2003 and similar occurrences.²³³ In the light of Yassine’s statement about suicide bombings in Israel, such criticism might be seen as hypocritical and opportunistic. But to Yassine there are crucial differences between the three scenarios (in the US, Morocco, and Israel). Whilst the US represents an infidel society that has never been subdued by the forces of Islam, and therefore is ignorant of God’s full truth, Morocco is nominally an Islamic society that is ill from within. Israel / Palestine differs, inasmuch as Yassine regards the state of Israel as an instance of external encroachment upon and

²³⁰ *Brigate Rosse*, an Italian leftist organization that resorted to means of terror in the attempt to achieve its aims during the 1970s and 80s.

²³¹ *faḍl al-jihād*, op. cit.

²³² *ibid.*

²³³ cf. e.g. Willis, op. cit., p. 19.

occupation of a functioning Muslim society. Yassine seems to consider Military *jihād* as permissible only in the third case, as a means of defence against external aggression..

Furthermore, Yassine makes a distinction between “violence” (*‘unf*) and “force” (*quwwa*), that mirrors the difference he makes between “revolution” (*thawra*) and “uprising” (*qawma*). In his glossary of “concepts,” Yassine defines violence as:

“[...]putting the hand of implementation unto the scales of desire and anger. It is hatred and vindictiveness, and a contest for the objects of this world. *jihād*, on the other hand, is force, not violence. It is the power that breaks down the barriers of tyranny which prevent people from hearing the word of God.”²³⁴

Evidently, *‘unf* differs from *quwwa* not necessarily in its external manifestations but rather in its internal motivations, and the ultimate end to which it is employed. Likewise, *thawra* designates the revolution of the proletariat as defined by Marx, which in Yassine’s understanding entails bloody revenge against the former capitalist oppressors. *qawma* is devoid of this element of revenge and materialistic motivations. Other than that, it might be difficult to tell the two apart by observing the apparent processes, as Yassine describes in his definition of *al-mahajja al-lāhība* (the Open Road), which carries quasi-prophetic overtones:

“There will be complete disobedience and rebellion. Workers will stage a general strike, and the people will take to the street. [It will be] the day when the Islamist movement is at its strongest, and the failure of the government will have reached its utmost limit. It will be an enormous wave of popular anger.”²³⁵

The difference between violence and force, and revolution and uprising, continues Yassine explicitly, lies on “the level of intentions, inclinations of the self, and freedom from the methods of *al-jāhiliyya*.” This conceptual differentiation

²³⁴ *mafāhīm minhājiyya*, op. cit.

²³⁵ *ibid.*

between *‘unf* and *quwwa* (akin to the distinction made, e.g., between “terrorist” and “freedom-fighter”) needs to be taken into account when evaluating statements from *al-‘adl* concerning their advocacy of non-violence.

The Uprising

Yassine’s reasons for choosing the word *qawma* (uprising) instead of using the much more wide-spread *thawra* (revolution) are mainly concerned with the purity of his Islamic discourse. By refusing to speak of an Islamic revolution, he furthermore aims to distinguish himself and his goals from the socialist opposition, whom he regards as aspiring to a revolution, as well as to express the difference in intention, the range of aims, and the ultimate purpose between Islamism and Socialism. Revolution to Yassine implies materialistic motivations, coupled with feelings of rancour and desire for revenge.

Once again, Yassine links his terminology to the Quran. He chooses to call the “Second Starting Point” after the first. Thus, he conceptually links the uprising which he envisages with the *hijra* of Muhammad’s community to Medina, and their subsequent conquest of Mecca. Yassine derives the word *qawma* from Q – LXXII:19: “And when God’s Slave rose up invoking Him in prayer, they thronged round him like a lion’s mane.” Yassine claims that an entire programme of action is encapsulated in this verse. In his interpretation of the verse he points out that the most important characteristic of the one who rises up is that he be God’s Slave. The infidels may throng around him, but he resists them, and continues in his invocation of the Lord until victory is granted him.²³⁶ Yassine does not elaborate on the details of this complete programme and guiding ideal, as they are explained in the Prophet’s biography (*sīra*). One conventional interpretation of the verse is that, as Muhammad

²³⁶ *al-qawma*, op. cit.

was rising up to recite from the Quran and pray to God, the Jinn thronged around him. Swayed by the beauty and intensity of his recitation they then professed Islam.

Thus, the Islamic uprising should follow the model of the Prophet who first exerted his efforts in preaching the message of Islam, thereby gathered about him a large enough number of followers, and then marched on Mecca. Significantly, the traditional accounts insist that the so-called “conquest” of Mecca was brought about without bloodshed.

Furthermore, by interpreting contemporary reality with the way Muhammad lived his life as guiding standard, Islamists avoid the risk of being influenced by “revolutionary thinking” and violence. Yassine present his conception of the sequence and development from spiritual education (*tarbiya*) which paves the way for the proper organization of the movement (*tanẓīm*), to the “march into battle” (*zaḥf*) as a cycle reminiscent of his greater vision of Islamic history. After the *qawma* is won, the greatest efforts should again be spent on *tarbiya*, as was the case in the beginning.

Interestingly, Yassine does not speak of the Islamic uprising and successful lesser *jihād* in completely hypothetical terms or with reference to the earliest history of Islam. He points to contemporary and recent examples such as the activity of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the *jihād* against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in addition to the Iranian revolution as “superior to the efforts spent by extraordinary men” of other religions or political persuasions.²³⁷

Spiritual education and preparation for *jihād* need to be the springs of the energies of the *umma*, as well as provide the guiding principles towards an uprising “more radical and further-reaching” than the wars of liberation against colonial oppression (such as in Algeria), and the post-independence revolutions which in

²³⁷ Yassine, op. cit., p. 344.

Yassine's perception have altered nothing but replace one *jāhiliyy* system with another (cf. Egypt, Iraq), e.g. overthrowing a monarchy to establish a one-party state.²³⁸

Yassine quotes two verses from the Quran²³⁹ to show that the *qawma* is a religious obligation, and that the divine commandment enjoining it also clarifies the proper means, i.e. disobedience: "Do not obey the command of the prodigal who sow dissension on earth, and reconcile not." This command, says Yassine, is valid until Judgment Day like all passages in the Quran as eternal scripture. When the "violent wave" (*al-mawja al-‘ārima*) rises, the members of the movement can put an end to corruption and dissent by complete disobedience, staging a general strike, and going out into the streets.²⁴⁰

However, Yassine concedes, the uprising may also take a different course, depending on unpredictable circumstances. Despite the fact that Muslims should be taught to be patient and enduring, they must not allow historical chances and "breaches in the ranks of the profligate" to go unseized. Thus, God's army may employ other means to seize power, if they seem wise and expedient at the time.²⁴¹ Since the masses of the people have no pronounced talent for adhering to lofty moral ideals, it is inevitable that motivations of anger against oppression (*al-ghaḍab ‘alā al-ẓulm*) will be mixed with anger on behalf of God (*al-ghaḍab li allāh*) in the Islamic uprising. It will be the responsibility of the leaders to prevent the uprising from turning into a revolution.

