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Religious Revival (tajdīd) *and Politics in Contemporary Morocco:*
'The Prophetic Path' *of Shaykh Abdessalem Yassine (d. 2012)*

(Rachida Chih – Cnrs/Ehess)

Abstract:

Shaykh Abdessalem Yassine (d. 2012) founder of the the so-called 'Islamist' movement Justice and Spirituality (al-'Adl wa-l-Iḥsān) in Morocco claimed for himself the title of 'reviver of religion' (mujaddid al-dīn), pre-destined to restore the purity of the faith and renew Islamic Law. He identified with this role on the basis of his Sharifian and spiritual legitimacy and set himself the mission of the moral reconstruction of the Muslim mind as a preliminary step that would lead to the building of a society defined by Islam; he also founded his own community as a model for this, his jamā'a. On the basis of the examination of his major work, The Prophetic path (Al-Minhāj al-nabawī), this paper analyses Yassine's conception of prophetic heritage in order to show that his predication followed a religious concept and cultural model of messianic mysticism that has been identifiable in Morocco since the Middle Ages: in the eyes of his followers, the very existence of Al-Minhāj al-nabawī demonstrated and proved that Yassine was the guide (imām) predestined to set in motion a great social transformation that would restore the Islamic community to its original purity by placing it under the direction of a Prophet's Sunna that is re-actualised.

The most popular of the so-called 'Islamist' movements in Morocco, *Justice and Spirituality* (*al-'Adl wa-l-Iḥsān*), was not born out of opposition to Sufism, as was the case for most such theological and political movements in the contemporary Muslim world, which have rejected Sufi practices as reprehensible innovations (*bid'a*). On the contrary, it was inspired by Islamic spirituality and the Sufi concept of imitation of the Prophet (*ittibā' al-nabī*) in the interior lives of believers as in their outward acts. The founder of this movement, Shaykh Abdessalam Yassine (d. 2012), laid claim to the earthly heritage of the Prophet, in competition with both Morocco's monarchy, to which he was openly opposed, and the Sufi brotherhoods from which he sprang and ultimately distanced himself. Unlike the monarchy, Shaykh Yassine does not justify his prophetic legitimacy by means of *sharaf*, genealogy (although he nevertheless remembered to underline the fact that he was also a descendent of

the Prophet, in the Idrisside branch), but because of his exemplary conduct, conforming in every way to the Muḥammadan model. In addition, his mission is different from that of the monarchy, which exercises political power, or that of his original Sufi brotherhood, the Qādiriyya Būdshīshiyya, which teaches spiritual progression and realisation: Shaykh Yassine worked towards reform and social justice, which may explain why his teachings have mostly been studied by sociologists or political scientists.[1]

Yassine's ideas were not restricted to the field of politics, in which his positions earned him the position of principal opponent of the monarchy. Above all a man of religion, very heavily influenced by or even impregnated with Sufism, he was an important Muslim thinker of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, author of an important body of work that is much discussed at international conferences. The Qādiriyya Būdshīshiyya Sufi brotherhood and *Justice and Spirituality* are probably the two largest religious groups in Morocco today. Shaykh Yassine and the charismatic leader of the Būdshīshiyya, Sīdī Ḥamza (d. 2017) were both taught by the same spiritual master, Sīdī Bel-'Abbās (d. 1972), Sīdī Ḥamza's father. Sīdī Bel-'Abbās's teachings sprang from the Darqāwiyya, a Sufi brotherhood that was very powerful in Morocco and the west of Algeria during the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth, and whose many branches spread as far as the Near East.[2] Sīdī Ḥamza and Shaykh Yassine both described themselves as continuing a model of Islamic tradition that had become classical from the time of the prominent theologian al-Ghazālī (d. 1111): that of a reviver of religion (*mujaddid al-dīn*), pre-destined to restore the purity of the faith and renew Islamic Law. They identified with this role on the basis of their Sharifian and spiritual legitimacy. Sīdī Ḥamza did not set himself up in opposition to political power, but built up around his own person a group that claimed to reproduce the spiritual community of the Prophet and his companions. Yassine, on the other hand, was in open conflict with the King; he set himself the mission of the moral reconstruction of the Muslim mind as a preliminary step that would lead to the building of a society defined by Islam; he also founded his own community as a model for this, his *jamā'a*.[3] His theological and metaphysical ideas are sometimes complex, and his books not accessible to all readers. On the basis of our

[1]Belal, *Le Cheikh et le Calife*; Chekroun, 'Islamisme, messianisme et utopie au Maghreb'; Darif, *Jamā'at al-'adl wa l-iḥsān*; *namūdhajān*; El-Ayadi, 'Abdessalam Yassine ou le poids des paradigmes dans le parcours d'un nouveau clerc'; Lauzière, 'Post-islamism and the Religious discourse of 'Abd al-Salam Yasin'; Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc*; Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains*.

[2] Chih, '*Shurafā'* and Sufis: the Qādiriyya Būdshīshiyya in Contemporary Morocco'. The Darqāwiyya, an offshoot of the Shādhiliyya Sufi path, was founded at the end of the eighteenth century by Mawlāy al-ʿArbī ad-Darqāwī (c. 1737-1823) in Morocco. Le Tourneau, 'Derkāwa'.

[3]Yassine*, The Muslim Mind on Trial*.

examination of his major work, *The Prophetic path* (*Al-Minhāj al-nabawī*), I shall analyse Yassine's conception of prophetic heritage in order to show that his predication followed a religious concept and cultural model of messianic mysticism that has been identifiable in Morocco since the Middle Ages: in the eyes of his followers, the very existence of *Al-Minhāj al-nabawī* demonstrates and proves that Yassine is the guide (*imām*) predestined to set in motion a great social transformation that will restore the Islamic community to its original purity by placing it under the direction of a Prophet's Sunna that is re-actualised.

Morocco in the postcolonial era: consolidation for the monarchy and fragmentation in the religious sphere

The growing importance of nationalist reformism during the colonial period (1912-1956) brought with it a concomitant increase in power for the Moroccan monarchy, the sacred aspects of which had been underlined by reformist movements. Nationalist groups campaigned in the press for the colonising powers to show greater respect for the sacred person of the King; in 1933 they instigated the Throne celebration, in which urban Moroccans participated in large numbers. Thus the King became a symbol of national unity.[4] Once Morocco had gained its independence, the monarchy consolidated its authoritarian power: in the 1962 Constitution the King gave himself the title 'Commander of the Faithful' (*Amīr al-mu'minīn*); he weakened the religious sphere by fragmenting it and, as early as 1956, began co-opting the leaders of the nationalist movement into the administration of the State to neutralise them.[5] Unlike the republics of Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey, which engaged in a political drive to secularise their societies, Morocco did not see attempts to purge Sufism, but as it emerged from the colonial period the Sufi brotherhoods were nevertheless delegitimised by nationalist reformists; for example, 'Allāl al-Fāsī (d. 1974), who founded the *Istiqlāl* (Independence) party in 1943, spoke very harshly of the brotherhoods.

