



Al-Wifaq Research Journal of Islamic Studies

Volume 6, Issue 1 (January - June 2023)

eISSN: 2709-8915, pISSN: 2709-8907

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55603/alwifaq>

Issue Doi: <https://doi.org/10.55603/alwifaq.v6i1>

Home Page: <https://alwifaqjournal.com/>

Journal QR Code:



Article

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Indexing

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Published

30 June 2023

Article DOI

<https://doi.org/10.55603/alwifaq.v6i1.e2>



QR Code



Citation

Qari Abdul Basit, “The Authorship of Sayyidī Shaykh Muhammad ‘Uthmān ’al-Burhāni (d. 1403/1983) and the Impact of his Religious Dissemination through Divine Proximity,” *Al-Wifaq* 6, no. 2 (June, 2023): 23–41, <https://doi.org/10.55603/alwifaq.v6i1.e2>



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[The Authorship of Sayyidī Shaykh Muhammad ‘Uthmān ’al-Burhāni \(d. 1403/1983\) and the Impact of his Religious Dissemination through Divine Proximity](https://doi.org/10.55603/alwifaq.v6i1.e2) © 2023 by Qari Abdul Basit is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Publisher Information:

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The Authorship of Sayyidī Shaykh Muhammad ‘Uthmān ‘al-Burhāni (d. 1403/1983) and the Impact of his Religious Dissemination through Divine Proximity

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ABSTRACT

In researching the rich and diverse Sufi culture of the Arab world, I came across the unpublished work of Sayyidī Shaykh Muhammad ‘Uthmān ‘al-Burhāni. (d. 1403/1983).¹ This was surprisingly unexplored in previous research, and no formal publication capturing this fascinating work has been released yet. Sayyidī through these teachings significantly contributed to the development of religious dissemination, which gained a massive following in Sudan and Egypt and ultimately reached followers all over the world. ² His teachings go beyond emphasizing mere divine proximity for Muslims but they also provide a profound sense of purpose for individuals who still hold onto their ancestor's religion, inspiring them to embrace Islam. This serves as a guiding light, directing followers towards the path of divine legislation (sharī‘ah) through the power of divine love (‘al-ḥubb), while the cultivation of this love propels individuals towards the ultimate divine reality (ḥaqīqa). In addition, he answered questions in his sermons (durūs) from various fields of knowledge, and for this reason, many scholars of his time including from ‘al-‘Azhar sought to attend his gatherings, where he spoke about the sciences of the Qur’an from different aspects. This research intended to unveil the impact of his religious dissemination and the introduction of his authorship, which has yet to be documented.

KEYWORDS:

Authorship of Sayyidī ‘Uthmān, Religious Dissemination in Sufism, Mystic Vision of Preaching, Divine Proximity, Burhāniya Veneration.

Sayyidī ‘Uthmān’s Biography

Sayyidī Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Uthmān al-Burhāni, also known as Sayyidī

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1. Jason Sparkes, “Doctrines and Practices of the Burhaniya Sufi Order in the Arab World and in the West Between 1938 and 2012: A Decolonial and Transdisciplinary Analysis from an Insider Perspective,” (M.A diss., University of Montreal, 2013), 56.
 2. Michael Frishkopf, “Changing Modalities in the Globalization of Islamic Saint Veneration and Mysticism: Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Uthmān al-Burhani and their Sufi Orders,” *Religious Studies and Theology*, Vol. 20 no. 1 (2001): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1558/rsth.v20i1.1>

Fakhruddīn, was born in 1902 in the city of Ḥalfa in northern Sudan and demised in 1983. His biological genealogy traced its roots back to the family of Prophet Muḥammad ('āl al-bayt), establishing a direct connection to the Prophet himself through Sayyidnā 'Ali Zain ul 'Abidīn.³ In terms of his spiritual genealogy, He is known as the successor and revitalizer of the Sufi order established by the principal saint Sayyidī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (d. 1296).⁴ He successfully combined the charismatic force of Sayyidī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī and his putative uncle Sayyidī 'Abu 'al-Ḥasan 'al-Shādhili (d. 1258), both of whom are recognized as mystic figures of the post-classical era.⁵

There was the grandson of Sayyidī 'Abu 'al-Ḥasan 'al-Shādhili, who took the initiative to unite the Sufi orders of Dasūqī-Shādhli in Morocco, and he transmitted the order to Sayyidī Aḥmad Zarrūq al-Maghribi, who later visited Sudan and further disseminated the ṭarīqah there. Through the chain of transmission, the Burhāniya order eventually reached the family of Sayyidī Shaykh Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Burhāni through Sayyidī Shaykh Faḍal, who was one of Sayyidī's ancestors.⁶ Sayyidī himself affirmed that the Burhāniya Sufi order had deep ancestral roots within his family. His grandfather, who held the position of a Shaykh in this order, from him, he had acquired a collection of books within his house. ⁷ During Sayyidī 'Uthmān's spiritual journey within the Burhāniya, he experienced recurring visions in which he discovered the presence of Imām 'al-Ḥusayn and Sayyidī Ibrāhīm 'al-Dasūqī alongside a group of saints. Subsequently, these visions manifested into a tangible reality, culminating in Sayyidī 'Uthmān being granted the esteemed succession of the Burhāniya Sufi order.⁸

Globalized Veneration of 'Sayyidī 'Uthmān'

This particular Sufi order had a long-standing presence in Sudan and Egypt and gained significant recognition following the conquest of the Sudanese territories by ruler Muḥammad 'Ali in 1821.⁹ However,

