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Contents

Johanne Louise Christiansen

Preface

This issue of the *Scandinavian Journal of Islamic Studies* (SJIS) consists of a thematic section, an open section, and one book review. I would like to thank the authors, the editors in charge of the thematic section, and the SJIS editorial board, Jesper Petersen in particular, for their contributions to this issue.

In the thematic section, which is introduced by editors, Jenny Berglund, Laura Gilliam, and Amina Siječić Selimović on pp. 6-38, Islamic education in the minority setting of Scandinavia is at the center. The section includes five contributions by Maria Lindebæk Lyngsøe, Amna Mahmood, Synnøve Markeng, Nora S. Eggen, and Jenny Berglund, treating various aspects of religious teaching in the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

The open section presents three articles by Naveed Baig, Andreas Dohn, and Tobias Anderson. While these studies are on three rather different subjects – Islamic spiritual care, Ramadan TV, and wine poetry – they demonstrate the broad research interests and scope of scholars working within Islamic Studies in Scandinavia. In the first article, "Islamic spiritual care and negative religious coping", Baig examines the cross-field between the psychological and the theological in different forms of coping strategies, especially focusing on what is termed "Islamic spiritual care". Having experience as a Muslim chaplain himself, Baig offers insights into the understudied field of Islamic practical theology and such practices in Denmark (pp. 163-183). In the second article, "Ibrahim på ramadan-tv", Dohn examines the central figure of Abraham/Ibrāhīm in contemporary Arabic cultural expressions. Through an analysis of two TV-series, *Ard al-Anbiyāʾ* (on al-Arabiya in 2007) and *Misr Ard al-Anbiyāʾ* (on

al-Ūlā, DMC, and CBC in 2020), he shows how these series work as a lens to consider different temporal, political, and religious differences and developments in the Arab world of today (pp. 184-214). The third and final article of the open section, "Islamisk vinpoesi från Ibn al-Farid till Ian Dallas" is written by Tobias Andersson. In this study, Andersson treats wine poetry through the long history of Sufism, in the works of the Egyptian poet Ibn al-Farid (d. 1285), the Moroccan Sufi-shaykh Ahmad b. ʿAjiba (d. 1809), and the Scottish Sufi Ian Dallas (d. 2021) in particular. While these three Sufi works are separated historically, they are intertextually linked through the genre of commentary: Ibn Aijba comments on Ibn Farid, Ian Dallas on Ibn Aijba. The study places a particular focus on the didactic nature of wine poetry, its overall purpose being to teach and guide other Sufis to different spiritual states.

The issue is concluded with a book review by Vebjørn L. Horsfjord. The book read and reviewed is Mette W. Torps *Den forkerte muhammedtegner – og andre nuancer af karikaturkrisen*, which was published in 2023 by Forlaget Vandkunsten. Horsfjord provides a well-considered assessment of a non-scientific book that taps into the still controversial and ongoing debate concerning the Danish cartoon crisis.

Finally, the editorial board is happy to announce that Gustav Larsson, currently PhD fellow at Department of Cultural Sciences, Linnaeus University, is the new managing editor of SJIS. During next year, 2024, the present managing editor, Jesper Petersen, will work with Gustav Larsson to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Jenny Berglund, Laura Gilliam, Amina S. Selimović

The teaching of Islam in Scandinavia

Three ways to handle religious minorities, societal ideals, and moderate secularism

Education plays a crucial role in the maintenance, preservation, and survival of religious systems. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to say that religious education and instruction lie at the very heart of all religions. For members of a dominant majority religion, the means by which the religious traditions are transmitted to future generations differ from those operating in a minority religion. The majority society is, in some sense, "marinated" in the majority religion (Berglund 2022:111); hence, certain religious values and narratives are "transmitted" through state institutions, official media, traditions, cultural expressions, and so on – although formal education is also necessary for a religion's long-term survival. Yet, for minorities, the opportunities to teach their religion to future generations are far more limited and thus urgent; if not somehow taught, it will eventually disappear. In consequence, Islamic education is of great concern to many Muslims in Europe. As they cannot rely on state institutions to ensure the management and continuity of their religious community, Muslim minorities often depend on networks and institutions outside the state. Numerous Muslim children, teenagers, and even adults attend privately run supplementary classes on Islam in the afternoons or at weekends, while others attend private schools or are taught by parents or other family members at home. Within the last decade, and increasingly during the recent COVID pandemic, the number of online, often transnational, teaching opportunities has also risen.

Meanwhile, the increased vigilance with regard to Islamism and Muslims since September 11, 2001 and the Islamist terror attacks in European cities, has made Islamic education a concern for most European governments: a practice to be controlled and

surveilled for fear of rising radical Islam, while still ensuring minorities' constitutional rights to religious freedom (Gent & Franken 2021; Berglund 2015). This goal of striking a balance between providing religious freedom and controlling religious minorities explains why Islamic religious education (IRE) has become a topic of intense public debate; people are concerned that their government is either intervening too little or too much when it comes to shaping the spiritual beliefs of private citizens. State strategies have ranged from sponsoring Islamic education in state schools, providing state funding for religious schools, organising state-supervised training of teachers of Islam, and monitoring curricula and teaching practices in Muslim private schools, to forgoing the provision of opportunities for Islamic education entirely – with policies varying according to national ideologies of secularism, multiculturalism, and political culture (Taylor 1998; Modood 2007; Mannitz 2004; Berglund 2015).

The topic of Islamic education has been handled in both similar and different ways in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, all of which have been dominated by Lutheran Christianity but are now considered among the most secular societies in the world. The three countries are all strong, universalist, welfare states that grant social and human rights to all citizens, meanwhile retaining the right to interfere in their lives to ensure security, equality, and cohesion across social groups. This encompasses high demands for the 'integration' of minority populations, including accommodation to the majority's stance on religion and secularism (Gullestad 2002; Rytter 2019; Gilliam 2019). There are, however, differences between the three countries when it comes to the role of Christianity and religion in relation to the state, civil society, and schools, and in the lives of individuals. Furthermore, there are some differences in the political reception of Muslim migrants; in how the teaching of religion, including Christianity and Islam, is named, organised and practiced in state schools; in the possibility of and rules for public funding of Muslim organisations and what is termed either Muslim free, independent or private schools and; the manner in which the schools, mosques, and organisations are surveilled by the state.

In this special issue of Scandinavian Journal of Islamic Studies, we present studies on Islamic Education in the Scandinavian countries that illuminate how the teaching of Islam – and the children, youth, parents, and teachers engaged

in it – is affected by the specific Scandinavian context. The studies discuss the rules, practices, and debates relating to the Muslim minorities' transmission of Islam to the next generation, in both institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms. The articles range from focusing on teachers in state schools who teach Islam as part of non-confessional religious education (Markeng), on informal activities in homes, seminars and study groups (Lyngsøe), through mosque-based versions (Berglund and Eggen), to formalised Islamic education of imams and missionaries in an Islamic movement (Mahmood).

In this introduction, we provide context and background information to help clarify both similarities and differences between the Scandinavian countries with regard both to their handling of Islamic education and the experiences and practices of Muslim parents, teachers, and students involved in the teaching of Islam. We begin by examining some general characteristics of the position and handling of Christianity, secularism, minority religions, immigration, and Muslim migrants in the three countries, followed by an outline and discussion of how the teaching of religion in state schools is organised, and the legislation and handling of Muslim schools and Muslim organisations. Our intention is not to draw a comprehensive comparison between the three countries, as it is beyond the scope of this introduction and the studies that we have available differ between the countries, but rather to help readers understand the context of the following articles and to draw attention to similarities and differences within Scandinavia that other scholars may explore further.

Christianity and Secularism

In all three societies, Christianity has a special position and relationship to the state. In Denmark, the state and church were divided as early as 1849, but in Sweden and Norway this only happened in 2000 and 2017 respectively. However, despite this division and political legislation ensuring religious freedom and recognition of minority religions, Christianity is still the culturally dominant religion, defined as the people's church (*folkekirke*) in all three countries. This means that its churches are intrinsically tied to the national identity and subsidised through taxes in various ways. Thus, while identified as secular,

and among the most progressive and liberal societies in the world, all three Scandinavian societies can be understood as merely moderately secular (Modood 2004; Thurfjell 2015; Thurfjell & Willander 2021). Although the separation of religion and politics has gradually become hegemonic, Christianity is still financially subsidised and privileged in educational institutions and in everyday cultural interactions (Berglund 2023; Jensen 2001).

In Denmark, the constitution of 1849 authorised the division of the state and the church and defined the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the Danish people's church (*den danske folkekirke*). As of 2023, 72% of Denmark's 6 million inhabitants are members of the church and, unlike members of other religious communities, pay 1% of their income to the church, a 'church tax'. According to a large survey of Christianity in Europe, two-thirds of Danes identify as Christians, yet despite this comparatively high number, only 10% go to church at least once a month (the median is 18% in Europe) and 55% describe themselves as non-practicing Christians (Pew Research Center 2018a). Compared to Norway (43%), and Sweden (42%), a smaller number – 30% of Danish inhabitants – identify as non-affiliated to any religion (ibid.). Studies show that Danish church members predominantly use the church for rituals, such as baptism, marriage ceremonies, and funerals, and family traditions like Christmas service. Hence, their religiosity often takes an individualised and 'relaxed' form, in which Christianity affords identity, family rituals and community, and not least national community, as Christianity is regarded as a central aspect of Danishness (Jensen 2001; Mouritsen 2006). As pointed out by political scientist Per Mouritsen, while Christianity no longer provides the overarching meaning system for Danish citizens, a view of 'secularised Christianity-as-culture' is broadly accepted, and also promoted by politicians who argue that Christianity is conducive to Danish egalitarianism, open mindedness (*frisind*), and liberal democracy (Mouritsen 2006).

While the Norwegian state-church relation was dissolved in 2017, a change in the constitution was made prior to this, in 2012, redefining the State Church of Norway as the people's church of Norway (*folkekirke*) and "supported as such by the state". This happened after several rounds of discussion at political and church levels, a process which was willed and pushed forward by the church officials in order to gain independence (Staalset

2023). Nevertheless, the Church of Norway is still in a unique position compared to other religious communities in the country, and is actually entirely financed by public budgets, a relationship grounded in §16 of the Norwegian Constitution: "The Church of Norway, an Evangelical Lutheran Church, remains the people's church (*folkekirke*) and is supported as such by the state" (translation by Selimović). In Norway, 43% of the 5.5 million inhabitants declare that they belong to a religion or religious community. Yet, according to statistics from 2022, 63.7% of the Norwegian population are members of the Church of Norway. This number is drastically larger than any of the numerous other religious or non-religious communities in the country, which have fewer than 400,000 members in total (SSB Norway). Yet, reports demonstrate that church attendance is changing; statistics, for example, show that fewer people attend church regularly and fewer young people have their confirmation in the Church of Norway. This is an interesting tendency as the Norwegian Humanist Association (HEF) has experienced a rise in confirmation numbers (non-religious confirmation); on the other hand, in terms of weddings and baptisms in the Church of Norway in recent years, the numbers show an increase. In short, the majority of Norwegians use the church for rituals and, through their membership, acknowledge the Church of Norway as part of their identity.

Sweden's population stands at approximately 10 million. Prior to 2000, the Evangelical Lutheran Church was Sweden's official state church. Today, however, its status is also that of a people's church (*folkkyrka*), meaning that it is no longer directly tied to the Swedish state. Membership in the Church of Sweden (*Svenska kyrkan*) has decreased to around 60% of the Swedish population in recent decades (Willander 2019) and sociological surveys affirm Sweden's status as one of the world's most secular countries; according to the Pew Research Center in 2018, up to 72% of Swedish respondents believe religion has no influence on their lives. Only about 15% of people reply in the affirmative to the question, "Do you believe in a personal God?" (Pew Research Center 2018b). On a typical Sunday, about 1% of the population attends a Church of Sweden service. This is a low score, but statistical evidence suggests that the very low level of church attendance has been fairly consistent for as long as there have been numbers to compare. When church attendance in Sweden started to be registered in 1927 attendance was around 5% (Gustafsson 2001; Willander 2019).

The political reception of immigration and Muslim migrants.

While often grouped together in the past as the progressive and liberal states of Northern Europe, the three countries have had distinct political approaches to immigration in general and to Muslim migrants in particular. One could argue that the three countries, following Mikkel Rytter's description of Danish ideas about 'integration' (Rytter 2019), have different social imaginaries about the nation, the welfare state, what constitutes 'us' and 'them', and how to handle this relationship.

Sweden has more than 200 years of history as a neutral state, and neutrality and non-alignment have long been part of the Swedish self-image, which is evident in its attempt to define its role as a 'humanitarian superpower' but also in its feminist foreign policy. As Simons and Manoilo noted in 2019, cracks had for years been visible in the domestic consensus as the contradictions of the humanitarian superbrand and feminist foreign policy became more salient (Simons & Manoilo 2019). Today Sweden is not only waiting to enter NATO, it has also radically changed its migration policy, once a strong ideology of international solidarity and hospitality demonstrated during the 2015-16 refugee crisis, when many other countries closed their borders. In the 2014 election, the anti-immigrant and especially anti-Islam 'Sweden Democrats' political party received 13% of the vote in the election and in 2022 they gained 20% of the vote, becoming the second largest party. Islamophobia and hate crimes are on the rise in Swedish society and, in 2023, the polarisation of society entered a new level with the discussions on the burning of the Qur'an in front of mosques and Muslim-majority embassies. In the public debate, Islam and Muslims are often depicted in a negative light and Muslim immigrants regularly problematized, often being described as a minority that is resistant to democracy and secularisation and opposed to the established separation of church and state.

There are no reliable statistics for the number of Muslims in Sweden, only various estimates. According to statistics from 2016, Sweden's Muslims accounted for 8% of the total population. The Pew Research Center estimates that 810,000 people in some way identify as Muslim and that the country will have the largest Muslim population in Europe by 2050, ranging from 11 to 30 percent of the population depending on the migration rate.

Muslim immigration to Sweden started in the 1960s with labour migration from Turkey and former Yugoslavia. Since the 1980s, the majority of Muslims who have moved to Sweden have either been refugees or relatives of people who already live there (Sorgenfrei 2018). In 2021, Thurfjell and Willander's large-scale quantitative study compared Swedes with Muslim family backgrounds to Sweden's secular, post-Lutheran dominant culture. Contrary to expectations, the Christian respondents show more affinity with their religious heritage than Muslims, and there is a noticeable fusion between the groups. While both groups largely distance themselves from their own religious heritage, Muslims do so in a more definite way, with Muslims upholding more secular values and identities than Christians. Thurfjell and Willander conclude that, on the basis of their findings about Muslims in Sweden, equating religious familial heritage with religious identity is hasty. Nonetheless, although Sweden's Muslim population is to a large extent secular, the majority population perceives Muslims as more religious and the debate about Islam is coloured by an 'us' and 'them' dichotomy with a tendency to support the idea that 'normal' religion is one that is either protestant or invisible.

As with Sweden, the first substantial groups of Muslim migrants came to Denmark from Turkey, Pakistan, and Yugoslavia as 'guest-workers' in the 1960s and 1970s. While this immigration was severely restricted by new laws in 1973, the families of the predominantly male migrants were allowed to enter until 1983, bringing with them children of Muslim background in need of education. Since the 1970s, new Muslim inhabitants have arrived as refugees from wars in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon (Palestina), Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, and Syria, among others. Typically, these families have been placed in social housing estates alongside poor Danish families, meaning that the children have grown up in ethnically mixed and socially deprived areas. Whereas registering religious affiliation in Denmark is prohibited, it is estimated that there are 300,000 Muslims in Denmark (5% of the population), representing 84 nationalities (Religion i Danmark 2020). The largest group comprises people who have migrated from Turkey, followed by Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Pakistan; 85% are Sunni Muslims and 10-15% Shia Muslims (Kühle & Larsen 2017). We do not have studies of their religioius identification, but Lene Kühle estimated in 2006 that 20-25 % of Danish Muslims were

members of a mosque organisation and, in 2017, that 7-9% participated in any particular Friday prayer (Kühle 2006, Kühle and Larsen 2017).

While migrants to Denmark have always reported experiences of discrimination, Denmark long had a national social imaginary of Denmark as a humanitarian, inclusive welfare state. Yet, in the 1990s, a more hostile environment for migrants, and especially Muslims, was developing. Municipalities became increasingly frustrated with the huge task of integrating the many new refugees and the cost of this due to their eligibility for welfare benefits. In response, in 1998, a government led by the Social Democrats and the centre-left party Radikale Venstre introduced a significantly lower 'introductory payment' to refugees. Yet the hostility increased as a new right-wing government came to power just two months after the 9/11 attack. With parliamentary support from the far-right Danish People's Party, this government remained in power for ten years and initiated a radical change in Danish foreign and immigration politics, including active engagement in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. During this time, and fuelled by the Danish cartoon crisis in 2005-6, the government instigated a politics of securitization, introducing a range of strict anti-terror legislation and pre-emptive methods, including surveillance of Muslim organisations, as well as restrictive immigration and integration policies (Rytter & Pedersen 2014). While a more inclusive and pluralist approach is promoted by left-wing parties, civil organisations, and in everyday encounters in institutions and workplaces, the Social Democratic and right-wing governments, which have been in power since 2011, have continued to promote these policies. Likewise the Danish debate is dominated by the concern that an undemocratic and patriarchal Islam threatens the Danish modern, liberal, egalitarian way of life (ibid.; Kublitz 2010). Discussions often focus on freedom of speech and gender equality, recently ignited by the banning of burkas, recommendations from a committee to forbid Muslim girls from wearing the hijab in school, and public burnings of the Qur'an by the right-wing activist Rasmus Paludan and others.

As in the two other countries, the character of immigration to Norway changed in the 1970s and onward with the introduction of labour migration from countries like Pakistan and Morocco. In the 1990s refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina were the largest migrant group to enter Norway, but refugees from several

countries on the African continent also arrived in this period, followed by large groups of refugees from Afghanistan and Syria in the 2000s. The statistics show that immigrants from Pakistan, Somalia, and Syria, together with their families, are the three largest groups in the country today, while the registered number of Muslims – that is, members of a mosque – is 182,607 (2023), making it the largest non-Christian community in Norway.

Most of the Norwegian political elite describe and define Norway as a peace-loving country; it engages in and facilitates peace talks, and is a vocal member of the United Nations; the Nobel Peace Prize is also awarded in Norway. However, as pointed out by the parties furthest to the left, Norway is also a warmongering country as weapons production and their export is high, and Norwegian soldiers are being deployed to various types of operations led both by the UN and NATO, but also in the American-led operations in Afghanistan post 9/11, the so-called "war on terror". Another central aspect of Norwegian self-understanding is that it is both a secular society and also a multi-faith society in which religion and belief can be expressed, a perception Norwegians term *et livssynsåpent samfunn* (NOU2013, 1), "a society open to a diversity of religion and life stances". Since 2013, this term has been applied to describe the Norwegian policy towards religious communities and lifestances and the way they are met by society (Stålsett 2021). However, although the Norwegian self-perception is that their society is open to religious beliefs and lifestances, a number of political parties, individual politicians, and various organisations are very critical of the Muslim presence in Norway. The political discourse concerning immigration, especially Muslim migrants, has had several peaks in the last twenty years and has become a revisited theme in pre-election debates. Of the ruling parties, the most vocal critic of Islam and Muslims has been the Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet). In recent years the party leadership has made use of terminology such as 'stealth islamisation' (*snikislamisering*) when criticising the changes instigated by Muslim immigration, such as discussions about halal slaughter. The current leader of the party has used the example of Sweden, inherent in the term 'Swedish conditions' (*svenske tilstander*), in order to communicate that Muslim immigration leads to integration problems. Sweden has been used as a model of what not to do, while Denmark, on the other hand, is upheld as an example to follow due to the country's more restrictive policies.

Moreover, the presence of right-wing extremism has been prominent in Norway for years, clearly exemplified by the right-wing terrorist attacks on 22 July 2011 and 10 August 2019, and anti-Islam activism, fronted by, among others, the organisation SIAN (Stop the Islamisation of Norway).

However, all the political parties in the Norwegian political landscape have developed policies concerning what some characterise as 'Muslim issues'. These include, for example, the wearing of the hijab and related matters, but also the building of mosques, caricatures, and the burning of the Qur'an in public spaces. Some of these have been discussed under the umbrella of religious freedom and/or freedom of expression, at times leading to heated debates among Norwegian politicians but also stakeholders.

Religious education in state schools

In Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, the vast majority of Muslim children pass through the state school system. Indeed, in Sweden, 27% of all pupils in school have an immigrant background (Skolverket 2022/2023), although as yet there are no available statistics on how many of these are Muslim. Likewise, there are no available figures on how many Muslim pupils there are in Norwegian classrooms; however, some numbers from 2016 can give an indication. According to SSB Norway (2016), in a report on immigration and education, it is stated that there were 46,329 children with immigrant backgrounds in Norwegian kindergarten, just above 16% of all kindergarten children. The number of children with immigrant backgrounds in the age group 6-15 was 102,900 in 2016, or about 16%. These numbers do not give specific information about the pupils' religious identity; however, we can presume that a significant number come from Muslim families. While the religious affiliation of pupils is not registered in Denmark either, 10% of pupils in Danish schools are bilingual, and the majority of these have Muslim backgrounds. An estimate from 2014 is that approximately 7% of Danish pupils are Muslim, and 90% of these attend the Danish state school (Sedgwick 2014; Gilliam and Kühle 2014), although they are not distributed equally. In fact, in 2014 Mark Sedgwick calculated that 76% of Danish state schools had lower than 5% Muslim pupils, while 50% of

children with a Muslim background attended schools with between 10-50% Muslim pupils, and 22% attended schools where there was a Muslim majority (Sedgwick 2014).

There are important differences between the three countries in how the teaching of religion is organised in state schools and how Christianity and other religions, including Islam, are prioritised. In the three countries Christianity was the main subject since the Middle Ages, in a Lutheran-evangelical form after the reformation, and, while gradually pushed aside by other subjects and a general secularisation, it was still taught as a confessional subject until recent times. It is worth noting that Scandinavian approaches to religious education differ from most other European countries. France, for example, is characterised by a strict secularistic approach, banning religious symbols in schools, having no separate school subject for religion, and teaching the history of religion within the history syllabus. Central and East European countries have generally retained the confessional teaching of religion and invited the different religious communities into the schools to conduct faith education for different groups of children (Mannitz 2014; Gent & Franken 2021). The current Scandinavian and wider Nordic model, on the other hand, provides the teaching of religion in a non-confessional way, privileging Christianity to different degrees both quantitatively and qualitatively, including acknowledging the Christian holidays of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

Of the three countries, Sweden has the longest history of non-confessional integrative religious education. A school reform in 1962 required the subject of Christianity to maintain an 'objective' profile with regard to questions of faith (Skogar 2000), and the subject's name was changed from Christianity to Knowledge About Religion in 1969, which is a direct translation of the Swedish word *religionskunskap*. This name change symbolised the transition from a confessional to a more non-confessional school subject that prioritises teaching about religion, including various non-Christian religions, from a Study of Religions perspective. Since 1996, non-confessional religious education (RE) has been an obligatory school subject taught in all state-funded (i.e. also in all independent schools including the confessional ones) schools from primary to upper secondary. The emphasis in primary school is on the local community and storytelling, whereas at higher levels it is on key ideas within

what are called 'the world religions' (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, according to the syllabus) as well as on secular worldviews, or 'outlooks of life' as they are called in the English-language documentation from the National Agency for Schools (Skolverket 2011). In upper secondary school, one RE course is obligatory. The first sentences in the syllabus clearly show its departure point: "The subject of religion has its scientific roots primarily in the academic discipline of religious studies, and is by its nature interdisciplinary. It deals with how religions and outlooks on life are expressed in words and action, and how people formulate and relate to ethical and existential issues" (Skolverket 2022).

The use of the term "non-denominational" (the term used in the official translation to English) is meant to imply that education is to be presented in such a way in the Swedish school system that no particular worldview is prioritised and that pupils from all cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds should feel comfortable (Skolverket 2018, 5). This neutrality, however, does not apply to the realm of what is described as society's "fundamental values", the mediation of which the national curriculum considers a primary task of Sweden's educational system (Skolverket 2018, 5). Despite the fact that all school subjects are supposed to be non-denominational and non-confessional, they can be understood to be "marinated in Lutheran Protestantism" – not only the country's factual history, but also in terms of how people think and talk about religion in society, how religion is taught and holidays are celebrated in schools, how institutions are built, and who receives state subsidies (Berglund 2023).

The confessional character of religious education remained much longer in Norway – until 1997 – probably because since 1974 pupils had had the option to choose between a confessional religious subject with close ties to the Christian Church and a 'lifestance communities' (*livssyn*) subject presenting other worldviews and religions. However, the growing influence of the Norwegian Humanist Association and religious/lifestance cooperation had an important impact on imminent changes. Acknowledging that globalisation and migration had changed Norwegian society and the pupils in Norwegian schools, and in order to counteract growing social and cultural fragmentation, a non-confessional but compulsory subject teaching about different religions and worldviews was introduced in 1997

(Skrefrud 2022). Meanwhile, critics voiced the concern that the teaching was still highly influenced by the dominance of Christianity and thus argued against its obligatory status. The matter was raised in the Human Rights Court of Strasbourg, which also criticised the amount of Christianity in the syllabus, and the subject was revised in 2008, with specifications that it should be taught in a pluralistic, objective, and critical way (ibid.). In 2015, the government reinstated 'Christianity' into its title, which did not create much debate, presumably because the subject was now characterised by a religious studies and intercultural approach. The topic is now called Christianity, Religion, Lifestances, and Ethics (*Kristendom, religion, livssyn og etikk* or KRLE) at the primary school level (Grades 1-10) and Religion, Lifestances, and Ethics (*Religion, livssyn og etikk* or RLE) in secondary school.

In Denmark, the subject became non-confessional in 1975, at which point it was renamed 'Knowledge of Christianity'. Even though it is intended that the subject be taught in a neutral and scientific manner, Christianity is described as the central area of knowledge, and it was not until 1993 that the teaching of 'other religions and perspectives of life' became obligatory in the seventh grade and onwards. An ongoing political debate concerns whether the subject should be called 'Religion', as it is in upper secondary schools, and align the teaching of different religions, or the focus on Christianity should be retained in both name and content. Whereas left-wing parties and the association of religion teachers argue in favour of the former, a consistent majority of politicians insist that Christianity should remain the main subject because it is perceived as a central part of the national cultural heritage. While national conservatives proclaim that the subject should be obligatory for all children for the same reason, pupils can be exempted from the subject due to legislation on religious freedom. Yet, in reality only a low number – 1.3% – are exempted from participating in the weekly hour of the subject (Buchardt & Enemark 2021). A smaller qualitative study found that Muslim parents whose children had been exempted had often been concerned that their children would be taught about Islam by school teachers with little knowledge of the Islamic faith (Holm Pedersen 2014). Studies also show that some teachers of 'Christianity', especially in schools with a larger proportion of Muslim children, choose to include the teaching of Islam and other religions before the

seventh grade in an attempt to be inclusive of their Muslim pupils (Gilliam 2019; Buchardt & Enemark 2021).

In the remaining three years of the school, Islam is taught alongside Judaism and Buddhism, in limited periods of the scheduled hours, and primarily as a means of comparison to Christianity. This subject is often taught by teachers without a specialisation in Knowledge of Christianity but even those who have this specialisation only have very limited professional education in the non-Christian religions (Gilliam & Kühle 2014; Gilliam 2014; Buchardt & Enemark 2021). The Christian focus of the subject is underlined by the fact that in the seventh or eighth grade, the time scheduled for the subject is switched into confirmation lessons organised by and taught in the local churches, and the remaining pupils have the time off.

Research from all three countries shows that despite these significant differences in approaches to the teaching of religion, there are similarities in the teaching of Islam and the stances towards religion and religiosity reflected in the religious education in state schools, and that this has an impact on Muslim pupils who attend these schools.

Studies of textbooks and teaching in the subject Knowledge of Christianity syllabus in Danish schools show that whereas Christianity is described as heterogeneous, changing over time, personal, and a religion of love and faith, Islam is generally depicted as homogenous, ahistorical, and impersonal, governed by rules and related to conflicts and radicalism, as well as foreign to Denmark (Sedgwick 2014; Kudal 2015; Kjeldsen 2016; Gilliam 2017; Buchardt & Enemark 2021). Studies also demonstrate that pupils of Muslim background are expected to be religious and are thus often called upon to explain or represent Islam in lessons on Islam (Buchardt 2010; Pedersen 2014). As Mette Buchardt describes, by "pedagogising" Muslimness, the lessons also tend to produce a legitimate flexible and a non-legitimate inflexible Muslim subject (Buchardt 2010, 2014). Similarly, although teachers strive to ease the participation of Muslim pupils in the everyday routine of Danish schools, and perceive their approach as secularistic, Muslim pupils demonstrate that what they have learned is that while the presence of Christianity in school is normalised, Islam should be invisible and kept private (Khawaja 2014; Gilliam 2014). In line with this, other studies find that Muslim pupils pick up that they are associated with terrorist acts and wars in Muslim countries and that

religious differences are potentially conflictual. At the same time, they note that the school requires them to tone down their religiosity, participate in Christian practices, and be "relaxed Muslims" (Gilliam 2009, 2014, 2015, 2022).