At the time of independence, the construction of a national narrative that accused the Sufi brotherhoods of collaboration with the colonial power and presented the Sharifian State as the sole agent of modernisation and of struggle against colonialism meant that the historical role played by Sufis was forgotten.[6] Yet, the Darqāwiyya (to which 'Allāl al-Fāsī belonged) was

[4] Spadola, *The Calls of Islam*.
[5] Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains,* 50
[6] Al-Fāsī, *Hadīth al-Maghrib fī-l-Mashriq*.

very active in the anti-colonial struggle in the north of the country, and its offshoot the Kattāniyya was behind one of the first movements for anti-colonial resistance, led by a religious figure with whom Yassine identified, Muḥammad al-Kattānī (1873-1910), who died under torture in the royal gaols.[7] In this unfavourable context the Qādiriyya Būdshīshiyya, whose groundwork had been laid during the colonial period, was founded during the 1960s in the mountains inhabited by the Banī Iznassen Berber tribe in north-western Morocco, near the Algerian border. The Qādirī Būdshīshīs present themselves as a Sufi and saintly linage, descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad. According to the family's genealogy, *Qādirī* indicates kinship ties with the great saint of Baghdad, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d.1166); as for *Būdshīsh*, it is a nickname (*laqab*) given to an ancestor who fed the people with a soup made of cracked wheat (*dashīsha* or *tashīsa*) during a period of famine.[8] To this reputation for hospitality they soon added one for *jihād*: in 1845, when France and the Sultan of Morocco Mūlay 'Abd al-Rahmān signed the treaty of Maghniya, defining the border between Morocco and Algeria, Sīdī Mukhtār al-Kabīr (d. circa 1852), the great-great-grandfather of Sīdī Hamza, joined the emir 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī's resistance struggle against the French occupation.[9] The defeat of the emir in 1847 brought a temporary halt to resistance in the north of Morocco; it would be taken up again by the Habriyya branch of the Darqāwiyya at the turn of the nineteenth century.[10] French colonial archives mention the arrest in 1907 of Sīdī Mukhtār's grandson, also called Sīdī Mukhtār (d. 1914) and nicknamed al-Mujāhid, 'the one who carries out the *jihād*' because he led a long insurrection against the French army, which had entered the country from Oujda on the northen border.[11] After his release in 1910, Sīdī Mukhtār al-Mujāhid left his mountain village, Bū Yahyā, and settled on the Berkane Plains in Madāgh ; his descendents still live there.

Thus the Būdshīshiyya follows the model of Morrocco's great historic *zāwiyas*, places of hospitality and outposts on the frontier of Christian invasion. In 1942, the arrival in the *zāwiya* of a cousin of Sīdī Bel-'Abbās, Sīdī Bū Madyan Munawwar Būdshīsh (d. 1955), a Sufi who was initiated into both the Tijāniyya and the Darqāwiyya, was a turning point in the family's history: Sīdī Bū Madyan transformed this local lineage of *shurafā'* into a Sufi path to spiritual education (*tarīqa al-tarbiya*), describing its teaching as a synthesis of the great Moroccan spiritual traditions, of the Qādiriyya by blood (*nasab*), and of the Darqāwiyya (a

[7] Bazzaz, *Forgotten Saints*.
[8] Qustās, *Nibrās al-murīd*, 36-37; al-Ghazālī, *Musāhama fī-l-bahth 'an zawāyā Banī Iznāssen,*68.
[9] Qustâs, *Nibrâz al-murîd*, 35.
[10] Founded by Muhammad al-Habrî (d. 1898), the Darqâwiyya Habriyya spread mainly in Algeria. Le Tourneau 'Derkâwâ'; Drague, *Esquisse d'histoire religieuse du Maroc*.
[11] Berahab, *Zâwiya Bûdshîshiyya, textes et documents à l'appui*.

branch of the Shādhiliyya) and the Tijāniyya by virtue of the initiatic transmission (*mashrab*) that it encompasses, completes and revivifies.[12] From a remote and isolated spot in the north of the country, this brotherhood would progressively spread across all of Morocco's educated and urbanised classes. Among its first disciples were two school teachers who were to become high-profile public personalities, Shaykh Yassine and today's Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Ahmad Tawfiq.

The Islamic Revival in the 1970s and 1980s

The defeat during the 1960s of ideologies with a socialist orientation, and the struggle against leftist parties, prepared the ground for the Islamisation of society across the Muslim world, with the financial support of Saudi Arabia. During the 1970s, Shaykh Yassine left the Būdshīshiyya and established his fame by defying King Ḥasan II in a letter entitled 'Islam or the flood' (1973). This was an impudent missive, accusing the King of squandering the people's wealth and calling on him to return to the path of God.[13] Yassine was then imprisoned in a psychiatric ward; it was alleged that King Ḥasan II could not conceive that any sane man would challenge his authority so brazenly. Shaykh Yassine was laying the foundations of his movement, which would be registered as an association during the 1980s under the name *Justice and Spirituality* (this association is tolerated but not recognised).