3. Sayyidī Shaykh Muḥammad 'Uthmān, "*Sharāb 'al-Waṣl*," (Burhāniya E-Library), 6.

4. Since the medieval time, the Sufism have venerated four principal saints (aqṭāb or "poles") Sayyidī 'Aḥmad 'al-Rifa'i (d.1182) Sayyidī 'Abd 'al-Qādir 'al-Jilānī (d. 1166), Sayyidī 'Aḥmad 'al-Badwi (d. 1276) and Sayyidī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (d. 1296), to see more, el-Sayed el Aswad, "Spiritual Genealogy: Sufism and Saintly Places in the Nile Delta," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38 (2006): 503, <https://doi.org/10.1017.S0020743806384012>

5. Frishkopf, "Changing Modalities," 18.

6. Sayyidī Shaykh Muḥammad 'Uthmān, "*Min Jawāhir al-Imām Fakhr al-Dīn*" (Burhāniya E. Library), 4.

7. Sayyidī Shaykh Muḥammad 'Uthmān, "*Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' li-Sīdī Fakhr al-Dīn*" (Burhāniya E-Library), 29.

8. Frishkopf, "Changing Modalities," 18.

9. J.S. Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan* (Frank Cass, 1965), 241.

researchers such as Michael Frishkopf¹⁰ and Jason Sparks¹¹ have discussed the teachings of Sayyidī Ahmed ‘Arbi ‘al-Sharnūbi through the lenses of Burhāniya¹² and put forth the notion that each principal saint, referred to as the “pole” or “Quṭb” possesses a distinct sphere of influence. The growth and expansion of Sayyidī Ibrāhīm’s Sufi order, known as ‘al-Burhāniya,’ can be observed with the succession of Sayyidī ‘Uthmān. Prior to this succession, the Sufi order was relatively unknown and likely had a limited following primarily from limited people, including Sayyidī Ibrāhīm’s own family.¹³ However, during the period of succession to Sayyidī ‘Uthmān, the Burhāniya gained significant popularity and attracted a substantial following worldwide.¹⁴ As a result, some scholars have categorized this movement as Burhāniya, considering it a form of Neo-Sufism¹⁵ or New Age Sufism.¹⁶

Sayyidī ‘Uthmān played an essential role in establishing and elevating the foundations of Sufism, not only in Sudan but in all corners of the world.¹⁷ The influence of the ‘Ṭarīqah Burhāniya’ expanded through the daily lessons delivered by Sayyidī ‘Uthmān over many years. His gathering was a source of knowledge for many scholars from the Islamic world, including scholars from ‘al-‘Azhar, university professors, as well as scholars hailing from Europe, America, Australia, and various other regions.¹⁸ Among these eminent personalities, there were the Shaykh of ‘al-‘Azhar Dr. ‘Abdul Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, Dr. Tāḥā Hussein, Professor ‘Abbās Maḥmūd ‘al-‘Aqqād, Shaykh ‘Aḥmed Ḥassan ‘al-Bāqūri, Professor Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd and Shaykh Dr. ‘Abdul Mun‘em ‘al-Nimr. Dr. Tāḥā Hussein once remarked, “*I had heard that the Shaykh is an open book, but when I sat with him, I found him to be a wandering library.*”¹⁹ This demonstrates the immense knowledge and wisdom possessed by Sayyidī ‘Uthmān.

10. Frishkopf, “Changing Modalities,” 21.

11. Sparkes, “Doctrines and Practices,” 41-42.

12. A member of the Burhāniya Sufi order and a student of the Quranic commentator Jalāl ‘al-Dīn ‘al-Suyūṭi.

13. Helena Hallenberg, *Ibrahim al-Dasuqi (1255-1296): a Saint Invented* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2005), 40-41

14. Leccese, Francesco Alfonso. “Il ḍikr nella ṭarīqa Burhāniyya secondo l’insegnamento di Muḥammad ‘Uṭmān ‘Abduhu al-Burhānī,” *Annali, Sezione orientale*, 79 (2019): 181. doi:10.1163/24685631-12340076

15. Frishkopf, “Changing Modalities,” 16.

16. Søren Christian Lassen, “Growing up as a Sufi Generational change in the Burhaniya Sufi order,” *Sufis in Western Society Global Networking and Locality*, ed. Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt Klinkhammer, (Taylor & Francis, New York, 2009), 149.

17. Frishkopf, “Changing Modalities,” 42.

18. Sayyidī Ibrāhīm, “*Hawliya in Khartoum 2000*,” (Burhāniya E-Library).

19. Sayyidī ‘Uthmān, “*Min Jawāhir al-Imām Fakhr al-Dīn*,” (Burhāniya E-Library), 7, and Sayyidī Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Uthmān, “*Min ‘Ulūmī fī al-Fiyāfi*,” (Burhāniya E-Library), 1.

Sayyidī ‘Uthmān organized collective remembrance sessions (*Ḥadra*)²⁰ and guided their disciples on the spiritual path (*tariqa*) from outward Islām to inward faith (*imān*) culminating into excellence (*ihsān*). In another common formulation, the path leads to the seeker (*murīd*) from the visible (*sharī‘ah*) to the invisible world (*ḥaqīqa*). He established clear guidelines to overcome any difficulty that the disciples may encounter along their spiritual journey. This enabled the disciples to adhere to the divine law (*Sharī‘ah*) and foster love (*‘al-ḥubb*) and obedience (*Tā‘āh*) towards their spiritual leader and fellow disciples.²¹

Sayyidī ‘Uthmān connected Sufism, which is the essence of the faith, with life and society. He emphasized earning a lawful livelihood and encouraged individuals to be righteous cores in building noble families and contributing to the development of their communities. His teachings gained widespread acceptance due to their ability to provide an opportunity for the “common people” to seek proximity to the divine while actively participating in society. This went beyond the boundaries set by traditional Sufi norms, breaking the concept of seclusion in the quest for proximity to Allah.²² As a result, individuals were able to embrace a state of being constantly immersed in Allah as an integral part of their lives.²³ The impact of his teachings was particularly significant on the youth of both genders, as most followers of the path became young individuals.²⁴ Through his teachings, Sayyidī ‘Uthmān fostered a deep connection between his disciples and Allah, enabling them to lead a life immersed in the remembrance of Allah and the pursuit of spiritual excellence.