Although one might expect the neutral religious studies approach to the teaching of religion in Sweden and Norway to result in a more neutral presentation of Islam, this does not seem to be the case. Two studies of textbooks about Islam for non-confessional religious education in Swedish schools have shown that throughout history, the choice of words and events with which to describe Islam has often been negative. Although the content is not specifically wrong, this reiterated pattern creates a tedious picture of Islam as a whole (Otterbeck 2004; Härenstam 1993). Berglund's studies on the subject demonstrate that Swedish textbooks follow the format of 'the man, the book, the faith.' (Berglund, 2014). A type of presentation that is prone to cause problems since it indicates to students that the Qur'an is the same type of text and serves the same purpose as the Bible in Christian traditions. Both are of course books, and thus can be compared as such; they have a common story and gallery of characters, but what is important to remember is that their function in theology differ. Another problem that is not specifically related to Islam but to all religions presented in Swedish textbooks is that persons representing a religion in textbooks are often 'maximalists': in other words, those who are most devout and most self-assured about a specific tradition. This could have two negative consequences: (1) students belonging to a specific religion may believe they are not good adherents because they do not live as the maximalist representative depicts, and (2) students not belonging to the religious tradition depicted may believe that all its adherents live according to the maximalist representation (Berglund 2020; 2021)

Despite the secular (not favouring any specific religion or world view) but not secularistic (favouring a world view in which religion should be kept in the private sphere) outlook of the Swedish school system, studies have shown that religion is frequently associated with a historical time when people didn't know better – that religion may have played an important role in the past, but modern people do not need it anymore. Karin Kittellmann Flensner (2016) demonstrates that taking a non-religious and atheistic stance is considered a neutral and normal

attitude toward religion, and that being religious is frequently presented as problematic for a modern, rational, and independently thinking human being. Apart from this dominant discourse, which can be understood as a specific normativity, some students and teachers in Kittelmann-Flensner's study talked about Sweden as a Christian country with reference not to beliefs but to Swedish traditions and history, frequently using them to define a 'we' in relation to 'the others', who were frequently religious people in general, and Muslims in particular (Kittelmann-Flensner 2016). An interview study from Sweden also shows that pupils who receive Islamic supplementary education - often consisting of memorizing passages of the Qur'an - have been the target of negative comments to the effect that it is at odds with modern, rational Swedish society (Berglund 2017, 2018). Although it was common 50 years ago for Swedish pupils to have to memorise not only poems, hymns, and Bible passages, but also features such as the periodical system and Sweden's rivers and lakes (which are numerous), this is no longer the case. Instead, the school system's discourse on memorization is very negative and frequently referred to as 'old fashioned' in contrast to the prevailing educational ideal in Sweden – and the West more broadly – of interactive learning. Muslim pupils thus face an underlying presumption of negative outcomes if they discuss the knowledge and skills gained in their supplementary education, with teachers and friends labelling them as 'too religious'.

In Norway, in contrast to Sweden and Denmark, there has been little research on representations of Islam in textbooks, with some exceptions that include work by Ann Midtun (2014), Jon Magne Vestøl et al. (2014), Hallvard Nestby (2019), and Bengt-Ove Andreassen (2014, 2021). Andreassen writes that teaching about Islam was made mandatory in Norwegian schools in 1974; however, the curricula and textbooks in Norway have tended to promote a stereotypical representation of the religion (Anderssen 2021). Furthermore, teaching in classrooms has been "influenced by public debate, popular culture, and news media" (Anderssen 2021, 206). This is supported by Audun Toft's research in Norwegian classrooms, which shows that media depictions of Islam and Muslims in connection with terrorism, extremism, and the oppression of women are used as starting points for teaching about Islam and selecting themes that are deemed important to deal with in class (Toft 2018, 2019, 2020).

Therefore, even though Muslim pupils in general are positive towards Islam being taught as part of RE in schools, the focus on these stigmatising themes is making it a challenge (Toft 2017, 2018; Andreassen 2021). A report (2022) developed by the KIFO Institute for Church, Religion, and Worldview Research underlines this, as it demonstrates that pupils with a Muslim background in Oslo experience the teaching in Christianity, Religion, and Life Stances (KRLE) as stigmatising and a burden (Bangstad et al. 2022).

Muslim schools

All three countries incorporate so-called *friskolor* - free or independent schools - into the school system; however, it should be noted that these schools are not free but privately run, state-funded, and subject to the laws and regulations of the state or municipality. Some of these school are faith-based, also called confessional schools. In Sweden, only 1% of all pupils attend a faith based school. Sweden's first state-funded Muslim school (a state-funded, independent, faith-based school) opened in Malmö in 1993. At present there are 10 Muslim schools. Like other independent schools in Sweden, these are 100% funded by the state. No new Muslim schools have been founded since 2004 (Henrekson 2023).

One of the reasons these Muslim schools were established in Sweden in the early 1990s is that the Education Act was amended in 1992 to make it easier to establish independent schools. Although independent schools (including faith-based schools) must have the same basic goals as state schools, an independent school is allowed to have a profile or mission that distinguishes it from state schools, including a specific school ethos and extracurricular subjects (such as Islamic religious education [IRE] in Muslim schools) that are incorporated into the weekly schedule. Confessional school subjects or gatherings can consequently be added to the weekly schedule, but these subjects cannot be mandatory. The goals outlined in the national curriculum (see above) must be met in faith-based independent schools, meaning that non-confessional religious education is taught as a mandatory school subject in Swedish Muslim faith schools, whereas Islamic religious education (IRE) must be optional. The profile of one Muslim school may be very different from that of

another, and a distinction is frequently made between schools with 'strong' and 'weak' profiles, classifications which are based on the degree to which a specific religion influences the school's profile (Roth 2007).

Several studies show that parents' decision to let their children attend a Muslim school is not primarily influenced by the presence of IRE or even the Islamic school ethos. In her study, Mohme (2016), for example, shows that parents chose a Muslim school for their children primarily to provide them with a good academic education, one that, in the parents' opinion, was not possible to obtain in the suburb where they lived, whose state school standard was perceived to be low (Mohme 2016). Other studies of school choice show that parents send their children to Muslim schools for reasons of security and well-being, that is, to avoid discrimination and achieve acceptance of difference (Bunar & Kallstenius 2006; see also Berglund 2010). Although RE or IRE may not be the most important factor in parents' decisions to send their children to Muslim schools, these schools do provide an environment in which children can be educated about Islam through textbooks based on a secularised, study of religions approach, and also through confessional lessons in which Islam is the norm and the child learns about the 'good life' from an Islamic perspective.

In Denmark, free schools were introduced in 1855 as a result of the 1849 constitution, which established the Lutheran-Evangelical church as the Danish people's church and at the same time guaranteed religious freedom. By extension, parents were granted the right to establish schools teaching their children according to their own convictions. Some of the present free schools have been founded by religious minorities, but many rather adhere to a specific pedagogical idea. Since 1980, groups of Muslim parents have used this possibility to open either Muslim free schools, schools catering to Arabic-speaking children, or schools for children of specific ethnic groups where Islam is taught in more or less confessional ways, often in a subject called 'Religion' (Ihle 2007; Shakoor 2008; Buchardt & Enemark 2021). Like private schools which exist alongside free schools, free schools in Denmark are partly subsidised by the state, currently at 75% of the cost of pupils in the state schools. They thus require a school fee from parents, which is waived for families of low income.

In 2022, there were 24 Muslim free schools in Denmark with

5,000 enrolled pupils, amounting to 10% of Danish Muslim children (Mouritsen, Ahrensberg, & Kriegbaum 2022). While free schools had previously been obliged to align with the academic level of the state schools and their teaching of democracy, following the general post-9/11 concern about Islamic radicalism, Muslims isolating in 'parallel societies', and post-PISA[1]) worries regarding the academic level of Muslim schools, the government made these demands more specific (Reeh 2010). In 2005, a new law required the free schools to follow the multiple academic goals of states chools and "to prepare the pupils to live in a society like the Danish, with freedom and democracy, as well as developing and strengthening the democratic literacy of the pupils and their knowledge of and respect for fundamental freedom and human rights, including equality between the genders" (Friskoleloven, paragraph 1, stk. 2, Gilliam's translation). In 2017, new rules regulating and monitoring the schools were implemented, including strict academic and financial supervision as well as inspection of the schools' teaching of freedom and democracy (Kofoed-Pihl 2021; Mouritsen, Ahrensberg, & Kriegbaum 2022). In 2018, this led to the closing of four Muslim schools when the state terminated their subsidies. In a study of ninth grade pupils at 22 of the 25 Muslim schools and Muslim pupils from state schools with more than 20% Muslim pupils, Mouritsen, Ahrensberg, and Kriegbaum (2022) explore whether Muslim schools harm the children's integration to citizenship. The survey suggests that the pupils from the Muslim schools are more religious and have more resourceful parents than Muslim pupils in the state schools, but show no signs of being less integrated with regard to issues of citizenship. In fact, they identify more with the Danish identity and less with the ethnic identity of their parents than the Muslim pupils in the state schools. They report that they and their parents have chosen the schools because they recognize their Islamic values, the close home-school relationship, and due to their calmer, safer, and better learning environment (Mouritsen, Ahrensberg, & Kriegbaum 2022)

In Norway, a *friskole* is defined as a privately owned, independent school with the right to public funding that offers an alternative pedagogical profile or one that is religion or life-stance based. As such, these schools function as an alternative to publicly run state schools. In contrast to Sweden and Denmark, as of 2023 there are no Islamic or Muslim privately run schools

1 PISA stands for Programme for International Student Assessment.

in Norway. While there are many private schools that in some way hold a Christian value base, it has not been easy to establish schools based on Islamic values. There have been several attempts to register a Muslim free school or private school in Norway, but the applications have been denied, often on the basis that they represent "a hindrance for integration" (Ekgren 2019). It should also be noted that in Scandinavia, as in other European countries, many Muslim children attend Christian free/independent schools, one reason for this being that parents expect the respect for religion to be higher in these schools than in mainstream secular state schools.

Muslim organisations and mosques

Outside the school and education institutions, the Muslim organisations in Scandinavia that offer Islamic education are affected by the political concern with avoiding radical Islamic influence while maintaining the constitutional rights of religious freedom. Here the universal welfare models of the Scandinavian countries tend to increase the state's influence and decrease the role of civil society. All three countries have thus been concerned with the rules and regulations the organisations should apply in order to be eligible for public funding, yet they have solved this question in different ways with consequences for the conditions of the organisations seeking such assistance.

The Swedish state recognises seven umbrella organisations that represent Swedish Muslims today which, in 2021, were estimated to have 224,458 members in total (Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund 2021). Despite the fact that most organisations, with the exception of the Bosniak Islamic Association, founded in the mid-1990s, recruit members from various ethnic backgrounds, Sweden also has a sizable number of smaller, ethnically defined organisations and congregations. One such is the Ahmadiyya community, but there are also Salafi and Wahhabi groups, which have drawn followers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (Olsson 2019); some Sufi groups are ethnically homogeneous, while others, particularly those led by and recruiting Swedish converts, are more mixed (Sorgenfrei 2016). Funding is available for religious organisations through the Swedish Agency for Support for Faith Communities, although potential recipients must adhere to certain values and

organise in a certain way to be eligible. Some of this funding is used to educate children and teenagers, but also grown-ups. Muslim organisations that do not receive state funding must find other means of financing the Islamic education they offer, or base it on voluntary work and private funding.

By the late 1950s, there was a basement mosque in Kärrtorp, situated in the southern part of Stockholm. Sweden's first architect-designed mosque was built by the Ahmadiyya community in Gothenburg in 1975–1976. The most famous mosque in Sweden is probably the large mosque on the island of Södermalm in Stockholm, which was inaugurated in 2000. Most Muslim communities in Sweden collaborate with the surrounding society. Many receive study visits from schools and municipalities or participate in information meetings with them, are represented in local consultation bodies and in committees in the residential areas where they have their premises, and collaborate with tenants' associations, women's shelters, temperance and education movements, and not least with other religious communities (Sorgenfrei 2019). In contrast to Denmark and Norway, Swedish children are entitled to mother-tongue education in school, which probably means that fewer children attend mosque education purely to learn the Arabic language as in the other two countries (Iversen forthcoming).

In Norway, formally registered faith organisations may apply for public funding if specific criteria are fulfilled, a possibility prompted by the funding of the Church of Norway, which is financed by taxpayers. As a result, all Muslim faith organisations are financed by the state in accordance with the number of members, which in turn gives the state the opportunity to make demands (Stene 2020). As of 2017, there are two umbrella organisations representing Muslim groups in talks concerning legislation that targets religious institutions, among other issues.

On 1 January 2021, a new law on religious communities came into force, which requires that each must have at least 50 paying members in order to receive state grants and, as of 2023, the rate for calculating state subsidies is per member. Among other things, there are new reporting requirements qualifying applications for grants; one that has been discussed relates to how the organisations are governed and to what degree women and men are represented in the governing bodies. In the past,

religious communities did not face such requirements. In addition to state financing, the different organisations and communities can apply for grants through many different state and private institutions by developing specific projects.

Muslims registered within faith organisations in Norway numbered about 180,000 in 2023 (Statistics Norway 2023); however, the overall number is higher as many are not registered members: Three forms of organisation may be distinguished – mosques, educational institutions, and cultural centres – although these often have overlapping activities. Mosques are often organised on ethnic/national lines, whereby religious education is combined with the preservation of cultural memory of the 'homeland'; however, some are transnational, offering both religious education and ritual worship in different languages. Most mosques follow the Sunni-Shia divide and the majority belong to the Sunni denomination, although in areas where there are few mosques it has been recorded that Shia and Sunni worship in the same building. The Ahmadi community has its own mosques and there is little public communication between the leadership of the Ahmadi community and Sunni and Shia leaders.

Norwegian society has undergone considerable changes in terms of religious pluralism since the 1970s, materialising in the development of inclusive policies, the so-called 'lifestance open society' (*livssynsåpne samfunn)*, and through legislation. Nonetheless, even though pluralism is recognized and deemed a positive trait in Norwegian society, religions other than Christianity (and sometimes Judaism) are still defined as 'immigrant religions' (*innvandrer religioner*), situating their practitioners as religious 'others' in some circumstances. This implies that, unlike Lutheran Christianity, immigrant religions are not part of the everyday patterns of society and are, therefore, taught in limited form in schools.

In order to bridge gaps between the majority religion/ population and minority religions – but also as a result of work already done in this regard – the focus on communication through interreligious dialogue has become an important element in the Norwegian religious landscape. The need for official representatives to take part in conversations between the two largest religious communities in Norway indirectly led to cooperation between Muslim organisations, especially mosques, and the establishment of an umbrella organisation – Islamic

Council of Norway, IRN (*Islamsk råd Norge*) – in 1993; in 2017, a second – the Muslim Dialogue Network, MDN (*Muslimsk dialog nettverk*) – was established. The two umbrella organisations represent different mosques, and only MDN is a member of the Council for Religious and Lifestance Communities in Norway (STL). It is here noteworthy that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Norge, which is related to the organisation presented in Amna Mahmoud's article (this issue), is not a member of either the IRN or the MDN although it partakes in dialogue conversations on the same footing in the STL. According to Leirvik (2001), religious dialogue has been important in developing Norwegian society into one where religious beliefs and lifestances are welcome.

Islamic education in Norway is organised in different ways, but mostly through already established faith and/or cultural organisations, and teaching national languages is part of the curriculum; thus, pupils attending a Bosnian mosque will have the possibility to learn and practise Bosnian, as the textbooks are in Bosnian. Transnational mosques offer different classes, for example in Arabic and Norwegian, depending on the mosque organisation – transnational or national – but also on the language skills of the teacher/imam and the pupils attending the classes. However, Arabic is learned as the language of ritual. A report on the education of children in MDN mosques in Oslo was published in 2023 underlining the internal differences based on both the theological stance and national belonging of the mosques (Eggen 2023).

In Denmark, the first mosque was established in 1967 and the first Muslim faith and cultural organisation in 1977, and since then the number of both mosques and Islamic faith organisations has increased, amounting to 170, primarily Sunni, mosques in 2017 (only 20 are Shia and two Ahmadiyya) and 28 Islamic faith organisations approved by the Danish State (Kühle and Larsen 2017). Both mosques and faith organisations are primarily organised according to ethnicity. According to religious sociologist Lene Kühle, approximately 20-25% of Danish Muslims were members of these organisations in 2006 (Kühle 2006). During the years after the cartoon crisis in 2006, three umbrella organisations (Muslimernes Fællesråd [2006] Dansk Muslimsk Union [2008], Den Islamiske Union i Danmark [2013]) were established to support the cooperation of the many Muslim organisations and provide them with a collective voice

when engaging with politicians and the media.

According to Danish law, a Muslim organisation can apply to become a recognized religious organisation if it is set up as an association and has at least 50 adult members with resident status and Danish citizenship. Some mosques establish a specific association for their cultural activities and can receive financial support for this work if what they do can be defined as civic education for their members. Once recognized as an organisation, it is indirectly subsidised by the Danish state through tax deductions for donations made by its members and exemptions from property tax. It also attains the right to perform marriages with civil validity and access to visas for overseas imams, yet the organisations must be authorised to receive these donations and visas, as the law bans – especially overseas – donations from, and visas for persons "who oppose or undermine democracy, and fundamental freedom and human rights" (Report on International Religious Freedom: Denmark 2022). With increased concern for the role played by Muslim organisations, measures have thus been taken to surveil their funding from foreign states and organisations, as well as their initiatives to invite imams.

A study by Marie Bisbjerg (2011) of 73 mosques depicts that 83 of them provide education for 10% of Danish Muslim children and youth, including reading of the Qur'an, teaching about Islam, language instruction, and homework tutoring. In another more qualitative study of after-school activities for children and youth in Danish mosques, Tina Maagaard (2011) notes that the participating mosques all include the teaching of the Qur'an, Islam, and Arabic, but that the Arabic mosques focus on recitations of the Qur'an, whereas the Pakistani and Turkish mosques concentrate more on the teaching of Urdu and Turkish. Her study also finds that the mosques organise sports and social activities for the attending children and youth. It has also been pointed out that there is an overlap between some mosques and Muslim free schools, as imams teach in the schools and the schools provide space for Friday prayer (Kühle & Larsen 2017).

The articles in this issue

The articles in this issue address different types of Islamic education.

In the first article, Maria Lindebæk Lyngsøe examines the

pivotal role of education in the lives of Danish Muslim women who are students and voluntary instructors in Islamic education. The knowledge-sharing of these women occurs in domestic settings, where Islamic teachings are seamlessly integrated into their upbringing practices, and in institutionalised spaces like mosque-based programs. The women emphasise the unique significance of Denmark's context to minority religious practice but also reveal how their Danish middle-class identity plays a significant role in their 'intensive' engagement in their children's education. Their motivation stems from a strong desire to educate their own children in Islam and a belief in nurturing virtue through care and commitment to a broader moral community. Here, sharing knowledge of Islam serves a dual purpose: shaping the future of Muslim generations and enhancing their personal piety. The article thus challenges the view of education as individual self-building, highlighting its role in fostering communities and piety as something nurtured through relational lines.

Synnøve Markeng discusses the perceptions teachers in Norwegian state schools voice regarding teaching about the Qur'an as a religious scripture in Norwegian religious education in state schools. Analysing religious scriptures and rituals along three dimensions, she shows that the interviewed teachers emphasised work with content and meaning (the semantic dimension) rather than recitation (the expressive dimension) or any special treatment (the iconic dimension) of the Qur'an. This is partly due to the comparative approach of the subject and the fact that the teaching of Islam is modelled on that of Christianity, but also caused by a concern that listening to the recitation of the Qur'an will be understood as confessional or contribute to an exotic or harmful representation of Islam.

In her article, Nora Eggen investigates the history of the *koranskole* (Qurʾanic school) in Norway, and shows how it has become a catch-all term that conceptualises non-formal, religious, educational leisure-time activities organised in mosques. She argues that although the Qurʾan is central to Muslim faith and to Islamic religious education, *koranskole* is not an emic term coined on the basis of the Islamic tradition. Instead, although representing a diverse range of activities, it is an orientalist trope that has brought them all together under the same label, which is used as a standard in debates concerning Muslims in Norway and their religious education versus their

successful integration into Norwegian society. She also suggests a typology for the meaning, use, and function of the term *koranskole*.

Based on interviews with young Swedish Muslims, Jenny Berglund discusses some of the co-curricular activities within the broad category of Islamic supplementary education in mosque organisations, such as football, mathematics, and homework, which take place in connection with more classical forms of Islamic education. Her analysis shows that slamic supplementary education with its co-curricluar activities, allow students to make friends, improve their social skills, and get involved in new activities that might not otherwise be accessible to them. They can therefore be understood as sources of extra-familial social capital that have a compensatory effect for children and students without ready access to it otherwise.

In her study on Jamia Ahmadiyya (AMJ) UK, a UK-based institute for the education of Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries, and its Scandinavian-born students and alumni, Amna Mahmood presents various sites of learning within the organisation. Focusing on *tabligh* (propagation) and *tarbiyyat* (upbringing), she demonstrates that the practice of learning is a multifaceted and crucial part of the AMJ and that it is necessary to understand the organisation as a missionary movement to grasp how religious education is formulated and practised. Furthermore, Mahmood makes the point that education and learning are essential in the preservation of minority religions in Scandinavia, discussing how contextual needs and boundaries are negotiated and how a double minority ensures its survival. She shows that for the Norwegian Ahmadi Muslims the opportunity to educate scholars at the Jamia UK is essential, as the "import" of non-Norwegian Ahmadi imams is not an option, while leaders should have first-hand knowledge of the society within which they are to function. Mahmood's article also indirectly explains the active engagement of the Ahmadi community in Norwegian society by virtue of Ahmadi imams who take part in various discussions in society, but also through active engagement on different platforms.

Conclusion

The outline in this introduction points to both similarities and

differences between the three Scandinavian countries with regard to the role of Christianity, the practice of secularism, the political approach to Muslim migrants, how Christianity and Islam are taught in state schools, and how Muslim minorities' religiosity and claims regarding Islamic education in Muslim free schools or by Muslim organisations are perceived, handled, and governed.

Although all three countries are considered among the most secular in the world according to world-wide statistics (PEW), the role of Protestant Christianity varies in relation to self-understanding. While the division between state and church happened much earlier in Denmark, the majority of Danes define themselves as 'cultural-Christians', and a secularised form of Christianity is broadly perceived as a central part of Danishness. This is not the same in Norway and Sweden, where the state and church were split later. While the majority of Norwegians and Swedes are members of the Norwegian and Swedish Christian Churches, a larger percentage of the inhabitants, compared to Denmark, identify as non-religious and a smaller percentage as non-practicing Christians; however, while secularity is a more explicit component of the Norwegian and Swedish self-understanding, the Protestant heritage is still visible on closer examination. As we have seen, this may have had importance in relation to minority religions such as Islam, with both Norway and Sweden maintaining a more welcoming approach up until recently. This has however drastically changed in recent years, with the anti-Muslim discourse also becoming much harsher in these two countries.

As members of the European and international community, the Scandinavian countries are committed to religious freedom and public expression, as well as the right to non-discrimination based on culture, religion, and ethnicity. However, both the growing number of Muslims and the notion that Islam is now a part of Scandinavian national culture and identity present a number of challenges to the general public. In terms of Muslim immigration we can see both similarities and differences between the three countries. Over the past decades, Sweden has, in line with its 'humanitarian superpower' image, welcomed significantly more immigrants than either Norway and Denmark. While Denmark has increasingly tightened its migration, Sweden has tried to retain a more humanitarian stance. The 2015 refugee crisis can be characterised as an immigration

shock, which sparked a major policy change, and a variety of new policy proposals were made in all three Scandinavian countries in order to stem incoming migration. Although the direction of policy change was similar, the policy instruments used, as well as the style and content of policy actors' legitimising and coordinating discourses, differed. In short, we can see that Sweden broke away from its humanitarian path, Denmark continued along its already strict path, and Norway maintained its middle line (Hagelund 2020).

All three countries have a strong welfare state that prides itself on ensuring social equality and welfare, including free education, for its citizens, which improves the educational opportunities of minorities. Yet, often explained by a concern for integration, social and cultural cohesion, and a worry about Islamic radicalism, the welfare state also engages actively in the education of minority children and in how Muslim citizens organise their religious lives. The way the three countries organise religious education and teach Islam in their state schools reflects, to a great extent, their general approach to secularism, Christianity, and Muslim migrants, as well as their specific social imaginary about the nation and the welfare state. In Sweden, the identification as a neutral, inclusive, and humanistic society is reflected in the choice to teach religion as a neutral, non-confessional subject called Knowledge About Religion wherein knowledge about Christianity is not prioritised but taught alongside other religions from a 'study of religion' perspective. In Norway, the politics of a 'lifestance open society' is seen in how pupils and their parents up until 1997 were given a choice between a confessional religious subject with close ties to the Christian Church and a 'lifestance communities' (*livssyn*) subject. Finally, in Denmark, the national imaginary that Christianity is part and parcel of Danish culture and the state school is the societal channel for this culture may be seen in how Christianity has remained the main syllabus topic and also in the name of the religious subject, while other religions take second place and are not mandatory until seventh grade. Thus, while the Swedish schools and, from a later date, the Norwegian schools strive for a secularistic and neutral approach, with Swedish teachers of religion identifying particularly strongly with this neutral stance wherein Christianity is not privileged over other religions, Danish schools more explicitly prioritise Christianity and only teach about Islam in a limited way.

It is noteworthy that research shows that, despite these large differences and the intention to provide neutral teaching of religion in Swedish and Norwegian schools, the teaching and textbooks in all three school systems tend to treat Christianity as the norm and Islam and Muslims as the problematic other. Resting on the twin pillars of an understanding of religion as archaic, and negative media images of Islam, Muslims are portrayed as more religious and tied by religious rules and more prone to dogmatism and radicalism than Christians, who are often portrayed as free-minded, 'cultural Christians'. Research from Norway and Sweden thus reports that Muslim pupils find the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the religious education syllabus stigmatising.

Interestingly, both Sweden and Denmark provide opportunities for Muslim parents to organise their own schools and, thus, the education of their children, which has facilitated the teaching of Islam in a more confessional manner. In Denmark, the possibility to establish Muslim schools is a consequence of parents' constitutional right, established in 1849, to organise the teaching of their own children, which cannot be denied to Muslim parents. In contrast, when Sweden amended the Education Act in 1992 to ease the establishment of independent schools, it was well-known that religious communities could make use of this possibility. Nonetheless, the main public debate in Sweden on Muslim schools relates to the potential lack of integration, and likewise in Denmark, where the schools have been seen to challenge the integration of Muslim children and thus the social and cultural cohesion of Danish society. The arguments against establishing Muslim schools in Norway reflect the same concern that Muslim schools will be a threat to the integration of Muslim children. In the Danish context, a central concern has been that this teaching will foster radical Islamism, and this has led to an increased surveillance of the teaching and funding of the schools and, as a consequence, the closure of two of them.

In all three countries, Muslims come together in a range of different types of organisations, often mosques, and often along ethnic lines; however, umbrella organisations gather together the different Muslim groups and associations, with the primary intent of presenting a collective voice to the state and the media. There are two such umbrella organisations in Norway, three in Denmark, and seven in Sweden, indicating both a difference in

numbers of Muslims living in the countries, and also the internal diversity among Muslims. The organisations are eligible for public funding in all three countries – although only for their cultural activities in Denmark – which gives the authorities a way to monitor and regulate their practices. Comparing this to how the three states act towards Muslim schools, the Muslim organizations and mosques in Sweden and Denmark are also affected by the overall national self-understanding in these countries; that is the neutral/open, but increasingly controlling approach in Sweden and the controlling stance in Denmark. In Norway, the situation is more complex. Whereas Norway has a not-approving stance to Muslim schools, which is in stark contrast to the idea of a "lifestance open society", the situation is different for Muslim organisations and mosques. As there are no Muslim schools in Norway, mosques have developed into both spaces for worship and socialisation, and also important educational institutions and facilitators for communication with Norwegian society more broadly (Stokke Nielsen 2010; Stene 2020; Eggen 2023). This development can be seen as a result of the needs of the Muslim community in the country, but it is also relevant to see this development through the lens of lifestance open society, which is official state policy towards faith and life stance communities and the recognition of these as important and significant community builders (Staalset 2023). Further research and comparison of how state policies in the three countries envision and influence the ways Muslims organise religious education is of importance in understanding the role of Islamic education for Muslims in Scandinavia.

In this introduction we have provided context and also pointed out similarities and differences that are of importance for further understanding the articles. As we see it, putting Denmark, Norway, and Sweden side by side, in some sense comparing them, opens up interesting perspectives and insights that would not be visible with a focus on only one country. The challenge of drawing such comparisons is complicated by the fact that each country, despite considerable common history, has its own unique historical, cultural, social, and educational background and national self-understanding, all of which can create significant differences in their approaches. This notwithstanding, working comparatively across national borders can enable us to see the need for new national research, since it provides an opportunity to make visible how a national context,

i.e. national laws and norms, shape a specific issue. We hope that this introduction will have this function.

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Maria Lindebæk Lyngsøe

Sharing and Caring

Muslim Women Teaching Islam in Denmark

English abstract Muslim women dedicate themselves to Islamic educational activities as an important aspect of their religious engagement, and pious Muslim Danish women are no exception. One important element of this engagement appears to be the sharing of the knowledge gained with younger generations. In this paper, I scrutinize this aspect of contemporary Danish Muslim piety, asking how and why Danish Muslim women 'pass on' knowledge to children. I show that this transmission should be seen as a way of caring for the children as part of the Muslim community, and that this way of caring appears especially important in a setting where Islam is practiced as a minority religion. At the same time, the sharing of knowledge should be perceived as a virtuous practice, given that it is an aspect of the women's own efforts to live virtuous lives.

1 The Qur'an is recited as an Arabic text on a large number of occasions, and the recitation forms an important part of pious Muslim everyday and ritual life (see e.g. Nelson 1985; Gade 2004; 2021). For example, smaller parts of the Arabic Qur'an are recited during the *salat* prayers that observing Muslims commonly perform five times daily. To recite the Qur'an, one needs, first of all, to be able to pronounce the classical Arabic of the text. Furthermore, the recitation follows distinct rules, a kind of grammar. Muslims worldwide learn Qur'anic recitation in their homes, but it also forms a core in formalized Islamic education (Leemhuis 2006).

'As a parent, you are obliged to pass on what you know. But it is also your duty to learn more to be able to teach more.' These words were uttered by Wafiqa, a 23-year-old university student and student of Qur'anic recitation in a Copenhagen mosque, when I interviewed her in the spring of 2019.[1] As the quote shows, for Wafiqa learning was intertwined with teaching or sharing knowledge, and, while she was not yet a mother herself, she clearly had specific anticipations about her own motherhood and ideas about childrearing. Most of the women I talked to during my exploration of Danish Muslim women's engagement in Islamic educational activities made this same link between learning and sharing knowledge, especially highlighting the aspect of being a parent as a key motivation for their own search for knowledge on Islam, and as part of their engagement with Islamic knowledge.