However, mixing of the pure Islamic motives of the leadership and the ordinary, vengeful anger of the masses is both natural and lawful, according to

²³⁸ *al-qawma al-islāmiyya*, op. cit.

²³⁹ Q – XXVI:151,2

²⁴⁰ *al-qawma al-islāmiyya*, op. cit. (cf. also *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.: *al-maḥajja al-lāhība*)

²⁴¹ Yassine, op. cit., p. 344.

Yassine.²⁴² To prove this point, Yassine quotes from the Quran:²⁴³ “What is the matter with you that you do not fight for God’s sake, and the sake of the oppressed men, women, and children who say: O Lord, deliver us from the wicked denizens of this town.” To fight for the sake of God (*fi sabīl allāh*) is the true Islamic motivation for *jihād*, whilst the struggle for the rights of the oppressed is an expression of the anger against worldly injustice. Both are mentioned in the Quran, and are in fact two sides of the same coin.

As an example of the loftier of the two motivations, Yassine retells an account of Ali’s behaviour in battle. According to the report, Ali found himself face to face with an infidel enemy (*‘aduww fi al-jāhiliyya*). Instead of engaging in combat with him immediately, Ali first “held back his sword for a while” (*yumsik waliyy allāh sayfahu maliyyan*) before killing the polytheist. When the man next to him in the phalanx asked him about his behaviour, he explained that he hesitated so that his intention may be true and unadulterated by feelings of personal revenge.²⁴⁴

Inception of Islamic State After Uprising

The same idea of non-violence informs Yassine’s image of the inception of an Islamic society after the uprising. Whoever opposed religion previously due to ignorance of its true nature, he says, will be forgiven on one condition: he must repent, and accuse the people who used to exploit religion for their own ends (i.e. the unjust rulers with their false pseudo-religious legitimacy; the insincere official scholars, etc.) instead of accusing religion itself. Then he must strive to return politics, the economy, and society to its proper religious foundations.²⁴⁵

²⁴² *ibid.*, p. 339.

²⁴³ Q – IV:75.

²⁴⁴ Yassine, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

²⁴⁵ *binā’ al-dawla al-islāmiyya*, *op. cit.*

As for the “opulent classes” themselves, they must restore justice by giving from their riches “that which is God’s and that which belongs to His slaves.”²⁴⁶ Their repentance will be measured by their support for the vanguard of Islam without waiting until the Islamic state forces them to do so.

To Yassine’s mind, everything depends on “loyalty.” Every group within the community needs to give its unconditional loyalty to God, His Prophet, and the Islamist Project which is expounded by God’s Army. Loyalty will determine not only how soon the project will come to fruition, but also the way in which individual believers will be treated by the Islamic state. Yassine warns God’s army that “opportunistic loyalty will attach itself quickly to whoever seizes the reins of power.” After the corrupt systems of today have been overthrown, those who have led the uprising are responsible to promote the best individuals (*khiyār*) of the community to the positions they deserve, and not impose their own leadership. Men shall be judged and promoted according to their *ikhhlāṣ*. Yassine defines *ikhhlāṣ* as “earnestness in emulating the living model (of the Prophet’s community as described in traditional accounts).” By virtue of this kind of earnestness, Yassine claims, the men of the *da‘wa* (the call to God and the Islamist project) will also succeed in gaining the loyalty of the best individuals from among non-Muslims and those Muslims whose Islam is only an inherited formality. These individuals may come from all backgrounds, no matter which “class” they belonged to before the uprising, just as the movement before the uprising should be inclusive and open to all those who repent.²⁴⁷ Yassine also maintains that people’s loyalty to the state has to be based on religious foundations so as to enable it to weather economic crises and potential errors committed by the executive branch unaffected.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*

The remainder of society, i.e. unrepenting hypocrites and lukewarm Muslims or *a'rāb*, will be punished by Islamic authority and the “Sword of the State” which will “strike with Justice and *ihsān*, not with Revenge and Slander,”²⁴⁸ as Yassine puts it rather vaguely. But it strikes nonetheless, again with an implied difference in moral motivation and aims. These set the Islamic state apart from the desire for revenge which is “only quenched when the blood of the bourgeoisie is spilled and their possessions confiscated,” of which Yassine accuses the “socialist-revolutionary discourse.” Yassine understands all socialism as striving to establish the “dictatorship of the masses,” which in his view would be another form of injustice inflicted upon the former oppressors.

Yassine asserts that after the Islamists seize power, the state will have to be rebuilt completely. The administration will have to be restructured, as does the economy. For the details of the political institutions of the new state, cf. *jihād al-ta'bi'a wa al-binā'*.²⁴⁹ In terms of the economy, Yassine's main concern is that in the Islamic state there will be clarity and accountability.²⁵⁰ The people will have insight into expenditure and accounts of the state. He mentions specifically the abolition of exploitative practices and concomitant embezzlement of monies. The “enemies on the inside must be destroyed, and the foreign siege broken. *da'wa* and base (*qā'ida*) are in need of strong bonds of mutual loyalty, else these aims remain forever unattainable.”²⁵¹ On a more personal level, all Muslims should adopt a lifestyle that suffices them. Luxury, however, has no place in Islamic society (cf. also the eulogy on Ali in which the caliph and commander of the faithful, is described as a humble,

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*

²⁴⁹ this thesis, p. 37.

²⁵⁰ in addition to autonomy, cf. *jihād al-namūdhaj al-nājih*, this thesis, p. 42.

²⁵¹ *binā' al-dawla al-islāmiyya*, op. cit.

mystic-like figure who lived as though he were of the people, without any distinction in livelihood²⁵²).

Islamists, on the surface much like socialist, also campaign for an equitable distribution of wealth in society. Their motivations, however, are of a different nature.²⁵³ Already in the Quran a distinction between rich and poor is made: the rich are led into temptation and, if they succumb, turn into “exploitative, pampered, effeminate oppressors,”²⁵⁴ whilst the poor are struggling to survive and therefore cannot even fulfil the most basic ritual requirements of Islam. Interestingly, Yassine detects a distinction in the Quran between a Lesser Injustice (i.e. political, social, etc.), which is inevitably associated with the Greater Injustice (i.e. polytheism in the form, e.g., of worshipping luxury, etc.). As Yassine puts it, “material exploitation entails religious exploitation.” Thus, the Islamists oppose economic injustice for completely and utterly different reasons from those of the socialists. Even though Yassine does not draw the parallel explicitly himself, the conceptual pair of Lesser and Greater Injustice seems to mirror that of the Lesser and Greater *jihād*.