Sayyidī ‘Uthmān’s Authorship

During the life of Sayyidī, the book “*Intiṣār Awliyā’ ‘al-Raḥmān ‘alā Awliyā’ ‘al-Shayṭān*” was published. Sayyidī has presented a comprehensive description in this book, highlighting the role of the noble saints in attaining proximity to the Almighty Allah. The prevalent path of spiritual closeness among the Sufis follows the footsteps of the revered Prophet Muḥammad, reaching the esteemed companions and then passing down through the four great poles (*aqṭāb*). These methods serve as a means of attaining proximity to the Divine for individuals throughout the world. While another published book by Sayyidī titled “*Kitāb Tabrī‘at al-Dhimmah fi*

20. Frédérique Cifuentes, G.A.W Morgan, and E.H. Morgan, “Sufi Sheikhs, Sheikhas, and Saints of the Sudan,” *African Arts*, 41 no. 2 (2008): 54–55,

doi: <https://doi.org/10.1162/afar.2008.41.2.50>

21. Sayyidī Ibrāhīm address to ‘Burhāniya disciples’ during his visit to the United Arab Emirates in 2002, (Burhāniya E-Library).

22. Lassen, “Growing up as a Sufi,” 150.

23. Sayyidī Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Uthmān, “*Tabrī‘at al-Dhimmah al-Muḥaqqiqah*,” (Burhāniya E-Library), 12.

24. Lassen, “Growing up as a Sufi,” 157.

Nash' al-Ummah". This is an extremely well-mannered and comprehensive compilation of the noble biography of the Prophet Muḥammad. In it, Sayyidī not only sheds light on the external aspects but also enlightens the Ummat on various esoteric aspects of the life of Prophet Muḥammad.

Moreover, the majority of the writings attributed to Sayyidī have primarily been compiled and preserved by his descendants, without undergoing formal documentation or publication. These works are based on the teachings he spiritually received from Sayyidī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī²⁵ and the ancient manuscripts inherited from his grandparents. Sayyidī embarks on a spiritual journey (*Siyar il-Allāh*) and emphasizes the elevation of the soul to attain divine proximity and knowledge.²⁶ However, it is important to highlight that his spiritual doctrines remain firmly rooted in the principles of the divine legislation (*Sharī'ah*) and it is aligned with other manuscripts of the Qur'anic interpretations. For instance,

Sayyidī endeavours to interpret the pericope which refers to Allah as "*The Merciful, Who taught the Qur'an*"²⁷ According to Sufism, the act of teaching the Qur'an is attributed to Allah, and it is believed that humans themselves cannot fully comprehend the essence and beneficial knowledge of the Qur'an bestowed by the Merciful unless they embark on a profound spiritual journey. The question then arises why humanity should undertake a spiritual journey to approach 'al-Raḥmān (the Most Merciful) and gain knowledge when Allah is omnipresent. Sayyidī retorted and explained the term "*Muqām*" of 'al-Raḥmān (divine stations/progressions) is mentioned in Qur'an, which describes Allah as "*The Merciful, established on the Throne*"²⁸ In this context, he further explains:

والرحمن هنا مش ذات البارى تبارك وتعالى، معناه الاسم (الله) الاسم (الرحمن)²⁹

"Here, when we refer to "'al-Raḥmān" (The Merciful), it is not referring to the divine essence but rather as the name ('al-Raḥmān) mentioned in verses similarly as the name "Allah" is"

This is the magnificent tradition of the Almighty Allah to bestow knowledge in diverse ways and forms. Our revered ancestor, Sayyidnā Ādam, was granted the knowledge of 'al-Asmā' (the Names) by the Almighty Allah at the time of his creation, and Allah separates Sayyidnā Mūsā from the people

25. Lassen, "Growing up as a Sufi," 150

26. Paola Abenante, "Inner and Outer Ways: Sufism and Subjectivity in Egypt and Beyond," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 78:4, (2013): 493.
doi: 10.1080/00141844.2012.688758

27. Al-Quran, 'al-Raḥmān 55:1-2

28. Al-Quran, Ṭāhā 20:5.

29. "Say, 'whether you call on Allah or on the 'al-Raḥmān: His are the finest names.'" Al-Quran, Al-Isrā' 17:110; and Sayyidī Shaykh Muhammad 'Uthmān, "*Allimū 'Annī*," Vol-1, (Burhāniya E-Library), 10.

and summons him to Mount Tūr, where He reveals knowledge of the Book in His proximity. Among these, none can be comparable to Prophet Muḥammad, the esteemed Messenger. It is to him that Allah Almighty granted him the knowledge of the sacred Book during his earthly existence. Nevertheless, to bestow even greater distinction upon His beloved, He organized a momentous journey known as Mi'rāj, wherein the Prophet Muḥammad ascended to the heavens and attained proximity to the Divine Presence. Alongside this extraordinary experience, Allah bestowed upon him additional knowledge within the Book.

The translation of Maḥmūd 'al-Hassan sheds light on this divine transmission through the verse "*Allah, exalted and throned on high, reveals the secrets upon His chosen servants to warn them of the Day of Meeting*".³⁰ In the Qur'anic commentary, 'al-Ṭabari has associated the meanings of "secret" with "Qur'an and the Book".³¹ The transmission of knowledge before the time of the Holy Prophet can be understood through specific instances mentioned in the Qur'an. For example, the words of admonition from Sayyidnā Hūd,³² and Sayyidnā Sāleḥ³³ to their people, urging them to seek forgiveness from Allah, are mentioned in the Quran. The repentance of Sayyidnā Ādam is another significant event, during which he received divine words from Allah Almighty, which are now part of the available Qur'an.³⁴ Similarly, Sayyidnā Yūnus was granted a specific passage, a portion of the Qur'an, to bring pleasure to Allah.³⁵ In all these scenarios, Allah has granted His Messengers knowledge of the book that they were tasked to deliver.