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In this article, I address the role that educating children in Islamic subjects and ethics plays for Danish Muslim women who are actively involved as students and voluntary teachers in Islamic education. Education is central to religious communities but, as has been noted, the religious education of future generations might be especially important to religious minority communities like that of Muslims in Denmark (Levitt, Barnett, and Khalil 2011; Pedersen 2014). This article scrutinizes how pious Muslim women reflect on this situation and their own roles as 'transmitters' of Islamic knowledge. Departing from the link between the search *for* knowledge and the sharing *of* knowledge that was exemplified in Wafiqa's words, the article asks how and why the upbringing of future generations of Muslims motivates women to educate themselves in Islamic subjects, ethics, and a Muslim way of life; what it means for the women as pious Muslims to share knowledge with future generations; and how this sharing takes place.

Throughout the article, I describe the women among whom I carried out research as being 'pious', thereby emphasizing that these women described Islam as a framework for their lives and noted that they strove to retain Islam, and ultimately God, as a guiding factor or horizon (Mittermaier 2021) in their lives. Importantly, I do not perceive piety as a state but rather as an ongoing orientation towards a religious realm that processually forms the women as subjects (see also Lyngsøe and Stjernholm 2022). In her influential research on women engaged in the Egyptian mosque movement, this understanding of piety as a processual orientation of everyday life rather than a fixed state has also been promoted by Saba Mahmood (2012 [2005]). Here, Mahmood has shown that Muslim women endeavour to form themselves as pious subjects through 'disciplinary techniques' of bodily *self*-cultivation, a notion that has proven very useful to studies on Muslim women's religiosity. Mahmood's work has been a key inspiration for literature on Muslim women, and piety has been an important analytical term within this literature (e.g. Minganti 2007; Jacobsen 2011b; Hocke 2014; Jouili 2015; Groeninck 2017), one that emphasizes how women engage in 'practices of self-cultivation' (Jouili 2015, 15) to live pious lives.

The Islamic knowledge engagement of women practicing a pious lifestyle is often highlighted by this literature, and the link between piety and educational efforts forms an important strand in a number of studies (e.g. Mahmood 2012; Jouili 2008; Inge

2017; Giulia Liberatore 2017; Groeninck 2017; Noor 2017; Bano 2017; Mateo 2019). In such works, it is generally acknowledged that Islamic education is an important aspect of modern Muslim women's striving for and practice of piety, and it appears that Muslim women seek Islamic education to find relevant answers to questions arising in their everyday lives in the Scandinavian context as well (Minganti 2007, e.g.; Lyngsøe 2018; Liebmann and Galal 2020; Eriksen 2020), as is the case for the Danish Muslim women in this study.

My description of the women in this article as pious relates to and relies on the literature mentioned. While my understanding of piety as a continuous and processual formation of the self through an orientation towards Islam takes great inspiration from this literature, I also wish to add to this line of research by placing greater emphasis on the relational aspects of piety formation. Thus, I argue that by not only examining the knowledge search of individuals but also the sharing of knowledge, it becomes evident that piety is also formed through and influenced by the various relational bonds of individuals, and that piety, then, in a sense, is also formed collectively.

I build this argument throughout the article. After introducing the methods and materials used, I describe the analytical framework of the study and its argument. I then move on to highlight specific women from my sample to analyse their perceptions and practices of knowledge sharing, both in domestic and institutional settings. Finally, the significance of the Danish context is considered before I finish with concluding remarks.

Methods and Materials

To answer the questions above, I rely on material collected via fieldwork conducted between April 2019 and July 2021 among Danish Muslim women engaged in Islamic educational activities. This consisted, firstly, of participant observation of a variety of Islamic educational activities in Greater Copenhagen, secondly, of interviews with twenty-five women engaged in Islamic educational activities as students or teachers, and thirdly, of analysis of logbooks kept by four such women.

The activities in which I conducted participant observation ranged from highly structured weekly Qur'an recitation classes,

across occasional thematic seminars, to private study groups, both in online as well as in-person meetings. 'Observation', says Tim Ingold, 'is a way of participating attentively' (2017, 23), and there is no contradiction between observing and participating; there are, however, different ways of engaging, and in my fieldwork I made the effort to walk what Jessica Moberg calls 'the tightrope' between the two (2013, 64). I always considered the specific context and made sure to remain authentic and clear about my purpose and intentions when participating, while at the same time remaining respectful to teachers and participants by keeping a low profile and, for example, not intervening with questions. Most of the activities in which I participated took place in two specific mosque communities which were selected for further scrutiny, both representing Sunni Islam and both with a well-developed milieu for educational activities in a Danish context.[2] These were also the places where I met the majority of my interlocutors, through whom I became involved in activities outside of the two mosques, both in other institutions and in private settings.

I also conducted interviews with twenty-five women whom I met during participant observation or were introduced to by other women. As such, a 'snowball approach' guided my selection of interlocutors and secured a 'bottom-up approach' to the field. Interviews were structured around prepared questions, but my aim was always to remain open to my interlocutors and to 'question beyond the immediate concerns of the research questions' (Forsey 2010, 567–68). This meant that the women's own narratives and reflections also guided the flow and themes of our conversations.

Of the women I interviewed, the youngest was twenty-two and the oldest sixty-seven at the time of our interview, and all were involved in Islamic educational activities as teachers or students or both. As such, these women were all dedicated to Islam in a specific way that does not reflect the practice and dedication of Muslims at large or of Muslim women in Denmark. Their practices do, however, represent a tendency found both in Europe and in Muslim-majority countries among dedicated Muslim women to prioritize intellectual engagements with Islam (see e.g. Jouili 2008; Bano 2017; Guilia Liberatore 2017; Eriksen 2020) – a tendency that my research suggests is also influential in Denmark (Lyngsøe 2022; see also Jensen 2022). The amount of time that the women dedicated to Islamic educational

2 In Denmark, no official Islamic education exists, and Islamic educational offerings are run by local associations or groups such as mosques without state funding (Simonsen and Daun 2018, 846; Kühle and Larsen 2019, 99–100; Mikkelsen 2019, 174).

activities and the kind of activities in which they were involved differed among them. Some spent more than ten hours weekly studying, while others found the time to study once a week. Their national backgrounds differed as well. Most were children of immigrant parents who came to Denmark from Muslim-majority countries as immigrants or refugees, and these women were therefore raised in Muslim families, although the prominence of the role Islam and education in Islam had played during their childhood years varied. In my sample, I also have a few representatives of first-generation immigrants to Denmark who grew up as Muslim in Muslim majority-societies but migrated to Denmark as adults. Finally, a few of my interlocutors were converts to Islam and consequently grew up in non-Muslim families (though not necessarily non-religious).

Guiding my selection of interlocutors was that educational activities in different ways were central to their religious engagements and their wishes to live pious lives. However, the women's different backgrounds do appear to influence practices quite strongly and are highlighted when relevant to the analysis. This is also valid with regard to what we may call the secular educational background of the women, that is, their education in public, civic institutions, as well as their relation to the Danish labour market. Here, as well, the women differed; while the formal education of some of the first-generation immigrants among my interlocutors had been brief, most were well-educated women with college or university degrees from Danish public educational institutions and were, for example, teachers, social workers, or medical doctors.[3]

In addition to interviews and observation, my research relies on logbooks that four women kept for two separate weeks separated by around a month in which I requested them to note all their Islamic educational activities. While the interviews worked to give me an impression of the life stories of the women, with special attention to their involvement in Islam and Islamic education, the logbooks ensured that I got a more detailed picture of the women's daily activities connected with studying and disseminating Islamic knowledge. As a method that can follow the women more closely in their everyday life, logbooks were very useful for getting an insight into the little everyday practices of the women (Ammerman 2013, 17; Page and Yip 2017, 8). Together, the three main methods employed – participant observation, interviews, and logbooks – provided me with

3   What I refer to here as 'college degrees' are what in Danish terminology would be called '*mellemlang videregående uddannelse*'. What I refer to as 'university degrees' are in Danish terminology called '*lang videregående uddannelse*'.

broadly based material for understanding how and why Danish Muslim women engage in Islamic education, including what it means for them to share knowledge.

While conducting fieldwork, I decided to keep the identity of all interlocutors confidential, and to ensure this, I had also to anonymize institutions such as mosques. Consequently, the names of all interlocutors and institutions in this article are pseudonyms. I made the choice of confidentiality to secure my interlocutors' safety and their sense of being able to talk and act freely. In addition, it made it easier to gain access to both places and people's narratives. Informed consent was retrieved from all interviewees, and in the case of observation of classes, the teachers consented to my participation as a researcher on behalf of the students. In addition, I always presented myself to students in classes, and maintaining clarity about my intentions and purpose guided my participation.

Analytical Framework

As noted above, a number of studies have pointed out the centrality of engagement with Islamic knowledge for Muslim women who wish to cultivate their piety. In this study, I am interested in investigating the 'intrinsic link between knowledge and faith' (Jouili 2015, 41) by highlighting the pious efforts of the women. Piety formation is key to my analytical approach and, as noted, I wish to highlight the relational aspects of this formation. I do so by looking specifically at the intergenerational knowledge-sharing practices of my interlocutors, and motherhood thus becomes a key theme.

Motherhood forms an important part of the religious identity and social role of Muslim women around the globe, and Muslim mothers are responsible for multiple facets of education in the lives of their children, including 'educating their children in the extensive knowledge and religious practice that form part of Muslim identity' (Pappano and Olwan 2016, 5, 8). Despite its evident importance, the role of motherhood has seldom been investigated in the scholarship on Islamic knowledge dissemination or Muslim women's teaching. Since research on teaching and education tends to focus on institutional settings, the everyday practice of bringing up children is generally overlooked, although it is touched upon briefly in a few studies

addressing Muslim women's search for knowledge. For example, Sahar Noor (2017, 180) notes that one important reason why the Dutch Muslim women in her study increased their knowledge of Islam was their wish 'to raise their children in an Islamic fashion' and thus contribute to the cultivation of 'a new generation of pious Muslims imbued with Islamic knowledge' (see also Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003, 64–66; Jouili and Amir-Moazami 2006, 622–23). Jeanette Jouili (2015, 129) concludes that generally '[t]he link between education and maternity is an important trope in contemporary Islamic discourse' (see also Jacobsen 2016; Liberatore 2019). Jouili links this tendency to 'the Islamic reform movement of the turn of the twentieth century' (2015, 129), which emphasizes the 'pivotal and "sacred" role of the educated woman in society' (2015, 130). Based on research from Britain, Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor (2016, 26) likewise argues that that '[m]otherhood has become one of the many fronts on which young Muslim women are reclaiming their faith' in contemporary Europe. Research on Muslim motherhood in a Danish setting is scarce, but Marianne Holm Pedersen's studies (2009, 2013, 2014) show that Islamic rituals, knowledge, and ethics play important roles in domestic life, including childrearing practices, among Muslims of Iraqi background in Denmark. And in Sara Jul Jakobsen's research on notions of women in Danish online jihadi Salafism, she also finds that motherhood forms a fundamental trope.[4]

The role of motherhood in the knowledge and education practices of Danish or, more broadly, Scandinavian Muslim women has, however, not been addressed in the literature. By linking the aspect of searching for knowledge with that of sharing it for the benefit of future generations, this article provides new insights into the field of Scandinavian Muslim women's engagement in Islamic education and the role of religious education more broadly. While this is not a study of religious childhood experiences, it touches upon what a religious childhood is or might look like, although it does so through the lenses of mothers who reflect on their experiences and choices concerning this. Consequently, we might call this study an 'anthropology of parenthood', as Pedersen has suggested (2009, 165),[5] as it looks 'beyond official religious teaching to the everyday…practices' of teaching religion (Strhan, Parker, and Redgely 2017, 3). However, as we will see, the upbringing and teaching of children is not a de-institutionalized practice; I

4   In a recent study, Jeppe Schmidt Grüner (2020, 244) has demonstrated how Danish Muslim men conceptualize and practice fatherhood as part of their religious aspiration, meaning that caring for children becomes a kind of work that connects fathers not only to their children but also to the divine (see also Lyngsøe 2022, Chap. 6).

5   In her study, Pedersen focuses on the transmission and production of religious knowledge in Muslim families of immigrant background in Denmark, but does not look at these practices as an aspect of pious women's engagement with knowledge.

argue that there is a need to centre the work that women do in *multiple* settings and spheres in bringing up future generations to understand what it means to be a pious Muslim woman in Denmark, and what it means to engage in Islamic education as part of this work. As Muslim mothers are rarely portrayed, and even more rarely allotted speaking roles in dominant media representations (they are perhaps more noticeable by their absence than by their presence [Pappano and Olwan 2016]), such attention appears all the more important.

In anthropological studies on family relations, including those on parenting or mothering, care is often highlighted as a key term. I have also found the notion of care to be interesting when investigating the meaning of the work undertaken by the women in this study in the course of educating children in an Islamic fashion, and the ways they think about and conceptualize this work. Approaching an understanding of care, I take inspiration from Sara Ruddick's (1999) reflections on the virtue of care as something relational. Ruddick builds these reflections and her conceptualization upon research of aging and what it means to be elderly, finding that an 'individualistic account of virtue seems conceptually inadequate to represent the moral efforts of elderly people' (1999, 51). Instead, she argues that 'virtue is in the first instance created between and among people; that it is, therefore, inseparable from relationships' (1999, 53). In the context of European Muslim piety, this might reflect what Jeannette Jouili suggests terming an 'ethics of intersubjectivity', where the 'ethical work is made out of feelings of responsibility, obligation, and care for others' (2015, 18).[6] While this might be true more generally, I find, like Ruddick, that it is especially relevant when considering inter-generational relations in the form of child rearing and the education of children. Based on Ruddick's reflections, it becomes possible to see women's engagement in such work as a form of care, but also as virtuous or pious activity that forms part of their own religiosity. In the women's reflections, the work of educating is related to that of care, but is further understood within the realm of the religious or what we might call the virtuous. In a similar vein, Maria Louw (2022, 74) has argued in her study of women in Kyrgyzstan who grow old in the absence of children with whom to form relations of care, that care is virtuous, and that caring allows one to be a more virtuous version of oneself. I found that this understanding sheds light on the material with which I am engaging as well.

6 Formulating this idea about ethics, Jouili relies on and refers to Aristotle's notion of *phronesis*, which she defines as doing the right thing in the right place, time, and way, so that it is 'right' not only for the individual but also for 'human flourishing' (Jouili 2015, 18).

Such an understanding of virtue as relationally built pushes further than Mahmood's Foucauldian notion of being virtuous, which, as previously noted, shows how Muslim women build themselves as pious subjects through bodily acts of self-cultivation. While this notion has proven very useful, is has also been criticised for establishing the individual as the central or even sole agent in ethical, including religious, work (e.g. Rozario 2011, 286; Mittermaier 2012, 251–52; Rytter 2016; Louw 2022, 64) it is not unusual in the contemporary Islamic world, both in Muslim-majority countries and in the diaspora, for young people to be much more 'Islamic' in behaviour, dress and lifestyle than their parents. As this may suggest, modernist Islamic piety is not infrequently directed by young people against their parents, as a mode of resistance to parental authority. However, wearing the hijab, becoming a follower of a Sufi shaykh, or marrying a 'good' Muslim spouse from another ethnic group to one's own, are different kinds of resistance from, for example, joining an inner-city youth gang, or rejecting one's parents' Asian cultural background for a more globalised identity. I discuss some of the ways in which Islamic piety can be deployed in resistance to parental authority through case studies from my Economic and Social Research Council-funded field research in Bangladesh and the UK, and consider in what ways these forms of behaviour resemble, and differ from, more familiar forms of resistance. Drawing on dream stories from a Sufi community in Egypt, this article probes the limits of the paradigm of self-cultivation which has come to be widely employed in the anthropology of Islam. While the concept of self-cultivation has complicated the equation of agency and resistance, its emphasis on intentionality and deliberate action obscures other modes of religiosity that centre neither on acting within nor on acting against but on being acted upon. Far from reaffirming a self-cultivating subject, narratives of visitational and divinely inspired dreams are profound reminders of the unpredictability of divine interventions and the contingency of life itself. Through an analysis of Egyptian dream narratives and in conversation with anthropological literatures on an ethics of passion, this article traces a relational understanding of subjectivity which poses an even more radical challenge to the liberal model of the autonomous self than do practices of self-cultivation. This article discusses the significance of growing large beards among the young Danish Pakistani members of a newly established

Naqshbandi Sufi order in Copenhagen, where the beard is not simply an imitation but a reflection of the Prophet Muhammad. Exploring emic understandings of emulation and embodiment, the article suggests that a conceptual displacement from imitation to reflection enables our analytical framework to move beyond the 'self-cultivation paradigm' that has dominated recent writings in the anthropology of Islam, so that it can accommodate the numerous ways in which devoted Sufis are being acted upon; a change from 'technology of self' to 'technology of Other' enables connections between this world and Elsewhere to be included in the analytical framework. The article further discusses how the beard is significant in the brotherhood's attempts at sacralization and world transformation based on nur (light, and a framework for religious virtue that moves beyond the common frame of self-cultivation has been called for.

Furthermore, the understanding of care as virtuous needs to be linked to and understood in relation to the specific context that the women inhabit and the position from which they seek and pass on Islamic knowledge. Their religious and national as well as educational backgrounds influence their positions, possibilities, and choices and are considered in this study. Here, the minority positionality of the Muslim women is inevitable, and in a Danish setting, being Muslim is also a matter of living with structural and discursive othering and discourses of suspicion about Islam more broadly (e.g. Khawaja 2011; Rytter and Pedersen 2013; Rytter 2019). Given the contextual setting of the women's daily practice as Muslims, it is relevant to investigate the role taken by the education of children as Muslims and how education as an act of care is made meaningful in this setting in particular.

Danish Muslim Women as Educators

Most of the women whom I talked to during my research explained that they shared their knowledge of Islam with others in some way or the other, and around half of them did explicit voluntary work as teachers, most commonly in mosques. A common motivation for the women to pass on their knowledge was what can be described as a care for one's community, whether this was understood as the nuclear family or the broader Muslim community in Greater Copenhagen or beyond. As educational

activities are important pillars in Islamic communities, including mosque communities, the teaching work that these women carry out as they introduce basic Islamic history to converts or teach the *fiqh* of fasting (*sawm*) practices – to give some examples from my sample – educating not only children but also other adult women, makes them important figures in local Danish Muslim communities. They formulate knowledge and carry out tasks that shape the paths of numerous other Muslim women and children, and without doubt should be described as important figures of authority in the Muslim communities that I have investigated. This is an important conclusion, and it relates to an often articulated interest in authority positions within the study of Islam, and among Muslim women especially (see e.g. Jonker 2003; Bano and Kalmbach 2012; Spielhaus and Hammer 2013; Ali 2021).

Without de-emphasizing the importance of this conclusion, I leave the discussion here in order to scrutinize the role of care in the teaching work more closely. The teaching of both adults and children was talked about and understood within the framework of care, although the vulnerability that childhood represents did appear to distinguish children's education. In this article, therefore, I focus on more specifically on the teaching practices that form part of the upbringing of children.

Approximately half my interlocutors were already mothers; some had recently had their first baby, while others had older or even adult children. Other women did not have children but imagined themselves as future mothers and had clear ideals of motherhood, as was the case for Wafiqa. Generally, the women were conscious of their role as (future) wives and mothers. Family values appeared important to most, and being a mother seemed to be closely linked to most women's notions of gender and womanhood, regardless of their national background. Gendered divisions of labour also influenced how the women saw themselves and performed in families as mothers. Almost all of them mentioned or hinted that child rearing and caring was a job for mothers and fathers equally, but even so, it also appeared from my conversations with the women that, in many ways, they took on the larger amount of this work, especially with smaller children. Furthermore, reflecting on their roles as (future) mothers, the women clearly found it to encompass the obligation to pass on Islamic knowledge and values, as Wafiqa observed by way of introduction. Many integrated Islamic values and practices into the rearing of their children from an early age

and had done so quite consciously. Among the women who were mothers, Islam played an important role in their reflections on motherhood and the way they educated their children. Thus, motherhood and the domestic sphere of family life is also an arena for Islamic education (see Pedersen 2017), and in this sphere as well, women play central roles in shaping the paths of others.

Motherhood as Virtuous Work: Building Islamic Foundations

The women with children generally explained that they wanted to give their children a basic introduction to Islam in regard to both what Mark Sedgwick (2014, 5) calls its more 'habitual' aspects – that is, Islamic practices such as prayer and fasting – and its more 'doctrinal' aspects, such as knowledge about God, the Prophet Muhammad, or ethics, although any sharp distinction between the two would be an error (Scourfield et al. 2017, 125). This found expression among the women across a range of different social and national backgrounds. However, as noted, most women were secularly well-educated with diplomas from or enrolment in Danish universities and colleges, and if they were not currently students, most were well-established in the labour market. This background appeared to shape their ideas and ideals of what good parenting and proper religious upbringing included. First of all, they expressed that they were generally inclined towards intellectual engagements with the world, and they wished to teach and pass on to their children this aspect of knowing and reflecting critically on matters. Second, with this educational background and cultural habitus, most women in my study were of 'middle class identity formation' (Liebmann and Galal 2020). It thus appears that the educational background of the women, as well as their connection to the labour market and their upbringing in Danish institutions, influenced their choices to invest energy in their children's Islamic education. Some women explained that their inclination towards academic approaches to Islam was influenced by their secular academic training at, for example, university, a link between educational background and academized approaches to one's religion pointed out in a number of studies (Bano 2017; Groeninck 2020; see also Gilliam 2022).

One of the highly educated women I encountered was the

29-year-old aspiring medical doctor, Samira, whom I came to know as a vivid and smiling teacher of a class for women converts. At our first interview, Samira was also the mother of a one-year-old, and she was one of the women with whom I discussed the Islamic upbringing of children. With such a small child, parenting life was still new to Samira and her husband, but when she and I talked about the role of Islam in their family life, it was very clear that they were 'intensively' engaged – to borrow from Gilliam (2022); they had reflected deeply on their daughter's education and discussed the role of religion in the upbringing of their baby girl extensively. As Samira said, '[My husband and I] definitely agree that she should have a Muslim upbringing. She should learn the religion, we will talk about God and the beliefs and the prophets and all those kinds of things. It's part of her heritage, and she should be taught that' (Interview, February 2020).

For women like Samira, this teaching would often be smoothly integrated into daily life and the general educating tasks of parenting. Samira explained further:

Already at this age [of our baby daughter], we are, for example, uttering the specific phrase of '*alhamdulillah*' when someone sneezes; we teach her that naturally. And we read the Qur'an to her when she falls asleep and wakes up.[7] And when we perform the [*salat*] prayer, we will hug her afterwards to make sure that she thinks of praying in positive terms instead of, like, 'if you don't pray you go to Hell' or something like that. We want her to have a close connection to [Islam] but it should come naturally. (Interview, February 2020).

The rest of the mothers among my interlocutors offered similar descriptions of their parenting work and the role Islam played in that. Islam was described as a special kind of 'foundation', as one woman expressed it, on which they build their own lives, and they also wanted their children to rely on and be familiar with it.

As parents, they had a special responsibility to teach their children to navigate life as a Muslim, the women explained quite unanimously. Therefore, motherhood was also in part motivating the women's own search for adequate and authentic knowledge. One of the women, who linked her own need for knowledge to the raising of children in an Islamic fashion, was Yasmin, a forty-five-year-old woman born in Denmark of Muslim parents of immigrant background who grew up in a religiously observant home. I got to know Yasmin when I was learning more about the

7 'Read' should here be understood as 'recite'.

educational activities for children in one of the mosques. Yasmin taught weekend classes, in which children were introduced to the Arabic language as well as to Islamic doctrines, to use Sedgwick's (2014) terminology, such as basic faith articles and Islamic ethics. Yasmin was also a professionally trained teacher, and when I participated in her classes, she came across as a skilful woman with a natural authority over the children and a dedication to their education. She was enthusiastic and positive when she taught, and she also expressed in our conversations that this voluntary teaching work, in which she had been active for thirteen years, was important to her and her religious engagement.

Yasmin was the mother of five children aged eight to 25, and obviously their Islamic education was important to her. The upbringing of children was therefore also a salient topic during my interview with her. She explained that she had prioritized what she called 'their heritage' in the education of her own children, which included their religion (Interview, January 2020). She had ensured that her children obtained Arabic skills, both through the teaching they received at mosques and at school, and by practicing at home where Yasmin and her husband insisted on Arabic as the common language. Yasmin told me that she had also taught her children about 'the prophets and read stories' as well as ''aqida and sunna' (Interview, January 2020).[8]

Women like Yasmin and Samira said that they felt obligated to build an Islamic foundation for their children, and that, therefore, they had to be knowledgeable about Islamic practices, doctrines, and ethics themselves. Thus, their own striving for knowledge was a way to ensure both their children's religious path and also to build themselves as good mothers who included Islamic education in their caring relations with their children. This relation between the women and their children clearly influenced their ideas about what it means to be a pious Muslim, and the kind of efforts and practice required. This is what makes Ruddick's suggestion that virtue is relationally built so interesting. The reflections of women like Yasmin show that notions about being a good Muslim and living up to the ideals of Islamic life do not centre only on the individual. Rather, they also develop out of an embeddedness in social relationality with other Muslims to whom one shows signs of care, for example, by passing on knowledge. These caring efforts that 'make life easier'

8 ʿAqīda can be translated as 'creed' and 'refers both to the fundamental doctrines of Islam and to texts specifying these doctrines' (Hoover 2014). Apart from *shahāda*, the confession of faith, there is no one commonly accepted creed. The Qur'an and hadiths form the basic framework for the formulation of such visions, even if neither contain any formal creed (Hoover 2014).

for other people, as one woman formulated it, were integral to what the women thought of as Muslim life, and they were especially articulated and practiced in intergenerational relations with younger Muslims such as one's children.

Clearly, for women like Yasmin and Samira, this way of caring for their children was also an aspect of their own virtuous lifestyle, or their efforts to live a life with an Islamic horizon. Consequently, I would argue that the mothering practices were part of their individual pious efforts. In Louw's investigations of aging in Kyrgysztan in the absence of children (mentioned above), she likewise emphasizes virtues that 'are relationally constituted through acts of care which bring together persons in moral worlds' (2022, 75). And care, she thus proposes, 'always comes with a "world"; a world which is a moral world in the sense that it comes with a larger context or horizon of meaning' (Louw 2022, 68; see also Robbins 2013). I suggest that the work that Danish Muslim women do when they share knowledge, often in intergenerational relations, can be perceived along the lines that Louw describes. The caring efforts of sharing knowledge that women like Yasmin highlighted, especially in relation to their own children, were built into or formed part of an ethical horizon with specific meaning, a moral world. In this moral world, the women appeared to find themselves embedded in a relationality with the future generation of Muslims for whose religiosity they were responsible. Taking on this responsibility was at the same time part of their own building of themselves as virtuous subjects.

Building Islamic Foundations in the Danish Context

In a country like Denmark where Islam is practiced as a minority religion, 'religious socialization takes place either in isolation from the broader society or even in contradiction to it' (Sedgwick 2014, 7). When Yasmin told me about her wish to educate her children in an Islamic way she emphasized the significance of the Danish context and the children's need for Islamic knowledge. She told me that she had experienced that life in an otherwise Christian society made it especially important that Islam was given space in the domestic setting, and that she was able to answer the questions concerning religion and heritage that her children raised.[9] Similar notions were commonly articulated by my interlocutors who felt that the minority position made the

9 The vast majority, 74%, of the Danish population, are members of the Danish National Church (*Folkekirken*). The church is integrated constitutionally with the state and more broadly in societal structures (Christoffersen 2012; Poulsen et al. 2021, 23). The Lutheran Christianity that the church represents is influential on most levels of Danish society and the lives of people living here.

Islamic foundation even more important to emphasize as part of the upbringing (see also Haga 2014).

The women in my sample generally explained that in their own lives they had been confronted with a lot of questioning concerning their Muslim identity. This could sometimes be in the form of curious questions about, for example, specific visible practices such as veiling and fasting, but most interlocutors also had experiences of being met with negative prejudice concerning their religiosity, either in their immediate relations with people around them, or from public discourses and media coverage of Islam and Muslim life. This reflects the findings in numerous studies on Islam, both in Denmark and Europe, which conclude that public debates commonly frame Muslims within a discourse of securitization and othering (e.g. Rytter and Pedersen 2011; Jouili 2015; Guilia Liberatore 2017; Rytter 2019; Trulsson 2020). To these women, practicing as a Muslim in a context of certain 'constraints' (Jouili 2015) made the Islamic foundation especially important, which is one reason why they emphasized it in the upbringing of their children, often asserting that Islam is a universal religion which may be practiced meaningfully anywhere and at any time, including in a Danish context. At the same time, they experienced that bringing up children in Denmark did make the domestic education and a general emphasis on Islam especially important (see also Pedersen 2017, 132; Scourfield et al. 2017, 126–27). This is not to imply that they were disseminating an unchangeable religious identity or beliefs; as Pedersen notes, 'the transmission of religion' also shows us 'how religious practice and interpretation necessarily undergo change over time' (2017, 132). Obviously, this would also be the case in the contexts I describe and, interestingly, the women themselves stressed the importance of staying open to society and of being knowledgeable about the Danish context when it came to teaching Islam to children and rearing them in an Islamic fashion.