In 1981 Shaykh Yassine provided his companions with a practical guide to spiritual improvement and socio-political militancy, *The Prophetic Path*, his most important work (mentioned above). Yassine was in and out of prison, with his original Būdshīshiyya brotherhood under suspicion, and Sīdī Ḥamza under house arrest in his *zāwiya* in Madāgh. Meanwhile, the manipulation of public opinion by the monarchy had reached its peak: Ḥasan II organised a vast spectacular call for unity around his sacred person, the Green March of 1975, when thousands of Moroccans from all regions of the Kingdom marched peacefully to recover the Moroccan Sahara from Spanish occupation. An extensive media campaign was organised by the King, using the State monopoly on television and radio (which lasted until the 1980s). This allowed him to capture public opinion and manipulate it by disseminating notions of of solidarity with an imaginary community that was protected and perpetuated by its King. The monarch reproduced the ritual of allegiance (*bay'a*) to his person on the scale of an entire country, thanks to new communication technologies that allowed him to erase

[12] Chih, '*Shurafā'* and Sufis', 212.
[13] Yassine, *Al-Islam aw al-Tūfān*, consultable online http://siraj.net

distance and establish a close and direct relationship with his unique and united people. According to research undertaken by the anthropologist Emilio Spadola among participants in the march, they often felt that to reply to the King's call was to demonstrate their belonging in the nation, but also to give to the King in the hope of receiving a gift in return; these hopes were never realised.[14]

From the beginning of the 1980s the two competing religious groups – the Qādiriyya Būdshīshiyya and *Justice and Spirituality* – had begun to implant themselves in the new departments of Islamic Studies that had been created in State universities from 1979 to compete with the traditional institutions of religious learning (the Qarawiyyine and Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥasaniyya).[15] The political relaxation of the 1990s, and the introduction of new forms of communications media that remained outside of State control, also changed the situation in the religious sphere, allowing for new calls to Islam to appear and compete with the call of the Sharifian State. Across Morocco there followed an unprecedented expansion for the movements of Shaykh Yassine and of Sidi Ḥamza, who, no longer under house arrest, was able to travel and to meet freely with his disciples. The Būdshīshiyya became embedded among the Moroccan middle and upper middle classes, and, thanks to networks of Moroccan emigrants, expanded to Europe. The house arrest of Shaykh Yassine came to an end with the coronation of Mohammed VI in 1999, and he, too, could at last travel around the country. His *Justice and Spirituality* movement also spread transnationally, through Moroccan emigration to Europe.

Genealogy and Politics

Competition around Sharifian genealogy is part of a long politico-religious tradition in Morocco. However, claiming authority or political legitimacy because of descent from the Prophet is a modern phenomenon: during the Medieval Period only personal charisma and virtues were emphasised. Genealogical literature began to flourish from the fifteenth century, with Ibn Sakkāk's celebrated work *Nuṣḥ mulūk al-Islām* (Advice to Muslim Kings), which reminds kings of their duties towards *ashrāf*: the Moroccan historian Halima Ferhat describes this sort of text as making up a 'literature of combat', influenced by a militant and often political outlook.[16] The accession to power of the Saadian dynasty (1549-1659), which

[14] Spadola, *Calls for Islam.*
[15] Tozy, 'Le prince, le clerc et l'État', 81-82.
[16] Ferhat, 'Chérifisme et enjeux du pouvoir'.

instituted a compromise between political and religious authority, was a turning point that historian M. Garcia Arenal calls 'a joining of Sufism with Sharifism' in the symbolic elaboration of power in Morocco.[17] The Saadīs constantly evoke concepts of *sharīf* and of *jihād* to define their movement, to explain its success and to establish its legitimacy.[18] The rise of the Saadīs was closely linked with that of jazulism, the most important mystical movement in Morocco in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[19] The writings of Muhammad al-Jazūlī (d. 1465), with their eschatological bent based on the notion of *sa'da* (the promise of happiness here below and in the after-life), provided the ideological foundation for the legitimisation of the Saadīs, and were exploited to this end by the sultans. The expression *aqtab al-dawla* (the poles of the State) arose in milieux linked to Jazūlī, meaning that on earth the Sufi acts for the Prophet and, in His absence, becomes His legitimate substitute (*badil*). *Qutbiyya* signifies concrete power over the world, along with the feeling among men that it is because of the permanent presence and intercession of the saints that the world continues to exist: saints are effectively guarantors of stability in a society that is prey to constant and often violent political change. It was during this period that the great *zāwiyas* that would mark the history of Morocco were born: the *zāwiya* of Ilīgh, the *zāwiya* Nāsiriyya, the *zāwiya* Sharqāwiyya and the Wazzāniyya.[20] Almost all of them were in some respects messianic, and they also refered constantly to the closely-related concept of *tajdīd*, renewal of Islam. What's more, this renewal was never distinct from material – or even political – claims, often made at times of crisis during which the stability or integrity of the country was threatened from within or without.[21]

During the same period the concept of a Muhammadan Path (*tarīqa muhammadiyya*) emerges among Sufi and non-Sufi scholars, defined either as a return to the model of the Prophet or as a direct attachment to His person as a way of reaching sainthood. Vincent Cornell attributes to Jazūlī and his disciples a decisive role both in the conceptualisation of the Muhammadan Path and in its propagation to the rest of the Muslim world via the scholarly and Sufi milieus of Medina, thanks to the new Ottoman context.[22] The Muhammadan Path was not an organised Sufi path, but a way of accessing religious knowledge that was specific to Sufis who were initiated by the Prophet through assiduous prayer on Him (*tasliya*) 'until it invades the consciousness to the extent that when he hears his

[17] Garcia-Arenal, 'La conjonction du soufisme et du sharifisme'.
[18] Garcia-Arenal, 'Mahdī, Murabīt, Sharīf', 81.
[19] Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*.
[20] Laroui, *Les Origines Sociales et Culturelles du Nationalisme Marocain*, 137.
[21] Hammoudi, 'Aspects de la mobilisation populaire à la campagne', 47.
[22] Chih, *Sufism in Ottoman Egypt*, chap. 3.

name he trembles, his heart is overwhelmed beholding him, and the visible appearance of the Prophet appears present to the eyes of inner vision (*basīra*) during his sleep (*manāman*) or when he is awake (*yaqazatan*). He can then ask him whatever he wants.'[23] During the seventeenth century there was a mention in the *Kitāb al-Ibrīz*, which relates the words of the Moroccan Sufi 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Dabbāgh (d. 1720), of the omniscience and infallibility (*ma'sūm*) of the believer who has conformed in his outward behaviour and his inner life (*ma'nawī*) to the Prophetic model; this places him above theologians and jurists for his knowledge of God and for his continuous interpretation of the law through *fath*, spiritual opening.[24] The Sufis' claim to a prophetic inheritance through the Muḥammadan path worked to legitimise the (probably unprecedented) authority they exercised in society.. The concept itself was not new, but its amplification in the Modern period corresponds to a new geographical expansion of Sufism, and to what was probably the apogee of its implantation in society, encouraged as it was by sultans and emperors.[25] The Sufi masters who were at the origin during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries of what historians would later call the *Sufi revival* claimed this path for themselves. In the Maghreb from the end of the eighteenth century it was powerfully expressed in the teachings of Ahmad al-Tijānī (d. 1815); of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān (d. 1793), the founder of the Rahmaniyya in Algeria; of the Moroccan Sufi Ahmad Ibn Idrīs (d. 1837), and of his successors who were to make union with the Prophet the aim of their Sufi path. In *Jawāhir al-ma'ānī*, (The Jewels of Meaning) Ahmad al-Tijānī informs his disciple 'Alī Ḥarazim that although the legislative prophecy is sealed, the Prophet nevertheless continues to guide his community and to send messages through his spiritual heirs. As for Shaykh al-'Arbī al-Darqāwī (d. 1823), he was considered by his disciples to be a *mujaddid*, reviver of religion in the Maghreb, and the pole of the circumference (*qutb al-dā'ira*), because of the tens of thousands of disciples who were affiliated to his Sufi path.[26] Below we shall see how Yassine's predication continued in the tradition of this Muhammadan path, without naming it.