In much the same way, Yassine insists that his conception of oppressors and oppressed (*mustakbirūn* and *mustad‘afūn*) should not be understood in purely materialistic terms. *istikbār* (lit. arrogance) is used by Yassine to designate a “social, political, economic group of people who trample the miserable underfoot, assume a leadership position in the world without the right to do so, and spread corruption. They stand in God’s way.”²⁵⁵ Therefore it is true to say that the Prophet and his companions fought the *mustakbirūn* for God’s sake, and for the sake of the *mustad‘afūn*. The *mustakbirūn* are by definition “rich, effeminate, infidel

²⁵² *rijāl*, op. cit.

²⁵³ again, Yassine distinguishes on a moral level – cf. “Violence and Force,” this thesis, p. 70.

²⁵⁴ a barely concealed allusion to the Moroccan monarch.

²⁵⁵ cf. *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.: *al-istikbār wa al-istid‘āf*.

oppressors.”²⁵⁶ This “unholy alliance between opulence, oppression, and unbelief” must be eradicated with the sword of Islam.

In the context of Yassine’s discussion of luxury and deprivation, his explicit reference to the two Characteristics (*khiṣāl*) of *badhl* and *ṣabr*, (which he defines here as “spending of one’s own possessions for the benefit of the community as God’s messenger and mortifying the desires of the self”) is another indication of the extent to which the Islamization of even the most “worldly” matters, such as the economy, depends upon spiritual education.

Poetry

It is striking that much of the poetry which Yassine cites is concerned with armed combat. On the one hand, this might be due to the fact that poetry is a more emotive mode of expression than prose. On the other hand, it may simply reflect an abundance in the Arabic poetic tradition of predominantly explicit battle poetry (as part of the wider genre of panegyric poetry, *fakhr*).

The tone is particularly belligerent in Yassine’s choice of poetry at the end of *huwiyya ihsāniyya*. In this case, it consists of one longer section from a poem ascribed to al-Nabigha al-Ja‘di reciting tribal *fakhr* to the Prophet Muhammad after the latter’s triumph over Quraysh at Mecca. Yassine states that his intention in citing it at length was to illustrate the manly virtues (*murū’āt*) upon which the Islamic identity is built. In this context, they are mainly concerned with courage in the face of death, and not engaging in warfare for personal gain.²⁵⁷ Yassine’s own verse reiterates some of these

²⁵⁶ *al-qawma*, op. cit.

²⁵⁷ facing death in battle with equanimity (*kunna ‘alā al-mawt aṣbarā*), regarding the killing of enemies simply as one’s job (*numīt wa lā nuḥyī – kadhālika ṣanī’unā*), treating the enemy’s women after victory with respect (*fa-lam nakshif qinā ‘an li-ḥurratī*), only taking armour / weapons as booty (*lam nastalib illā al-ḥadīd al-musammarā*)

points, but adds the point that Muhammad and his supporters “killed a large number of unbelievers.”

Elsewhere²⁵⁸ he quotes from Bukhari verses attributed to Khubayb, a companion of the Prophet, which he is said to have recited whilst being led to his execution by Quraysh. They are extremely graphic, and emphasize the idealized stoicism a believer is expected to possess when faced with violent death. Khubayb is reported to have said that “God will bless [even] the limbs of a dismembered corps which is torn apart. As long as I die a Muslim I do not mind on which side I fall.” Similarly explicit are the well-known poems attributed to the sons of the *mukhadrama*²⁵⁹ poetess al-Khansa, and the story into which they are weaved. They relate the consecutive martyrdom of her four sons at the battle with the Persian army at al-Qadisiyya (636 CE) in what is today Iraq, whilst their mother looks on with composure, urging them to display valour in combat.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ *rijāl*, op. cit.

²⁵⁹ i.e. who was born before the advent of Islam but lived to hear Muhammad’s message.

²⁶⁰ *al-qawma*, op. cit.

4) Yassine's Theory of Society and History

This chapter is intended to give an overview of Yassine's attempt to formulate an entirely Islamic theory of history and society. To this end, he devises a range of "categories," and "classes" of people whom he sees as responsible for historical change, both in the past and today. His cyclical view of history takes as its starting point Muhammad's life and ends in the prediction that the caliphate will be re-instituted, which is also the ultimate aim of Yassine's teachings.

Mysticism and Orthodoxy

The question of mysticism and orthodoxy in Islam is of special importance to Yassine. In terms of his theory of history, the two traditions represent two channels of religious transmission comprising the formal learning associated with orthodoxy, and the spiritual dimension of faith which Yassine associates with mysticism. On the one hand, he presents historical figures from both "traditions" as examples for different types of *jihād* (without labelling them as belonging to one or other of the eleven). Presenting individual Sufis and '*ulamā*' in a positive light, furthermore, is part of Yassine's rhetoric aimed at a reconciliation between the two as integral parts of religion which should not be separated. On the other hand, discussion of the issue serves to criticize current practices in both camps, with contemporary '*ulamā*' and Sufis seen as state officials and superstitious obscurantists respectively.

Yassine's concept of *tarbiya* interestingly blends the mystic notion of the individual's spiritual journey towards God with the traditionalist idea of pure knowledge being transmitted over generations through channels traceable back to the time of the Prophet. The first generation of Muslims, according to Yassine, were

granted victory partly because of the blessing of Muhammad's company (*ṣuḥba*). This blessing was then inherited generation by generation in the form of having known personally someone who knew the Prophet, and so forth, and having emulated their behaviour.²⁶¹ Thus, *ṣuḥba* comes first not only in the ten Characteristics, and at the beginning of the individual's spiritual journey in the company of the *jamā'a*, but also historically at the very inception of Islam. The link to God through spiritual education is equally important to Yassine as the link to His Prophet through uninterrupted transmission of knowledge from the pious ancestors.²⁶²

Another one of the ten Characteristics plays a crucial role in Yassine's vision of the uninterrupted transmission of knowledge. Truthful transmission requires sincerity (*ṣidq*), and insincerity always threatens the chain of transmission with being interrupted by false testimony or blatant lies. Therefore it is imperative that *ṣidq* comes before, e.g., knowledge and work (*'ilm and 'amal*) in the succession of the ten *khiṣāl*. Both *ṣuḥba* and *ṣidq*, asserts Yassine, are of tremendous importance to the individual salvation of believers, and their collective salvation as a community.²⁶³

Yassine claims that there have always been learned specialists in the science of *ḥadīth* who conform to his idealist stipulations. These specialists, he asserts, have safeguarded the Sunna of the Prophet with uninterrupted chains of transmitters and certificates of their proficiency to teach that which they have learnt.²⁶⁴ Likewise, the chain of Sufis who are connected by *ṣuḥba*, spiritual education, and mystic initiation is firm and uninterrupted. The former chain, Yassine calls *sanad al-riwāya* (the learned tradition of the *'ulamā'*). The latter he labels *sanad al-tarbiya* (spiritual education of Sufism). He expresses his disapproval for the "chronic squabbling"

²⁶¹ Yassine, op. cit., p. 333.