One interlocutor who was extensively invested in the Islamic education of children was the sixty-seven-year-old Zainab. Warm and smiling and with a noticeable calmness in her attitude, Zainab was engaged in a number of teaching activities in the same mosque as Yasmin, and here she also took part in the development of children's educational activities. Privately, Zainab was the mother of six now grown-up children, in whose Islamic

education she had been intensely involved. Furthermore, Zainab was an often-used informal counsellor for families experiencing issues of some kind, including issues with their children, and youngsters. Based on her long and extensive engagement in the education of children, Zainab had given the subject a lot of consideration. In general, she said that she found that teaching Islam to others was her call in life – she used the Arabic term *da'wa* – an obligation based on her own extensive knowledge of Islam. In talking about this obligation, she was highlighting the relational aspect of Muslim life, the intrinsic link between a religious orientation, being virtuous, and engagement in the religious path and growth of others (cf. Ruddick 1999; Louw 2022). From her narrative, as well as her practical engagement, it appeared that Zainab found the Islamic education of Muslim children in Denmark especially vital, while emphasizing the importance of staying open to the surrounding society and not being afraid of meeting prejudice or being an outsider. But she also noted that for her, being knowledgeable and thus secure in Islam was a precondition for such openness. In our interview, she explained it as follows:

I discovered, *subhanallah*, that when people don't have knowledge, especially about Islam, they are very scared to get lost in society. … My children are brought up here, and they are good Muslims, they live normal lives, and they know how to deal with Danish society. … So I mean, all my children *alhamdulillah*, they [participate] in society like normal people. But they have happiness here because they know that this inside [*putting her hand to her heart*], the real happiness, is for us to really know God: who is he, what does he want from us. Those who complain to me that they are afraid their children will be lost, I say the more we don't have a good understanding of our religion, the more easily we can be afraid to lose our identity. … So that's why I say when I am Muslim, I know how not to be afraid, to use it to protect myself, but at the same time I am open. (Interview, January 2020).

As Zainab expressed it, Muslim children needed the 'security' of the Islamic foundation to navigate life in a Danish context, and this security was based on the knowledge that the older generation, such as mothers, could and should provide. Taking care of the Islamic education of one's children – and perhaps also the children of the broader community – was thus presented as a key element in nurturing the children's capacity to thrive

and feel confident in themselves. In that way, the caring aspect of children's education extends what we could call the religious sphere to concern their well-being as such, and this becomes accentuated in a minority context like Denmark (see also Pedersen 2014).

Zainab's reflections further suggest that it is not adequate to conclude that the minority positionality of the women in terms of religious identification will always hamper or disrupt ethical or religious life. While the 'complicated and restrictive settings produce experiences of ambiguity, suffering, and injustice', they also create 'conditions for the intensification of ethical labour' (Jouili 2015, 4), such as the teaching work carried out by Zainab. This intensification appears to make the women understand their own religious engagement in specific terms, giving significance to their search for knowledge because this search is linked to the sharing of knowledge and, therefore, the caring for their communities. This clearly indicates the need to allow virtue to be considered in terms of relationality, as Ruddick suggests. Indeed, Zainab understood her own commitment to a virtuous life as playing out in and affecting her relationality to people around her. She was committed to the teaching of many of these, including both her own children and those of the Muslim community to which she belonged. Zainab's example makes it clear that women engage in the work of bringing up children in an Islamic fashion across a variety of settings, and that such work is also a virtuous act through which they build themselves as pious Muslims. 'Paying Islam forward' in this way was described by Zainab as well as most other women I talked to as core to Islamic doctrines, and an integral part of Muslim life. Across generational and other differences, almost all my interlocutors conveyed that knowledge of Islam is meant to be shared for the benefit of others, and this basic understanding shaped their educational approaches and engagements.

Conclusions

Muslim women seek knowledge in order to get answers to the questions that arise in their everyday lives and to strengthen their relations to Islam, to God, and to fellow Muslims. This is also the case for Danish Muslim women who seek to live pious lives. In this study, I have shown that one of the things motivating

such women to become knowledgeable about their religion is their wish to educate future generations and, most importantly, their own children, in an Islamic fashion. They express a sense of obligation with regard to this task because they themselves have the resources to obtain knowledge, and because they perceive themselves as embedded in a broader moral community wherein virtue is also built through acts of care and commitment to others. Thus, the sharing of knowledge both builds the foundation for future Muslims and comprises part of the foundation of their own piety. The sharing of knowledge with future generations takes place in domestic settings where women share Islam with their children as a natural part of their more general education. But the care for future generations is also performed in more institutionalized settings, such as mosque educational offerings, where women take care of the Islamic schooling of children from the broader community. In both the domestic and institutionalized settings, the women underline the importance of the Danish context in which Islam is practiced as a minority religion. This, they claim, makes it especially important to imbue Muslim children with an Islamic foundation.

To understand what seeking and having knowledge means to Danish Muslim women, I have argued that we should move beyond thinking about the educational engagement as a merely individualized practice that builds selves. By looking into the ways in which the women think about knowledge as something that they pass on to future generations, I have shown that knowledge engagement is a practice that also builds communities, as well as selves as *part of* communities. This adds new dimensions to the anthropological study of Islam, which has been dominated by the framework of pious *self* cultivation and a focus on interiority, an approach introduced by Mahmood in particular (2012; also see e.g. Hirschkind 2006; Hocke 2014). With inspiration from Ruddick's (1999) notion of care as relational, this article has addressed a growing wish within the scholarship on Islam to broaden the scope from piety as something that individuals cultivate to something that is (also) nurtured along relational lines (Mittermaier 2019; Alkorani 2021; Louw 2022). Looking at my interlocutors' work through the lens of an ethics of care, the importance of trans-generational relations became apparent, and virtue could be seen as relationally embedded. Moreover, the significance of these relations does not only have to do with matters of discontinuity, which has been broadly

highlighted in literature on Muslim youth (e.g. Jacobsen 2011a; Giulia Liberatore 2016; Eriksen 2020); rather, the aspect of passing on, of maintaining a foundation for life and certain values in life was emphasized by women who were mothers or expected to become mothers, as well as those who taught children in more formal settings. This work of 'passing on' knowledge, including religious skills such as language, appeared an important way for the women themselves to stay virtuous. Through an understanding of care as virtue, I have presented a perspective on contemporary Muslim life that views individual Muslims and Muslim piety as relationally embedded.

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Synnøve Markeng

Temasektion

Teaching about the Qur'ān in public schools in Norway

Keywords: The Qur'ān , RE-teachers, Qur'ān recitation, James Watts, public schools, Norway, KRLE

Abstract This article discusses what teachers in Norwegian public schools have to say about teaching their pupils about the Qur'ān. Exploring what teachers find important or challenging is relevant to what both Muslim and non-Muslim pupils learn about the Qur'ān, since religious education (RE) in Norway is non-confessional and compulsory. The empirical material consists of four semi-structured interviews with RE teachers. Following James Watts' model (2013, 2019), which suggests that religious scripture is ritualized along three dimensions, this study finds that the interviewed teachers emphasize working with content and meaning (the semantic dimension) rather than recitation (the expressive dimension) or any special treatment (the iconic dimension) of the Qur'ān. Another finding is that the teachers are reluctant to address Qur'ān recitations in their classes. The article examines this uncertainty in relation to the teachers' perceptions of what pupils should learn about religious scriptures in general, pedagogical considerations about how to teach RE, and overarching RE-specific aims and concerns in relation to debates about Muslims and Islam in Norwegian society.

There has been increasing interest in Europe in what is being taught about Islam in public schools (Franken and Gent 2021; Toft 2017). In the Norwegian context, religious education (RE)[1] lessons about Islam also include teaching about the Qur'ān; however, we know little about the challenges that teachers encounter when doing so. This article is based on interviews with four teachers (with non-Muslim backgrounds), part of a larger research project on teaching religious scriptures in educational settings in Norway. The focus of the interviews was teachers' understanding of religious scriptures, as well as what they found important or challenging when working with them.

1 I use "religious education" (RE) as a generic term to refer to teaching about both religions and non-religious life philosophies.

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The interviewed teachers expressed the view that teaching about the Bible and teaching about the Qur'ān should be similar in terms of narrative content, religious interpretation, and historical context. When I suggested Qur'ān recitation as a potential topic for RE, they appeared uncertain about its relevance and how they could implement it in their lessons. In this article, Qur'ān recitation thus functions as a "test case" to prompt discussion of the ideas and concerns teachers have on topics related to teaching their pupils about the Qur'ān, conceptualized as "teacher perceptions". This is derived from Fives and Buehl's (2012) concept, "teacher beliefs", which is widely used in educational research to highlight taken-for-granted aspects of teachers' practice, interpret why teachers do what they do, and explore what they think about specific aspects of their work[2]. Through this lens, we can better understand the challenges teachers encounter when the Qur'ān and Qur'ān recitation is brought into the RE framework. Thus, the question discussed in this article may be framed as the following: which "teacher perceptions" influence RE teachers' concerns and reflections on teaching about the Qur'ān?

In terms of theory, I approach scripture as something people *do*, applying James Watts's (2019) framework, which helps describe how religious people ritualize scripture along different dimensions;[3] however, when applied in the RE context, the question is not about the dimensions ritualized by teachers, but those found to be relevant in their lessons. The next three sections situate the study within the Norwegian context and recent RE research, followed by an outline of the study's method and approaches to the material. The results are then presented in a three-fold structure: teacher perceptions of religious scripture, of pedagogical concerns, and, finally, of RE-specific aims and concerns. The findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research.

KRLE: A mandatory, critical, and pluralistic RE subject

In Norway, RE is titled "Christianity, religion, worldviews, and ethics" (KRLE), a compulsory, non-confessional subject in primary school, which includes all pupils from the start of first grade to the end of lower-secondary education in tenth grade.

2   I use "teacher perceptions" instead of "beliefs" to avoid conflation with religious beliefs. Although ideas about religion drawn from personal experience can impact teacher perceptions, this was not the focus of the interviews.

3   This is in line with the tradition of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, in which "scripture is a human activity" (1993, 18).

In KRLE, pupils are taught about various religious traditions and worldviews, including Islam and the religious scriptures of Islam. The Education Act declares that lessons in KRLE "[…] must present different world religions and philosophies of life in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner".[4] This means that the teacher should under no circumstance evangelize or nurture pupils into a religious conviction; indeed, secularization and pluralization in Norwegian society have made Norwegian RE a much-debated subject for the last 25 years. Consequently, teacher training programs offer courses in RE equal to a minimum 30 or 60 credits, presenting multiple religions, various topics, and didactical reflections on teaching within the current curricular framework. RE teacher training courses cover pupils' rights to partial exemption from the subject and how to plan lessons so that pupils do not need to invoke it,[5] and also encompass the scriptures of various religious traditions, including Islam.

The Norwegian RE curriculum is organized according to competence aims that outline what should be covered by completion of fourth, seventh, and tenth grades. Different religious narratives and scriptures have been mentioned in the curriculum in the last 25 years, following decades in which pupils were only taught about the Bible and Christianity. With the introduction of a new, mandatory RE subject in 1997, the content of its curriculum prior to fifth grade was described in detail. For example, pupils should learn about "stories from the life of Muhammed (i.e., the birth of the Prophet, his childhood, the night journey, the revelation of the Qur'ān, the escape from Mecca to Medina, and his life in Medina)" (Kirke, undervisnings- og forskningsdepartementet 1996, my translation). In the curriculum from 2006, a comparable aim was that pupils should be able to "describe the Prophet Muhammed's life, the revelation of the Qur'ān, and the content of central parts of the Qur'ān" (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2015, my translation). However, when it was updated in 2020, the competence aims were reduced in number and made more open-ended for primary school, which has arguably made the extent to which religious scriptures should be included in classroom teaching vaguer than in the 2006 curriculum. There is no mention of any specific scripture or narratives, although pupils are expected to be able to "talk about and present central stories and beliefs" from Eastern and Western religious traditions after grade four

4 This formulation was added in 2007 when the European Court of Human Rights reached the verdict that the subject had violated parents' freedom to ensure their children an education in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions (Lied 2009, 263). For further readings about this case, see Lied (2009) or von der Lippe (2018).

5 The Education Act section 2-3a: 'Following written notification by parents, pupils must be exempted from attending those parts of the teaching at the individual school that they, on the basis of their own religion or own philosophy of life, perceive as being the practice of another religion or adherence to another philosophy of life, or that they on the same basis find objectionable or offensive. […] Exemption cannot be demanded from instruction in the academic content of the various topics of the curriculum" (Opplæringslova 1998)

(Utdanningsdirektoratet 2020, my translation). In the next sections, I discuss what might be taught about the Qur'ān in RE, based on previous research, and whether Qur'ān recitation should be a part of the lessons.

What do pupils learn about the Qur'ān in RE?

Previous research on religious scriptures in the Norwegian classroom has focused on how teachers and pupils interpret and use these texts, emphasizing the Bible (Hartvigsen and Tørresen 2020; Kjørven 2016). However, recent contributions have provided new insights into the discussion of *what* pupils learn about religious scriptures and *why* they learn these things. For instance, Flø and Mogstad (2021) show that upper-secondary pupils understand the Bible in a different way to the Qur'ān. While the pupils' knowledge of the former is mainly related to its content and biblical narratives they have encountered in lessons or textbooks, they draw upon information derived from the media when describing the Qur'ān. Research shows that lessons about Islam tend to include more news media coverage than any other religion in RE (Toft 2018), and, because the coverage is characterized by conflict and polarization in which the sensational becomes the normal (Døving 2013; Toft 2020a), it raises the question of how it influences what teachers find important when teaching about the Qur'ān.

Nonetheless, textbooks are the most common learning material used in RE (Broberg 2020; Tallaksen and Hodne 2014) and have considerable authority (Andreassen 2014); therefore, they impact which aspects of Islam, and the Qur'ān pupils encounter in the classroom. One tendency has been for textbooks to favour the presentation of normative traditions rather than an individual perspective on "lived religion" (McGuire 2008; Midttun 2014). This world-religion paradigm can be found, for instance, in the form of the template "the book, the man, and the faith", which implies that most religions are presented with emphasis on what scripture is important, the most central person and what people believe in (Berglund 2021, 187). A textbook analysis by Midttun (2014, 338) found that religious scriptures and what Muslims believe are presented separately – as are Qur'ān recitation and knowledge about the Qur'ān (Midttun 2014, 337) – with the result, she suggests, that connections between

scripture and faith are lost (2014, 334).[6] Nonetheless, references to the Qur'ān are made when emphasizing that the moral virtues expounded in Islam are opposed to practices like forced marriages and honour killings. Such examples provide an impression of how the Qur'ān is presented and portrayed in the material pupils encounter in KRLE, and, moreover, frequently function as starting points for teachers planning their lessons (Tallaksen and Hodne 2014). In this case, Qur'ān recitation might not be seen as a priority, even though it is central within Islamic traditions.

Kristina Nelson notes that it is important that non-Muslims understand the significance of the art of recitation (*tajwīd*) to Islamic culture and religion, as, through the process of memorizing and reciting the Qur'ān, God's speech is believed to become embodied (Nelson 2001, 14). Reciting the Qur'ān is described by Gade (2006, 486) as "a foundational element of Islamic education, practice and piety". Thus, reading the Qur'ān is understood as a devotional act, whether this consists of reciting the words in prayer or striving to understand them through study and reflection (Eggen 2019, 91), and practices connected with it are manifold in Muslims' daily life (Hedman and Ganuza 2019); some may listen to Qur'ān recitations on their way to work, while others recite specific suras or passages from the Qur'ān before eating (Lyngsøe 2018). Therefore, distinguishing between knowledge about the Qur'ān, Qur'ān recitation, faith, and practice, as Midttun (2014) found in the textbook she investigated, may seem artificial when examining the role of the Qur'ān in the everyday life of Muslims. For Muslim youth and young adults, recitation could be learned through various types of media, such as smartphone apps, scheduled online lessons conducted via Skype, or in the supplementary Islamic religious education many undertake in their free time (Daugaard 2019; Sandberg et al. 2018; Aarset 2016). Yet some pupils who attend both supplementary Islamic education and secular mainstream public school in Sweden have reported that they choose not to talk about their ability to read and recite the Qur'ān because of teachers' reactions (Berglund 2017, 525, 533). In other words, Qur'ān recitation may be an aspect of lived religion that is significant for Muslims, but not valued or known among teachers in public schools, which tells us that practices involving the Qur'ān may be more extensive and meaningful than would appear from the RE curriculum.

6 «Læreboka har plassert «Hellige tekster» og «Hva muslimer tror på» i hvert sitt avsnitt. På den måten får man ikke synliggjort den indre sammenhengen mellom tekster og trossystemer» (Midttun 2014, 334).

Approaching religious scriptures

Whether teachers see various practices involving the Qur'ān as relevant for KRLE is, according to Fives and Buehl (2012), related to the perceptions they hold about various aspects of education, which can function as filters for interpretation, a frame for defining problems, and a guide for action (Fives and Buehl 2012, 478). Even though the term "teacher perceptions" is not commonly used within RE research, the idea is present when, for instance, Vestøl and colleagues' write, "The understanding of religion is closely related to the understanding of the purpose of religious education", influencing both the facts that are presented, as well as *how* they are used so as to "develop an understanding of, and respect for, religion" (Vestøl et al. 2014, 14-15). Perceptions about the purpose of KRLE, the relevance of religious scriptures, and the pupils' role in the learning process – whether based on earlier experience, education, or professional development – will impact what teachers find relevant in terms of content and methods. Furthermore, aspects teachers identify as challenges may guide their actions when planning and conducting lessons (Fives and Buehl 2012, 479-480). In this study, the concept of teacher perceptions is a useful tool when faced with the complexity of the interviewees' responses to questions about teaching about the Qur'ān; however, such perceptions must be understood in light of the dominant approaches to religious scriptures which are prevalent in RE and Western religious studies.

One assumption in research on religious scriptures in general has been "that by reading the sacred texts of a community, one gets some insight into that communities [sic] beliefs and practices" (Malley 2004, 12). Furthermore, the study of religious scripture has been biased toward the scholarly elements of Christian theology, that is, "toward the written, the reflective and the systematic" (Malley 2004, 13). The Lutheran Church has been the majority denomination in Norway for several centuries and played a central role in the history of the public school system. Most teachers in Norwegian schools know more about the Bible than the Qur'ān and are more familiar with the narratives presented in Christian traditions than those in Islamic traditions. KRLE has not been a confessional subject for a long time, but it is still relevant to ask how the Christian tradition has left its imprint on *what* teachers think about religious scriptures. Considering the Swedish context, Berglund (2021; 2013) finds

that, although there has been an attempt to secularize RE in Sweden, the subject still includes ideas about religion that are typical of the Protestant tradition.[7] Berglund (2013) suggests using the term "Protestant marinade" to describe how such ideas permeate schools even today. There seems to be a similar marinade in Norwegian RE, which is notable, for instance, when teacher training textbooks in RE emphasis content and narratives when writing about religious scripture (Markeng 2023); presumably, the marinade also influences teachers' perceptions of teaching about the Qur'ān.

Previous RE research on religious scriptures in Norwegian KRLE has been related to two topics: teaching about stories and narratives, and teachers' and pupils' interpretation of texts. According to James Watts, this touches upon only one dimension of the ways in which religious people ritualize religious scripture (Watts 2013, 2019). With an increasing interest in what people *do* with scripture and the functions it has in their lives, Watts proposes a model of how people ritualize religious scripture along three dimensions: *the semantic dimension* is related to the interpretation of the content and meaning of texts, which could be relevant when reading a text and interpreting its meaning as part of a religious ritual or privately, or working with content within a theological context: *the expressive*[8] *dimension* is seen in any performative rendition of the scripture, such as oral or visual representations. Within this dimension, Watts (2019, 14) draws a distinction between "expressions of the words of scriptures and expressions of the content of scripture". Recitations, songs, and graphic expressions of words or inscriptions are examples of the former, while statues, paintings, and films that portray the content of scripture exemplify the latter. The *iconic dimension* is expressed through special treatment or behaviours before, during, or after an interaction with scripture. These could include the placement of a sacred text in the home, rituals of "death" for scripture, such as burying a damaged Bible, decorations of the scripture, or embodied practices (Watts 2019, 15). When studying what teachers say about scriptures in RE lessons, the question is not whether they or their pupils ritualize scripture along these dimensions but, rather, which dimensions teachers find to be relevant and the perceptions about religious scriptures that are conveyed through their reflections.

7 As mentioned above, one example is how religion is presented in Swedish textbooks according to the template known as "the book", "the man", and "the faith" (Berglund 2021, 187).

8 The expressive dimension was previously termed the "performative" dimension (Watts 2013); however, Watts argues in his anthology fof 2019 that the term performative is too broad, and that "expressive" is a more appropriate label (Watts 2019, 14).

Research design and methodological approach

In this study, I sought to investigate the potentials and challenges of teaching about the Qur'ān in primary and lower-secondary religious education in public schools from the perspective of the teachers. The four qualitative interviews were conducted as one out of three smaller studies that make up the empirical material for a PhD project. After reaching out to elementary and lower secondary schools, teachers with formal education and experience in teaching KRLE were asked to take part in the study.[9] The four teachers who participated were, therefore, certified RE teachers.[10] This strategy does not attempt to provide a generalizable sample; rather, it targets a particular competence in order to access people who have in-depth knowledge about a particular subject, in this case KRLE (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2018, 219).

The most experienced teacher, Knut, had credits in *Kristendomskunnskap* that he obtained during his teacher education over 20 years ago.[11] Berit and Anders had quite recently completed their master's degrees, which were related to religious education and social science, and Ellen had about 60 credits in KRLE. While Berit and Anders teach in elementary school, Knut and Ellen teach in lower-secondary education. The teachers taught at different schools in small- to middle-sized towns in the eastern region of Norway; however, the lower secondary schools were more rural than the elementary schools. Berit and Anders describe their schools as being religiously diverse, and some of the pupils they teach come from a Muslim minority background. Ellen and Knut explain that there are some pupils with Muslim backgrounds at their schools, and Knut has taught a couple of Muslim pupils over the years as well. However, in these schools, pupils with a Muslim background are no more prevalent than pupils belonging to other religious minorities, such as the Pentecostal church or Jehovah's Witnesses. To provide a context for the teachers' perceptions of the Qur'ān, it is worth mentioning that those in this study experienced their childhood and education, including teacher training, in the Norwegian context, and have non-Muslim backgrounds.

The interviews were held in the spring semester of 2022. Because of the teachers' busy schedules, two of the interviews were held at their workplace, one was held on a university campus, and one was held digitally.[12] The teachers were given a

9   The Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) approved of the project in 2020, before I recruited the teachers.

10   The teacher education program has changed multiple times in the last decades. The most recent change was the implementation of a five-year master's degree in 2017. However, all the informants have their teacher's degree from earlier, as three started on a four-year program, and two then continued by writing an additional master's thesis. Knut attained his teaching degree when it was a three-year program called *Allmennlærerutdanning* in the late 90s. Presumably, Berit and Anders, who have written their theses in relation to RE, were especially interested in this subject.

11   The names used in this article are pseudonyms.

12   In this project, I have used Services for sensitive data (TSD) to collect, store and analyze the research data. TSD is provided by the IT services at the University of Oslo.

Assignments

1. What is the Qur'ān?
2. Why is the Qur'ān not accepted as God's word when translated into another language?
3. When did the Prophet Muhammed receive the first revelation?
4. How long did it take to assemble the Qur'ān as one text after the death of the Prophet Muhammed?
5. What is a hadith?

(Waale, Dølplads, and Wiik 2017, 195)

1. Qur'ān recitation

Listen to the recitation on the web page and describe what you hear.
Write a text based on the following criteria:

- Describe what you heard.
- Is it singing or prayer?
- Are there any instruments?
- How did you experience listening to it?
- Have you ever heard something similar?

(Børresen, Hammer, and Skrefsrud 2017, 235)

consent letter to read and sign, with a detailed description of the research and larger study; they were also informed about their option to withdraw their consent at any point. The interviews offered a great deal of room in which to discuss religious scripture in general, although the interview guide also contained questions concerning the interviewees' knowledge of, and experiences with non-formal, supplementary Qur'ān education and the Qur'ān in particular. In addition, all teachers were given examples of textbook assignments related to this topic, both copied from RE textbooks, which functioned as the starting point for pedagogical reflections (Figure 1). The first was written for pupils in lower-secondary school, while the second was written for grades five to seven. It is worth noting that both textbooks were written prior to the new curriculum, but this was not seen as an obstacle because the tasks were still relevant within the new framework and most teachers still used textbooks from the older curriculum. These assignments were chosen because previous RE research and pedagogical literature have indicated that, for the Qur'ān in particular, recitation may not be what teachers first think of when discussing religious scripture (for example, Winje 2017). Additionally, the tasks were intended to elicit whether teachers had addressed Qur'ān recitations in class, why they had or had not done so, and what they viewed as important to consider if they were to give such an assignment to their pupils.

All interviews were conducted and transcribed by the author,[13] and ensuing categorization was characterized by an abductive approach (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2018). Thinking with the concept of teacher perceptions meant analysing what teachers said about KRLE, teaching in general, and religious scriptures more broadly, to shed light on approaches to the Qur'ān, even when these were not explicitly discussed. I established the following three categories: *religious scripture understood as the basis of faith*, *pedagogical considerations*, and *KRLE-specific concerns*. These categories are aligned with the well-known pedagogical practice of asking *what*, *how*, and *why* when planning and conducting lessons (Sødal 2009), to which I return throughout the discussion.

Results and discussion

During the interviews, all the teachers seemed eager to provide their perspectives on how religious scriptures are relevant to KRLE. Berit gave examples of how she would work with narratives, while Ellen reflected on the role written text had in her lessons. Knut, who teaches 15-year-old pupils, said, "In general, I think it would be strange to talk about the Bible and the Qur'ān without looking at the texts as well." Anders, whose pupils are younger, said that they talked *about* scripture – for example, when working with digital videos of Biblical narratives – more often than they read or made use of religious texts. Even though there were differences in the role scriptures played in the teachers' RE lessons, the teachers expressed opinions about their importance and thus engaged in reflection on what they did and why they did it.

When I introduced Qur'ān recitation as topic, there was a change in the approach and the conversation overall. When describing assignments that required pupils to listen to Qur'ān recitations (Figure 1), three of the teachers were uncertain how they would move forward with such a task. Ellen said she would likely skip it. None of the teachers interviewed had presented Qur'ān recitations as part of their lessons. The explanations for their hesitation varied from "I have never even thought about it" (Berit) to "How are we going to assess that kind of work?" (Ellen). Meanwhile, Anders said that he would consider using this assignment to "challenge himself", which could indicate that it

13 The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, and excerpts were translated into English by the author for presentation in this article.

is not seen as straightforward to implement. Even though the teachers were uncertain regarding *how* they could implement Qurʾān recitation as part of their lessons, they did reflect on the potential and relevance of this example. The following three sections will present and discuss the teacher perceptions appearing in the interviews to cast light on their reflections and concerns.

Teacher perceptions of religious scriptures as "the basis of faith"

One of the first questions in the interview was *what* the teachers considered important to teach pupils about religious scriptures in KRLE. The teachers argued that religious scriptures should be included because of the role they play within religious traditions. Anders said the pupils "must know something about what [scriptures] contain, why they exist, and that they could be important for many people, and learn a bit about the human aspect". This highlights the fact that multiple aspects of religion could be relevant when discussing religious scripture. In a similar vein, as Knut said:

> They [pupils] must know the scriptures from the largest world religions. And have some knowledge about the historical background and, not least, what is the basis of faith. […] So… if you are to learn about Christianity, the narratives are quite important. To know something about the Easter narratives, for instance.

Both Knut and Ellen use the word *trosgrunnlag*, which I have translated as "basis of faith", a word which implies that religious scriptures are the foundation of religious beliefs and might explain what religious people believe in and why. Although this is a relevant and useful approach in many situations, it is worth noting that perceiving religion as faith is especially typical within the Lutheran tradition. The three phrases that summarize Luther's theology, s*ola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *sola scriptura*, exemplify the importance of both faith (*fide*) and scripture (*scriptura*) (Thurfjell and Willander 2021, 312). Arguably, the Lutheran tradition seem to impact what teachers find important when teaching about religious scriptures. If religion is understood as faith, and religious scripture is understood as the *basis* of faith, then the semantic dimension is perceived as the most beneficial

in terms of providing the desired knowledge about religion.

Ellen, on the other hand, compared the use of scriptures in RE to the content and methods used in the natural sciences: "For me, it seems logical. If you are working with natural sciences, you would use the microscope to explain things." Using a microscope as a metaphor suggests that reading religious texts could be seen as studying the components that make up and "explain" a larger whole. Later, she elaborated on this, saying that pupils should learn about the messages scripture convey: "Especially, […] controversial topics. […] How to make the pupils understand that [religious people] let something like this control their life. We can use the sources to explain it." This example indicates that the semantic dimension of religious scripture can explain faith in and of itself. Only occasionally do the interviewees relate scripture to practice, as Berit does in the following excerpt:

> [The pupils] must know what role [scriptures] play in different religions and know some of the religions' texts before graduating from primary school. That's my opinion. And, in Islam, it would be natural to learn about the time he… I don't remember exactly, but the time he was told the number of prayers a day. […] It was a lot at the beginning and ended up being five.

Referring to *al-Miraj* (a part of the Night Journey described in various hadiths; Roald 2004, 33), Berit explained how religious scripture could be relevant when teaching about practice, in this case prayer. In other words, the semantic dimension is seen as a relevant and legitimate way to explain religious practices as well, which could also be related to the fact that, in the Lutheran tradition, written text holds great authority (*sola scriptura*). Moreover, Berit said that this narrative is not only relevant but almost obligatory when working with Islamic religious scriptures. Similarly, Ellen referred to *al-Isra*, another part of the Night Journey, when providing an example of the narratives that are found in the ninth-grade textbook she uses. Although the curriculum from 2020 no longer mentions any specific stories, the Night Journey seems to have retained its place in what Ellen and Berit perceive as a relevant "KRLE canon". It was prominently mentioned in previous curricula (both from 1997 and 2006) and is presumably why both teachers mention Night Journey narratives when we discussed lessons about religious scriptures,

although the Qur'ān itself only contains very brief references to them, and they are primarily known from the hadiths (Bøe and Farstad 2023, 54).

According to Fives and Buehl (2012), teacher perceptions act as filters to help identify relevant knowledge. How teachers perceive religious scriptures – as the basis of faith, for instance – are examples of such filters. They provide a framework for lessons about the Qur'ān in which teachers draw upon the semantic dimension to explain what Muslims believe and do. Approaching the content and even working with the text itself are understood as important aspects of this kind of work. Because recitation is performed in a language unfamiliar to most teachers in Norway (Eggen 2019; Gade 2006), leaving the meaning of the words unknown, the content of scripture is not accessible through Qur'ān recitation. Moreover, if scripture as "the basis of faith" functions as a filter, other aspects of what religious people do with scripture will not come to mind when planning lessons, even though they can exemplify both faith and practice. A result might be that the various ways of making use of the Qur'ān in Muslim everyday life, especially Qur'ān recitation, may not correspond with what is conventionally perceived as relevant content – that is, the *what* – when teaching about religious scripture in Norwegian schools. I now turn to *how* teachers envision working with scriptures.