Similarly to the messengers, there were specific moments when the people heard the *Kalām* (speech) through the theophany of God, such as the seventy people of *Bani Isrā'īl*. When Sayyidnā Mūsa invited them to Mount Tūr, while He the Magnificent was communicating to Sayyidnā Mūsa, commanding and prohibiting, "Do this and do not do that." Even if the people had heard a single word through their Messenger, it would have been from the knowledge of Allah that He intended to be heard from them.

This understanding can be accepted by Muslim people that messengers were been granted a special revelation for a special task which is currently the part of Qur'an. However, it can also be presented to those who hold previous divine religions and believe that the Qur'an bears a resemblance to the books Allah granted them. For this reason, they are deceived in

30. Al-Quran, 'al-Muminūn 40:15.

31. Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr 'al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* (Dār 'al-Hijr, Cairo, vol-20, 2001), 295.

32. Al-Quran, Hūd 11:52

33. Al-Quran, Hūd 11:61

34. Al-Quran, 'al-A'raf 7:23.

35. Al-Quran, 'al-Anbyā 21:87

claiming that the Qur'an is a modified version of the books in their possession. In reality, the Qur'an is a complete book that was specifically revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad, and while it contains similarities to previous scriptures, it is distinct and encompasses the final and comprehensive guidance from Allah.

This suggests that after the Prophet Muḥammad, the Qur'an is not to be sent directly to humanity. Instead, the divine secrets and teachings within the Qur'an are transmitted to individuals through the lens of this sacred scripture, as the Merciful has attributed Himself with its teachings. The comprehension of the deep esoteric meaning of the Qur'an, along with the bestowed knowledge and attributes befitting those who deserve to delve into this sacred knowledge, is explained by Sayyidī Fakhruddīn:

"Yes, it's not common for people to become leaders and learn the Qur'an from 'al-Raḥmān after their souls reach the throne. The meaning of "'al-Raḥmān taught the Qur'an," When the disciple elevates, their souls reach the throne, then they receive the Qur'an from 'al-Raḥmān. How do they receive it? They receive the Qur'an in the place where it was revealed, its acts of worship, its special qualities, its celestial spheres, its connections, and its purposes. What is the purpose of all of this? And so on. They take it all from our Lord, then those who receive the Qur'an from Him are the ones who perform these deeds." 36

Within this framework, these spiritual leaders learn the Qur'an from 'al-Raḥmān by a deep understanding of its meanings, revelations, legislations, special qualities, secrets, numerical aspects, and various states. The writers of Tafsīr 'al-Nisābūrī and Tafsīr 'al-Rāzī have explained under the pericope *"Say, 'Sufficient is God as my witness between me and you, and those who have knowledge of the Book'".*³⁷ According to both, the book of knowledge mentioned in this verse refers to the (*'al-Lawḥ 'al-Mahfūz*) the Preserved Tablet, which has been granted to specific individuals.³⁸ This knowledge sharing Journey is perfectly described in the commentary of 'al-Nisābūrī, under the Qur'anic verse *"When the Qur'an is read, listen to it with attention, and hold your peace, so that you may receive mercy"*³⁹. He illustrated this in his esoteric exegetical language:

[So listen attentively] with your outward ears, [and be silent]

36. Sayyidī 'Uthmān, *"Allimū 'annī,"* vol-1, 148.

37. Al-Quran, 'al-Ra'd 13:43.

38. Nizām al-Dīn 'al-Nisābūrī, *Gharā'ib 'al-Qur'an wa Raghā'ib al-Furqān* (Dār al-Kutub 'al-'Ilmiyyah, Bayrūt, vol-IV, 1996), 167, and Imām Fakhr al-Dīn 'al-Rāzī, *Mafātiḥ 'al-Ghayb* (Dar ul Fikr, Bayrūt, vol-19, 1981), 72.

39. Al-Quran, 'al-A'raf 7:204.

*with your inward tongues, [perhaps you may receive mercy].
'I was his hearing and his sight; by Me, he hears and sees.'⁴⁰ So,
whoever hears the Qur'an from its Creator, has indeed heard
it from its reciter.*

*This is the secret of the 'al-Rahmān's knowledge of the Qur'an,
[And mention your Lord within yourself]⁴¹ by transforming
your manners for Allah, [with humility and in awe] At the
beginning, which is a matter of compliance, [and without
raising your voice].*

*[The day when the two forces met]⁴² gathering of human
qualities and gathering of Divine Morals.⁴³*

*Which is the station of annihilation (Fanā), for indeed,
revealing the secret of Lordship is disbelief in the eternity of
the past and the perpetuity of the future, Verily, the one who
remembers, the one remembered, and the remembrance itself
is Allah. That is why He said from eternity [So remember Me,
and I will remember you]⁴⁴*

Sayyidī exemplified this by the act of Ṣaḥāba in the same discussion that the first person to establish this process was our beloved Salmān 'al-Fārsī, whom the Prophet's companions approached with concerns about his mixing of different aspects of the Qur'an. The Prophet instructed them to bring Salmān to him. After reading specific verses that were relevant to Salmān's needs, the Prophet acknowledged and blessed him by saying, "You are the purifier and fragrance-spreader".⁴⁵

The compilation of his durūs was undertaken by the decedents of Sayyidī 'Uthmān and organized under appropriate titles:

- a. Sharāb 'al-Waṣl
- b. 'Allimū 'annī, Vol-1 to Vol-V
- c. Qabas min 'al-Nūr al-Mubīn
- d. Qaṣaṣ 'al-Anbiyā' li-Sayyidī Fakhr al-Dīn
- e. Min Khawāṭir 'al-Imām Fakhr 'al-Dīn
- f. Min Jawāhir 'al-Imām Fakhr 'al-Dīn
- g. Min 'Ulūmī fī 'al-Fiyāfī
- h. 'al-Ta'rif 'al-Muḥkamāt

40. Muḥammad Ismā'īl 'al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-Riqāq, *Hadith No. 6502*, (Dār al-Ḥadāra Lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', Riyāḍ, 2015), 1038.