The overlap between Sharifism, religious renewal and Sufism has left an indelible mark on the political and religious history of Morocco, where the resulting outlook is very evident even to the present day. The centre of gravity of the triangle formed by these three religious poles (Monarchy – Būdshīshīyya – *Jamāʿat al-'Adl wa-l-iḥsān*) is the issue of the Prophet's earthly heritage (which means that of the imamat), and the legitimate leadership of

[23] Sanûsî, *al-Salsabîl al-mu'în*, 7.
[24] Radtke, 'Ibriziana', 113-158.
[25] Chih, 'The Apogee and Consolidation of Sufi Teachings and Organizational Forms (1453-1683)'
[26] Meftah, 'L'initiation dans la Shâdhiliyya-Darqâwiyya',

the community. Sīdī Ḥamza claimed to be the holder of the Prophet's secret, or *sirr*, which is the inner knowledge accessible only to God's elect: the decline of Islam with the passage of time (*fasād al-zamān*) is interpreted by the Būdshīshīs as a decline of the spiritual influx of God's Messenger; this influx had permeated his community while he was alive and was preserved after his death only by a small circle of pious men elected by God, to whom fell the task of reviving this legacy (*amāna*).[27] In his struggle against the Salafis since the attacks of May 2013, 'Commander of the faithful' King Muḥammad VI has supported the Sufi brotherhoods and in particular the Būdshīshiyya, several of whose most eminent members are in the government, including Ahmad Tawfiq (mentioned above), and his cabinet head Ahmad Qustās. The aim of the Būdshīshiyya is to support the monarchy's claim on the sacred realm while strengthening and legitimising its own. Yassine has his own concept of prophetic heritage (*wirātha*), refusing the king the title of 'Commander of the faithful' and rejecting his claim to religious legitimacy, believing that the king has left the path of God. Yassine ascribes to himself the role of renewer and admonisher, as the Prophet was described in the Quranic verse: 'Indeed, We have sent you with the truth as a bringer of good tidings and a warner' (Quran 35:24).

I will not present the life and career of Shaykh Yassine here, because Mohamed Tozy and, later, Malika Zeghal have between them created a fine and carefully-researched portrait of the man, touching notably on the moments that contributed to his charisma, his role as censor of the monarchy, and the historical models among Moroccan insurgent Sufis with whom the shaykh identified, such as al-Yūsī (d. 1691) and Muḥammad al-Kattānī (d. 1910).[28] Yassine's social activism and political opposition to the monarchy have also been the object of numerous studies among Moroccan and western scholars, in whose works may be found descriptions of the organisation of the *jamā'a* and of its activities, often similar to those of the Būdshīshiyya to which Yassine initially belonged: the visit (*ziyāra*) to the guide (*murshid*) in his house in Salé corresponds to the *ziyāra* to Sīdī Ḥamza in Madāgh; the structure of the *jamā'a* is based on companionship (*ṣuḥba*), and the ritual is centred on the permanent mention of God's Names (*dhikr*) and the recitation of daily prayers and litanies. As in the Būdshīshiyya, lessons (*majālis*), camps and spiritual retreats are organised. Yassine's book, *The Prophetic path*, is taught to the members of the *jamā'a* as a religious discipline (*al-fikr al-minhājī*), like the Quran, the *hadīth* or the *fiqh*.[29]

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[27] Qustās, *Nibrās al-murīd*, 36-38; Chih, '*Shurafā'* and Sufis.
[28] Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc*, 185-226; Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains,* Chapter II.
[29] Bellal, 'Mystique et politique chez Abdessalam Yassine et ses adeptes' 175.

The Prophetic path **as self-empowerment for Muslim individuals and communities**

The 10 principles of the Prophetic path

The Prophetic Path is Yassine's most important work because it brings together and synthesises all of the ideas presented in his forty-odd published texts.[30] It has been studied by many researchers, who have described its structure and principal themes along with their own readings of its contents. Outside of Morocco, the *Minhāj al-Nabawī* and the shaykh's other writings have been examined at several international conferences organised by the *European Institute for Islamic Sciences* and other international Islamic foundations: Istanbul (2012); Brussels (2013); Ukraine (The National University of Ostroh Academy, 2014); University of London (British Association for Islamic Studies Annual Conference, 2015).[31] After two days of debates and discussion at the Istanbul conference, on *The Centrality of the Holy Koran in Abdessalam Yassine's Theory of The Prophetic Method* (*Al-Minhāj al-Nabawī*), the academics and religious scholars present concluded that Shaykh Yassine was the renewer in his own time; his *Minhāj* was described as 'one of the most prominent and influential revivalist projects in current intellectual Islamic thought'. Ten days later, the death of Shaykh Yassine at the age of 84 was announced..