Teacher perceptions about pedagogical concerns

In this section, I examine interviewees' perceptions of pedagogical considerations, which could clarify why they are reluctant to bring Qur'ān recitation into their lessons. My focus is on the concerns that teachers voiced about the practicalities of *how* to teach this topic; however, such methods are understood as related to other pedagogical aspects like content, aims, assessments, and pupils' knowledge (Sødal 2009, 19). When discussing what they considered to be the best indicator of a good lesson, all four teachers emphasized the engagement and interest of pupils; yet they had different ideas about what contributes to such enthusiasm. Knut said the content had to be relatable for pupils "so they do not have to ask, 'Why are we learning about this?'" Ellen would engage the pupils in discussions about dilemmas, while both Berit and Anders, who teach nine- and ten-year-olds, would show short movies, or use digital

presentations to vary their lessons. While it can be difficult to adapt methods such as examining dilemmas, discussing their lives, and watching movies in a way that corresponds with listening to Qur'ān recitations, what teachers perceive to be the most engaging methods could serve as a threshold for approaching Qur'ān recitation in KRLE.

It is worth noting that most teachers gave examples of how to approach the expressive dimension of the Bible through movies and artwork, which can be categorized as expressions of the *content* of scripture (Watts, 2019). Berit provided examples of other material she would show in the classroom, such as pictures of mosques, calligraphy, and YouTube videos of people dancing and singing during festivals. In other words, the teachers could bring in materials other than that provided in the textbook to make the lessons more varied. Furthermore, the teachers were open to reflecting on the possibility of working with recitation when I introduced the topic. Berit was the most thorough in this regard:

> But I have not made pupils listen to the Bible either. But Qur'ān recitation is much more important in Islam than reading the Bible aloud is for Christians, so one could include it. There is something about, well, I do not want to present it to the pupils if it sounds strange. I must listen to it first. But why do I worry about it being strange? We talked about this today, what direction Arabic is written, and some said it is the wrong direction. Why do we think that it is wrong? It is, of course, neither more wrong nor right than anything else, so… […] Perhaps we could listen to… Let us say we listen to someone performing the Lord's Prayer. We could do that, so we could probably listen to Qur'ān recitation as well. I have not even thought about it.

Primarily, Berit turned to the Bible and the Christian tradition to discuss the relevance of Qur'ān recitation in KRLE. At first, she argued that reading aloud from the Bible would not be relevant to her lessons and, therefore, neither would Qur'ān recitation. However, knowing that recitation is an important part of Muslim life and practice, Berit found something she believes to be closer to Qur'ān recitation than reading aloud from the Bible: namely, reciting the Lord's Prayer. Similarly, Knut suggests comparing recitation to listening to the Bible or church services.

> You might describe some of the elements in what you are listening to, and that is okay, but then you need some knowledge and background information to know what you are listening for. Perhaps they could be looking for differences. Or perhaps they have listened to the Bible being read aloud or a church service or something so that they can notice differences.

Teacher perceptions about methods in KRLE emerge when teachers compare expressions from Christian traditions to Qur'ān recitation in order to find RE-relevant approaches to recitation. For example, the teachers note that there should be similarities in terms of how pupils work with scriptures from different religious traditions. As Anders said it:

> As a starting point, I think it [how to work with scripture] should be similar. If pupils can look at the Bible, they should be able to look at the Qur'ān as well. This goes for every sacred scripture. So, when we are discussing looking at sacred texts, I think pupils should be able to do so with [texts] from every religion.

The idea that one should be able to approach every religion and scripture similarly explains why teachers would like to ensure that Qur'ān recitation is addressed comparably with other scriptures in terms of both content and methods, yet they are not sure how to accomplish this. When comparing the semantic dimensions of the Bible and the Qur'ān, as they do when they are discussing narratives, content, and the basis of faith, teachers may use approaches that are familiar from Biblical interpretation or literary analysis in general because scripture is perceived as *text*. When they search for something like Qur'ān recitation within the KRLE discourse, the teachers are looking for an expressive dimension, in this case the expression of the *words* of scripture (Watts 2019). Furthermore, they seem to be searching for something religious people are *practicing*.

Berglund (2021) argues that it can be relevant to compare the Bible and the Qur'ān as books with common narratives, as these teachers do; however, when drawing comparisons, it is important to keep in mind the differences that exist in the relationships between the scriptures and God within the Christian and Islamic traditions. As Wilfred C. Smith famously formulated, "Qur'an is to Muslims what Christ is to Christians" (1993, 46). Whereas

stories about the revelation of Christ are found in the Gospels, the revelation of the Qur'ān is described in various hadiths (Berglund 2021, 187) but, following the template of "the book, the man, and the faith", many RE textbook presentations of religion omit such differences. Some posit that a more useful comparison to Qur'ān recitation is the Book of Psalms (Fujiwara 2016). While the traditions of Catholic and Orthodox Christianity contain examples of the expressive dimension of the Bible that more closely resemble recitation, it seems that the general approach to scripture in Norwegian RE can be understood as a (Lutheran) Protestant approach. In other words, tension could arise when the teachers perceive "similar methods" as the way to approach religious scripture in general, and at the same time perceive religious scripture as "the basis of faith". Methods relevant to approaching the semantic dimension of the Bible or the Qur'ān will not necessarily provide relevant tools with which to grasp Qur'ān recitation. As Berglund (2021) argues, this could result in Islam being presented in a protestant manner.

When the teachers ruminated on potential approaches to Qur'ān recitation for (what seems to be) the first time, these reflections are not only affected by the fact that they do not know how recitation would fit within the pedagogical framework, but also what they *do* know about the status of the Qur'ān and recitation within Islamic traditions. For instance, one teacher specifically mentioned the physical aspects and special treatment of religious scripture as a relevant topic to teach pupils, bringing in both the Qur'ān and the Torah as examples of material belongings treated with respect by religious people:

> The Qur'ān is incredibly sacred for some people, the physical copy; you are supposed to keep it in a special place and see to it carefully. Like the Torah scrolls in a Jewish synagogue; we have learned about them being wrapped in silk and so on. These are sacred belongings […] For many people this, a careful and respectful treatment of such belongings [is important]. (Anders)

The objects Anders mentioned can be seen as examples of the iconic dimension of religion and, following Watts' (2019) argument, studying how people ritualize the iconic dimensions of religious scripture is a key to understanding why such scriptures are perceived as something other than "ordinary"

books. However, Anders was the only one who raised this issue in the conversation on matters relevant to teaching about religious scripture and, other than Anders' comment, the interviews do not provide much insight into how teachers address the iconic dimension when teaching (if they do at all). Examining the Norwegian teacher training textbook in RE provided a similar result: the iconic dimension is barely mentioned in pedagogical discussions on approaching religious scripture (Markeng 2023). Nevertheless, teachers' knowledge about this dimension (for instance their knowledge about what is, and what is not perceived to be respectful treatment of the Qur'ān) also seems to be relevant to their uncertainty when discussing Qur'ān recitation, with concerns being raised in relation to central aspects of Norwegian RE. I address RE-specific teacher perceptions in the following section.

Teacher perceptions of KRLE

While the teacher perceptions discussed above are also related to the subject of relevant content and methods, another common perception voiced in the interviews was that qualified RE teachers have knowledge about topics, matters, and values that are RE specific. Therefore, teachers' perceptions of the purpose and challenges of the subject, as well as what this requires of them, could shed light on the complexity of the teachers' responses to Qur'ān recitation. When discussing the recitation assignment (Figure 1), a concern the teachers expressed was how the pupils would experience listening to such recitations: on the one hand, non-Muslim pupils might think the recitation sounds strange, while on the other, pupils might become too involved when listening. I relate both sides of this concern to teacher perceptions of the overarching framework of KRLE.

First, I turn to the way in which pupils could perceive and react negatively to the recitation. Berit, quoted above, feared the recitation might "sound strange" to the pupils with a non-Muslim background, while Anders said, "[In the w]orst case scenario, it could be some sort of exotism, so you have to prepare the pupils by explaining that this is a completely normal thing for many people." The teachers' concern about the reactions they might get from non-Muslim students can be seen in relation to the public debate about Islam. The increased attention paid to Muslims in Norway and widespread awareness of Islamophobic

attitudes are examples of how the relationship between Muslims and the majority society has become a matter of public concern (Leirvik, 2014, 142). Furthermore, a recent survey found that approximately a third of the Norwegian population agreed with the statements that "Muslims constitute a threat towards Norwegian culture" and that "Muslims do not fit in with a modern Western society" (Moe 2022, 9). Given the discourse of conflict concerning Islam presented in the media (Døving 2013), teachers are understandably worried both about contributing to exotic or harmful representations of it, and that such presentations will reflect negatively on pupils with Muslim backgrounds. Interviews with pupils from religious minority backgrounds have revealed a potential for alienation when their religious experiences are compared with the textbook or classroom presentation of religion (Nicolaisen 2013; Vestøl et al. 2014). In other words, it is not an unreasonable concern, and one which seems to be enhanced by what the interviewed teachers perceive to be the main objective of RE.

The four teachers agree that RE should promote values such as respect and tolerance. For instance, Anders said, "This subject does not only provide knowledge about different religions. Really, it is more about life skills. So that… the pupils are tolerant, that they can encounter different ideas about the world and put themselves in someone else's situation." Furthermore, Berit relates the world "out there" to the attitudes pupils obtain in KRLE: "I hope that the pupils get a better understanding of each other … and the people outside the classroom they meet later in life. I think it is the most important thing… being compassionate." In other words, the teachers argue that these are values and attitudes are needed to navigate within a society in which people of different religious and cultural backgrounds live together. The communication of certain values and knowledge about a multicultural society is also mandated in the KRLE curriculum; thus, RE teachers are expected to communicate respect and tolerance and teach their pupils about various forms of religious life. However, when these teachers reflected on the potential of Qur'ān recitation, the objectives of the subject seem to generate uncertainty. For instance, recitation could be one of many religious expressions pupils encounter with respect and tolerance within the "safe space" of the classroom, in alignment with the stated objective of the subject. However, if recitation is

perceived as strange and exotic, at worst its inclusion could be contradictory to the values teachers want to instil, and thus be counterproductive in terms of achieving the educational goals of the subject.

Avoiding difficult or controversial topics is not uncommon among teachers, and worrying about pupils' reactions is usually a reason for this (Børhaug and Harnes 2018; Flensner 2018; 2020; Von der Lippe 2019). Nonetheless, research demonstrates that teachers *do* include controversial and challenging topics, such as terrorism, as long as they find that the relevance and importance of the event or topics surpasses their insecurity about how to address it (Toft 2020b, 10). Qur'ān recitation is in itself not a controversial topic in RE.[14] Nevertheless, as an expression of Muslim practice, it might start a conversation about other, more challenging topics which have been debated in the Norwegian public: for instance, attending a Qur'ān school as a leisure activity or public desecration of the Qur'ān. Such debates could potentially give rise to utterances which defy the attitudes and values teachers expect of their pupils when encountering examples of religious life that differ from their own. Yet interviews with RE pupils in upper-secondary education found that the pupils worried about whether teachers were romanticizing religion (Flø and Mogstad 2021). Therefore, selecting the types of religious expression to include or exclude based on pupils' predicted reactions might underestimate pupils' capabilities and, at the same time, actually weaken the credibility of teachers' presentations, creating unwanted distance between teachers and pupils.

The second concern the teachers voiced touched on pupils' feelings and experiences when listening to Qur'ān recitation. Ellen said, "I do not think they should put their emotions into it. But let's say we found an enabling YouTube video that meant that their feelings were not at stake…" Both teachers in lower secondary, Ellen and Knut, said that experiences were hard to evaluate and assess. According to Knut, combining pupils' emotions with listening to recitations is not beneficial in a RE context: "And the assignment about their feelings… It does not really provide anything. […] Are we supposed to assess the creativity in describing what they have heard and experienced?" Not knowing what pupils should engage with in such an assignment, or what they could learn from reflecting on their experiences when listening, may be reasons why pupils' encounters with re-

14 This is according to definitions on controversial issues, presented and discussed by, among others, von der Lippe (2019) and Flensner (2020).

citation are more difficult to assess than, for example, discussion of ethical dilemmas, which was something the teachers found very relevant in KRLE. Although ethical dilemmas typically do not provide a single correct answer to evaluate, RE teachers have considerable experience with such approaches, and with what they want the pupils to experience through such discussions. Furthermore, dilemmas are usually presented in a way that relates ethics to *us*, thus making them easier to engage with. Religion, on the other hand, is usually presented as something related to *them*, demanding an outsider-oriented approach, which involves more distance (Unstad and Fjørtoft 2021, 4). Thus, the nature of Qur'an recitation as a *religious* expression seems to impact whether teachers perceive it to be valuable and acceptable for pupil engagement.

Although pupils are presented with various forms of religious expression through lessons, textbooks, and videos in KRLE, they seldom encounter them as audio alone. There seem to be perceived differences between *listening* to and *watching* Qur'ān recitation, as Ellen suggests. One way to understand this is that listening to an expressive dimension of the *words* of scripture when one does not understand the language eliminates access to the semantic dimension, meaning that one must evaluate other aspects of scripture then what they would normally do in KRLE, with which teachers have little experience and hardly any methods of approaching. If the same ritual is presented in video form, a format well-known to both teachers and pupils, it is possible to adopt a descriptive approach that addresses other aspects of recitation, such as location, clothing, the body, and the Qur'ān. Such an approach might introduce methods relevant to encountering expression of the *content* of scriptures, thereby maintaining a certain distance from the perceived religiosity of the practice.

A lack of distance could be one reason why combining emotions with the topic of religious recitation is found challenging. Following this argument, comments about emotions "at stake" could be related to concerns about pupils becoming *too involved* when listening. For instance, it is the pupils' right to be exempted from involvement in what they "perceive as being the practice of another religion or adherence to another philosophy of life, or that they on the same basis find objectionable or offensive" (Opplæringlova 1998).[15] The interviewed teachers are aware of earlier debates and that there should be no

evangelizing or participation in religious practice within the subject. After Berit reflected on where she would draw this line if she were to include Qur'ān recitation in her lessons, she concluded, "Saying out loud the prayers or creed of other religions is not okay, so the goal would never be to learn this by heart or read it out loud. [...] But maybe... if the pupils are only listening, and not repeating it... I don't know." Considering that, according to Islamic tradition, God's speech is believed to become embodied through the memorization and recitation of the Qur'ān (Nelson 2001, 14), teachers may worry that parents or pupils will perceive that listening to recitation is moving closer to religious practice. Additionally, it is stated in the Education Act that different religions should be presented in an "objective, critical and pluralistic manner" (Opplæringslova 1998). This relates to the ideal of giving a neutral presentation, as Anders mentioned when he reflected on how he could teach his specific group of pupils: "We have a quite diverse group of pupils, multiple religions, and worldviews in the same class. So that might be why I find it challenging. Even though I think pupils can learn from other religions, there is something about... You have to make sure you are neutral, right."

Studies of RE classroom practices in Scandinavia suggest that a secular, non-religious position is seen as neutral and objective (Flensner 2018, 14; Hauan and Anker 2021). Thus, any expressions of religion elicited by teachers or pupils must fit within this framework to be seen as relevant (Gilliam 2022). Qur'ān recitation might challenge what is commonly perceived as expected and accepted expressions of religiosity in KRLE. Thus, the teachers could be uncomfortable with having to make the decision about whether or not to bring this expressive dimension of the Qur'ān into their classrooms.

Conclusion

In this article, I have discussed teacher perceptions of religious scripture, pedagogical considerations, and the frame and purpose of KRLE in order to cast light on teachers' concerns about, and reflections on bringing Qur'ān recitation, as an expression of the Qur'ān, into their KRLE lessons. On the one hand, recitation could provide an opportunity to learn about and encounter an important Islamic practice within a learning

15 The right to exemption only applies to activities. Pupils are not exempted from curricular knowledge.

environment. Offering pupils the knowledge needed to encounter this practice with respect and tolerance is one educational purpose of the subject. On the other hand, teacher perceptions of what religious scripture *is* and what role it should play in KRLE do not provide them with the applicable framework and approaches for listening to this expression of scripture. When teachers look for comparable approaches to religious scripture, they find methods most suitable to discussing the semantic dimension of the Qur'ān. Consequently, even experienced and highly qualified teachers find the expressive dimension of the Qur'ān both unfamiliar and challenging. Whether they worried about *too much* distance (pupils might find it weird or exotic) or *too little* distance (pupils might become too involved in this form of religious expression), the teachers' interviews address some of the major questions that have affected the debate on KRLE over the past decades: the academic presentation of religion, pupils' involvement, and the right to exemption. These results align with Keränen-Pantsu and Rissanen's (2018) study, which finds that teachers experience tensions between pedagogical ideas (e.g., student-centred and creative learning) and the sacredness of religious narratives.

When seen in conjunction with recent classroom studies, my question is whether teachers' uncertainty also relates to a public concern about the relationship between Muslims and Norwegian society in general. Knowledge about Muslim ritualization of an iconic dimension of the Qur'ān, bolstered by debates on, and reactions to public desecration of the Qur'ān, might be a part of this context. To counteract stereotypical presentations of Islam which are found in the public sphere, teachers will typically frame the content related to Islam so that it fits within the perceived framework and goals of the subject (Toft 2018; 2020). However, there seems to be a gap between the given framework on the one hand (for instance, a protestant approach towards scripture and a secular normativity in the public school [Hauan and Anker 2021; Gilliam 2022]), and the drive to present Islam in a way that contributes to the anti-discrimination of Muslims in the society, on the other. While teachers are aware of the importance of the Qur'ān and Qur'ān recitation for Muslims, without a solid pedagogical framework for encountering recitation as an expression of scripture they would rather not risk generating discussions or reactions which could reproduce stereotypical notions about a Muslim religious minority.

In other words, ongoing public debates and concerns appear to affect in-service teachers' practice and choices. The time pressure and multifaceted responsibilities teachers experience restrict their capacity to challenge the perceptions that impact *what* and *how* they teach about religious scriptures, and *why* they believe this is important. Exposing them to various expressions of religious scriptures and coherent pedagogical approaches in teacher education programs and teaching-learning resources could be a relevant starting point in this regard. There is also a need for further research to gain insight into how teachers and pupils relate to teaching and learning about all three of Watts' dimensions, the assignments that are given, how these are experienced by Muslim pupils who also learn about scripture in their leisure time, and the concepts that are required to grasp the various ways religious scripture functions in religious people's lives. Furthermore, given that this study is conducted with four teachers from a Norwegian majority background, another relevant question for exploration is how RE teachers with minority backgrounds approach and relate to religious scriptures.

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Nora S. Eggen

Between Term and Trope

The '*koranskole*' in Norwegian Public Discourse

Abstract The term *koranskole* has a prominent place in the public discourse on Islam and Muslim life in Norway. Despite being empirically imprecise, it is by far the most frequently used term in reference to non-formal Islamic religious education (IRE), but it is also used in other contexts with explicit or implicit referents, creating a polyvalent and at times contested concept. First coined by ethnographers studying Muslim societies, the term *koranskole* does not originate in Islamic educational traditions; however, it has been used both by researchers and practitioners, although today it occurs to a lesser extent among organizers of such educational enterprises than in public discourse. This article maps the use of the term *koranskole* in Norwegian public and scholarly discourses throughout the past century, preparing the ground for discussing the analytical vocabulary for research in this area.

Mosque-based afternoon or weekend classes for Muslim children have routinely been conceptualized by the term *koranskole* (pl. *koranskoler*) in scholarly and public discourse in Norway and in Scandinavia more broadly. The most comprehensive studies on the topic in recent decades use the term (Østberg 1998; Dahlin 2001; Østberg 2003; Leirvik 2009), as do some major studies on Muslim faith stance organizations (Vogt 2000; Elgvin 2020).[1] Arguably, Qurʾanic instruction proper is a key element in different forms of denominational Islamic religious education (Berglund and Gent 2019; Berglund 2019) and includes skills like reading and recitation (*qirāʾa*, *tartīl*, *tajwīd*), memorization (*ḥifẓ*), and interpretation (*tafsīr*) and reflection

1 In this article, I do not make a normative distinction between the words 'Islamic' and 'Muslim'. The adjective Islamic in this context refers to faith-based and committed enterprises while the adjective Muslim likewise refers to faith-based enterprises and self-declared committed individuals.

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(*tadabbur*). However, in mosque-based education, the curriculum generally extends to other subjects, such as general Arabic language skills, other mother tongue languages, additional foundational texts (notably *ḥadīth*), and liturgic and devotional texts (*duʿāʾ, anashīd*). Considered equally important is reflective education on values and virtues, religious ritual skills, and history, in addition to topics complementing primary school education and extracurricular activities (Dahlin 2001; Østberg 2003). This raises the question of the suitability of the term *koranskole* for such a wide range of activities.

In the English research literature, one may observe a conceptual distribution wherein the term Qurʾanic school seems dominant in historical or ethnographic studies of non-European contexts (Boyle 2004; Ware 2014; Hoechner 2018), whereas Islamic religious education is commonly used for the Muslim minority context in the West (Daun and Arnjand 2018; Franken and Gent 2021). In the former usage, the term may appear to be vernacular, a translation of the informants' own terminology, although, as this article demonstrates, it was actually coined in early modern Western historical and ethnographic studies. The second term, on the other hand, is univocally an analytical category created for comparative purposes within the contemporary field of Religious Education. In the Danish and Swedish research literature on the Scandinavian context, generic terms like 'leisure time education' (*fritidsundervisning*) or 'instruction' (*opplæring*) are used at times but without completely replacing *koranskole* (cf. Bisbjerg 2011; Magaard 2011; Berglund in this issue).

In the rather limited Norwegian research literature (Eggen 2023b), it is not possible to identify a similar form of conceptual distribution; rather, *koranskole* remains a term with multiple uses and referents. Its suitability has rarely been discussed, although at times it has been put in quotation marks, expressing a form of conceptual caveat.[2] Moreover, in this literature it is not clear whether *koranskole* is being used by the informants on their own initiative, a term the researchers introduce to the informants or use analytically,[3] or a sort of negotiated term testifying to its intertwined conceptual history.

In this article, I describe the development of the use of the term *koranskole* in Norway. To this end, I map and analyze its use in written discourse throughout the past century in a wide range of media texts, academic literature, prose, and fiction. My

2   See, for instance, a presentation of the research project of which my study is a part. *FAITHED: Non-formal faith education, the public school, and religious minorities in Norway*, running 2021-2025, at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

3   For instance, in the latest survey of the habits and everyday life of Muslims in Norway, the term is used as a separate category, an alternative to *islamundervisning*, without further explanations or definitions of either term (Rafoss 2023, a KIFO report presented at the seminar *Mangfold blant norske muslimer* 21.03.2023).

main source for harvesting the empirical material in this study is the National Library database of digitalized written material (www.nb.no), which divides the material into books (including reports, fiction, and general prose), newspapers, and journals. I have also consulted other bibliographical and full text databases belonging to the university and research institute sectors. The main search term has been *koranskole* with variations, as well as a variety of combinations of words like education or instruction and Muslim organizations or mosques. A frequency report generated by the National Library database (generated 17.01.2023) showed that the quantitative increase in the occurrence of the term *koranskole* has been substantial, probably due to changing demographical circumstances, the socio-political situation, and public interests. Notwithstanding possibly irrelevant occurrences and repetitions, the following diagram also demonstrates the importance of newspapers and general publications in establishing the term.
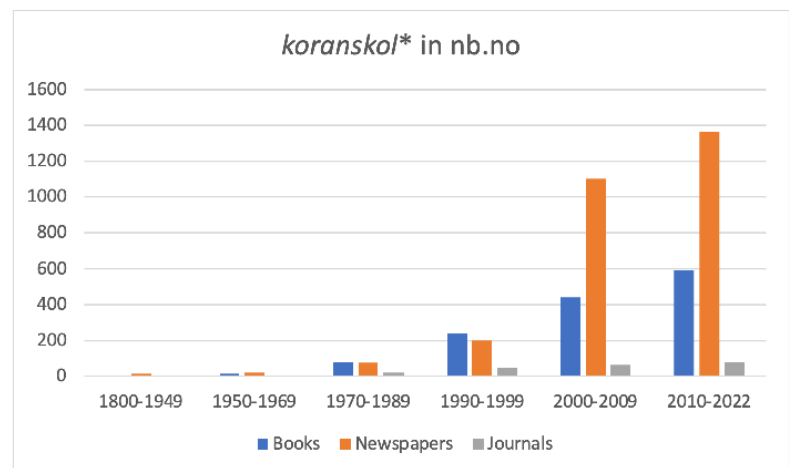
More importantly for my concern in this article is the observation that the thematic distribution demonstrates both consistencies and shifts, which I found by selecting and examining the relevant parts of the total material. Corresponding roughly to a chronological development in the use of the term this may be summed up as follows: up to around 1980, the *koranskole* was perceived in Norwegian written sources as a phenomenon belonging to foreign times, places, and cultures; from the 1980s, mosque-based education in Norway emerged as a topic, and by the mid-1990s, the word *koranskole* was established as the designated descriptive term for such mosque-based learning. In the debates on the role of formal religious education in the

Norwegian primary school system in the early 1990s, the *koranskole* epitomized a contested field. Conflicting views suggested, on the one hand, that mosque-based education could function as a supplementary resource for the children of Muslim immigrants, and, on the other, that it represented an impediment for their successful integration into Norwegian society and its work force. Following the turn of international events, with the Global War on Terrorism following the World Trade Centre and Pentagon attacks in 2001, the term *koranskoler* began to appear in the media coverage of international and transnational events and debates on extremism and radicalization.

Throughout the period the different constellations of meaning have also to some degree remained consistent, and, as shown in this article, the various semantic contents are continously activated side by side. Thus, the term *koranskole* functions as a suggestive concept: ambiguous, contested, and open to positive and negative connotations. Currently, it is found in popular as well as academic discourse, although in media discourse, the term itself is seldom discussed and its meaning seems to be taken for granted, or it is left an ambiguous buzzword.[4] In academic literature, reference is made to the media discourse and the term is mostly retained, although the buzz quality of the term is not necessarily adopted, and at times be explicitly rejected. The term seems to be used to a lesser extent by the Muslim organizations facilitating educational activities for children,[5] and some Islamic religious education organizers and attendees express a certain unease with it.[6] Because Qurʾanic instruction is only part of the activity, the term is not considered adequate, notwithstanding the indisputable and undisputed centrality of the Qurʾan. More importantly, practitioners are acutely aware of the stereotypical, often negative and potentially stigmatizing ideas associated with the term.

Islamic religious education in Norway

The common research concept religious education (RE) includes several categories. One is the formal, institutionalized, mandatory, state-supervised, and sometimes state-funded education in public or private schools; other categories are the non-formal, non-mandatory, but institutionalized

4 Some analyses of religion in media mention the term *koranskole*, but neither it nor its coverage are discussed further (Døving and Kraft 2013, Lundby 2021, Strømme 2022).

5 In Nora Stene's recent interview-based report on female representation in mosque leadership, the general term *undervisning* (education) is used, as well as the specific term *koranundervisning*, but not *koranskole* (Stene 2020).

7 This observation is based on interviews for a report on child education in mosques (Eggen 2023a).

supplementary education offered by civil society organizations, and the informal education outside institutional frames such as in the family or through media outlets (Schweitzer 2017). Following this, the concept Islamic religious education (IRE) is polyvalent, referring either to denominational or non-denominational formal education, or to denominational non-formal education, in addition to informal educational activities in the private sphere (Franken and Gent 2021, 8–9). It is worth noting that these categories are primarily relevant in the context of a functioning, state-governed school system and a highly organized official authorization system.

In Norwegian public schools, as in those of the other Scandinavian countries, denominational IRE is not an option. Since it was first made mandatory in 1739, denominational Christian education was considered a preparation for confirmation and, although the confessional aim (baptism instruction – *dåpsopplæring*) was removed following the 1969 code, formal religious education in public schools remained denominational into the 1990s, with an increasing number of exemption clauses and alternative programs. In 1998, a new Education Act introduced nondenominational mandatory religious education in Norwegian public schools, with the Christian faith allotted an exceptional role in the capacity of heritage (Opplæringslova 1998; Andreassen 2021; Skeie 2022). Unlike Denmark and Sweden, where private Muslim schools have been operative since 1978 and 1993 respectively (Berglund 2010; Simonsen and Daun 2018; Berglund 2019), in Norway only one private Muslim school initiative has been successful in terms of receiving state approval and funding (Leirvik 2009; Strand 2012, 434–445).

In Norway, just as in many other Muslim minority countries, non-formal, denominational IRE typically consists of faith community initiatives that offer regular afternoon or weekend classes or courses. These have been recognized as a crucial element in the development of institutionalized Islam in Norway over the past five decades (Vogt 2000; Elgvin 2020). Likewise, the importance of the knowledge acquisition and the sense of belonging – or alienation – developing out of attending mosque-organized religious education has regularly been raised in the literature discussing young Muslims in Norway, highlighting reports of fond memories and appreciation as well as sore memories or critical reflection (Jacobsen 2002; Østberg 2003;

Kavli 2007; Sandberg et al. 2018). Additionally, informal forms of tutoring in small neighborhood groups may replace or augment mosque-based instruction (Østberg 2003; 59–61), as do semi-structured educational initiatives outside the faith stance organizations. In recent years, online courses have grown popular, often with teachers based in other countries. Online Qurʾanic instruction is mostly individual and can easily be fit in between school, homework, and other leisure time activities (Aarset 2016). In the pandemic situation of 2020–2022, institutionalized, mosque-based teaching also used various online solutions, but only as a temporary arrangement.