41. Al-Quran, 'al-A'raf 7:205.

42. Al-Quran, 'al-Anfāl 8:41.

43. 'al-Nisābūrī, *Gharā'ib 'al-Qur'an*, vol-III, 407.

44. Ibid, 370, and Al-Quran, 'al-Baqrah 2:152.

45. Sayyidī 'Uthmān, "*Allimū 'Annī*," vol-1, 10.

- i. Ḥasan al-Qaṣaṣ
- j. Musāmirāt al-Abrrār

These teachings have been consistently shared within the realm of the Burhāniya Sufi order, reaching the Arab and beyond. It involves a comprehensive interpretation of Qur'anic verses, particularly emphasizing their mystical dimensions.

Sayyidī Ḥuthmān's Approach to Religious Dissemination

Preaching is always been considered a vital aspect, and various groups with religious affiliations contribute to spreading the knowledge of Islam throughout the world. Among these groups, mysticism plays an important role in preaching in an outer (*zāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*) way, as they firstly focus on personal transformation to develop a deep connection with the divine, and subsequently, they guide others in their journey towards divine proximity, assuming the role of a spiritual guide to help people reach Allah's closeness. The approach of Sufism to Islamic preaching can be perceived in two different dimensions. One of these involves extending the invitation of divine proximity to individuals who are already familiar with and have accepted Islam but are deprived of divine proximity, while there is also an evident example by the influence of these teachings many people abandon their ancestor's beliefs and embraced Islam.

Sayyidī Ḥuthmān was a traditional Sudanic Saint and never had visited Europe. He is believed to have gained profound insights and spiritual knowledge without formal academic education. Consequently, he is regarded as an untainted source of wisdom and authenticity that continues to inspire and guide the Burhāniya members in their daily lives.⁴⁶ The teachings of Sayyidī Ḥuthmān hold great significance in comprehending and assessing this approach, as his teachings disseminated swiftly in Sudan and Egypt and later it facilitated the conversion of numerous individuals in densely populated regions to Islam in a short time. Remarkably Germany, when a small number of young Germans came into contact with Sayyidī Ḥuthmān in the late 1970s. These people formed an original core group, and many of the initial followers are still active in the movement, today there are several Zāwiyāhs (spiritual centers) in German cities, the biggest being located in Hamburg, Berlin, and Munich, which exemplify the rapid expansion of the movement within the country.⁴⁷ Similarly, other European nations such as Denmark, England, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Italy have also witnessed

46. Lassen, "Growing up as a Sufi," 151.

47. Lassen, "Growing up as a Sufi," 151.

the spread of veneration for the ‘Burhāniya’ Sufi order.⁴⁸ In Italy,⁴⁹ in particular, the movement has garnered a significant following among converts to Islam, surpassing the number of individuals born into Muslim families.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the reach of ‘Burhāniya’ veneration extends beyond Europe, with its presence being felt in regions as distant as America,⁵¹ and Australia,⁵² and populated Muslim countries of the world. This global expansion of the message from Sayyidī signifies the ability to transcend cultural and geographic boundaries, attracting followers from diverse backgrounds. It is therefore important to explore “What approach did Sayyidī ‘Uthmān employ in his teachings that led to a significant number of Muslims attaining divine proximity and non-Muslim individuals benefiting from his teachings, all within a short time?”

Understanding the Merits of Religious Dissemination:

There are numerous verses in the Qur’an ordering Muslim nations to expand the message of the divine to the unfamiliar so that they can be regarded as successful in the hereafter. However, the pericope which particularly presented to get motivation in this sacred job is from chapter ‘ale ‘Imrān:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْبِعْرِوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَابُ وَالْحِسَابُ
أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ الْيُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثُهُمْ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour, and believing in God. Had the People of the Book believed, it were better for them; some of them are believers, but the most of them are ungodly.”⁵³

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْبِعْرِوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

Let there be one nation of you, calling to good, and bidding to

48. Frishkopf, “Changing Modalities,” 42.

49. Alessandra Marchi, “Il suismo in Italia: molteplici «vie» per vivere l’Islam,” *Religioni e Società Rivista di Scienze Sociali Della Religion*, Fabrizio Serra editore, Pisa · Roma, (2009): 55.

50. Paola Abenante, “Essentializing Difference: Text, Knowledge, and Ritual Performance in a Sufi Brotherhood in Italy,” *Performing Religion: Actors, contexts, and texts Case studies on Islam*, Ed. by Ines Weinrich, (Orient-Institut Beirut, 2016), 222.

51. Miller Rasul, “The Black American Sufi: A History,” Sapelo Square, (March, 2020), [The Black American Sufi: A History – Sapelo Square | Sapelo Square](#), accessed June 6, 2023.

52. Abu Bakr Sirajuddin Cook, “Sufism in Australia: A Brief History,” *Scared Footsteps, Sufism in Australia: A Brief History - Sacred Footsteps* date of access – accessed June 6, 2023.