²⁶² cf. Lauzière, op cit., pp. 248-9 for Sufism and Salafism in Yassine's writings.

²⁶³ Yassine, op. cit., p. 334.

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*

between the two, and dismisses active partisanship for or against either one of the groups as a waste of time for God's army who should adopt everything that is good and pious which has come through both channels.²⁶⁵

In Yassine's view of Islam, the continual transmission of *ḥadīth* provides Muslims today with a code of behaviour and the facts about Muhammad's historical heritage. It also protects Islam against heretical accretions and superstitions. The mystic tradition, on the other hand, prepares the "soil of the hearts which hearken and awake, so that they rise and put into practice [that which they have learnt]."²⁶⁶ Thus, Yassine identifies the emotive side of faith represented by Sufism as a necessary prerequisite for the practical implication of otherwise highly theoretical learning in the tradition of the '*ulamā*'.²⁶⁷ Yassine mentions especially the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hasan al-Banna, who, he says, was also an advocate of mysticism as "the heart of spiritual education, the flint of faith, and the stronghold of morals."²⁶⁸

Were it not for the mystic dimension of faith, Yassine claims, nothing could remedy the disunity of Islam in the world today. Only through the sustained historical effort of sincere Sufis do Muslim in our times have access to faith as "fresh" as when Muhammad received his revelations.

Mysticism

Yassine devotes some attention to clarifying his stance on ascetic practices of self-deprivation, since he clearly feels that such exercises are the main component of the popular understanding of Sufism. First of all, he divides those who practice

²⁶⁵ Lauzière, op. cit., p. 245: "... from the early 1970s onward, Yasin viewed mysticism as essential for the success of Islamism ..."

²⁶⁶ Yassine, op. cit., p. 334.

²⁶⁷ cf. also Willis, op. cit., pp. 18-9 for Sufi influences on the structure of *al-'adl* and Yassine's thought

²⁶⁸ Yassine, op. cit., p. 335.

*mujāhada*²⁶⁹ into two categories: 1) those who lead an ascetic life of worship but are devoid of [the loftiest] *irāda*²⁷⁰, and 2) the Sufis of old, whose orders were characterized by “sensual and moral asceticism, silence, hunger, sleeplessness, and *dhikr*²⁷¹.” He is not interested in the former category, since their abstention lacks an internal dimension and purpose. Consequently, he dedicates his elaborations on the topic of *mujāhada* exclusively to the ancient mystics.

False Sufism

Yassine laments the fact that the popular image of a Sufi holy man is informed to a great extent by tales of *manāqib* and hagiography, in which the *waliyy* is usually portrayed as covered in dust, having matted hair, and leading an excessively abstemious life. This image, claims Yassine, is founded on religious ignorance and constitutes an aberration akin to monasticism which is not mentioned anywhere in revelation.²⁷²

Not only is excessive self-deprivation in itself futile, but without the right guidance it might stand as an obstacle between the believer and God. In order to prove this point, Yassine quotes a saying attributed to Abd al-Qadir al-Jilaniyy: “O people, you run after this world to make it give you [the things you desire] – whilst the world runs after God’s *awliyā*’ in order to give them [all they need]. Therefore stand in front of them, and the world will nod its head [i.e. smile on you].”²⁷³ This saying is

²⁶⁹ subduing the desires of the self, in this context more specifically: by ascetic practice

²⁷⁰ Yassine’s concept of *irāda* does not conform to the lexical meaning of the word (“willpower”). In his thought, it is coupled with *himma* (loosely: ambition) and arranged hierarchically: the loftiest *irāda* is “to know God, loving Him, yearning to encounter Him, and endearing oneself to Him by pleasing Him.” Beneath that, there are innumerable ranks of *himma* and *irāda*, “down to the lowliest of things.” (cf. *irāda* in: *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.).

²⁷¹ designating ritual practice in Sufi brotherhoods, not *dhikr* as one of the ten Characteristics.

²⁷² *faḍl al-jihād*, op. cit.

²⁷³ *ibid.*

interpreted by Yassine as emphasizing the importance of keeping the company of the friends of God as role-models and sources of spiritual enlightenment.

Yassine furthermore asserts that voluntary asceticism is morally inferior to fighting for God's cause in this world. He concedes that the path to God is indeed closed in front of him who does not subdue his selfish desires, but this kind of *mujāhada* must not become a way of life. Supererogatory prayers must not take up night and day and leave not space for the "supererogatory prayers in the spirit of *jihād*," as Yassine calls them. These are such mundane things as earning one's living, striving for offspring, learning and teaching, commanding people to do good and preventing them from wicked deeds, and charitable giving.²⁷⁴

Moreover, the hardship endured by the Prophet's companions during the *hijra* and the subsequent conflict with pagan Mecca in terms of travelling through the desert without sufficient provisions and cover was much more difficult to endure than self-inflicted deprivation. As for the mystic practice of sleep-deprivation, spending the night awake to keep guard over the believers is worth more before God than spending the night in solitary prayer.²⁷⁵

Yassine also cites poetry written by anonymous mystics that exemplifies the experience of mortifying the desires of the self by ascetic exercises. Several verses composed by "one who subdued his self by forcing it to drain the dregs of sorrow's bitter cup," play on the two paradoxes that, unless accustomed to the bitterness of deprivation, the self would recoil from it in disgust; and that humility leads to greatness, whilst greatness leads to lowliness.²⁷⁶ This may indicate that such exercises, if performed with sincere intentions, constitute a valid and necessary

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *ibid.*

²⁷⁶ *tarīq al-mujāhda*, op. cit.

component in the spiritual development of the individual. However, they must remain confined to a preliminary stage, and should not be adopted as a life-style.