Conceptualizing Islamic religious education

The first component in the *koranskole* collocation originates in the Arabic *qurʾān*, which refers to the reading or recitation of the revelation (*qirāʾa*). The aural-oral aspect is thus intrinsic to the term *qurʾān*, while the determined form al-Qurʾān (*Koranen*) conventionally refers to the collected text in the material book (*kitāb* or *muṣḥaf*). The second component in *koranskole* denotes 'educational institution', which is semantically close to the Arabic word *madrasa*, 'a place for conducting studies' (cf. *tadrīs*, 'teaching' and *dirāsa*, 'studying') (Lane 1984, 1, 871).[7] Historically, the term *madrasa* was used for an institution of higher learning, while a facility for elementary learning was called a *maktab*, which refers in this context to 'a place where the art of writing is taught', with the synonym *kuttāb*, which is short for *mawḍiʿ al-kuttāb* – 'a place where pupils learn how to write' (Lane 1984; 2, 2591). Here the pupils would learn how to write and read by working with the Qurʾan and other texts foundational to Islam, thus providing basic literacy as well as basic religious literacy.

Organized education for children dates back to the seventh century, and historical records provide evidence that in the subsequent centuries, it developed into an established practice (Arnjand 2018; Ayyad 2021). Children's education was not government enforced, but striving for a certain level of literacy was highly recommended, and learning the Qurʾan and basic tenets of Islam was considered a religious duty. Extensive medieval writing in the genre *adab al-muʿallim wal-mutaʿallim* sheds light on the philosophy of education, pedagogy, and didactics in the early Islamic societies, as well as suggesting some

7   Lane notes the correspondence with the Hebrew *midrāsh*, a place for studying the Jewish scripture.

traits of actual practice (Cook 2010; Günther 2020).

In one of the earliest extant works in this genre, Ibn Saḥnūn (d. 256/870) held that although the responsibility for educating children layed upon the parents, and the informal setting was recognized as of primary importance, a formalization of the educational situation was beneficial, and he recommended that a teacher should be hired for the actual teaching (Ibn Saḥnūn in Cook 2010, 1–19). He proposed that the children should be taught to recite the Qurʾan by heart, to read and write, orthography, grammar, basic mathematics, and basic ritual knowledge, with the addition of poetry and Arabic literary language. A committed group of children would meet with a teacher in a semi-formal structure and a more or less permanent location (*mawḍiʿ al-kuttāb*) for a more or less specified amount of time. Later, the word *maktab* (pl. *makātib*) would come into more frequent use, suggesting a permanence of location (*maktab* = place for writing).

Some centuries later, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) wrote about the regional differences in child education. At this point in history, it seems to have become customary for children to spend time in an educational facility. One of the main regional differences, Ibn Khaldūn held, is the sequence of topics, whether reading and writing should be learnt first, followed by more specific Qurʾanic instruction, or vice versa. Starting out with the Qurʾan ensures a minimum of religious education, Ibn Khaldūn noted, while holding that the second method is pedagogically and intellectually sounder. Incidentally, Ibn Khaldūn's text is the only Arabic text in this field which is translated into Norwegian, and the translator uses the term *koranskole* (Ibn Khaldūn 1997, 417, transl. Ibn Khaldūn 2012, 2, 1103).

Notwithstanding the variation over time and space, it seems appropriate to speak of a semi-formal, premodern elementary IRE system: not obligatory although highly recommended, and not fully institutionalized, although highly organized. When children's education was made mandatory in state-governed schools in modern times, this system was replaced by two new systems (Akkari 2004; Daun and Arjmand 2018). Reading, writing, mathematics, and other skills and fields of knowledge were relocated to a formal educational system, while some of the literacy training, together with religious education and more specifically Qurʾanic education, was relocated to the non-formal system. In many Muslim majority societies today, IRE is taught

in primary schools, while the non-formal system has become part of the preparatory education in kindergartens or takes place in supplementary, non-mandatory, afternoon and weekend classes. In Muslim minority societies, the non-formal system mainly consists in afternoon or weekend classes.

The *madrasa* was historically an institution of higher learning, established in connection to a main mosque or, especially from the eleventh century, as a separate institution with a separate architectural construction (Makdisi 1981; Pedersen 2023). These institutions were known and recognized in early modern Europe. For instance, while there is no entry for the terms *kuttāb/maktab* in the encyclopedic European work on the Oriental world, Barthélemy d'Herbelot's (d. 1695) *Bibliothèque Orientale*, the *madrasa* is explained as a "college established for the disciplinary studies for the Muslims" (d'Herbelot 1777, 504).[8] The first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (printed between 1913–1936), on the other hand, has entries for both *maktab/kuttāb* and *madrasa*. The latter is understood in historical terms, as a separate institution of higher learning contained in a separate architectural construction (Brunot 1936). The term *maktab/kuttāb* is explained semantically as a school in which one learnt how to write but "in reality", the author held in a somewhat reductive vein, "it was a Qurʾanic school, since it is the Muslim opinion that children should start by learning the Qurʾān" (Pedersen 1936, 193).[9] The perspective is almost exclusively ethnographic, and the practice of reading the Qurʾan and learning it by heart is understood in terms of notions like blessings and magic, placing the activity in a primitive stage in the evolutionary approach to the study of religion which was dominant at the time (Styers 2023).

The *koranskole* collocation has no lexical equivalent in the premodern Islamic tradition. Referring to ethnographical studies, J.M. Landau asserts matter-of-factly that *maktab/kuttāb* denotes "a type of beginners' or primary school" that "European writers have often called…'Ḳurʾānic school'" (Landau 2023, first printed 1986). In modern times, as a result of the translation process, Muslims started to use equivalents of this originally European term not only in European minority contexts but also in Muslim majority contexts in countries where similar educational traditions extend further back in history than the European descriptions. Thus, today one finds the notion of *madrasa qurʾāniyya* in Arabic speaking countries, in addition

8   D'Herbelot reflects Kâtip Çelebi's (d. 1657) bibliography of the sciences, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*.
9   All translations into English in this article are mine.

to the traditional Arabic term *kuttāb/maktab* and a host of other local variants, like *mekteb* (Turkey, Balkans), *madrasa/madrassa* (South Asia), *msid* (Morrocco), *dugsi* (Somalia), *pesantrem* (Indonesia).

Koranskole as an Oriental Trope

The first Norwegian reference to *koranskole* is found in P.A. Munch's (d. 1863) work of world history (1849). Here we read about how the powerful Seljuk caliph Jalāl al-Dawla (r. 1055–1092) restored the derelict *koranskoler* in Baghdad (Munch 1948, 283). Munch's work was an adapted translation of Otto von Corvin (d. 1886) and Friedrich W.A. Held's (d. 1872) *Illustrierte Weltgeschichte für das Volk*, published in several volumes from 1844, in which the German *Koranschule* referred to a building housing an institution of higher learning, a *madrasa*. The *koranskole* in P.A. Munch's historical account is thus an architectural site, a building set up particularly for the purpose of higher education.

This architectural *koranskole* turns up repeatedly in newspaper articles and books on distant places, times, and traditions, as a recurring Oriental trope. The *koranskole* is explained as a "sort of a university" (*Bergens tidende* 04.08.1882), or, more often, is left unexplained, such as when Bagdad is identified as the city of a thousand and one nights which once had a million inhabitants and "lots and lots of mosques and *koranskoler*" (*Morgenposten*, 29.04.1917). While sometimes referring to shifting political circumstances, travel reports from Marrakech, Fés, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Samarkand, and Bukhara demonstrate a remarkable consistency over the decades, framed by notions such as past splendor, exotism, and nostalgia, sometimes mixed with a certain unease. In *Aftenposten* (28.11.1966) we can read that while Bukhara alone used to house 150 *koranskoler*, in the whole of the Soviet Union only one is left open, and the dull Soviet city is contrasted to the vibrant Oriental city of the past (*Aftenposten* 12.12.1966). Later, a cautiously optimistic article from Samarkand in 1993 reports that after the Soviet collapse, *koranskoler*, identified as '*madrasa*er', have reopened, and the interviewees assure the journalists that they feel the role of the *madrasa* is to neutralize extremism, not to encourage it (*Klassekampen* 16.11.1993). Notwithstanding that

some of the sites have undergone huge restoration and the travel accounts have become glossier, the tone and content throughout the century are remarkably similar. Recent travel reports from cities like Fés, Damascus, and Uzbekistan also portray the "impressive mosques, mausoleums, and koranskoler" as natural parts of the cityscape (*Aftenposten* 16.11.2002; *Dagbladet* 30.11.2005; *Telemarksavisa* 23.08.2014).

In early ethnographically oriented reports, the term *koranskole* was used for elementary education. When the geologist Hans Henrik Reusch (d. 1922) travelled in the early 1900s to Tunisia to study desertification, he also made some observations on the educational system. In an article in the pedagogical trade journal *Norsk skoletidende*, Reusch noted that the education system has two levels, holding that the whole system is religious in nature and based on the Qurʾan. The first level, "the so-called koranskolen", comprises elementary education for young boys focusing on learning how to read and write, and learning (at least parts of) the Qurʾan by heart. The second level is a "muhammedan university or high school of religion" situated at the mosque (Reusch 1906). Reusch followed closely an article by Louis Pierre Machuel (d. 1922), an Orientalist scholar and member of the academic institute L'Institut de Carthage in Tunis, who refers to the local terminology of *kouttab* pl. *ketateb*, glossed in French as *école coranique* (Machuel 1897). In Machuel's text, it remains clear that *école coranique* operates as an analytical term, meant to capture what the observer finds characteristic in the object of study, and reserving it for the elementary level of the educational system. Reusch does not provide us with this local nomenclature, but by preceding it with the qualifier "so-called" (*såkalte*), he does express a vague caveat.

Several subsequent articles and books presented similar images. The *koranskoler* are portrayed as simple educational facilities gathering children or youth after early morning prayers to "repeat the monotonous incantation of the teacher" (*Adresseavisen* 04.05.1935). The painter and writer Ferdinand Finne (d. 1999) reports admiringly from the great library in the Zāwiya Nāṣiriyya in Tamgroute, Marocco, housing thousands of centuries old manuscripts, a rich heritage in contrast to the material poverty of the *medersa*, glossed as *koranskole,* where serene pupils sit reading out the texts for memorization (*Aftenposten* 14.03.1959). The competition between educational systems in the colonial period is evident, reported in often

translated newspaper articles. In Peshawar, a journalist stumbles upon a British-style college, where the English language and different sciences are taught in English, while the *koranskole* and Islamic theology department remain a world untouched by the British college (*Dagbladet* 15.11.1930). Typically, the *koranskole* is the only means of education, in spite of colonial efforts to further the intellectual level (Heggøy 1949, 93–94). A talented young person could have received only some cursory education in a *koranskole,* before being discovered and brought to France for appropriate intellectual and physical training (*Arbeider-Avisa* 18.10.1949). At other times, articles hint at there being something covert in the *koranskolene*, locations in which oppositional movements could find a fertile breeding ground (*Stavanger Aftenblad* 09.11.1937, cf. Oppegård 1937). The *koranskole*, with rather cursory descriptions of the practice therein, was thus portrayed as passive, monotonous, cumbersome, outdated, ungovernable, and represented by the locals, in contrast to the vivid, active, engaging, and modern represented by the European colonizers. The two motifs, the splendors of the past and the primitivism of the present, conflated into one term, *koranskole*, which functions as an Oriental trope.

From the early 1970s, teaching on religions other than Christianity was included in the religious education program in the Norwegian high school. One textbook portrait of Islam is, on the one hand, ideologically framed, stating that in Islam religion and politics are highly integrated and political leaders are also religious leaders, and that the Qurʾanic teacher sort of takes the role of the priest (Hellern, Notaker, and Stubbraaten 1971, 31). On the other hand, the book contains ethnographic descriptions from Nigeria where boys learn the Qurʾan in a *koranskole* writing on little wooden boards. The text creates an image of strict ideology and simplistic, disciplined tradition. A couple of decades later, Jan Opsal holds in his introductory book on Islam that attending a *koranskole* is part of an Islamic life cycle that may either be supplementary or the only education that children receive as they are socialized into Islamic rituals (Opsal 1994, 71). In addition, *koranskolen* may teach writing and reading Arabic, but the emphasis is on learning by heart rather than translating and understanding. When the pupil has learned the whole or a portion of the whole text, a celebration is held in his honor. The description seems ethnographic, although the geographical context for this description is not very clear. This

form of decontextualized idea about Islamic practice is typical of this genre in this period, and the description is quite similar for a section of Muslims in Norway (Opsal 1994, 303–4). The assumptions feed into a conception of the *koranskole* as a timeless, spaceless notion, a frozen practice, unchanged and unchangeable.

The *koranskole* also figures prominently in the missionary literature. Sometimes local *koranskoler* are perceived as competitors to Christian mission (*Agder* 20.11.78), and childhood attendance in a *koranskole* is often presented as one of the central elements in the genre of conversion reports (Opsal 2003, 157). What is highlighted in these accounts is not so much the intellectual and educational shortcomings as the spiritual fruitlessness. In the individual testimonies of Christian converts from Islam, the *koranskolen* is repeatedly presented as a place where the individual had sought spiritual guidance, without success; there was nothing speaking to the heart or nurturing a sense of peace (Kirkengen 1987). Again, there is a remarkable continuity in these reports over time (*Vårt Land* 19.01.1996; Kaldhol 2007; Eikje 2020). When the *koranskole* is brought home to Norway in the 1980s, so is the missionary concern (*Vårt land* 20.11.1981).

Koranskolen brought Home

Towards the end of the 1970s, a few references to the phenomenon of *koranskole* are found in books and articles describing the situation for immigrants in European countries. Character- istically, these are community-based, leisure time, weekend, or afternoon courses for children. The *koranskole* is thus brought closer to home, and from the 1980s, a new set of *koranskole*- related motifs are found in Norwegian printed material.

By the late 1970s, a few thousand immigrant children of different backgrounds lived in Norway and their educational needs became a topic in both the formal educational system and in society. In this connection, the term *koranskole* occurred in media coverage, in political discussions, and in professional and scholarly deliberations on the immigrant children's social situation. It was normally framed by an assumption of the impermanence of their stay in the country (*Bergens tidende* 01.10.1977). This marks the beginning of two long lasting, partly

overlapping discussions in the Norwegian educational field during the 1980s and 1990s: the place of mother tongue instruction and the form and content of religious education in the formal education system. The constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion was confirmed in the law on religion, *Lov om trudomssamfunn og ymist anna* (1969), which, along with the law on education, *Grunnskolelova* (1969), set the frame for exemption from Christian instruction.

In the same period, Muslim immigrants, predominantly from Pakistan, Turkey, and Morocco, had started to organize cultural associations and faith stance organizations in which religious instruction for children was an important activity and concern. One newspaper reported that around 200 children assembled on a weekly basis in an Oslo primary school (Tøyen) for a two-hour lesson every Saturday (*Verdens Gang* 13.01.1978). The organization Islamic Cultural Centre gathered for prayers and teaching children in a rented space in a downtown building (Karl Johan's street) in Oslo (*Dagbladet* 12.09.1979). The reports do not tag or describe in further detail what the teaching sessions contained, but the source's comments suggest the centrality of the Qurʾan to the educational programs.

In a publication providing an overview of public services and community organizations relevant to immigrants in Oslo in 1983, several organizations report educating children as one of their main activities. The educational programs are described as concentrating on Arabic and/or national languages, Islam, Islamic and/or national culture, in addition to the Qurʾan (*Hvem gjør hva?* 1983). None of the organizations presented in this catalogue use the term *koranskole* to describe their educational activities, which are rather referred to in terms of education (*undervisning*), instruction *(opplæring)* or schooling activities for children (cf. *Aftenposten A-magasinet* 03.11.1984).

The first occurrences of the term *koranskole* I have found used in connection to these local educational initiatives is in a report published by the Oslo Peace Research Institute in 1980, in which the researchers were particularly interested in mother tongue instruction, but also note that Muslim children generally attend *koranskolen* on Saturdays (Heiberg, Kapoor, and Mathisen 1980, 30). Anne Hvenekilde also refers to the *koranskole,* glossing it with the notion of Sunday school (Hvenekilde 1980, 41–42). However, neither the report nor the book offer any further detail about actual attendance at these schools or their content. Bente

Puntervold Bø noted in 1982 that this field had not yet been studied, and she included it in her broader study *Nabolagsundersøkelsen* from 1984, in which she introduced the term 'Koran-skole' (with quotation marks). To her, the term denoted religious education in the form of a daily routine of reading the Qurʾan after school hours in private, but organized arrangements involving the children of Muslim immigrants, at the time most notably from the Pakistani community, but to some degree also the Turkish and Moroccan communities. According to the very limited empirical material Bø was able to gather in 1984, about 25% of the children attended this educational arrangement and 25% did not attend, while the question was not relevant to about 50% (Bø 1982, 123–125; Bø 1984, 86-89).

Meanwhile, the term *koranskole* was getting into circulation in media discourse in the context of these local educational activities. One article reports that around 200 children pour into the Jamaat ahl al-Sunna mosque in Oslo in the afternoon to learn the holy book of Muslims by repeating it with a teacher piece by piece (*Aftenposten* 23.11.1985). The article is illustrated with a Norwegian News Agency photo showing imam Chishti (d. 2002), with a group of children in a disorderly flock around him sitting on the ground. He sits with a book in hand, the children, boys and girls of around 6–7 years, are without books and are looking to him for instruction with open and smiling faces. This photo was used time and again in numerous reports and articles on Muslims in Norway, but also in more general articles on Muslims, on Muslim everyday life in Norway, and even on immigrants in a more general sense. The *koranskole* had taken on the role of a standard illustration, much in the same way as a photo of Muslims in congregational prayer.

The media coverage of Muslims in this period almost invariably features Pakistanis. The Pakistani community constituted the largest group of Muslim immigrants in Norway (Daugstad and Østby 2009), but different groups of Arabs (Moroccans), Turks, and others had also started organizing themselves in faith stance communities. A certain competitive situation developed between the faith communities, and the *koranskole*, most often free of charge, also had the function of drawing new members to the mosque (*Ny tid* 30.04.1988). Providing educational activities for children was considered an asset to a faith organization, not only for the members it already served, but also as a way to recruit members (Vogt 2000). The Norwegian public school curriculum of 1987 (M87)

introduced an option for parents to replace the school religious education classes with state-funded classes run by the faith or life stance organizations (NOU 1995, 9; Leirvik 2009). In a temporary experiment, non-formal, denominational religious education in faith stance organizations replaced the formal denominational Christian religious education, but the quality and the quantity of the education offered by various organizations around the country was obviously neither guaranteed nor easy to ensure. The arrangement was discontinued, but the experience informed the discussions leading up to the complete restructuring of the religious education in public schools culminating with the new Educational Act in 1998, which made nondenominational religious education mandatory in primary schools.

Conceptual Consolidation

Throughout the early 1990s, ongoing debates generated professional, scholarly, and political disagreement on the role of mother tongues in primary school pedagogical methods and the content of religious education in primary schools, as well as concerns over social problems and the integration of immigrants and children of immigrant descent. The *koranskole* became one of the conceptual axes around which these discussions evolved, yet empirical insights into mosque-based IRE remained limited, although academic interest was manifested.

Commenting from the perspective of migration pedagogy, in the late 1980s a group of textbook writers had criticized what they found to be a widespread tendency to see bilingualism as a social, emotional, and academic impediment for minority children. They asserted that sending children to the *koranskole* in the afternoons could be a manifestation of genuine religious interest which could function as a cultural element around which these ethnic minority societies might gather. It was suggested that what they called 'religious language' could serve as a potential resource and that one could consider the *koranskole* as having a stabilizing effect. In addition, they asked whether the pedagogical tool of rote learning might even have some benefits (Bjørnæs, Hauge, and Strandnes 1988, 209; Hauge 1988).

In her 1989 master's thesis, Sidsel H. Grande studied activities in the mosques, including educational activities (Grande 1989, 1990; see also Grande 2008). Reporting from her fieldwork in

the Jamaat ahl-e Sunnat mosque, where around 500 children attended a *koranskole*, in addition to classes in Urdu, she noted that 42 pupils were dedicated to learning the whole of the Qurʾan by heart (becoming *ḥāfiẓ*). In Grande's description, the term *koranskole* is self-explanatory, and she observed a resemblance to traditional Norwegian catechism training, with supervised recital that involved repeating after the teacher (Grande 1989, 215–16; Grande 1990, 11; cf. Grande 2008).

An important contributor to the emerging academic interest was Sissel Østberg, who published a book on pluralism in Norwegian public schools in 1992, with contributions from Berit Thorbjørnsrud, Pål Wiik, and Oddbjørn Leirvik. It is the first attempt to discuss the pedagogical dilemmas systematically, taking into consideration the different needs of the pupils in an increasingly multicultural school system. In addition to informal instruction in the families and homes, the book emphasizes the *koranskole* activities in the mosques as an important arena for knowledge transmission. Reflecting on the situation in primary schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Østberg argued that although at that point the religious education offered in *koranskoler* was considered a possible substitute for those children exempt from religious education in public schools, the public school's mandate should be to convey broader academic knowledge as well as provide an arena for discussing ethical issues (Østberg 1992, 57). Østberg's work introduced the *koranskole* in the Jamaat ahl-e Sunnat mosque (Østberg 1992, 95–99), which was dominated by Pakistani members and organized in the same way as such supplementary non-formal educational activities would be in Pakistan. While it is not clear whether her sources used the term *koranskole* or she introduced it, she points out that in Pakistan, the word *madrasa* is separate, referring to boarding schools for children (Østberg 1992, 96).

Just as in the media coverage from this period, the 1992 book's studies concentrate on a mosques with Pakistani members. Østberg's observations inspired a student assignment in migration pedagogy, in which Berit Alnæs, Unni Lian, and Jorunn Sundby broadened the scope to include two other, multilingual mosques. Their activities are somewhat more varied, although learning the Qurʾan in Arabic remains a principal aim. They found that conveying knowledge on religion and culture, and learning to be a good Muslim, were equally important (Alnæs, Lian, and Sundby 1995, 16), yet the established

term *koranskoler* is used without reservation. Likewise, in Kari Vogt's ground-breaking and influential books on Muslims in Europe (Vogt 1995, 43–46) and Norway (Vogt 2000), the term *koranskole* seems unquestioned and consensual. In a major Norwegian lexicon, the entry 'koranskole' is included in the 1997 edition, explained as an "institution where Muslim children learn suras ('chapters') of the Qurʾān by heart" (*Aschehoug og Gyldendals* 1997, 9, 82).

Debate and Controversy

Different positions on the *koranskoler* crystallized in the public debates during the early 1990s. Kamil T. Øzerk argued that attending *koranskolen* hinders children's participation in 'Norwegian leisure time activities', thereby hampering their school results (*Aftenposten* 26.06.1992), while Zahid Mukhtar held that the needs of Muslim children should be catered for in formal education, but their Islamic religious education is a responsibility for the mosques and cannot be left to the schools (*Vårt land* 4.7.1994). A group of Pakistani-Norwegian politicians asserted that the *koranskole was* not beneficial for the children, (*Aftenposten* 16.01.1995), while a group of Pakistani-Norwegian parents responded that they found this claim shocking (*Aftenposten* 19.01.95). Newspapers presented estimated numbers of children attending mosque-based afternoon *koranskoler*, and they featured some stories of individual children and their experiences. A young girl reported on her busy day, happy to conduct her daily Qurʾan lesson in her neighborhood (*Aftenposten* 15.01.1995). According to a group of young boys meeting once a week for lessons in the mosque, the most important benefit was just to get together and meet each other (*Vårt Land* 09.03.1996).

In the discussions, the question of religious education was entangled with the question of mother tongue language learning. Unni Wikan argued that striving for multilingualism through state school, mother tongue learning along with afternoon *koranskoler* impeded social development, integration, and the general wellbeing of the children (Wikan 1995, 58–59). Inger-Lise Lien similarly argued that, above all, *koranskolen* represented an intellectual and educational impediment for the young generation Muslims of Pakistani descent in Norway, as the

cultural capital they accrue by learning the Qurʾan by heart was of no value in the Norwegian context, nor did this year-long commitment have any intellectual benefits (Lien 1997, 146). Lien interprets the attendance and learning in the *koranskole* exclusively in terms of honor and blessing. In Walid al-Kubaisi's (d. 2018) writing, a similar argument is cast in the genre of a parable. The character Sindbad is led to believe that there is a magic code to be learnt in the *koranskole*, only to be disappointed because the teacher in the *koranskole* has a very limited and strict definition of what constitutes a legitimate code and does not permit the seeking of knowledge outside the tradition (al-Kubaisi 1997). This impression of a strict, stern, and unpleasant educational setting, in which there is little room for either individuality or intellectual development, coincided with many of the impressions created by the earlier accounts in books and articles. When Mah-Rukh Ali discussed the public and media discourse on Muslims in 1997, *koranskole* featured in her catalogue of stereotypical images (Ali 1997, 95). In the following years, this mimetic *koranskole* trope appeared repeatedly in fictitious as well as biographical and autobiographical childhood memory, often serving as a background against which the main character positioned him or herself.

Koranskolen as a Literary Trope

The literary childhood memory motif of attending Qurʾan lessons, was most famously introduced to European readers in translations of books by the Egyptian writer Taha Husayn (d. 1973). In his book *al-Ayyām*, Husayn described how he learnt the Qurʾan by heart as a young child by attending the *kuttāb*, where a group of young boys would gather around the teacher. With a generic translation choice, the *kuttāb* becomes 'a village school' (*landsbyskole*) in Einar Berg's translation of *al-Ayyām* in 1973, which was the first fictional book to be translated from Arabic into Norwegian (Husayn 1973). As Gunvor Mejdell notes, Berg often avoids both loan words and any explanation of cultural markers, thus inviting a cultural and literal rather than ethnographic reading (Mejdell 2011, 2020).

In the first novel written by an author of immigrant back-ground, Khalid Hussain's book *Pakkis* published in 1986, a young man is conflicted by internal and external aspirations and expec-

10   Orhan Pamuk also uses the term *Kuran okulu*. With thanks to Pamuk translator Ingeborg Amadou Fossestøl for this information.

tations and confronted by his father with his poor knowledge of the Qurʾan. The young man imagines himself seated in a mosque and the embarrassment of not being able to recite as well as others his age. Interestingly, though, there is no use of the term *koranskole* in this context.

In 1973 and 1986, references to the *koranskole* were limited in the general public discourse in Norway. A few decades later, when Berg's translation of Taha Husayn's book was reprinted in 2010, the scene was different, and the term *koranskole* had become interwoven into several local debates and new global concerns. It was no longer mainly associated with a nostalgic distance, but also with an ambiguous nearness cherished by some but regarded with mixed feelings by others. In 2010, Berg's insisting on the generic understanding of the term *kuttāb* in his translation of Husayn's book seems refreshing. In the meantime, several other fictional translations had chosen the term *koranskole* to translate the Arabic *kuttāb* (Naguib Mahfouz), the Turkish *medrese* or *mektep* (Orhan Pamuk),[10] or the English *Koran school* (Abdulrazak Gurnah). When this childhood memory or milieu-describing element appeared in original Norwegian writings from the mid-1990s, the term *koranskole* was readily at hand. Thus, Torgrim Eggen's main character imagines the nature of violent punishment meted out in the many *koranskolene* around Oslo (Eggen 1995, 80). In Nasim Karim's novel *Izzat*, attending *koranskole* is portrayed as one of the typical features of a traditional Pakistani girl's life (Karim 1996, 43), while in one of Elin Brodin's books, attending the *koranskolen* becomes an issue when a group of kids is planning leisure time activities (Brodin 1997, 51). Replicating the debated issues, from this period childhood *koranskole* attendance becomes a standard, and mostly self-explicating, motif in fiction.

The term *koranskole* is found detached from the lexical content, taking on metaphorical qualities, although occasionally, in some of the writings, one finds the term *koranskole* glossed as a "muhammedansk bibelskole" (*Gudbrandsdølen* 14.04.1976). However, some decades later the notion of *koranskole* seems to be perceived as more familiar, as in the question "Bible school? Is that a Christian koranskole?" (*Dagen* 22.02.2021). In another reversed comparison, the *koranskole* is used to evoke a pedagogic method of rote learning (Hasle 2015, 21), and a description of the early Norwegian primary schools preparing illiterates for

confirmation is said to bring the *koranskoler* to mind (*Aura avis* 05.11.2019). The term even takes on a metaphorical life of its own, as when Aslak Nore chattily compares his set of values to a *koranskole* curriculum, obviously without any reference to actual Qurʾanic content (*Aftenposten* 07.08.2020).

An Emerging Field of Research

By the mid-1990s, the term *koranskole* was well-established in the local context in Norway; however, the debates were only based to a limited degree on empirical knowledge about the different forms and content of the IRE offered to Muslim children in non-formal educational settings in Oslo and the countryside. This situation prompted the motivation among some researchers in fields like religious sciences, migration pedagogic, and religious pedagogy to undertake research on the subject (Eggen 2023b).

In her doctoral thesis and subsequent book, Sissel Østberg widened the scope of her previous engagement, with an ethnographic study of children of Pakistani descent in Oslo in which the educational complex was both very central and an important factor in the children's lives. In it Østberg presented an in-depth analysis of mosque-based education in a small selection of Oslo mosques, in addition to the classes given in private homes. Applying the most dominant concepts, *Qurʾan school* (1998) and *koranskole* (2003), Østberg found in her study that these educational activities served multiple purposes: emotional, social, and sensory. In addition to the educational instruction, they offered important arenas for religious socializing and religious practice for the children of Pakistani descent, and she argued that they deserved recognition as such. Østberg further held that the children experienced a sense of belonging through the Qurʾan classes (Østberg 2003, 235).

With Camilla Elizabeth Dahlin's master's thesis from 2001, we get the first comprehensive overview of the different forms of non-formal, mosque-based religious education, albeit limited to Oslo. Dahlin mapped educational activities in more than 30 organizations, along with an ethnographic study of four different *koranskoler* (Dahlin 2001). She emphasized the variations between the different institutions with regard to both content and methods, finding that the curriculum extended over

a number of topics and themes, including the Qurʾan, values, practice, and languages. Much like Østberg, Dahlin also noticed the social and cultural function of the activities; nevertheless, she uses the term *koranskole* throughout, and without reservations. It seems as if, at this point, the term *koranskole* does not require delimitations, specifications, and definitions, but has in fact been coined as a technical term in the academic literature.