53. Al-Quran, ‘ale ‘Imrān 03:110.

*honour, and forbidding dishonour; those are the prosperers.*⁵⁴

It is a genre that includes two types, encouraging people to perform what is required by religious obligations and recommended acts, and discouraging people from doing what is banned by religious prohibitions and disliked actions. Undoubtedly, both types are accompanied by thorough explanations. The apparent address (*Kuntum*) “you” is directed towards the Prophet Muḥammad’s companions, peace be upon him, but it has a broader application to the entire Muslim nation, as the verses (*Qīṣās*) “legal retribution is ordained upon you”⁵⁵ and “legal retribution is prescribed for you”⁵⁶ provide a comparable example.

The verse can be used to demonstrate to the Muslim nation that if they want to uphold the truth, they must first be considered among superiors (*Khair*). The teaching of good and the prohibition of evil is to be offered to both categories of individuals, those who have already embraced Islam and those who, in the final section of the pericope, still adhere to their prior religion. However, it needs to be explained which part of the Ummat will have to serve for this sacred work, if both the Ummat and the book holder need Qur’an preachings.

The answer to the question can be retorted inside the verses. Since, if the (*Khayr*) “good” from Ummat is to be associated only with the preacher of enjoining permitted and forbidding evil, then the person from the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) was not supposed to be included in the category of (*Khayr*) by simply having faith (*Imān*), without engaging in the preaching of permitted and forbidding evil themselves. However, if the condition for (*Khayr*) from Ummat is defined as having faith (*Imān*), and as mentioned in the second verse, whereas the command to invite towards “*Yad’ūn ila ’al-Khayr*” is independently working before preaching good and evil, then it allows for a broader interpretation. This means that any individual who reaches the level of faith will attain “*Khayr*” and the preaching will be considered effective for a preacher and to whom the preachings are proceeded at the same time.

As for faith in Allah (*Imān*), which is to be submitted to Ummat and by the book holders, as they are required to believe in everything, whether it pertains to the Messenger of Allah, the Book, resurrection, accountability, rewards, punishments, and other matters. The component of belief belongs to the substance of the heart, as stated in the narration of Ibn-e-Mājā, “*Faith (Imān) is the knowing from the heart.*”⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the Hadith of Holy

54. Al-Quran, ’ale ’Imrān 03:104.

55. Al-Quran, ’al-Baqrah 02:178.

56. Al-Quran, ’al-Baqrah 02:183.

57. Muḥammad Ibn ’Yazīd Ibn Mājā, *Sunan Ibn Mājā, ’al-Muqadamah, Hadith No. 65*, (Dār al-Ḥadāra Lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzī’, Riyāḍ, 2015), 17.

Prophet “*Islam is outward, while faith resides in the heart, then he pointed three times to his chest and said, “Piety is here, Piety is here.”*”⁵⁸

The statement of belief in Allah specifically when describing the nation is because it incorporates belief in Prophethood and everything else that has been mentioned, suggesting that it would not be a real belief without such beliefs. This situation in Qur’an is described as “*The Bedouins say, ‘we embraced faith (Imān) ‘Say: ‘you do not believe; rather say, ‘We accepted Islam’ for belief has not yet entered in your hearts’.*”⁵⁹ Prophet Muḥammad also made this distinction between the people for the group of whom he did not give during the distribution, one of his companions asked the Prophet “*O Messenger of Allah, you gave to so and so, but you withheld from so and so, and he is a believer.” He (peace be upon him) said, “Do not say ‘believer’, but say ‘Muslim’.*”⁶⁰ Belief in Allah is a matter of the heart; rather, to embrace Islam, an individual must first ensure that his inner self is aligned with his beliefs. This is the merit of the preacher which can be observed through Qur’anic verses and Hadith and on this approach the preaching of enjoying good and forbidding evil would be fulfilled.

Sayyidī ‘Uthmān’s Methodology of Preaching:

In the Meccan Qur’an, when there was neither a Prayer, nor Fasting, Pilgrimage, or Zakāt, they were completely unfamiliar with the oneness, as the Meccan have never been warned before, or more accurately to say that their ancestors have not been warned before.⁶¹ The Qur’an indicates the purpose as “*so that you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, and so are heedless*” describing the introduction of people to the Prophet Muḥammad, for whom he has been sent to guide towards Allah.

Sayyidī ‘Uthmān’s methodology, to make proximity between the servant and God is rooted entirely within the framework of the Meccan Qur’an. He guides his followers and the one who still holds beliefs of ignorance of the Meccan as is, following his unique methodology. Sayyidī, firstly makes a necessary measurement to develop a relationship between the creature and the creator. It is because religion is the name of the relation between humans and God through Prophet Muḥammad and for this, the individual needs a strong intention (*Irāda*: root word of *murīd* ‘Intended of Allah’) towards God. The description of this relationship can be abstracted through the Hadith where the Angel Gabriel expounded the

58. Imām Aḥmed bin Ḥanbal, *Musnad, Ḥadith No. 12381* (Al-Risāla, Beirut, vol-19, 1997), 374.

59. Al-Quran, ‘al-Ḥujurāt 49:14.

60. Aḥmed Bin Shu‘aib ‘al-Nisai, *Sunnan Nisai, Kitāb ‘al-Imān ‘wal-Shara‘i, Ḥadith No. 4993* (Dār al-Ḥadāra Lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, Riyād, 2015), 672.