Yassine reminds his readers that *minhāj* is a Quranic term (sura *al-Mā'ida*, verse 48), and that 'the Islamic law, the *sharī'a*, comes from the Quran and the *minhāj* from the Prophet's Sunna.'[32] He writes that the *minhāj* is the path (*tarīq*) of faith (*īmān*) – and of the spiritual struggle against oneself's ego (*jihād*) in one's relationship with God – a path along which the believer travels (*salaka*) in order to reach spiritual perfection (*ghāyat al-ihsāniyya*); for Yassine the *minhāj* perfectly expresses the objectives of his text: to translate the Quran and the Sunna into concrete action (*barnamijan 'amaliyyan*) in order to overcome the obstacles (*'aqabāt*) of the times.[33] However, the term *minhāj* is traditionally found in the Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) texts that currently flood the market for religious books; it was used by Muslim reformists of the twentieth century, in particular by Ḥasan al-Bannā (d. 1949)

[30] https://yassine.net/en/2013/05/14/list-of-books/
[31] https://Yassineconferences.net/quran-conf/en/index/
[32] *Al-Minhāj al-nabāwī*, Introduction.
[33] *Al-Minhāj al-nabāwī*, 9.

who inspired and influenced Shaykh Yassine; the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood spoke of an Islamic method (*al-minhāj al-islāmī*) containing all aspects of everyday life – spiritual, but also social and political. We believe that the use of this term by Yassine and also by the Būdshīshiyya Sufi brotherhood (whose teaching is described as a path of education, *minhāj tarbiya*) reflects the impregnation of Sufism with the influence of a literalist and fundamentalist reformist Islam, which has obliged Sufism to adapt its vocabulary to match the evolution of contemporary Muslim thought. Although Yassine's *al-Minhāj al-nabawī* has ambitions to be a practical work (hence the translation by some of *minhāj* as 'method'), it nevertheless contains a great deal of theory, which is expressed in a style and language accessible only to the educated élite – the élite addressed by Yassine in the hope that they might make up his *jamā'a*, his group, which, following the example of the Prophet and his companions, would support Yassine in his mission and propagate his message. During the same period, the master of the Būdshīshiyya, Sīdī Ḥamza, also aimed his predication at the educated élite of the nation, succeeding, with the support of his many close disciples who were teachers or university students, in recruiting numerous followers among the Moroccan bourgeoisie.[34]

The Moroccan political scientist Mohamed Tozy describes *al-Minhāj* as an original synthesis of Sufi teachings with the political and religious ideas of the Egyptians Ḥasan al-Bannā and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), the former being the founder and the latter a prominent theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood. *The Prophetic Path* began to appear in the journal *al-Jamā'a* (16 issues between 1979-1983), during a period marked by two events that shook the Muslim world: the Iranian revolution in 1978-79 and the 1981 assassination of the President of Egypt, Anwar al-Sadat, by a member of the radical Egyptian *Islamic Jihād*. As a result, its first chapters are marked by a militant, anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist tone, and by reminders of the struggle to be undertaken against all the enemies of Islam: Yassine speaks here of invasion (*ghazw*), of a difficult and obstacle-strewn path (*ihtiqām al-'aqaba*), of uprising (*qawma*). In the second part of the book, he explains his concept of a prophetic path or method that is entirely contained within the Prophet's saying (*hadīth*) on faith (*īmān*): '*Īmān* consists of seventy branches, the best of which is the declaration that there is no god but God and the least of which is the removal of harmful objects from the road, and modesty is a branch of *īmān*.' However, of these seventy branches, only three are cited, which has led religious scholars to seek the others in the vast *hadīth* corpus; the best-known work on

[34] Chih, 'Sufism, Education and Politics in Contemporary Morocco'.

this subject is by al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066), *Shu'ab al-imān*. Yassine rearranged the seventy branches into ten principles (*al-khisal al-'ashar wa shu'ab al-īmān*) and from these he derived his model of education (*tarbiya*) to revive the faith. The first three of these ten principles are the most important, and adherence to them determines the success of the method: 1. Companionship and community (*al-suḥba wa-l-jamā'a*); 2. Remembrance of God (*dhikr*); 3. Sincerity of faith (*sidq*) towards one's master and brothers (sincerity of faith has other aspects, of course, among which are faith in God and His mystery, belief in the Last Judgement, and belief in pious visions). The other principles are: 4. Offering and sacrifice (*badhl*), giving alms, charity towards the poor and orphans; 5. Knowledge (*'ilm*); 6. Good works (*'amal*); 7. Religious devotion (*al-samt al-hasan*); 8. Moderation and discipline (*al-tu'ada*, rejecting violence as the means of achieving any legitimate claims); 9. Economy (*al-iqtiṣād*); 10. Dominating the ego (*al-jihād*). This ordering means that it is after the acquisition of good behaviour and deeds and the transformation of one's character that one may then attempt to achieve the continuous striving involved in dominating one's ego. Thus an Islamic order cannot be reached unless the individual is educated and trained according to a model, *minhāj*, into which all branches of faith are integrated.[35]

A handbook of ethics

The Prophetic way is essentially a handbook of religious ethics, profoundly inspired by Sufism. Even the name of the movement founded by Yassine, *Jamāʿat al-'Adl wa-l-iḥsān*, expresses the two distinct registers of his teaching and the intrinsic link that he establishes between spiritual and moral perfection and social justice. This approach is not particularly original, especially in the history of Morocco where religious exhortation and social critique featured side by side in the lives of many of the saints who founded Sufi lineages. Yassine situates himself in the domain of *tarbiya*, education, which is not received from books but acquired through *ādāb* (refinement, good manners, morals), although he does not employ this Sufi term. His approach can be summed up as demanding proper behaviour towards God and His Prophet, oneself, and others. The word *iḥsān*, built on the Arabic verb *aḥsana*, means to act with benevolence, kindness and charity towards others. These qualities are engendered through the refinement and embellishment of one's moral character (*ḥusn al-khuluq*) via the battle with one's ego (*nafs*). An untamed *nafs* will pull a man towards evil inclinations and

[35] *Al-Minhāj al-nabāwī*, 113.

actions (*sū' al-khuluq*). The believer who acts and does good for God's sake alone and not in the expectation of earthly approbation that would flatter his pride, or even in hope of a reward in the afterlife, also does genuine good to those around him.

The Prophetic path is meant to be practical and progressive; the one who follows it must pass from *Islam* to *īmān* and then to *iḥsān*, which, according to the celebrated *hadīth* of the angel Jibrīl is the highest degree of faith: 'that you worship God as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you'. This method puts divine revelation into practice, rather than relying on argumentation. Yassine's thinking is often very metaphysical, entirely focussed on intuition, inspiration (*ilhām*) and revelation (*waḥy*). He believes in the invisible world (*ghayb*) and rejects all intellectualism or speculative thinking.[36] The Prophetic path is man's quest within himself for his primordial nature (*fitra*) before it was corrupted by the search for rewards in this lowly world, by stubborn, arrogant and impious reason. Some passages of the *Minhāj* in which he rails against the dogmatism of theologians and the formalism of jurists are reminiscent of the writings of Ghazālī, who established the superiority of spiritual intuition over reason, and to whom Yassine compares himself[37], but also of the works of the Moroccan Sufi Ibn Idrīs (mentioned above), among them the *Risālat al-radd 'alā ahl al-ra'y* (An epistle in reply to the authorities of the legal schools), as studied by Bernd Radtke: 'In his treatise, the main points Ibn Idrīs expounds are these: a Muslim has only been commanded to obey God and the Prophet. God is the Koran and the Prophet is the Sunna (...) In order to understand both categories of scripture the techniques of the schools of jurisprudence are not necessary. What is required is fear of God (*taqwā*), which each Muslim can develop individually.'[38]