True Sufism

In order to demonstrate that, historically, Sufism did not conform to current popular stereotypes, Yassine mentions al-Shadhiliyy's distaste for the phenomenon of ostentatious asceticism. To exemplify, Yassine quotes a number of sayings attributed to al-Shadhiliyy or his master disciples, as well as an anecdote in which an ascetic in rough woollen garments criticizes al-Shadhiliyy for wearing the clean and smooth attire of an *'ālim*. The shaykh counters the provocation by saying that shabby clothes indicate a dependence upon people's benevolence, whilst being dressed normally indicated a dependence solely upon God. The sayings combined express the point of view that it is morally preferable to enjoy good things with sincere gratitude to God instead of pretending to thank God for unpleasant things which in truth one detests.²⁷⁷

Yassine personally approves of the influence exerted by al-Shadhiliyy on the historical development of Islamic mysticism. According to Yassine, al-Shadhiliyy removed Sufism from its seclusion and ostentatious abstemiousness, and advised his followers not only to maintain an inconspicuous appearance in their manner of dress, but also enjoined the pursuit of a craft or profession. By this token, *mujāhada* becomes loyal obedience to God's commands and subduing selfish desires, but without being mutually exclusive with productive work. The implication is that no-one should live as a "parasite," dependent on his fellow men as some ascetics do.²⁷⁸ As al-Shadhiliyy's main disciples and "inheritor of his secret" (*wāriṭh sirrihi*), Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi is reported to have said: "May the shuttle on your loom be your

²⁷⁷ *tarīqat al-shukr*, op. cit.

²⁷⁸ *ibid.*

prayer beads, or your adze, or the movement of your fingers whilst sewing or twining ropes.”²⁷⁹

To the same effect, Yassine cites a passage from Abu al-Hasan al-Nadwi’s book *rabbāniyya la rahbāniyya*,²⁸⁰ in which al-Nadwi contradicts the popular perception of Sufism as detached from this world, and points to those Sufi shaykhs who have fought on the battlefield of *jihād*. Nadwi writes:

“Sufism in its original, sincere form, in keeping with the way of prophecy²⁸¹ [...] breathes into [the souls of] our sons the spirit of action and the yearning for *jihād*.”

Yassine seems to be implying that Muslims need to be re-educated to appreciate the true value of Sufism once more as they used to, and that the kind of potentially belligerent Sufism exemplified by Umar al-Mukhtar, the leader of the Libyan opposition against Italian fascist colonialism in the 1920s and 30s, and others is an essential component of the Muslim identity.²⁸²

The readiness to sacrifice one’s life in battle as a component of complete faith is also a prominent theme in some of the poetry Yassine cites. He adduces verses attributed to a Sufi, who “gave his soul generously in the [battle]field of love [for God].”²⁸³ Their main theme is God’s omnipotence. Due to this divine quality, the shedding of the believer’s blood is declared lawful unto God whensoever He pleases.

Yassine’s own three lines of verse reflecting this theme allude implicitly to the concept of *ṣuḥba*, and metaphorically weave together both types of *jihād*: inner and outer, individual and communal, greater and lesser:

²⁷⁹ *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ footnote [2] in: *huwiyya ihsāniyya*, op. cit.

²⁸¹ *minhāj al-nubuwwa*, an implicit hint at one potential source of inspiration for Yassine when devising his own conception of *al-minhāj al-nabawiyy*

²⁸² *huwiyya ihsāniyya*, op. cit.

²⁸³ *tarīq al-mujāhada*, op. cit.

Even he who dons the chain-mail of disgrace and shirks that of *jihād*
If they gave him a coat of piety in our ranks, he would derive [valour] from it
He who has never been heroic, when he walks on our path he shall be it²⁸⁴

Orthodoxy

According to Yassine, '*ulamā*' who are sincere in their works towards subjects and rulers must uphold the commandment of "enjoining good deeds and forbidding wicked ones" (*amr* and *nahy*). Many may have fallen short of these sincere intentions, both in former times and now. Treachery, however, is not confined to either '*ulamā*' or Sufis. The traitors amongst the former he calls "'ulamā' of the Palaces," referring to their being in the service of the ruler. The Sufi traitors, on the other hand, were called *khufarā' al-żalama* ("sentinels of unjust rulers") by Ibn Taymiyya. According to Yassine, these two types of traitors must be considered exceptions, "even if their numbers proliferate like flies on filth."²⁸⁵ Instead, the crucial role played by sincere individuals from both '*ulamā*' and Sufis in spreading and protecting God's religion on earth must be remembered. It is clear that Yassine sees true religion as above such distinctions as the one conventionally made between mysticism and orthodoxy. His argument bears the marks of a pronounced catholicity, in keeping with his project to re-unite the Muslim community on a global scale. However, Yassine goes even further than to underline the merits of each group separately, and claims that there have been significant overlaps between them in the past. Tellingly, in this context the Sufis have the upper hand. Many a great '*ālim*' is said to have been disciple to a Sufi-shaykh learned in jurisprudence, but not vice versa.

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *jihād fī al-ḥitna*, op. cit.

In the course of his comments on *'ulamā'* and Sufis, the distinction Yassine makes between *tarbiya* and *ta'līm* becomes clear. Whilst *tarbiya* is education associated with Sufism, and therefore more strongly related to the spiritual side of learning, *ta'līm*, as more formal, rational education, is the domain of the *'ulamā'* (as the common root of both words already suggests).²⁸⁶

Historically, Yassine presents Izz al-Din ibn Abd al-Salam as the exemplary *'ālim*. According to Yassine, Izz al-Din was a contemporary of al-Shadhiliyy. He recounts an episode at the battle of Mansura in which the paths of both men crossed, as they had both come to preach to the Muslim forces and encourage them with their presence. Yassine insists that their spiritual support in combination with the political leadership of the Mamluk Sultan al-Zahir Baybars was a prerequisite for the triumph of the Muslim forces over the army of Louis IX of France, which ended the seventh crusade in ca. 1250.²⁸⁷ The anecdote is an allegory of the desired alliance between state, orthodoxy, and mysticism.

Yassine extols the virtues of Izz al-Din at great length, much of which has the ring of conventional, if enthusiastic eulogy. He describes the great *'ālim* as “a man of the people, humble towards the masses and [allowing himself to be] led by Sufi shaykhs. [...] But he was a thorn in the side of the rulers²⁸⁸ who would never let a wicked deed go unnoticed. He had confrontations with the Sultans of his age that constituted an exemplary standard for the *jihād* of *'ulamā'* in times of disunity (*al-fitna*).”

It is clear that Izz al-Din is one of Yassine's role-models, or an historic precedent with which he identifies. Despite the fact that he does not advertise his own humble background and Sufi past here, a cursory comparison with Yassine's official

²⁸⁶ cf. also this thesis: *jihād al-ta'līm* (p. 24), and *jihād al-nafs* (p.18).

²⁸⁷ *jihād fī al-fitna*, op. cit.