61. Walid A. Saleh, “The Preacher of the Meccan Qur’an: Deuteronomistic History and Confessionalism in Muḥammad’s Early Preaching,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 20.2 (2018): 93.

level of relation through questioning formulation to Prophet Muḥammad.⁶² In this context the outward (*Zāhir*) of the human is belongings to the matters of (*Sharīʿah*), the certainty with knowledge (*Ilm ʿal-Yaqīn*). In this particular relation, the creature only heard about his God through his ancestors, books, or the locality whereas he applies the worship on his physical body by offering five basic articles of Islam. The second and third phases of the relationship between God and Human is to be known as inward faith (*Imān*) “the certainty with an eye” (*ʿAin ʿal-Yaqīn*), and excellence (*Iḥsān*) “the certainty with the truth” (*Ḥaq ʿal-Yaqīn*), in these both, the heart of the human and his spirit built a relation through strong divine love culminating faith (*Imān*) into excellence (*Iḥsān*), the same scenario is conceptualized in Qurʿan as *ثُمَّ اتَّقُوا وَاٰمَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقُوا وَاَحْسَنُوا* “then fear and believe, then fear and do excellence”.⁶³ The work in it is heartfelt, the remembrance is heartfelt, and piety in it is to magnify the rituals of Allah.

The preaching of the Meccan Qurʿan was bestowed with only the first article of the testimony of oneness, “There is no deity but Allah, and Muḥammad is His Prophet” (*lā ilāha illa Allah, Muḥammad Rasūl Allah*). All the essential aspects of Islam were revealed to humanity during the later period in Mecca and were further transmitted during the period in Medina. However, before that, in Mecca, the Prophet Muḥammad was primarily focused on teaching monotheism (*Tawḥīd*) and the importance of moral conduct. The companions of the Prophet Muḥammad faced numerous trials and difficulties at the hands of the pagans of Mecca, leading some of them to leave their homes and seek refuge in other lands. During the Battle of Badr, when the companions were facing overwhelming odds, the Ṣaḥāba expressed their unwavering love to Holy Prophet, “Even if you ask us to cross the ocean on horseback, we will do so without hesitation”.⁶⁴

The mysticism is love (*ʿal-ḥubb*),” or “it is the essence of religion Islam.”⁶⁵ The socio-spiritual networks between Shaykh and disciples (*Murīdīn*) with an oath (*ʿahd*) of allegiance are tightly woven, and infused with affection. The Shaykh asks the disciple first to repent from their previous deeds so may Allah forgive them. In this context, repentance entails returning to remembrance (of God). Allah, the Highest, has said, “Call upon your Lord humbly and secretly. Surely He does not like the offenders.”⁶⁶ This means that He loves those who remember Him and

62. ʿal-Bukhārī, *Al Jāmiʿal-Ṣaḥīḥ. Kitāb al-Imān, Hadith No. 50, 19-20.*

63. Al-Quran, ʿal-Maʿida, 05:93.

64. Muslim Bin Hajjāj ʿal-Nīsābūrī, *Al Jāmiʿal-Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb ʿal-Jihād, Hadith No. 1779, (Dār al-Ḥadāra Lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, Riyāḍ, 2015), 587.*

65. Michael Frishkopf, “Textual Dimensions of the Public Ḥaḍra in Egyptian Sufism,” *Musicological Annual* 58 no. 1 (2022): 62, <https://doi.org/10.4312/mz.58.1.61-99>

66. Al-Quran, ʿal-Aʿraf 7:55.

repent, as He has also said, *“Indeed, Allah loves those who repent and loves those who purify themselves.”*⁶⁷ Sayyidī knows that mere words and outward actions, devoid of sincerity in the heart, are akin to a mirage. Therefore, the righteous and ascetics focused on purifying the hearts of their followers, recognizing that inner purification and cleansing are fundamental in religion, alongside the emphasis on physical worship. The first rite that the disciple of ‘Burhāniya’ is required to perform, once admitted to the *ṭarīqa*, consists in repeating the formula seventy thousand times of (*istiġfār*—*“astaġfiru Allāha ‘l-‘Aẓīm Huwa al-Tawwābu al-Raḥīm”*) “I ask forgiveness to the Most High, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful”. This ritual is intended to purify the heart of the disciple by preparing him for the proximity of Allah Almighty.⁶⁸

In truth, Allah, exalted and glorified be He, has linked salvation to the purity of the heart. He states, *“The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, but only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.”*⁶⁹ The Prophet Muḥammad also emphasized its significance, saying, *“Indeed, in the body there is a piece of flesh, if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. Indeed, it is the heart.”*⁷⁰ Thus, it is the focal point of Allah’s observation, and then if the heart is attached to worldly desires and the love of others, it leads to servitude to entities other than Allah. Therefore, it is imperative for individuals to free themselves from servitude to worldly possessions. It is understood that Sayyidī possesses a deeper understanding, recognizing that the darkness within one’s heart, resulting from continuous sins, can only be eradicated through continuous repentance to Allah. This is the initial stage for disciples taking an oath (*‘ahd*) with Sayyidī, aiming to attain proximity to the Creator.

As for those who adhere to the religions of their ancestors, they are granted companionship to foster a love for those whom Allah loves. Sayyidī discusses this particular scenario, acknowledging that it may appear peculiar to the unfamiliar that the love of Allah Almighty is obligatory, along with the love of Prophet Muḥammad, the Prophets, his companions, saints, the family of the Prophet (*ahl ‘al-Bayt*), and the scholars. Through this collective love, one attains the love of Allah, as exemplified by the pericope, *“He loves them and they love Him.”*⁷¹ The companionship of the People of Allah (*‘ahl Allah*) nurtures a love within their hearts, leading to a hopeful connection with Allah Almighty and further cultivating their relationship with Him. The methodology of religious dissemination

67. Al-Quran, ‘al-Baqrah 02:222.

68. Leccese, “Il ḍikr nella,” 186.

69. Al-Quran, ‘ash-Shu‘ara 26:88-89.

70. ‘al-Bukhārī, *Al Jāmi‘al-Ṣaḥīḥ. Kitāb al-Imān, Hadith No. 52, 20.*

71. Al-Quran, ‘al-Ma‘ida 05:54.

through companionship has also been approved in Islamic philosophy. Throughout Islamic history, war prisoners were granted the special status and lived under the supervision of Muslims. These practicing Muslims were responsible for their well-being and basic needs, while the prisoners were required to follow their instructions. Through this companionship strategy, many prisoners were inspired by the moral living of Muslims and embraced Islam. Similarly, the Sufi community has employed the same approach, welcoming disbelievers to their gatherings, allowing them to listen to sermons, and learn about the positive and universal aspects of Islam.