The term *koranskole* is readily available, easily recognized, with an assumed content that makes it flexible and useable almost on a generic level. For instance, a media representation of a report from 1995 about employment among refugees, in which there was nothing about Muslim children and no particular focus on Muslims in general, was illustrated by a depiction of a class in the "World Islamic Mission Koranskole" (*Verdens Gang* 17.11.1995). An *Official Norwegian Report* from the same year noted that some of the approximately 5–6% of the pupils exempt from the (at that time Christian) religious education in school, attended classes organized by their faith community. This is described respectively by the term *koranskole* and by the generic notions "education in the synagogue" and "the education Jehova's Witnesses give their children" (NOU 1995, 8, 60). In a later *Official Norwegian Report*, it is asked whether children with an immigrant background participate in *koranskole* or in "activities in the Catholic community" (NOU 2011, 14, 305). The particularity in the terminology when it comes to Muslim leisure time activities may reflect the catch-all quality of the term, or it might suggest to the reader that all spare-time Muslim activity is set in an educational frame. The term has become generic, to a certain extent ambiguous, and in some instances, the *koranskole* has been turned into a symbol of immigrant lives.

In discussions on the educational, intellectual, and social value of mosque-based children's activities, however, mosque attendance was not always considered on a par with other leisure-time pursuits. When Hanne S. Kavli investigated such activities among children of Pakistani and Somali descent, attending a *koranskole*, without further qualifications of the concept, was not categorized as an organized leisure time activity (like sport, clubs, and band practice) but treated as a separate category (Kavli 2007). Consequently, one of the conclusions was that children attending *koranskole* were less inclined to participate in organized leisure-time activities (Kavli 2007, 46),

and Kavli's report was predictably presented in the media discourse with headlines like "Koranskole rather than friends and leisure time" (*Dagsavisen* 17.12.2007). In this report, the social, emotive, cultural, even sensory and spiritual potential benefits pointed out by Dahlin (2001) and Østberg (2003), are reduced to a notion of tiresome swotting that is epitomized by the term *koranskole*.

The Global in the Local

By turn of the millennium, the formal religious education in public schools had become a non-confessional, non-denominational, comparative subject with a focus on all religious traditions, although weighted in favour of Christianity. There were continued debates on the quantitative and qualitative distribution between the religions and life stances (Skeie 2022), but a standard repertoire of Qurʾanic stories and even descriptions from *koranskoler* were used in textbooks (Breilid and Tove Nicolaisen 2003). The role of mother tongue teaching was reduced in order to support Norwegian language training (Bakken 2003).

Non-formal religious education, along with mother tongue teaching, remained supplementary and based on parental choice, and educating children continued to be a major concern for Muslim organizations. In 1993 the inaugurating statutes of the first Muslim umbrella organization, the Islamic Council of Norway (Islamsk Råd Norge, IRN), stipulated the aim of providing a thorough education for Muslim children in Norway in faith, history, and culture; indeed, one of the conditions for membership in the umbrella organization was the provision of regular *koranskole* for children and adults (Elgvin 2020, Appendix A, 378–396). In the 2002 revision, the wording is slightly amended to *koranundervisning*, while in the 2006 and 2021 revisions, the Council's aim to work toward such education is still stated, but it is no longer a condition for membership that it is offered (https://irn.no/irn-vedtekter/). Some attempts have been made to produce a uniform educational curricula (Leirvik 2009), while the Muslim Dialogue Network umbrella organization (Muslimsk Dialognettverk, MDN) has also voiced a concern for children's education since its inauguration in 2017.

From the start, transnational connections have been

11 From a handful in the late 1960s, by 1980 Muslims of primarily Pakistani, Turkish, and Moroccan background amounted to around 14,000. With new groups from countries like the Balkans, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, and others, as well as converts, the numbers had by 2016 grown to around 200,000 individuals or around 4% of the population. However, with no official registration of faith, only organisational belonging, the numbers are increasingly difficult to estimate (Dalgard and Østby 2009; Østby and Dalgard 2017).

important for most of the mosques in terms of children's education, as the first generations of Muslims were predominantly immigrants.[11] By the 2000s, several generations of Muslims had been born and raised in Norway, and to some of these, attending mosque activities as children was a habitual part of their lives. Some of the teachers in the mosques had gained experience from public schools, others had received university training abroad. Nevertheless, the framing and perception in the context of the wider society continued to be contested, with the media regularly featuring stories presenting the 'closed world' of the *koranskole*.

As we have seen, in some of the early writings, the *koranskole* was equated with the *madrasa* as an institution of higher learning. However, in the media discourse from the late 1990s, *madrasa* or its variant *madrassa*, glossed as *koranskole*, was associated first with the local advancements of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan, then with training facilities recruiting for international terrorism, and, from the 2000s, with debates on extremism and radicalization. Its gloss of *koranskole* was connected to transnational movements, and it was inscribed in discourses of caution and suspicion, especially after the U.S.-initiated Global War on Terrorism from 2001, following the World Trade Centre and Pentagon attacks (Fair 2012).

In 2006, a lexicon entry explained the term as an institution for higher Islamic learning, but also pointed out the use by some movements of the age-old institution (*Aschehoug og Gyldendals* 2006, 10, 25), an image of a violence-mongering enterprise that was soon picked up by popular culture. Thus, for instance, in a 2008 novel by Ørjan N. Karlsson, one of the central characters, after losing his parents and relatives in American bombardments in Iraq, travels through several Arabic countries until he is initiated into a terrorist network through attendance at "en *koranskole*, en *madrasa*" (Karlsson 2008, 106–7).

Norwegian writers respond to these suspicions and allegations in different ways. When Bushra Ishaq investigated Norwegian Muslims' attitudes in 2017, one of the questions in the questionnaire addressed whether "religious activity in the form of a koranskole (madrasa) should be more regulated" to hinder terrorism (Ishaq 2017, Appendix two, 8). In the responses, apparently this solution was barely, if at all, supported by the interviews. Both the question and the vocabulary were clearly inspired by recent events and media coverage.

In 2016, Masoud Ebrahimnejad wrote a report on mosques in Oslo for the newspaper *Utsyn*, including what he termed "education in Islam outside of the Norwegian school" (Ebrahimnejad 2016, 12). The terminology in the report is sometimes selected on the basis of a temporal criterium (*kveldsskole* – evening school*, helgeskole* – weeked school), sometimes on a content criterion (*koranundervisning* – Qurʾan instruction, *språkundervisning* – language instruction). However, *koranskole* is Ebrahimnejad's overall term, although it is not clear whether this is the author's or his informants' preference. One of the claims in the report is that the instruction of children and young people in *koranskoler* and in weekend schools takes place in closed or relatively closed environments (Ebrahimnejad 2016, 8, 64). In the media outreach, the author raised concerns that children are being influenced without any governmental control (*Verdens Gang* 01.11.2016). Breaking with a tradition of autonomy for religious organizations, some politicians suggested surveillance and control of the *koranskoler* in particular (*Vårt Land* 24.05.2019; *Aftenposten* 04.11.2019). Others reacted to the sweeping generalizations or to the illiberal targeting of Muslims (*Vårt Land* 03.06. 2019, *Utrop* 06.02.2020), and it became an issue in the discussions leading up to the new law on faith and life stance organizations. However, there is no condition of governmental approval of educational activities attached to receiving state funding in the current law, which merely has a general clause stating violation of children's rights as a probable cause for withdrawal of financial support (Trossamfunnslova 2020, §6). An obligation to report on "the amount, content and form" of "educational or faith instructional and other activities" for children is stipulated in the law's regulations (Trossamfunnsforskriften 2020, §15).

Another form of global concern has been transnational schooling, which is practiced by some minority families (Ahmad et al. 2006), although motivated by different reasons and taking on different forms. As demonstrated by Reisel, Bredal, and Lidén (2018), Qurʾan instruction in non-formal educational facilities and Islamic religious education in formal school settings varies in the countries where Muslim families have travelled or sent their children for education. In 2017 and 2018, Norsk Rikskringkastning (NRK) uncovered a series of severe cases of deprivation of liberty and violence against young people in co-called educational facilities in different countries. Tagged

koranskolesakene (the Qurʾan school cases), the facilities in question were labelled *koranskoler* (collective web page 01.11.2016–31.03.2020 Koranskoler – Siste nytt – NRK). The term *koranskole* was sometimes the informant's choice, at other times it is unclear whose term it was. At times there were caveats presented, with the qualifier 'so-called' preceding it or with quotation marks around it; however, mostly the facilities were simply tagged *koranskoler*, without further qualifications. A report from an expert group shows how these particularly brutal cases in the media were connected to a general concern about negative social control, forced marriage, and the risk of encouraging extremist viewpoints and radicalization (Bredal et al. 2020), and they were soon politicized in the general debate. Thus, in this context a dubious and possibly stigmatizing quality is added to the term *koranskole*, and some of the young people interviewed spoke of a double stigma (Bredal et al. 2020, 64). As one of the informants put it, "He said it was a koranskole, but that was totally wrong. It was more like a disciplinary facility" (Bredal et al. 2020, 74). This young person had a different conception of the *koranskole*, possibly he had already attended one. In the public discourse, however, the term may potentially be more permanently tainted, casting Islamic religious education in a suspicious light and potentially adding to a widespread negative sentiment towards Muslims (Moe 2022).

Concluding Remarks

In Norway, the term *koranskole* has become synonymous with non-formal Islamic religious education. Although other terms, like education and instruction, do occur, and are often used by the organizers, *koranskole* is the most prevalent term in academic and public discourse, and is often perceived as self-explanatory. While some academic texts nuance this, one seldom finds extensive discussions of the suitability of the term, and few choose to discard it altogether. Already used ethnographically to refer to practices in other countries, during the late 1980s and early 1990s the term was introduced to describe a local educational practice foreign to established Norwegian culture. The source material, as well as informal conversations with individuals attending these facilities in the 1980s, confirm the impression that the Norwegian term *koranskole* was not

common among Muslims at that time. Nevertheless, some of their own preferred terms, like *dars al-Qurʾān - Qurʾan lesson*, emphasized the focus on the Qurʾan in this form of instruction.

As the term *koranskole* became widespread toward the mid-1990s, Muslim children, parents, and organizations also started using it, mainly to communicate with the broader society. I argue that the interconnectedness between different parts of the public discourse – in academia, politics, media, and prose – has been instrumental in prompting this widespread use of the term and in providing the diverse range of associations and functions demonstrated in this article. Today, however, although the term is sometimes used among Muslims, a number of educational facilitators express an ambivalence (Eggen 2023a). The Qurʾan remains at the heart of the educational concerns and programs, but the term *koranskole* is not perceived to give an accurate description of the vast range of content and activities that are offered. Moreover, some organizers hold that the term is today associated with negative practices or politicized discourses and potentially carries a stigma.

The different uses of the term *koranskole* were all established in the early stages of the public discourse in Norway, and the dominant conceptualizations, motifs, and tropes keep recurring, with some context-specific variations, throughout the period. Within the last few decades, the *koranskole* has been one of the touchstones in several highly politicised debates concerning Muslims in Norway. However, the term continues to be a standard reference in travel reports and in childhood memories, also bearing witness to mystery, nostalgia, sensation, unrest, and suspicion. The term works in different contexts as an image, a metaphor, or a trope. After investigating the appearance of the term *koranskole* in the material, I suggest the following typology for its meanings and functions: 1) It is used as a specific technical term, denoting what I have called Qurʾanic instruction proper as it is offered in some mosques. 2) It is also used as a metonymical technical term, denoting any kind of non-formal educational activities in a Muslim faith-based organization (mosque or other organization). 3) It is used as a generic term with a metonymic or symbolic quality for any kind of minority community-based children's activity. 4) The term *koranskole* works as an Oriental trope, evoking images of past grandeur in distant times, places, and cultural contexts, and present stagnation. 5) It works as a nostalgic, dismissive, or mixed memory trope, to

which an author can pin a past and assume a position for a character, in fiction as well as in biography or autobiography. 6) Lastly, the term *koranskole* seems to have taken on a metaphorical quality detached from its lexical content, evoking an image of rigidness or stagnation.

For generalized analytical and comparative purposes, de-nominational religious education is an established term, and my aim here is not to argue for a new analytical framework in the field. However, due to the lack of precision of the concept *koranskole* particular to Islamic religious education, I call into question the suitability of its continued use in research and academic discourse. Vernacular terms, like *maktab* or *madrasa*, are to some extent used by practitioners in the Islamic religious education field in Norway, but other terms, like 'school' with a variety of qualifiers, are more common (Eggen 2023a). The current legal framework in Norway uses the term faith instruction (*trosopplæring*). This is derived from the terminology adopted by the Church of Norway following a parliamentary decision, in replacement of the term baptism instruction (*dåpsopplæring*) in church-based Christian religious education (Johnsen 2015). However, within the Church of Norway this terminology is currently debated.

With regards to the particularities of Islamic religious education, one option is to differentiate between generalized and specialized activities. Thus, while the very specialized instruction in Qurʾan recitation skills could, for instance, pertinently be termed Qurʾan instruction (*koranundervisning*), a better suited general terminology needs thorough conceptual discussion. Such a terminology could be coined on basis of the content in question, such as language training, Islamic education, or Qurʾan instruction. However, the characteristic nature of these educational enterprises is precisely to combine different topics. Another option is to coin a temporal term, such as afternoon, weekend, or leisure time religious education. This notion could cover educational enterprises outside of the framework of the institutionalized faith community, as in informal religious education. Emphasizing the organizing entity – for instance, faith stance organization education – ties in with the legal framework, while lacking the spatial perspective inherent in the term mosque-based education, which I have used in this article.

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Jenny Berglund

Islamic supplementary education as an extra-curricular activity

Sociological studies have shown that teenagers in larger Swedish cities from 'poor result schools' participate in extra-curricular activities connected to religion more frequently than others, and that involvement in such religious activities is positive in terms of educational outcomes for pupils from the lower strata of the social hierarchy. These findings raise new questions about supplementary Islamic education, as this is one type of religious extra-curricular activity found in many such areas. The article is based on interviews with students as well as observations from four Swedish mosques. The purpose is to discuss how we can understand the potentially compensatory effect of supplementary Islamic education. Thus, the emphasis is not on the traditional core of Islamic education, but on what we can call co-curricular Islamic educational activities, such as football, homework help, and mathematics.

Research on Islamic supplementary education in Europe is in many ways in its infancy, especially in the Nordic countries. Some British studies recognize the growing importance of supplementary religious education across a range of communities in general and for the Muslim community in particular (Cherti and Bradley 2011; Ramalingam and Griffith 2015; Gent 2018; Berglund and Gent 2018). Semiha Sözeri et al. (2022) add to the research by addressing the role of mosque education in the integration of Turkish-Dutch Muslim children and Iverssen (forthcoming) shows that many linguistically minoritized students participate in Islamic supplementary education to

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receive instruction in Arabic. In Sweden, I have studied the experiences and reflections of children and young people, particularly the impact of their often-daily movement between mainstream schooling and Islamic supplementary education. The findings demonstrate both positive and negative experiences. One of the most significant results has been that the students claim that several skills can be transferred from Islamic supplementary education to mainstream education, and vice versa. The study also shows that the relationship between these two forms or traditions of education (and by implication, other types of educational traditions as well) is far more subtle, fluid, and nuanced than a polarized characterization suggests (Berglund and Gent 2018; Berglund 2019b). These young Muslims claim that one skill they can transfer is the ability to memorize (the Qur'an in Islamic education, verbs and the periodic system in mainstream school). Reading, reciting, and memorizing the Qur'an can be understood as a type of liturgical literacy. Research has shown that this liturgical literacy often needs to be hidden in the Swedish public school (Berglund 2017; 2019b) since the activities associated with traditional Muslim education are often thought of in polarized terms: as being mutually exclusive and appearing to clash with the ethos and other features of mainstream secular schooling (Boyle 2004; Boakaz 2012; Gent 2015; 2016).

Islamic Supplementary Education as an Extra-curricular Activity

There is sociological research that points in a different direction. Alireza Bethoui (2019) has, for example, shown that teenagers in larger Swedish cities from 'poor result schools' more frequently participate in religious extra-curricular activities than others. Furthermore, he shows that the benefits of involvement in religious organizations are more positive in terms of educational outcomes for pupils from the lower strata of the social hierarchy (Bethoui 2019, 350). Since Muslims constitute the poorest religious minority in Sweden (Willander 2019, 66), the role of supplementary Islamic education as educationally compensatory is therefore of interest. Bethoui's results pose new questions about supplementary Islamic education. How can we understand this education to be compensatory if the students need to hide

the fact that they participate? In order to shed light on this question, I have returned to the experiences of students who move between mainstream education and Islamic supplementary education, but with a different focus. In this article, my focus is not on reading, reciting, and memorizing the Qur'an but on what can be understood as co-curricular Islamic education activities. I do this to argue that these co-curricular activities are an integral part of what we call Islamic supplementary education and that they can be understood as part of the compensatory effect.

Social and Cultural Capital

To balance and enhance the understanding of student experiences, this article employs a constructive understanding of Pierre Bourdieu's pointedly inclusive concepts of cultural and social capital as well as habitus (Bourdieu 1996; 2001). Cultural capital refers to ideas, symbols, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action. Bourdieu connects this to 'habitus', which can be described as an embodied socialized tendency or disposition to act, think, or feel in a particular way. Social capital refers to the amount of actual and potential resources to which an individual has access through social networks and membership in organizations. Like ordinary economic capital, cultural and social capital can be amassed and invested as well as converted into various other forms. And it is obviously by way of the educational system that cultural and social capital is converted into educational capital, which then can be transformed into other forms of capital, meaning occupational, economic, and social opportunity. According to Bourdieu, this 'conversion' of one form of capital into another is central to the intragenerational or intergenerational reproduction of class differences. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is applicable to the study of extra-curricular activities since different forms of cultural capital, such as knowledge, skills, and interests, can affect which activities students choose to participate in. Students from more privileged backgrounds may have greater access to cultural resources that enable their participation in certain activities, while others may be excluded. Since Bourdieu emphasizes the role of social class in shaping individuals' tastes and preferences, this perspective becomes valuable for the study

of Islamic supplementary education as an extra-curricular activity. Among other things, it helps us understand how access to and participation in such activities more broadly are often structured along social class lines, shedding light on the unequal distribution of the opportunities and resources required to engage in them. Furthermore, through the concept of habitus, we can explore how students' internalized dispositions, shaped by their social and cultural context, influence their choices and experiences of these activities. Bourdieu's theories thereby illuminate how students' social networks, including their family and peer connections, influence their access to extra-curricular activities.

In contrast to Bourdieu's sociology, which addresses the 'mezzo' level of societal life, my research deals with individual students on an ethnographic level. The use of what Behtoui (2017) calls 'extra-familial social capital' constitutes an attempt to bridge these two levels. Behtoui builds on Bourdieu's work but also that of Stanton-Salazar (2001), and explains that extra-familial social capital consists of those resources which are provided by a variety of people beyond pupils' immediate family members, which can be school staff, friends, and other adults and adolescents with whom they are in contact through, for example, organized extra-curricular activities. Behtoui has demonstrated that when involvement in extra-curricular activities such as athletics, cultural, and religious activities:

> was associated with positive educational outcomes, participation in less-structured activities was associated with negative effects (in both cases compared to those with no extra-curricular activity involvement). Moreover, no activity at all (relative to less-structured activities) demonstrated a stronger negative association with the educational outcomes. (2019, 352).

He adds,

> Even after controlling for respondents' class background, cultural and athletic programmes appear to be more available to students attending schools with the best academic results – often located in affluent areas – than those who attend underachieving schools in cities and towns. The only exceptions were the higher rate of participation in activities put on by religious

organisations in marginalised areas of big cities and the YRCs existing in the less-privileged neighborhoods of small towns, which are likely to be more available to those living in these districts. (Behtoui 2019, 352)

This social capital can thus have a *bridging* or *bonding* effect (Putnam 1993, 2000). Bridging social capital refers to the development of relations and networks with people from *other* environments and backgrounds, people who are *different* from oneself. Bonding social capital then refers to the development of relations and networks with people from *similar* environments and backgrounds who are part of the *same* community. By combining the concept of social capital with Robert Putnam's ideas of bridging and bonding, we get a more comprehensive framework for understanding social dynamics, especially within the context of extra-curricular school activities. Bonding refers to the development of close-knit, homogenous social networks, such as those within a specific club or group. This can be understood in the context of habitus, as students from similar backgrounds may feel more comfortable participating in activities with peers who share their cultural capital. Bonding social capital can promote a sense of belonging and solidarity within these groups. Bridging social capital pertains to connections and networks that reach across different social groups and communities. In the context of extra-curricular activities, you can analyze how certain activities foster bridging by bringing together students from diverse backgrounds. This can provide opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and learning.

Extra-curricular school activities

As already mentioned, it is fairly well established that extra-curricular activities positively affect educational outcomes since they provide sources of social control, together with emotional and personal support. Studies show that students who participate in extra-curricular activities report higher levels of confidence, thus contributing to young people's character development (Blomfield and Barber 2009; Farb and Matjasko 2012; Snellman et al. 2015). Kenneth Bartkus et al. (2012) define extra-curricular activities—whether athletic, cultural, political, or religious—as

those which are external to the core curriculum wherein participation is optional. These activities can be considered a practical aspect of cultural capital (Jæger 2011, 295) as they facilitate the acquisition of cognitive skills, normative values, and cultural norms that align with the formal education system and are subsequently acknowledged and rewarded. Consequently, researchers have suggested that extra-curricular engagement may contribute to the preservation of social differences since it tends to be more prevalent among students from socioeconomically privileged backgrounds (Carolan and Wasserman 2015).

In Sweden, the majority of children and young people take extra-curricular activities outside of school and after school hours (Behtoui 2019), and what is here called Islamic supplementary education, is understood within educational research as one such activity. In Swedish public school, sport is a mandatory school subject, but unlike in other countries, schools do not offer an extra-curricular program *within* the school premises. Instead, parents take their children to sports activities *outside* the school. Religious education is also a mandatory subject in Sweden, but it is a non-confessional school subject that teaches about different religions, not a confessional subject that brings children into a specific worldview such as that provided in Islamic supplementary education (Berglund 2019, 2023). As with sports, if parents want their children to attend confessional teaching *into* a specific worldview, they need to enroll them in this *outside* the mainstream school.[1]

Traditionally, extra-curricular activities are organized by adults as members of civil society organizations, but since the 1990s, this type of non-profit civil society provision has declined. Instead, there has been an increase in the number of private actors, and as Lars Svedberg and Lars Trädgård (2007) show, we can see that the gap between the participation rates of young people of different class backgrounds (with education and income as markers) has increased. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (2014) shows that children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are under-represented in extra-curricular activities due to the cost of participation (equipment, training camps, membership fees etc.). What is important for our discussion is that the Islamic supplementary education discussed here is, for the most part, free, although in some cases parents were required to pay for teaching materials

1 An exception to this is of course if parents enroll their children in a religious school. At these schools, non-confessional religious education has to be taught, but confessional religious education can be added as an extra-curricular subject (see, for example, Berglund 2015 or 2019a).

or assist by supplying the children with snacks.

Islam and Islamic Supplementary Education in Sweden

Sweden has a population of about 10 million people. There are no reliable statistics on the number of Muslims in the country; instead, various estimates are used. According to 2016 estimates, the Muslim population in Sweden accounted for 8% of the total population. According to the Pew Research Center, 810,000 people identify as Muslims in some way, and the country will have the largest Muslim population in Europe by 2050, ranging from 11 to 30 percent of the total population depending on migration rates. The vast majority of Muslim children in Sweden attend public school. We know that 27 percent of all students have immigrant parents (Skolverket 2022/2023), but there are no statistics on how many of those are Muslim. In Sweden, religion education[2] (RE) [*religionskunskap*], is, as already mentioned, a non-denominational subject taught from first grade through to leaving. It is an integrative[3] school subject that teaches *about* different religions to all pupils in the same classroom, regardless of their religious or cultural background. This means that if parents want an education that inculcates their children *into* a specific religious world view, they must either enroll their children in a faith-based independent school or in supplementary religious education, which in the Islamic case is sometimes also called mosque education, Qur'an schooling, or Islamic instruction. The reason why I prefer 'Islamic supplementary education' is that the word *education* makes more space for the agency of the student (Berglund 2016). The word *supplementary* is significant as well, because it conveys the notion of an activity that 'adds value'. Supplementary Islamic education, moreover, constitutes a broad category that can reflect a variety of pedagogical outlooks. It is also broad in the sense that its content varies widely from Muslim standards like Qur'an memorization, Islamic history, and Islamic jurisprudence to non-standards, here called co-curricular activities, such as theatre, artistic performance, discussion groups, and lessons designed to improve homework performance.

There are no available statistics on the number of Muslim children and young people participating in Islamic

2   In this article the term religion education is used instead of religious education because I find it necessary to distinguish between the different ways that religion is taught in Europe. In other words, the term religion education is a choice made to illustrate the Swedish school subject's officially non-denominational character that is based on a religious studies approach.

3   Integrative is here used for classes where pupils of different religions or no religion are integrated into the same classroom.

supplementary education in Sweden, although somewhat more than 150,000 Muslims belong to some kind of registered Muslim organization (Willander 2019) and many of these provide some kind of Islamic supplementary lessons. These lessons generally take place once a week on a Saturday or Sunday, but sometimes also as an afternoon activity and sometimes twice a week. During holidays, especially summer holidays, some associations organize camps for children that provide more intensive Islamic education combined with excursions and other social activities. What we know is that with well over one hundred established organizations, and around 750 non-profit organizations with Islam or Muslim in their names, Islam has clearly become Sweden's largest non-Christian religion (Sorgenfrei 2018, 223).

Interviews with Young Swedish Muslims

The study's empirical material consists of 20 semi-structured interviews with Swedish Muslim students who at one point or another have participated in supplementary Islamic education in tandem with their mainstream secular schooling. The interviews were conducted in two of Sweden's larger cities, and the interviewees—the majority of whom were contacted through Islamic educational institutions—ranged from 16 to 24 years of age. Over and above the interviews, I personally attended supplementary Islamic educational classes in four different mosques and also had informal conversations with the teachers. The mosques showed great variety. Two of them could be described as national mosques, with a specific nationality dominating both leadership and participants, whereas two were more transnational. In terms of the language used in education, Swedish was the most prevalent since not all pupils understood the dominant language even in the national mosques. They also showed variety in terms of style of pedagogy used to teach the more traditional core of Islamic education, and the amount of time spent on, for example, learning to read, recite, and memorize the Qur'an varied widely.

The main focus of the interviews was on the students' experience of moving between supplementary Islamic education and secular school, with questions regarding the type of knowledge they could take from one setting to the other, but also about the content of supplementary education. A large part of

each interview addressed what has been called the traditional core of Islamic education, that is, learning to read, recite, and memorize the Qur'an. Other aspects of Islamic education that were discussed with the students concerned Islamic history and the Islamic narratives that were often used for teaching *adab* and *akhlaq* (manners and morals). Also mentioned as important by a clear majority of the students were activities such as sports, learning languages, getting help with homework, plus, in one particular case, extra mathematics. It is these co-curricular activities that are at the center of this article and will be discussed below. In the interviews, the students looked *back* on their experience of Islamic supplementary education, reflecting on their experiences in childhood.

When participating in Islamic supplementary education, I conducted formal interviews with teachers and parents but not with pupils because the Swedish ethical vetting committee did not permit interviews with children below the age of 14.[4] Below I have chosen to include both quotes from interviews and excerpts from my fieldnotes.

Homework help

Doing homework was mentioned as an activity that takes place in some mosques, although enthusiasm for this activity was mixed: "Homework here, homework there, at that time I just wanted to get away from it. I knew homework was important, or at least my mum kept telling me, but I just thought why do it in the mosque?" (16-year-old boy). Homework sessions could be part of the three to four-hour schedule for the weekend or a half-hour to hour session after the more classical Islamic education on weekdays. In these sessions, older teenagers and young adults helped children and younger teenagers with all types of homework. According to some of these young men and women, most of the children who came for the homework sessions had parents whose Swedish was not very good. When I discussed the homework help with the 'imam-teacher' (i.e., the imam in his role as a teacher), he said that some of the adults act as mentors for the young people and play an important role in their educational success; he was especially pleased that he had several university students helping out with the homework assistance, referring to them as role models who demonstrate

4   Note that the larger project also included interviews in England. There, we (myself and Bill Gent) could, according to the British ethical vetting system, also coduct interviews with younger children.

"strong work habits and a sense of civic engagement" (imam-teacher B). Yet homework help, as part of supplementary Islamic education, has been heavily criticized in the Swedish media (Expressen 21-07-13) where it has been claimed that some Islamic organizations have received grants from the Swedish National Agency for Education for homework help, but have instead used the money to spread Islamist propaganda.[5] At the time of the interviews, I had no information on grants for homework help; nevertheless, here I argue that the homework help that I have studied can be understood in terms of extra-familial bridging social capital, but also in terms of what Putnam (2015, 174) calls 'soft skills'.

Extra Advanced Mathematics

In one of Sweden's Shia mosques, I met students who attend the mosque in the weekend, not only for Islamic education but also for mathematics. The children's parents explained to me that Iran has the best mathematics education in the world and that the level in Swedish schools is too low. The mathematics lessons at the mosque are held in Persian which, at least for the parents, is also a motivation to enroll children, and a mathematics teacher comes to the mosque every weekend to teach more advanced math to the children. The focus in mathematics, according to the parents, is on numerical counting: "what is taught in upper secondary school [*gymnasiet*] in Sweden numerically, is taught in 7th grade in Iran", a mother tells me. "To learn about Islam, is of course, good, but the lessons in mathematics are also important. We don't separate, both are knowledge" (Mother A). The mother's comment can be understood in relation to the Arabic concept of *'ilm*, which translates as 'knowledge'. According to Franz Rosenthal, well known scholar of semitic languages, Arabic literature, and Islam, *'ilm* is the key concept that defines the nature of Muslim civilization itself: "There is no branch of Muslim intellectual life, of Muslim religious and political life, and of the daily life of the average Muslim that remained untouched by the all-pervasive attitude toward 'knowledge' as something of supreme value for Muslim beings. *'Ilm is Islam*" (2007, 2). A lifelong search for knowledge is an ideal of Islamic piety and underlies the concept of Islamic education. The main focus is the cultivation of religious belief although its meaning also

5   In 2022, 150 organizations applied for grants from the National Agency for Education, 84 were awarded support. Based on their names, 4 or 5 are possibly Islamic organizations. In Sweden, it is possible for non-profit associations that provide homework help to students in school to apply for financial support from the National Agency for Education. The grant can be used for salary costs for staff who administer the assistance, premises costs, technical equipment, and educational materials, but also snacks. In order for an organization to apply for grants for homework help, it must have no profit motive, not be running a 'proper school', be democratically structured, transparently organized, and respect the ideas of democracy, including equality, prohibition of discrimination, and respect for the equal value and rights of all people. It also needs to show its capacity for two years, before applying for the grant. (Skolverket 22-05-06)

incorporates secular disciplines both literary and scientific (Günther 2006).