²⁸⁸ lit.: “a foreign body in their throat causing them to choke”

biography reveals that he must be keenly conscious of the points of overlap between himself and Izz al-Din when he sings the praises of the 13th century *‘ālim*, especially since in Yassine’s view the *umma* still lives in a state of *fitna*.²⁸⁹ In this light, the “confrontations with the rulers of his age” are easily identified as an allusion to Yassine’s own provocations of Hassan II and Muhammad VI of Morocco in his “*jihād* of the Word.”²⁹⁰

Yassine furthermore gives two lengthy accounts of Izz al-Din’s more immediate confrontations with Mamluk rulers and commanders. The most instructive confrontation from the first account takes place after the Mongol conquest of Baghdad (1258 CE), when Izz al-Din advises the Mamluk Sultan Qutuz to spare no effort or expense of his own, and of his army commanders, instead of borrowing money from traders, in order to ward off the hostile onslaught. If the Sultan adhered to his advice (i.e. relied exclusively on his own means), Izz al-Din promised him certain victory over the invading multitudes. That was the reason, according to Yassine, for the unexpected triumph of the Mamluk armies at Ayn Jalut (1260 CE). The second account consists of a dispute between the Mamluk military commanders and the *‘ālim* which culminates in their being auctioned off in public for the benefit of the Muslim fiscus.²⁹¹ For all that their protagonist is an *‘ālim*, these anecdotes are strongly reminiscent of popular accounts of miracles performed by (God through) Sufi saints.

Yassine’s portrayal of the exemplary *‘ālim* in terms usually reserved for mystics is part of his effort to reconcile the two traditions. It is particularly instructive that he presents the ideal Sufi, who has overcome his fear of death and severed his

²⁸⁹ since it is divided not only along sectarian lines, but more importantly splintered into nation states that do not reflect the inherent unity of the global Muslim community as Yassine envisages it

²⁹⁰ *marḥalat jihād al-kalima wa miḥnat al-islām aw al-tūfān*:

http://www.yassine.net/yo12/Default.aspx?article=jamaa_hist_jihad_kalima

²⁹¹ *ibid.*

attachment to this world, as exceptionally belligerent to demonstrate that mysticism is not monasticism, but the driving force behind action and historical change.

Historical Change

To set himself apart from secular theories of society and history, Yassine introduces new categories of people to describe historical, social and political change. Whereas the previous discussion of orthodoxy and mysticism concentrated on historical examples, Yassine does retain Sufis and ‘*ulamā*’ as valid “classes” for analysis of today’s society. In addition, he introduces the “class of interpreters,” i.e. the Westernized elites. In this context they represent that portion of socio-political reality which must be replaced with a proper Islamic government, just as the “‘*ulamā*’ of the Palaces” must be replaced with religious bodies of political influence which combine true mysticism and orthodoxy.

To exemplify whom he includes in these three categories, Yassine lists Yunus Khalis and Rasool Sayyaf²⁹² as praiseworthy *mujāhid*-‘*ulamā*’, whilst on the Sufi side he includes Umar al-Mukhtar,²⁹³ as well as Hasan al-Banna.²⁹⁴ Exemplary of the Interpreters are Ataturk, Nasser, and Bourguiba, the likes of whom, says Yassine, are still in charge of running the states into which the *umma* is divided.²⁹⁵

²⁹² Both activists in the Afghan *jihād*. Despite the vague dates we have for the publication and writing of *al-ihsān*, It is reasonable to assume that Yassine has in mind only Sayyaf’s fight against the Soviet forces during the 1980s, and not his subsequent activities as supporter of Osama bin Laden, since elsewhere in Yassine’s writings (cf. e.g. *al-‘adl*), praise for the Afghan *jihād* against the foreign oppressor is usually accompanied by a footnote added during editing that laments the disintegration of Afghanistan’s Muslim community into warring tribal factions after the Soviet withdrawal.

²⁹³ cf. this thesis, p. 87

²⁹⁴ to whom he refers as “his group” (*jamā‘atuhu*) – Yassine implicitly underlines the parallels between the Brotherhood and *al-‘adl*, which internally is known only as *al-jamā‘a*. The term is derived from the special usage of the word *umma* in Q – III:104, which to Yassine means that there needs to be an organized community within the community, separate from the Muslim masses and entrusted with preserving, delivering, and fulfilling God’s message (cf. *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.: *jamā‘at al-muslimīn*).

²⁹⁵ *huwīyya ihsāniyya*, op. cit.

In addition to Sufis, *'ulamā'*, and the Interpreters, Yassine introduces a fourth social category which is instrumental to historic change: the soldiers, or army, of God (*jund allāh*).²⁹⁶ God's army may include men from all backgrounds, i.e. from any of the three other classes after they have disentangled themselves from their former social allegiances.²⁹⁷ Therefore, the soldiers of God potentially combine the best qualities of all categories (the formal, legal knowledge of the *'ulamā'*, the spiritual education of the Sufis, and the political and scientific know-how of the Westernized elites). These qualifications will make them rise to power on the "day of victory." Likewise, their sincere faith and correct education will prevent them from adopting the errors which are particular to each group (the hypocrisy of the palace-*'ulamā'*, the heresies of the Sufi orders, and the atheist ideology of the "interpreters").

Islamic Society – Spiritual Meritocracy

Whereas the categories of Interpreters, Sufis, *'ulamā'*, and God's Army were concerned with historical change, Yassine introduces a different set of categories to describe social realities in the Islamic State. In the new society as envisaged by Yassine, all previous "class differences" will be abolished. If necessary, the state authorities will abolish them by force, including the means for their continuation and potential return. Yassine's vagueness of expression seems to imply that his readership is aware of the nature of these means. He sees the majority of people as motivated only by the pursuit of their own benefit. Such people can be diverted from their selfish behaviour only by force and fear of official authority. Yassine calls this "class" *a'rāb* (lit.: Bedouins). That is to say, they are neither distinguished by faith as are true believers (*al-mu'minūn*), emigration (*hijra*) as are those Muslims who have severed

²⁹⁶ cf. footnote 150.

²⁹⁷ i.e. performed *hijra*

their previous social ties, if necessary, to join the Islamist movement (*al-muhājirūn*), nor by help (*nasr*) as are those Muslims who lend active support to the movement without actually being members (*al-anṣār*).²⁹⁸ The *a'rāb* are nominally Muslims, in the sense of *islām* as opposed to *īmān* and *ihsān*.²⁹⁹ They belong to “the fringes of the community, in terms of both faith and residency.”³⁰⁰ However, Yassine asserts, one must not call them unbelievers unless they themselves announce it clearly.³⁰¹ Thus, he definitely rejects the concept of *takfīr*, i.e. declaring one’s fellow Muslims to be apostates and consequently legitimate targets for violence.

At the other end of the spiritual spectrum of the Islamic social categorization, Yassine places those whom he calls *rijāl* (Men). The meaning of the word *rijāl* in Yassine’s vocabulary is derived from two Quranic verses: XXXIII:23,³⁰² and XXIV:36-7.³⁰³ The Men in the former are characterized by sincere adherence to their covenant with God (which is often interpreted to refer to the agreement between God and the believers concluded in Q – XI:111, i.e. God’s promise of paradise to those who kill and are killed for His sake), whilst in the latter passage, they are described as intent on *dhikr* to the extent that no worldly business can distract them. Thus, Yassine’s Men are Muslims who combine the qualities of *ṣidq* and *dhikr*.³⁰⁴ Likewise, his definition of Manliness (*rujūla*) stems from the Quranic text.³⁰⁵ *rijāl* are distinguished from other believers in terms of their innate religious instinct (*fiṭra*), by exemplary generosity, intellect, and morals.