The relationship between God and His creation, as understood through the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad, is rooted in love and devotion to Allah. In the second revelation Allah instructs in Surah Muzammil, “Remember the Name of your Lord, and to devote himself passionately to Him”.⁷² Allah, the Almighty, cherishes the bond between Himself and His creation. He does not pray as humans do for him, nor does He pay zakāt as humans do, and He does not perform the Hajj pilgrimage for his Humans. However, Allah does engage in remembrance (*dikr*) of those who remember Him in their hearts, recognizing His superiority. This relationship not only strengthens the divine connection between individuals and Allah, but it also prepares them to follow any command revealed in the Holy Qur’an or conveyed through the Holy Sunnah. With a clear vision and an understanding of the reality of the inner soul, they are ready to embrace and fulfill the teachings of Islam. It is because correcting one’s prayers in their complete and perfect form, understanding the true and accurate meaning of a verse from the Qur’an, and comprehending the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad can only be achieved after purifying the inside. All of this can only be attained through repentance and abundant remembrance of God and abundant prayers upon the Prophet Muḥammad shielding themselves from all evils, then, there comes a time when Allah starts loving that person and manifests Himself in the heart of the believing servant. It is narrated in Hadith Qudsi: “Neither My heaven nor My earth could contain Me, but the heart of My believing servant can encompass Me.”⁷³ Therefore, after the recitation of the istiḡfār formula, the disciple passes to that of *tahlīl*—*lā ilāha illā Allāh* (“there is no deity but God”) also repeated seventy thousand times. Only after completing these initial rites in full, can the disciples move on to mention the name *Allāh*, which must be repeated six thousand six hundred and sixty-six times each day.⁷⁴ It is through this that the heart is illuminated by the light of the divine name

72. Al-Quran, ‘al-Muzammil 73:8.

73. Muḥammad bin Muḥammad ‘al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā Ulūm ‘al-Dīn, Kitāb Sharāḥ ‘Aja’ib ‘al-Qalb* (Dār Ibne Ḥazm, Beirut, 2005), 890.

74. Leccese, “Il ḍikr nella,” 186.

(Allah), and it becomes enlightened, as Allah, the Most High, has said, “*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.*”⁷⁵ At that moment, the heart sees with the light of Allah, and whoever sees with the light of Allah, nothing remains hidden from them.⁷⁶

When the seed of love (*‘al-ḥubb*) settled in the heart through continuous remembrance of the name of Allah, the earth became a stable ground for him to cultivate the growth of inner love which emphasized his outer to be obedient following divine legislation (*Sharī‘ah*). Thereafter the love of the disciples towards their Lord is manifested in their obedience to Him, seeking His pleasure, and refraining from actions that would incur His displeasure and punishment. On the other hand, the love of Allah towards His servants is demonstrated by rewarding them with the best for their obedience, exalting them, praising them, and being pleased with them. Whoever nurtures the seed of love with the water of obedience and adherence, there is no fear for them in the future, nor shall he grieve for what has passed from the descent to the earth. It is because they return with the attracting forces of care and guidance to the realms of divine protection, and success comes from Allah alone. This is the merit of conveyance (*Tabligh*) that is chosen by Sayyidī Fakhrudīn for his disciples, and compared to his strategy of religious dissemination through divine proximity, the Qur’an also emphasizes calling people towards goodness (*Khayr*), so that they may embrace the love of their Lord to such an extent that they are never separated from obeying Him.

Conclusion

The authorship of Sayyidī ‘Uthmān primarily consists of *durūs* that he delivers to his disciples and other attendees in gatherings. During these knowledge-sharing sermons, Sayyidī talks about various subjects, drawing from ancient books within his possession, his spiritual connection with Sayyidī Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, and the knowledge bestowed upon him through divine proximity. The topics covered in his teachings encompass divine sciences, social sciences, and aspects of ancient history. These teachings further delve into presenting esoteric concepts of Qur’anic interpretation and legitimization that surpass the realm of conventional preaching in Islam.

This holistic approach has had a significant impact on cross-border communities, providing validation to divine legislation (*sharī‘ah*). As the author, Sayyidī places significant emphasis on his personal connection with the divine and subsequently adopts an approach of religious dissemination through divine proximity. As a result, he has attracted a substantial

75. Al-Quran, ‘An-Nūr 24:35.

76. Muḥammad Bin ‘Isā ‘al-Tirmizi, *Sunnan ‘al-Tirmizi, Kitāb Tafsīr ‘al-Qur’an, Ḥadith No. 3127* (Dār al-Ḥadāra Lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, Riyāḍ, 2015), 604.

following, not only within his immediate circle but also among individuals from diverse backgrounds. He presents a universal concept of religious adherence, capturing the attention of religious scholars and university professors, particularly those associated with institutions like 'al-'Azhar and universities outside the state. Furthermore, he has provided an opportunity for "common people" to follow him for divine proximity, transcending the conventional boundaries of Sufism. Unlike other Sufi practices that encourage seclusion and extensive travel, he does not impose such restrictions on his disciples. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of actively contributing to society.

In conclusion, Sayyidī's authorship has had a profound impact on both religious scholars and the general public, offering a path of proximity to Allah while remaining actively engaged in societal matters.

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