Yassine defends himself against accusations that he is a political ideologue of the Salafi type: 'Which of us is nearer to his prophetic guidance and method, the jurists of ritual cleanliness, its pious observance and general application, or the adherents of political Islam, who meet in session after the call to the afternoon prayer, in order to plan for the Islamic Caliphate, until the sunset prayer is announced while they are heedless of their prayer? Making a mockery of Islam, they would allege that the prayer is an act of worship and that what they are doing is also an act of worship… [such a man's] deeds will not be sanctioned

[36] *Al-Minhāj al-nabāwī*, 115, *The Muslim Mind on Trial.*
[37] 'Like al-Ghazālī I have found the truth among Sufis, where I realised the limits of Islam as transmitted by the texts. God allowed me to free myself of ignorance, of an inherited Islam that was badly understood, and to put me on the path of truth – He pushed me to seek to know Him.' *L'islam ou le déluge*, 8; cited by Zeghal, *Les islamistes marocains*, 129.
[38] Radtke, 'The Question of Authority', 252.

even if he strives with all his wealth and strength to establish an alleged Islamic Caliphate.'[39]

For Yassine, true *jihād* consists of changing one's way of life and acquiring the habit of devoting oneself to work during the day and to the recitation of the Quran and supererogatory prayers at night – but only during the earlier part of the night, for the believer must get some sleep in order to be able to concentrate on his professional activities during the day, that he may see to his own needs and those of his family. Yassine uses the Sufi concepts of wayfaring and progression, of discipline and the training of the soul, of stages (*maqām*, the highest of which is that of *iḥsān*, described as the stage of divine proximity). Yassine calls on the faithful to follow the same path to spiritual improvement as himself, until they reach its perfect realisation. He is therefore himself a model to be imitated, and love for the Prophet is passed on via love for the Shaykh. He reminds the faithful that the Prophet was not only a messenger but also a guide and a teacher (Quran 62:2), which Yassine means in the sense of a spiritual father: the Prophet felt both the love of a father for his son and the patience of the master towards his disciple. Yassine himself established this kind of paternal relationship with his disciples.[40] Companionship (*al-ṣuḥba wa-l-jamā'a*) is the first and most important of the ten principles of the Prophetic path (and the keystone of any mystical organisation), so he called his group *al-Jamā'a*. Yassine sets up a rapport of companionship (*ṣuḥba*) between the guide and his disciples, based on the relationship between the Prophet and his companions (*sahāba*). He writes that the guide must be the object of respectful or reverential fear (*hayba*), as was the Prophet, for the guide is a reminder of God, and God's Messenger on earth – submission to a holy (*walī*) and pious (*ṣāliḥ*) guide (*murshid*) is submission to God.[41] This relationship is sealed by a pact (*bay'a*). Yassine had a very strong feeling for the group, the community, believing in the solidarity essential to its members as social ties began to disintegrate.

Yassine has been labelled an Islamist, a term popularised during the 1980s by French scholars and used to refer to modern movements that politicise the religious realm: Wahhābīs, Salafis, jihādīs, the Muslim brotherhood... This catch-all term masks the complexity of the different configurations involved. For example Yassine's position on the status of the Prophet is very distant from what one finds in the writings of the Wahhābī or Salafi tendency. Although Sunni Islamist groups assume many different forms, they generally have a theoretical link with Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) in common: this Ḥanbalī theologian's ideas,

[39] Yassine, *The Muslim Mind on Trial*, 29.
[40] Yassine, *The Muslim Mind on Trial,* 18.
[41] *Al-Minhāj al-nabāwī*, 123.

rejecting the sacralisation of the figure of the Prophet and all forms of devotion to his person in accordance with his concept of divine unity (*al-tawhīd*), were initially recuperated and simplified by Muḥammad b. ʻAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 1791) and the followers of the fundamentalist religious movement he created. Ibn ʻAbd al-Wahhāb's essential doctrine is contained in his 'Book of Divine Unity' (*Kitāb al-tawḥīd*); as the title indicates, he develops therein his own concept of the dogma of unity and of the absolute uniqueness of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, with its different components (*tawhīd al-rubūbiyya*, the affirmation of God's omnipotence, *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, the reservation of worship only to God).[42] He exhorts the reader to return to a pure monotheism and to 'devote [himself] to an exclusive worship of God alone without any associate'. This therefore excludes the veneration of any being or thing other than God. He considers the veneration of the Prophet and the belief in his intercession as a form of idolatry (*shirk*) and of impiety (*kufr*). In his biography of the Prophet Muḥammad (his own abridged version of the life of the Prophet), entitled *Mukhtasar sīrat al-rasūl* Muḥammad b. ʻAbd al-Wahhāb erases from the most commonly accepted version of the Prophet's life, the *Sīra* by Ibn Hishām, all the episodes that demonstrate the suprahuman nature of the Prophet. Ibn ʻAbd al-Wahhāb retains only the parts of the biography that show the Prophet as an ordinary, sometimes fallible, human being, like all men (mentioning the notorious story of the Satanic Verses as being based on fact), asserting that it is only in this sense that the Prophet may be, and must be, imitated.[43]

The continuer of the Prophet's mission on earth and the renewer of his Sunna

Yassine depicts a Prophet who is close to mankind – because he is human – and simultaneously unlike other people (*basharan lā ka-bashar*) because of his divine election. Those who lowered the status of the Prophet, making of him a simple transmitter whose mission on earth ended once his message was delivered, are called blind and idiotic. In order to enlighten the faithful on the status of the Prophet, sent to bring mercy to the worlds, and on the extraordinary nature of his mission (as Yassine expresses himself in one of his lessons posted on Youtube), he recommends that they read the poem *al-Burda* (The Mantle), the best-known poem in praise of the Prophet by the Egyptian Muḥammad al-Busīrī (d. 1298). This poem about love for the Prophet combines a description of his physical and moral beauty with an account of his birth, his miracles, his celestial ascension and the quest for his intercession.