²⁹⁸ *a'rāb*, *anṣār*, and *muhājirūn* derived from Q and *sīra* accounts of the *hijra*.

²⁹⁹ cf. this thesis, p. 50.

³⁰⁰ cf. *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.: *al-a'rābiyya wa al-nuṣra wa al-hijra*.

³⁰¹ *binā' al-dawla al-islāmiyya*, op. cit.

³⁰² “Amongst believers there are Men who have been true [*ṣadaqū*] to their covenant with God.”

³⁰³ “In houses which God ordered to be elevated, and in which His name is remembered [*yudhkar*], Men glorify Him morning and evening – Men who will not be distracted by trade or buying from remembering God [*dhikr allāh*], performing prayer and giving alms.”

³⁰⁴ *dhikr* is the second, and *ṣidq* the third of the ten Characteristics.

³⁰⁵ *rijāl*, op. cit.

As a comment on the *ḥadīth* attributed to Muhammad which states that the best people of the *jāhiliyya* will also be the best Muslims,³⁰⁶ Yassine argues that in Islam all racial and national considerations fall obsolete because people will be distinguished from each other solely by their moral merit. Thus, considerations of “blood, colour, and language” do not determine the Islamic identity, although the teaching of Arabic as the language of scripture forms an essential part of it.³⁰⁷ Neither should Muslim society be subdivided into economic classes. Yassine here uses the term Muslim society as a synonym of *umma*, which is clear from his description of it as “spread out geographically, torn apart politically, and descended through various lineages.”³⁰⁸ Instead, he prefers the categories of *muhājirūn*, *anṣār*, and *a‘rāb*. As mentioned above, also these are derived from the Quran. Yassine defines the *muhājirūn* and *anṣār* furthermore as the “nucleus of the people of faith and good deeds (*īmān* and *iḥsān*),” whereas the *a‘rāb* are comprised of “hidden Muslims, hypocrites, those who have insufficient understanding of religion, and those who lack manliness, generosity, intellect, and morals.”³⁰⁹

Thus, Yassine claims, God has decreed in the Quran that the highest-ranking category of people in Muslim society are those who embody the Islamic ideal of *rujūla* as outlined above. Without educating generations of *rijāl* who “derive their complete personality and sound identity from the Quran and Sunna,” there can be no hope of establishing the Second Caliphate.

The Second Caliphate

The Second Caliphate is the political entity which will unify the Muslim community worldwide. Yassine half presents it as the ultimate goal for which

³⁰⁶ “People are [as] unearthed treasures, the best of them in *al-jāhiliyya* will be the best of them in Islam, if they understand.” *rijāl*, op. cit.

³⁰⁷ *ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*

Muslims ought to strive, half as a cosmic certainty. According to a *ḥadīth* report attributed to Muhammad, his community will be followed by a rightly-guided caliphate for a certain period of time. Thereafter, the community will splinter, and Islamic government deteriorate into hereditary kingship (*al-mulk al-ʿadḍ*), and subsequently into rule by force (*al-mulk al-jabriyy*). The latter is the state of the Muslim community today, “trapped in the living nightmare of the world Zionist conspiracy.”³¹⁰

According to Yassine, colonial, economic, cultural, and military oppression are direct consequences of “religious oppression.” He identifies the oppressors as Zion (contemporary Judaism understood as a global conspiracy against Islam), and the infidel East and West (during the Cold War). Their allies in the Muslim world are the rulers of *jabr* (cf. above), and the profiteers of capitalism. However, this darkest chapter of the political fortunes of the Muslim community will be followed by the Second Caliphate in this world.³¹¹ Yassine is certain of the advent of the Second Caliphate because of the numerous sound *ḥadīth* reports attributed to Muhammad that mention it, and his entire cyclical conception of history is based on them

To Yassine it is extremely important that Muslims perceive of Umayyad and Abbasid rule as part of the degeneration of Islamic politics (*ʿadḍ*). In fact, the Umayyad revolution initiated this degeneration. Consequently, Muslims must stop thinking of them as caliphates since they would always associate religion with unjust rule. Yassine emphasizes this point to counterbalance the discourse of the official religious authorities, whose “inherited” (i.e. nominal and passive) Islam is rooted in their pride in by-gone days of resplendent Muslim civilizations, and to emphasize that

³¹⁰ *min al-amāniyy al-maʿsūla ilā al-jihād*, op. cit.

³¹¹ cf. e.g. *mafāhīm minhājīyya*, op. cit.: *al-ʿadḍ*, and *al-jabr*. The former, according to Yassine, lasted “many centuries,” and included Umayyads, Abbasids, Mamluks, and Ottomans. The latter’s inception coincides with the gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire, whose extent can be gauged by the degree of European colonial encroachment upon the Muslim world.

by calling for the re-institution of the caliphate he does not mean a return to the feudalism of Umayyad and Abbasid times. This issue is related to the one of identity, education and ideology, since any conception of Islam which is defined solely by the material culture of past dynasties, in Yassine's opinion, reduces Islam to a mere "civilization," and thereby slips into nationalism. His main concern is that Muslims today must not forget the injustice that prevailed underneath the glittering façade of the Umayyads and Abbasids.³¹²

According to Yassine, neither *'add* nor *jabr* enjoy any popular support and genuine loyalty. Therefore, governments to whom these definitions apply are forced to buy a kind of commercial loyalty by enriching their entourage and functionaries. The logical concomitant, to Yassine, is the economic misery of the ordinary population. However, "there is a lowest limit of misery that can be tolerated"³¹³ Here, Yassine's argument seems to be influenced by the Marxist definition of a "revolutionary situation" in which neither the deprived masses nor the exploitative elites can continue living as they do because the system has become unsustainable. He goes so far as to state that "the governments of the Interpreters are now faced with political and economic failure, as well as being completely cut off from the popular base which only tolerates them with great displeasure."³¹⁴

Yassine furthermore adduces external factors to underline the perceived necessity that all Muslims should be united politically. The Muslim "statelets" of today fail their inhabitants as they "drown in international debt."³¹⁵ Their industry founders owing to the restricted market, and their efforts are futile because of a lack of co-operation between Muslim states. Their dependency on the industrialized world

³¹² cf. also *jihād al-ta'lim*, this thesis, p. 24.

³¹³ *ibid.*

³¹⁴ *faḍl al-jihād*, op. cit.