[42] Peskes and Ende, "Wahhābiyya"; Mouline, *The Clerics of Islam*.
[43] Riexinger, 'Rendering Muḥammad Human Again'. See his contribution in this volume

Yassine thus supports the idea that between his death and his resurrection the Prophet is still alive and communicating with mankind, especially with those who have been directly initiated by him.

In Yassine's conception, the Sunna may be represented differently according to its varied historical contexts. The Prophetic path is the Sunna of the Prophet as re-activated by its inheritor, who is able to take into account his own historical time and the necessity of adapting the Sunna to his time: 'Ulama of the past have debated about the concept of *tajdīd*, and how to recognise the renewer of his time. It is important for us to know the meaning of *tajdīd*: who can renew the religion and how. Renewal receives strength (*mustamiddan*) from the Prophetic guidance, the Prophetic Sunna and the Prophetic method (*hudā*, *sunna*, *minhāj*).'[44] Then Yassine quotes the most famous *hadīth* on *tajdīd*, transmitted by Abū Dā'ūd: 'At the turn of each century God will send to this community someone who will renew its religion.'[45]

Here we are faced with the figure of the renewer in its Sufi conception, the *tajdīd* being the re-actualisation of the Prophetic model – that is, the Sunna – in a post-Prophetic context.[46] Yassine believes in a continual re-interpretation of the divine message (and thus of God's law) by a person who has conformed to the Prophetic model; thus he expresses the possibility of innovation in Islam in its changing historical contexts. God and His will cannot be known by common mortals; only those who have approached Him through combatting their egos and purifying their souls until they obtain spiritual openness can receive messages from the Prophet enabling them to continue guiding their communities until the end of time. In the second chapter of *Al-Minhāj al-nabawī*, called *tajdīd al-dīn*, Yassine presents himself as the renewer of the religion of the fifteenth Hegiran century, attributing this title for the fourteenth century to Ḥasan al-Bannā who also came from a Sufi background.

The degree of *tajdīd* is defined by Yassine as that of the *walāya al-kubrā*. There is a hierarchy among the 'friends of God' (*awliyā' Allāh*), and the *walāya al-kubrā* corresponds to the highest stage, that of spiritual openness (*fatḥ*) and interior vision (*baṣā'ir*): 'This is an elevated degree that God through His grace grants to his elect'. The perfection inherited from God (*kamāl al-wirātha*), is not acquired through exoteric science (*'ilm*), and it is not sought out by the believer: this is a gift of divine grace. The character (*khuluq*) of the person who has

[44] *Al-Minhāj al-nabāwī*, Chapter II: Tajdīd an dīn wa-l-imān.
[45] Abū Dā'ūd (d. 889) was a Persian scholar of prophetic *hadīth* who compiled the third of the six 'canonical' *hadīth* collections recognised by Sunni Muslims, the Sunan Abū Dā'ūd Al-Ṣa'īdī, *Al-Mujaddidūn fī-l-islām*. Voll, 'Renewal and Reform in Islamic History'; Lapidus, 'Islamic Revival and Modernity'.
[46] Pagani, 'Renewal before Reformism'.

the most elevated experience of faith becomes the Quran (as Aisha described the Prophet). The one who is chosen in this way must work to raise up the community of believers (*qawma al-umma al islāmiyya*): this is understood to be the meaning of the *qiyām*, 'holding oneself upright' before God and in His hands, thanks to a permanent interior *jihād* undertaken in order to allow the Prophetic path to triumph. The *qawma* is the objective and end of the *tarbiya*.

The caliphate according to the Prophetic path (*al-khilāfa 'alā minhāj al-nubuwwa*)

In the Maghreb, the rhetoric of renewal that is present among all founders of new Sufi orders since the early Modern period refers not only to the question of the imamate, but also to the notions of redemption and salvation. On the *Jamā'a* website (and thus widely available) are postings describing visions granted to disciples of Shaykh Yassine; these visions confirm the Shaykh's status as heir of the Prophet and renewer of his community. In some of them the Prophet himself is seen to approve the contents of the *Minhāj* and to recommend that believers read it, or to accept the orientation of the Guidance Council (*majlis al-irshād*)[47] of the *Jamā'a*, or to promise paradise to its followers. In other visions the Shaykh himself appears, taking precedence over the four Caliphs and imposing himself as the elect of the Prophet in a flash of bright light; the saint's house in Salé becomes a sacred place. Most of the disciples' dreams show Shaykh Yassine in the presence of the Prophet and surrounded by angels. In another vision, the Prophet arrives on a white horse, from which he dismounts, asking Shaykh Yassine to mount in his place. The Prophet then strikes the horse's rump and enjoins him to continue on his course.[48] Some researchers have detected a messianic promise in Shaykh Yassine's predication and the apocalyptic character of his writings (*Islam or the Flood*), a promise of the Shaykh's arrival and the restoration of the ideal community (his *jamā'a*) on earth before the end of times. In this context, then, one should read Yassine's predication in the light of Morocco's Mahdist tradition, which was begun by Ibn Tūmart (1080-1130).[49] This Berber from the south of Morocco proclaimed himself *mahdī* and, with the support of the Atlas tribes, laid the foundations of the Almohad state (1130-1269), thus successfully transforming his religious and prophetic authority into political sovereignty. The

[47] Executive Council of the *Jamâ'a* entrusted to supervise the activities of the movement. It was founded on the model of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's *maktab al-irshâd* (leadership bureau).
[48] Tozy has examined about sixty of these visions from the *Jamā'a* website, analysing their political role: Tozy, 'L'évolution du champ religieux marocain au défi de la mondialisation'.
[49] Chekroun, 'Islamisme, messianisme et utopie au Maghreb'.

messianic dimension of Almohad power is aligned with the Muḥammadan prophecy as far as the origins and beginnings of Islam are concerned: at the end of times, after the Mahdī, the era of the Caliphate will begin again. Thus the first four Almohad Caliphs received the title of 'Rightly Guided' (*rāshidūn*). The Almohad Caliphs were simultaneously *imām* (infallible religious guides) and caliphs, God's representative on earth (*khalīfa*); they demonstrated a universal ambition to lead the entire Islamic *umma*.[50] Does Yassine represent the messianic figure of the *khalīfa*, who lays the groundwork for the coming of the 'Master of the Hour' (*Mūl al-Sā'a*), in addition to being a renewer of religion? In the Sunni tradition the two figures, *mahdī* and *mujaddid*, are often linked. During a lesson taught as part of a spiritual retreat to Salé with his disciples (posted on Youtube), Yassine identifies his role with that of the Prophet who brings a warning. He expresses the spiritual destitution and ignorance about God in which his community finds itself and warns it of the ultimate end of times (*al-Sā'a*) and the necessity for good behaviour in this earthly life. The theme of death and the afterlife is omnipresent in his lessons as in his writings: Yassine exhorts men to change their behaviour so that they may arrive at a new order made of 'justice and moral and spiritual excellence', in preparation for eternal life. For Yassine, history unfolds in successive stages or reigns, each of which ends in *fitna*, disorder, but, thanks to the presence of a category of men sent by God, Islam and the Caliphate are cyclically revivified in accordance with the Prophetic path (*al-khilāfa 'alā minhāj al-nubuwwa*), ending corruption and re-establishing justice and the universal message of Islam before the end of times. This outlook can indeed be compared to that of messianic Mahdism, which features the re-establishment of the Caliphate.[51] On the *Jamā'a* website, Yassine has the titles of guide and renewer (*imām mujaddid*).

Conclusion

Drawing on his best-known work, *Al-Minhāj al-Nabawī*, this article has sought to cast new light on Yassine's Sufi itinerary, and on its impact on his thinking and his actions as a man of religion. Within the framework of this collective volume on modern constructions of the Prophet's image, and the co-opting of this image for political ends, the aim was to analyse Yassine's way of representing the Prophet, and his own relationship with God's messenger – a relationship that was intended to serve as an example for every Muslim. *The Prophetic*

[50] Buresi, *Les Almohades*; Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*.
[51] *Al-Minhāj al-nabāwī*, 19-20.

Path, the publication of which started at the beginning of the 1980s, set out to express a modern revival of Islamic faith and a re-actualisation of the Prophet's Sunna, presented by one who had achieved the prophetic model of perfection. Yassine is the heir of a long religious tradition in Morocco, the dogmas and figures of which (especially the *sharīf-mahdī*, here interpreted in the sense of *mujaddid*, renovator) are not frozen in time, but alive and dynamic; they have always and continually been reappropriated and remodeled, according to their evolving historical and cultural contexts. Yassine revisits the figure of the *mujaddid* in Islam and introduces into its conception new ideas and forms of language in order to encourage believers into their self transformation as Muslims, motivated by the notion of *ihsān*, excellence in the adoration of God: in Sufism *ihsān* is the highest degree of religion after submission to Quranic prescriptions (*islām*) and faith in God (*īmān*). Through Yassine's predication the believer discovers his own capacity to transform himself and act on society; thus Yassine's teaching is also a political project.

Scholars of political science tend to agree that the thinking of Shaykh Yassine is original because he reconciled mysticism and social (or even political) activism. However, the very term 'mysticism', borrowed from the Christian lexicon, is inappropriate because it ignores the entire social dimension of Sufism, and its intrinsic political implications, along with the eminently collective and public aspects of Sufism. Political scientists and sociologists have presented the structure of the *Jamā'a*, existing in opposition to an individualistic Islam, as a novelty, but even in its formative period Sufism was always a social and collective phenomenon. Since its emergence in the writings of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 898), the figure of the saint (*walī*) is a political one; Tirmidhī developed his theory of sanctity (*walāya*) and its relation to prophecy (*nubuwwa*) during a period of weakening of the Abbasid caliphate, and granted the *walī* prerogatives similar to those of the Prophet from whom he inherited, thus putting him in competition with other religious contenders on the issue (one that is endlessly debated in Islam), of authority. With Tirmidhī the *walī* was brought into the religious and historical conscience of Muslims: subsequently the notion of sainthood changed in different historical periods, adapting to social contexts; this allowed the *walī* to adopt socially recognised types of behaviour to respond to the hopes and expectations of his community. Through time, the language of the saint may change, but his practice remains the same: the figure of the saint who chastises a prince, or even competes with him on the issue of the legitimacy of terrestrial powers, is a familiar theme in hagiographic literature. This figure symbolises the tension that has always existed in Islam, between the realities of political

power and the powers to which men of religion have laid claim, alongside their aspirations or pretensions to being above political power.[52]

M. Garcia-Arenal has published several pieces of research showing that millenarism and eschatological discourse appear to be inherent to Maghrebi Sufism since at least the twelfth century, and that no doctrine of sainthood can be complete if it doesn't attempt to define political legitimacy. Although Yassine demonstrates his in-depth knowledge of the classics of contemporary Islamic thought (Bannā, Qutb and Mawdūdī), he also takes on models of sainthood that are socially recognised in the Maghreb specifically, and sees himself in the model offered by the Sufi Muhammad Kattānī, nicknamed *The Martyr*, who rebelled against two successive Sultans. The role that Kattānī attributed to the Sufi shaykh is that of *faqih mujtahid*, a jurist who exercise *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) in an external as well as an esoteric way. Kattānī affirms that his knowledge of divine law is received either while awake or in a dream state, directly from the Prophet – and that this qualifies him for the role of *mujtahid*. This claim by the Sufis to a superior interpretation of the sacred scriptures defines the *tarīqa muhammadiyya*. The Kattānīs emerged in Fez in the context of popular discontent and revolts provoked by the profound economic changes taking place in the second half of the nineteenth century. It didn't take all that long for the local Sufi Kattāniyya to transform itself into a political force capable of mobilising the masses, as it was to do during the revolt of 1907.[53] During his lifetime Yassine always refused to participate in the political system as defined by the monarchy (although his successors may think differently); nevertheless, Yassine did demonstrate his power to mobilise people in the streets, the university campuses and in his own association. He also left behind an important body of work and his guide, *The Prophetic Path*.

The term 'Islamist', broad and undefined as it may be, is not appropriate to describe Shaykh Yassine. It's true that he did not call himself a Sufi either – that term had been delegitimised during the construction of Morocco's national history. Yet his teachings fit well into the spiritual traditions of his country and region. These traditions are plural, and have brought forth masters with diverse profiles: some were in search of ascesis and retreat from the world, while others engaged with the social and political events of their times, claiming for themselves an earthly authority similar to that of the Prophet within his own community. Observation of the success of Yassine's foundation and that of the Sufi Sidi Ḥamza (whom his disciples call *Mūl al-waqt*, Master of the present moment) provides a clear demonstration

[52] Berque, *Ulémas, fondateurs et insurgés du Maghreb.*
[53] Bazzaz, *Forgotten Saints*.

of the pervasiveness in contemporary Morocco of historical models of 'insurgent saints' (Berque).

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