³¹⁵ *al-wahda*, op. cit.

increases, and the grip of the rich and powerful nations of the northern hemisphere on the global economy grows stronger until no-one can influence their foreign policy. In short, the Muslim world needs to be unified to form a larger, more influential bloc to counterbalance Western hegemony, and in order to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth within the Muslim world. As Yassine points out, in some of the “oil-statelets” of the Gulf the average annual per capita income is more than twice of that in the US, whilst elsewhere in the world Muslims die of poverty and disease. In Yassine’s words, “nation states, that have been translated into the Muslim world as class-bound tyranny, only survive by emaciating the body of the *umma*, [and] squandering its powers.”³¹⁶ However, even if the Muslim world appears to be behind in terms of civilization, science, and other aspects of material culture in the present age, Muslims should not forget that they are the bearers of God’s true message.³¹⁷ Therein lies the ultimate significance of Yassine’s demand for unity: a unified and powerful caliphate would be the appropriate tool to deliver God’s message to all mankind.³¹⁸

Yassine does acknowledge that the material side of the above considerations is not absent from the policies pursued by the rulers of Muslim nation states as we have them today. Occasionally, he says, they will launch a project aimed at unifying at least portions of the Arab-Muslim world such as in the case of Nasser. In Yassine’s view, the failure of the United Arab Republic, and Nasser’s defeat at the hands of Israel discredited his entire pan-Arabist project. Yassine seems to imply that such failures are a clear indication that God was not pleased with Nasser’s ambitions, based as they were on secular ideology.³¹⁹

³¹⁶ *ibid.*

³¹⁷ *al-qawma*, op. cit.

³¹⁸ cf. also *jihād al-tawhīd*, this thesis, p. 43.

³¹⁹ *al-qawma*, op. cit.

Moreover, such projects are doomed to fail because the rulers are “hypocrites,” and the masses they govern have no faith. Projects that aim at imposing unity from above cannot succeed, just like revolutions that are inflicted on populations who may not have an interest in them. Unfortunately, these failures compound the psychological problem from which the *umma* suffers, says Yassine, as every thwarted hope contributes to the feeling of impotence. He sees the only way towards a political unification of the global Muslim community in “treating and curing the universal disease so that the body of the Community may be as healthy as its religion.” According to the *ḥadīth*, the main symptoms as well as causes for the weakness are love of this world and an aversion to, and fear of death.³²⁰

Islamic history provides Yassine with the model of Muhammad’s *jihād*, which transformed gradually people’s previous loyalties (tribal affiliations, the political importance of noble descent, etc) into exclusive loyalty to God, the Prophet, and religious law. This single-minded devotion to Islam will constitute the integrative human foundation of the Islamic state upon which the loyalty between believers is also built.

³²⁰ *ibid.*

5) Conclusion

Findings / Relation to Secondary Literature

It is hoped that this thesis has added to the understanding of Abdessalam Yassine's thought in the English-speaking world. Despite the fact that this work did not concentrate explicitly on issues that were evidently of concern and interest to scholars in the past – those of ideology and political ambitions – it has arrived at clearer conclusions than those reached in the secondary literature consulted.

Whereas the question of whether Yassine's project was limited to the nation state of Morocco or applicable to Muslims world-wide was previously shrouded in an aura of ambiguity, it can now safely be stated that Yassine's goals have definite global implications. Neither is the aim to re-establish a caliphate under which the entire Muslim world shall be united subject to changing circumstances (as the methods to attain it are). Rather, it is of cosmological significance as a means to deliver God's message to humankind by setting a resplendent example of virtue and morality. It was also promised by the Prophet Muhammad in a sound *ḥadīth* report, and is therefore beyond debate. Furthermore, the nature of the Uprising and the ways in which it is different from a Revolution in Yassine's thought was clarified. As explained above, the difference is mainly one of moral motivations.

As concerns the question of democracy and other "secular" ideologies, there remains no doubt that Yassine ultimately rejects them outright. They may present obstacles on the way to achieving the final goal, and as such must be dealt with in a constructive manner so as not to jeopardize the continuation of the Islamist effort. Whilst they cannot be abolished, the Islamist movement may participate actively in

the systems defined by them, but in the final instance they remain a part of infidel government.

Further Research

In terms of the oft-mentioned Sufi influences on Yassine's thought, this work is hoped to have provided the first step towards a fuller analysis beyond the mere statement that Yassine spent several years in the Butshishiyya order. Since the tradition of Sufism is an extremely extensive field of learning, this thesis had to be limited to a description of the mystical elements in Yassine's writings without contextualizing them in historical or contemporary Sufism. Such research could lead to a deeper understanding of certain aspects of Yassine's thought which in the light of a purely descriptive analysis may appear of interest only for their being somewhat quaint (such as the belief in miracles and visions).

However, the mystic background is not the only project of contextualization which remains to be undertaken. On account of Yassine's intellectual and religious eclecticism, the prospects for comparative study are ample. In addition to the efforts in the secondary literature consulted for this thesis to locate Yassine and his movement on a map, as it were, of Moroccan Islamism, it would be a fruitful project to analyze influences, similarities and discrepancies between Yassine's thought and that of other Islamist ideologues and intellectuals from around the Muslim world, both today and in the past. In this context, the likes of Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Ali Abdarraziq, and Hassan al-Banna come to mind, to some of whom Yassine refers explicitly in his writings, either with praise or disapprobation. As a most general and rudimentary conclusion to be derived from this thesis, Yassine's thought stands out from among these predecessors of his by virtue of the special place of Sufism in his programme for change, even though mystical influences and the idea to bring about

social change by transforming the individual member of a movement in general are not unique features. There are discernible parallels in this respect, notably to the thought of al-Banna and the early Muslim Brotherhood.

The Concept of *jihād* in Yassine's Writings

The concept of *jihād* in Yassine's writings proved to be an extremely complex and rewarding subject for study. As the root of the word (*j-h-d*) indicates, the lowest common denominator that underlies all different types and manifestations of *jihād* is their being defined as an "effort," i.e. any effort undertaken for the sake of God and His religion in this world. Consequently, Yassine's elaboration on the topic of *jihād* provided a singularly comprehensive insight into his thought and programme for Islamic change.

As explained above, *jihād* occupies the tenth and final position in the system of the Characteristics of the Godly Personality as proposed by Yassine. That position is to indicate not only the highest priority, but also the fact that *jihād* permeates all other nine Characteristics (i.e. the entirety of spiritual education). Furthermore, the study of *jihād* in Yassine's writings elucidated the final goals set for the Islamist movement, since certain aspects of *jihād* are concerned with implementing that which has been assimilated by the community of individuals over the course of spiritual education. As such, *jihād* represents the pinnacle of Yassine's programme for change.

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