I did not have the opportunity to take part in the mathematics lessons in the mosque since my focus, at that time, was rather on the more traditional aspects of Islamic education that were going on in parallel; however, the lessons caught my attention, since they were not homework help, but very advanced math. The high status and social capital of math has been acknowledged by several scholars because it is considered to be a factor that leads to well-paid jobs and high social status (Myndigheten för skolutveckling 2004; Lundin 2006). In my previous research, I have shown that in terms of capital, there is an interesting relation between Qur'an memorization and the type of teaching that occurs in subjects such as mathematics. According to the pedagogical guidelines for mathematics in Sweden's national syllabus, "[t]eaching should help pupils to develop their interest in mathematics and confidence in their own ability to use it in different contexts" (Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool, and School-age Educare 2018, 55). This same aim could just as easily apply to the subject of Qur'anic recitation, which is a central Islamic pious practice: that is, to develop an interest in the Qur'an and confidence in one's ability to *use* it in different contexts. These two subjects are also similar in the sense that both are used in different contexts to display knowledgeability and garner social capital (Bourdieu 1996; Lundin 2006). Thus, the ability to recite the Qur'an from memory can be seen to serve not only a theological purpose, but also a variety of personal, social, ceremonial, and cultural purposes. Although actual recitation of the Qur'an is a skill that needs to be hidden in Swedish public schooling, memorizing can be understood as a transferable capital that is beneficial for several school subjects (Berglund 2019b; Berglund and Gent 2018). In terms of mathematics, while the parents sending their children to mosque classes are not content with the level of mathematics education in Sweden, there is no doubt that the school subject is highly valued (Lundin 2006). Paola Valero, when discussing political perspectives in mathematics education, states that "mathematics is not only important in society due to its exceptional, intrinsic characteristics as the purest and most powerful form of abstract thinking but also and foremost, because of its functionality in the constitution of the dominant cultural project of Modernity" (2020, 663).

Teaching the Qur'an and mathematics within the same extra-curricular activity can thus be understood as a reflection of the ambition to use the social capital a bridge between two educational spheres.

Football for team building

Various kinds of sports are visible examples of co-curricular Islamic education. Depending on the space available to the different associations, they can provide children with opportunities to play table tennis or football. Several of the interviewed young Muslims stated that the opportunity to team up with friends after the traditional part of Islamic supplementary classes to play table tennis or football was actually their main motivation for going. One 17-year-old boy says, "I missed playing with my team, but since we had some football there as well, Islamic education was ok. In the summer camps we played a lot. We made teams that we kept through the week". Football was also very visible in some of the mosques that I visited, sometimes in a (for me) very unexpected way.

For most people, playing football in larger groups is connected to the availability of either an outdoor football field, or at least a field, or an indoor sports hall suitable for such an activity. When visiting a Swedish mosque to participate in Islamic education classes and conduct interviews with the imam-teacher as well as meeting with some of the young pupils, I learned that this does not have to be the case, as the following excerpts from the field notes demonstrate:

> The class consists of 19 10-12-year-old boys and girls who sit at tables that are put out in a horseshoe formation. The imam-teacher stands in front of the whiteboard talking to them about today's theme, which is compassion. The younger children are taught by the imam's wife in another room. The imam-teacher talks about how to show compassion.
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> The class is getting restless; a boy asks, without raising his hand, when it is football time. The imam-teacher smiles and says soon. The boy is obviously not content with the answer. I note that the imam-teacher is looking

at his watch. After a couple of minutes, when no one is listening to him any longer, not even me… He pauses and says, now it is time for a break. He opens a cupboard and takes out a soft football and throws it to some of the boys. They catch the ball and run out of the room. I talk to the imam-teacher.

Since it is late December, I reckon that the kids did not run outside, so I ask the imam where they went. He says, follow me. We go up the stairs to the prayer hall of the mosque. I must admit I am horrified by what I see. In the prayer hall, a bunch of boys are playing football. I look at the huge crystal lamp that is hanging down from the cupola. I then look at the imam-teacher who sees that I am horrified.[6] He smiles and says: where else should they play, the ball is soft so it won't damage the lamp, I like them to feel that they are a team.

(Observation 15-12-23)

Both interviews and observation show that sports activities can be important parts of Islamic supplementary education. For some children and youngsters, they make up an important reason for participating. Sports activity in a mosque setting is, of course, in some ways quite different to that in a sports hall, but it has similarities as a form of bonding social capital. In Sweden, the role of sports in promoting social inclusion and integration is strong and was particularly emphasized by national government agencies following a peak in immigration numbers in 2015 (Fundberg 2017; Ekholm 2019). Integration is not emphasized in discussions with the imam-teacher, however, but rather the bonding effects. This is in line with sports research, where the potential for sports to provide people with bonding social capital is often emphasized (Walseth 2008). Yet Stijn Verhagen and Nanne Boonstra (2014) argue that sports participation can also serve as a springboard for bridging relationships when the social climate encourages mutual and equal social interaction. This is of interest to our discussion on Islamic supplementary education since the Swedish Muslim community is known to be hugely diverse, meaning that potential bridging social capital would be between Muslims of diverse backgrounds rather than in relation to the secular majority society.

6   When reflecting upon this experience later, I realize that my reaction to the football game has more to do with me, than the mosque. In my culturally protestant background, the possibility of playing football in a 'house of worship' does not exist.

Compensatory or not?

Supplementary Islamic education constitutes a broad category that can reflect a variety of pedagogical outlooks. It is also broad in the sense that its content varies widely. It is in some ways similar to other leisure-time, extra-curricular activities such as football, theatre, mathematics, and chess, preoccupations that can add value to (i.e., supplement) a young person's life.

If we now return to the question posed at the beginning of this article: that is, how can Islamic supplementary education as a religious extra-curricular activity be compensatory in relation to mainstream schooling if the students need to hide the fact that they participate? If we take a look at mainstream secular schooling and Islamic supplementary education in the light of Bourdieu's and Behtoui's concepts, these two forms of education can be seen as agencies that variously augment and/or deplete a participant's cultural/educational capital. Habitus is closely related to the concept of capital since habitus is one of the ways that capital exists. Indeed, one way of understanding capital is as 'embodied habitus'—habitus being the result of social experiences, collective memories, and ways of moving and thinking that are inscribed in the individual's body and mind. Every person is by definition equipped with habitus, although habitus often varies between groups, and one person's habitus can be more or less valued than another's (Bourdieu 1996).

Applying all of this to our educational settings, we can see that there is a difference between what counts as cultural/educational capital in each. Within Muslim communities for example, the ability to recognize a quotation from the Qur'an or to place Qur'anic references in appropriate contexts is seen as the mark of a successful education, whereas the mainstream educational community recognizes an entirely different set of success markers, and even tends to question the need for Qur'anic learning altogether. While Islamic supplementary education often needs to be hidden, it has been demonstrated in previous works within the same research project that students themselves emphasize the advantages of participating in supplementary education as well as mainstream schooling to a greater extent than is commonly perceived by the broader society (cf. Berglund and Gent 2019). What emerges is that what may initially appear as two seemingly divergent forms of

education tend to, in practice, synergize, particularly in the lived experiences of individuals who have engaged with both. Emphasized in their narratives are the skills cultivated through the study, memorization, and recitation of the Qur'an, which they themselves claim have exercised a positive influence on their performance in mainstream education. These benefits extend to their capacity to focus on specific tasks, exhibit respectful conduct toward educators, deliver confident presentations, and engage attentively in the learning process. On top of this, my material suggests that there are also co-curricular activities within supplementary Islamic education that are, if not the same, very similar to non-religious extra-curricular activities, and might thereby also have the potential to contribute as some type of social capital.

What has here been understood as co-curricular activities within Islamic education (football, math, homework help) are labelled as extra-curricular in relation to mainstream secular schooling in Sweden. The co-curricular activities take up time outside the traditional core of Islamic education, but they also provide students with opportunities to gain life skills that have the potential to be important for their future success. Through the social capital lens, we can understand that these activities can contribute to relationships with adults and other young people, and pupils can gain access to social networks which afford them valuable resources, important and useful advice, and support for and information about their educational choices and career prospects. A further definite value of those activities in low-income neighborhoods is that they steer young people away from negative social activities.

If we return to the educational and sociological research done on extra-curricular activities, Elisabeth Covay and William Carbonaro (2020) argue that 'non-cognitive skills' such as becoming more independent, being able to follow instructions, working well in a group, fitting in well with peers, and dealing with figures of authority are further consequences of participation in these activities. These skills can also be understood as extra-familial social capital (Behtoui 2017). Just as extra-curricular school activities are essential for students because they allow them to learn about themselves, co-curricular Islamic education activities have the potential to fulfil a similar function. They make it possible for attendees of mosque education to develop interests within a specific space. These

activities are also crucial for students because they allow them to make friends, improve their social skills, and get involved in new activities that might not otherwise be accessible to them. The co-curricular Islamic education activities that I have studied are most clearly a part of Islamic supplementary education. As my analysis shows, these activities have, through both their bridging and bonding social capital, the potential to be part of the compensatory effect that Behtoui claims that supplementary religious education can have. The empirical material for this article is limited, and since research in this field is scarce, I hope that it can inspire others to expand its horizons.

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Amna Mahmood

Tabligh, *Tarbiyyat* and the Religious Education of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in Scandinavia

Keywords: Ahmadiyya, Islam in Scandinavia, Islamic religious education and learning, social capital, bridging and bonding

Abstract The article is based on a study of the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK and its Scandinavian-born Muslim students and alumni for an MA thesis. Drawing on fieldwork and interview material collected between September 2019 and January 2020, it identifies *tabligh* (propagation) and *tarbiyyat* (upbringing) as central aspects of Ahmadiyya religious learning. It explores how *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* are instrumental in the preservation and transmission of Ahmadiyya teachings and faith within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ). While the starting point is the Jamia Ahmadiyya, a Muslim seminary, also highlighted is the upbringing program, *waqf-e-nau*, and various auxiliary groups formed of Ahmadi men and women that are sites of religious education and learning and illustrate the multifaceted nature of the organization and its learning practice.

Religious education and learning are instrumental in transmitting and preserving the teachings and faith of the Islamic reform movement or community, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ), particularly when established in a Christian majority environment such as Scandinavia, the region examined in this article. As with other Muslim minorities in Scandinavia, the AMJ relies on foreign teaching institutions to train its imams and must organize its own learning arenas; moreover, as a minority within a Muslim minority, AMJ members are faced with more limited access to such arenas due to their theological beliefs, which diverge from the Muslim mainstream. How does a Muslim double minority in Scandinavia ensure the maintenance and survival of its faith? Based on empirical material gathered between September 2019 and January 2020, I outline the multifaceted arenas and sites for

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Ahmadiyya religious education and learning in order to explore how faith and teachings are preserved and transmitted within the AMJ. Based on the material and previous studies, I identify *tabligh* (propagation) and *tarbiyyat* (upbringing) as central aspects of Ahmadiyya religious learning. While my starting point is the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK – one of 13 international institutions specializing in Ahmadiyya religious education – I also highlight the upbringing program, *waqf-e-nau*, and various auxiliary groups formed of Ahmadi men and women, such as Khuddam and Lajna, as sites of religious education and learning. I begin the article with a brief introduction of the AMJ, before turning to the terms *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* and finally exploring how religious education is organized and practiced within the community.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat: Brief Historical Background, Establishment in Scandinavia, and Mission Project

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ) was founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908) in Qadian, India, while it was under British colonial rule, and it is estimated that there are between twelve and fifteen million adherents in the world today (Valentine 2008, 37). The AMJ shares some characteristics with the Sunni Islamic tradition and is often described as a Sunni subgroup as well as an Islamic reform group and a messianic sect (Sorgenfrei 2018, 88-89; Khan 2015, 4-6), although it regards itself an Islamic revival movement (AMJ official website). Following Ghulam Ahmad's death and disagreements over his successor and status as a prophet (Jacobsen et al. 2015, 360),[1] the movement split into Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-I-Islami (AAII, headquarters in Lahore, Pakistan) and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, which this article examines.[2] In 1947, upon the Partition of India and Pakistan, the AMJ's headquarters were moved from Qadian to Rabwah in Pakistan, and later to London in 1984 due to its controversial relations with mainstream Islam (Friedmann 1989, 16-18).

There are two principal reasons for the AMJ's controversies in regard to other Islamic groups: firstly, its view of Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet, in contradiction to the established Islamic doctrine of *khātam al-nubuwwa* (finality of prophethood),[3]

1 The AAII does not believe in Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet but emphasizes his role as a reformer (*mujaddid*).

2 On the split between the AAII and the AMJ, I refer the reader to Chapter 3 in Khan (2015). According to Jacobsen et al., the AAII does not have any organized communities in Scandinavia, although its website states that it has branches in Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK. The complete list of its worldwide branches is available at: https://www.aaiil.org/Pages/?ContentId=53.

which teaches that Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet of God (Khan 2015, 1; Jacobsen et al. 2015, 360); and, secondly, the AMJ's belief that Jesus survived crucifixion and was not taken up to heaven to return at the end of time, as most Sunni and Shia Muslims believe. Rather, the AMJ believes that Jesus disappeared for some days and travelled to India, and later died in Kashmir (Khan, 2015, 2; Jacobsen et al. 2015, 360).[4] The first fatwa against the AMJ declaring it *kufr* was issued in 1891 by the Ahl-i-Hadith group ("People of the Prophetic traditions") in India, who spearheaded the opposition against Ghulam Ahmad (Khan 2015, 31-32). Ahmadis constantly experience persecution and discrimination and are considered non-Muslims by several Muslim groups and organizations (Valentine 2008, 32-37). In 1974, the movement was officially declared a non-Muslim minority in Pakistan's Constitution due to its belief in a prophet after Muhammad. Later, in 1984, Pakistan's blasphemy laws were introduced, which can be used to criminalize the religious practice and proselytization of Ahmadis (as well as other religious minorities) (Khan 2015, 1-4; Nielsen & Otterbeck 2016, 152). In 2015, the Asian Human Rights Commission and International Human Rights Committee presented a report on the human rights violations and discrimination directed at Ahmadis in Pakistan stemming from the blasphemy legislation and specific anti-Ahmadi laws. The report records that Ahmadis face discrimination and targeted attacks at political, economic, social, and educational levels, and attests to multiple personal attacks on Ahmadis, which it describes as escalating, especially since the 2010 Model Town Mosque massacre where 86 Ahmadis where killed. In the first attack against Ahmadi women and children, in July 2014, eight Ahmadi family homes in Gujranwala were targeted, and eight women and children were killed, with the survivors being forced to leave the city (AHRC & IHRC 2015, 18-21; 30-36; Larsson 2018, 172-177).

The AMJ in Scandinavia

The persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan has led many of them to emigrate to Europe. According to Sorgenfrei (2018, 90) the AMJ has organized communities in 200 countries worldwide and is engaged in comprehensive missionary work, interreligious dialogue, and charity work (Nielsen & Otterbeck 2016, 152). The first Ahmadiyya communities in Scandinavia were established

3   Friedmann (2013) explains that upon declaring himself a prophet, Ghulam Ahmad emphasized that the Qur'an is the last heavenly book that will "forever remain valid". Ghulam Ahmad also made a distinction between "non-legislative" and "legislative" prophethood. In his view, his prophethood was "non-legislative" and therefore did not contradict the Islamic prophet doctrine. Larsson's *Muslims Accused of Apostasy* in Vinding et al. (2018, 174-177) also elaborates on the AMJs conceptualizations of prophethood.
4   For an elaborate description and outlining of the death of Jesus in Ahmadiyya teachings, see Todd Lawson's book *The Crucifixion and the Qur'an: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought* (2009) and Valentine (2008, 18-29). For discussion of Ahmadiyya concepts of prophethood, and Ghulam Ahmad's prophet status, see Chapters 1 and 2 in Khan (2015).

as early as the 1950s by the missionary Kamal Yousuf (Jacobsen et al. 2015, 361-368), and went on to construct the first purpose-built mosques in Scandinavia; the Nusrat Djahan Mosque in Hvidovre, Copenhagen, was established in 1966-1967, the Nasir Mosque in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1976. Between 1979 and 1980 the Ahmadiyya community in Norway bought a villa in Frogner, Oslo, and renovated it into a mosque which opened in 1980, and then opened the first purpose-built mosque in 2011, Baitun Nasr in Furuset, Oslo, which is the largest mosque in the Nordic region (Larsson & Björkman 2010, 19; Strand 2016, 53-65, 71-73). There are estimated to be around 1,641 Ahmadis in Norway (Department for Children and Families 2021), approximately 940-960 in Sweden (Sorgenfrei 2018, 95), and 700 in Denmark (Jacobsen et al. 2015, 362), an increase that is largely due to migration from Pakistan, as well as a small number of conversions. The differences between the communities in the region, as pointed out by Jacobsen et al. (2015), are related to how the Scandinavian states organize the funding of religious communities and organizations in their respective countries (Jacobsen et al., 361, 368-371); the rituals, theology, and general practice, are the same in the three countries.

"The Ahmadiyya Controversy" affects its Scandinavian communities to a certain extent. The AMJ is, for instance, excluded from Islamic umbrella organizations, such as the Islamic Council of Norway (IRN), and its members are not buried in the same graveyards as Muslims in Norway and Sweden. The IRN has allegedly also been reluctant to accept AMJ representatives as members of the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway (STL) because of theological differences. However, in 2017, when the IRN took a break from the STL, the AMJ applied for full membership and received it in 2019 (Bergh 2019). Furthermore, anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments are frequently expressed by other Muslims and there are negative mentions of the group on the internet (Jacobsen et al. 2015, 361-365). As Sorgenfrei's (2018, 90) interlocutor from Malmö attests, "Sweden is safer than Pakistan … but sometimes we become the enemies of both extreme Muslims and Islamophobes. It feels like it's getting closer" (my translation). My own interlocutors also mentioned both anti-Ahmadiyya attitudes among other Muslims, and microaggressions, Islamophobia, and racism from people who belong to the white, non-Muslim majority population in their respective countries (Mahmood 2020, 2022).

A more recent example of anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments among Pakistani Muslims in Norway appeared in a news story about the Ahmadiyya imam, Yasir Fawzi, and his claims against Oslo-based radio-host and public debater, Ali Chishti. The imam accused Chishti of defending Pakistan's persecution of Ahmadis on the basis of conspiracy theories about the AMJ's alliance with "enemies of the country" (namely India, Israel, and the USA); indeed, Chishti seemingly went further to support the death penalty for treason in a Facebook post, arguing that Ahmadis (and any other person committing treason) should be hanged; he also explained in the newspaper article that he "theologically doesn't view Ahmadiyya as Muslims" (Færseth 2021). The story sparked reactions, and a number of Sunni, Shia, and non-Muslims distanced themselves from Chishti's views. For instance, the Norwegian queer Muslim organization, Salam, expressed solidarity with Ahmadiyya on social media, explaining how "similar to us in Salam, Ahmadiyya Muslims fight to be recognized as fully worthy Muslims" (SalamNorge's Instagram post, January 25, 2021. My translation). This demonstrates that the internal dividing lines between Muslim groups in Scandinavia are not clear-cut.

Jacobsen et al. (2015, 269) add that during Islam's organizational establishment in the Scandinavian countries in the 1950s and 1960s, the internal differences and dividing lines between the AMJ, Sunni, and Shia Muslim groups appeared minimal. Muslims who did not belong to the AMJ, for instance, attended AMJ mosques and their celebrations. It was during the 1970s, when anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments grew internationally and a growing number of Muslim groups arrived in the region, that the AMJ was distanced from other Sunni and Shia groups.

The AMJ's Mission Project

The AMJ is a strong missionary movement; indeed, Valentine (2008, 211) describes mission as "the life-blood and raison d'être of the movement". The founder, Ghulam Ahmad, established the *sadr anjuman* ("supreme council of the AMJ") in 1906. In his will (*Al-Wassiyt*), he wrote that the *sadr anjuman* was to function as the movement's central administrative organization, spread the Ahmadiyya teachings and faith after his death, and organize missionary work. Jonker (2015, 24) writes that the "Ahmadiyya mission project" can be considered the first professionalized Muslim missionary organization. During the 1920s and 1930s,

the AMJ established several mission stations both in Europe and USA. Describing the AMJ's mission endeavors as ambitions, Stokkedal (2019, 31-34, see also Jonker 2015) writes that the movement needed funding for the expanding mission project. Accordingly, the second Khalifa[5] – the founder's son, Basheer-ud Din Mahmood Ahmad – established the charitable fund *tehrik-e-jadid* ("the new plan") in 1934, the purpose of which was to strengthen missionary activities and achieve the goal of global mission by collecting generous donations of both time and money from Ahmadis. *Tehrik-e-jadid* financed both missionary stations abroad and the printing of literature, in addition to a training center for missionaries (Jonker 2015, 45-46; Stokkedal 2019, 31-34; Khan 2015, 82). The fund, which still operates and is crucial for Ahmadiyya mission work, finances all Jamia Ahmadiyya campuses through annual subscriptions, and Ahmadis are encouraged to donate generously.

There are no Ahmadiyya mission centers in Scandinavia, but the AMJ communities are still dedicated to missionary work and Ahmadiyya mission in the region includes a range of different activities. Jacobsen et al. (2015) and Stokkedal (2019) highlight inter-religious dialogues, mosque visits from schools and universities, stands, as well as writing, translating, and publishing books, magazines, and pamphlets about Islam and the AMJ for the public – Aktiv Islam ("Active Islam") and Zeinab are both Ahmadiyya magazines that are publicly available; two examples of arenas for inter-religious dialogue are the AMJ's annual peace conference and the marking of International Hijab Day. Stokkedal (2019, 95) notes that mission activities are an important part of the religious lives of the Ahmadis (both missionaries and lay Ahmadis) he met during his fieldwork in Oslo, with his informants describing the AMJ as a mission movement, and understanding that missionary work is a religious duty for members of the community. The mission activities are also the subject of frequent discussions and the country's missionaries attend regular meetings to plan and discuss their work and make necessary adjustments to it (Stokkedal 2019, 95-96), and I met the Scandinavian-based imams and missionaries whom I interviewed at what they referred to as a "refresher course". While I could not take part in the meeting, the imams explained to me that they use these courses to share experiences, report back on the mission activities in their respective communities, and, as Stokkedal's informants also mentioned, discuss and adjust their work.

5   Within the AMJ, the title of "Khalifa" is assigned to the successors of the movement's founder, Ghulam Ahmad.

Previous Studies

When presenting the AMJ's history and organization I primarily build on Simon Ross Valentine's (2008) and Adil Hussein Khan's (2015) seminal works on the movement's organization, beliefs, and history. Larsson and Björkman (2010) offer an overview of South Asian Muslims in the Nordic countries and present the existing data on the establishment and institutionalization of South Asian Muslim groups in the region, including the AMJ, while Sorgenfrei (2018) and Jacobsen et al. (2015) deal specifically with the establishment and organization of the AJM in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Several MA theses from the University of Oslo in recent years (Strand 2016; Moraga 2018; Wærsted 2018; Stokkedal 2019) also provide insights into the AMJ's establishment history, self-image, women's organization, and mission in Scandinavia. Stokkedal (2019) casts light on the specific mission practices of the movement in Oslo, Norway, and describes both the adjustments Ahmadi missionaries make based on their status as a religious minority in Norway as well as their status as a minority within the Muslim minority in the country; his empirical material supplements my own. Furthermore, the works by Ahmed-Ghosh (2006) and Beyeler (2012) highlight the religious education and mission activities of Ahmadi women, which Stokkedal (2019) and I only briefly cover.

While the aforementioned research touches upon Ahmadi religious education and instruction more broadly, Mahmood (2020; 2022) present an in-depth analysis of the Jamia Ahmadiyya learning institution and the educational trajectories of Scandinavian-born Ahmadis. In the article, I investigate the impact that young Scandinavian-born Ahmadis' religious education – gained at Jamia Ahmadiyya UK, the movement's theological seminary – and their local social and cultural capital, has on their positioning as imams and missionaries in Scandinavia, suggesting that the young Ahmadi imams and missionaries exemplify so-called "new moderators" (see Døving 2012; Roy 2004). My analysis illustrates the Jamia's institutional authority and how the valuation of the Scandinavian-born Ahmadis' social and cultural capital (knowledge about the local context and language skills) impacts their religious capital (Islamic knowledge and status as imams, missionaries, and Jamia students) and strengthens their epistemic authority (Mahmood 2020, 2022; Vinding 2018, 241-245).

Drawing on the same study (Mahmood 2020; 2022), in this article I direct the focus to the notions of *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat*, as well as educational arenas beyond the Jamia Ahmadiyya campuses, and present new empirical data on Ahmadiyya religious education and Islam in Scandinavia. Moreover, in contrast to Larsson and Björkman (2010) I emphasize the religious life and practice of Muslims born in Scandinavia with South Asian backgrounds rather than that of the generations who migrated to the region; thus, the article also contributes to shedding light on generational dynamics (Larsson and Björkman 2010, 16-17, 21-22). It is based on data collected between September 2019 and January 2020 through semi-structured interviews with Ahmadiyya imams, missionaries, and Jamia UK students and alumni from the Scandinavian communities.[6] Additionally, I include field notes from a guided tour of the Jamia UK campus by one of the teachers (referred to as "the guide" in the text) in October 2019. In total, the data consist of interviews with ten informants (including the conversation from the guided tour), all cisgender men, a sample which reflects the exclusively male arena of Jamia UK; I also rely on the Jamia Ahmadiyya websites for the campuses in the UK, Canada, and Germany, where a brief history of the Jamia Ahmadiyya, its curriculum and admission process can be found.

In the following section, I outline the terms *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* as conceptualized by a handful of imams and missionaries (in training) within AMJ before turning to the Jamia Ahmadiyya, *waqf-e-nau* and AMJ's auxiliary organizations for Ahmadi men and women in order to investigate the role *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* practices have in religious education and learning within the AMJ in Scandinavia.

6 I have pseudonymized all my informants' names in the article. Distinguishing between senior imams, Jamia UK alumni, and Jamia UK students, I refer to the senior imams as Arif and Bilal, and the Jamia UK alumni as Gohar, Nadir, and Irfan. The students' pseudonyms are Asim, Barkat, Darwish, and Ehsan. The Jamia UK alumni and students are Scandinavian-born, while the senior imams were born in Pakistan and received their religious education and missionary training from Jamia Rabwah.

Tabligh and *Tarbiyyat*

The terms *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* appeared as central concepts in my material and were described as important tasks for Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries by my interlocutors; however, both are also regarded as important inclinations for lay Ahmadis (Stokkedal 2019, 3; Valentine 2008, 211). In this section I explain the terms and how they are understood within the AMJ and by my interlocutors. In the subsequent sections, I investigate the ways in which *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* are related to Ahmadiyya religious education.

Kupier (2018, 4) points out that *tabligh*, often translated as "conveying" or "communicating", can be used synonymously with *da'wa*, which translates as a "call" or "invitation [to Islam]" in modern Islamic discourses. Both are Islamic terms and, as Kupier explains, central to Muslim missionary activities but they are different in their reach; while *da'wa* is centripetal ("calling/ inviting *toward* Islam"), *tabligh* can be understood as centrifugal, meaning "conveying the message of Islam *outward*" (Kupier 2018, 4). Some contemporary examples of *da'wa* are mosque sermons, street preaching, translation of the Qur'an and other Islamic books, inter-religious dialogues, Muslim websites, and recruitment to jihadi groups. Within the AMJ *tabligh* is often understood as preaching or propagation, and "spreading the message of Islam peacefully and not by force" is emphasized (Valentine 2008, 203). In his glossary, Khan (2015, 188) explains that *tabligh* is used synonymously with preaching or other missionary activity within the movement. During our interview, senior imam Bilal described the community as "very active" in terms of *tabligh*, and listed a range of such activities that an Ahmadiyya missionary performs in a Scandinavian country that included collaboration with different faith and religious communities (for instance in seminar formats), stands, "Ask a Muslim" campaigns, food stalls, blood donation centers, and seminars on various topics (some examples are "Jesus in Islam", "Jesus in Religions", and "What is the true meaning of Christmas?") to which they invite the general public and people of different faiths (interview 2019). Similar activities are also described by Jacobsen et al. (2015) and Stokkedal (2019).

Stokkedal (2019), in his in-depth study of the Ahmadiyya mission in Norway, writes that in his experience Ahmadis use *tabligh* to describe missionary activities amongst themselves, but use the term "mission" for outsiders (Stokkedal 2019, 7). Describing the position of "Secretary of Tabligh" within every Ahmadiyya community, he notes that there is one position for a man and one for a woman. According to Stokkedal (2019, 63-64) the Tabligh-secretaries are instrumental in the performance of local *tabligh*: both in organizing *tabligh* activities on a local level and giving community members *tabligh* training. Accordingly, while *tabligh* has direct connotations to mission, the ideal is that every Ahmadi is engaged with it.

In contemporary Arabic, the term *tarbiya* means "education", but can also mean "to let grow" and "to educate" (Günther 2017).

Within the AMJ, the Urdu counterpart *tarbiyyat* is frequently used, referring both to the upbringing "at home" and the moral training and spiritual upbringing of Ahmadi children. Moreover, the AMJ regards *tarbiyyat* as an important task for Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries. For instance, it is common to refer to the main imam at the mosque as *murabbi*, and both Arif and Gohar explained the term as meaning the person who performs *tarbiyyat* (interviews 2019). The Jamia students and alumni I encountered also referred to the senior missionaries working at their local mosques as "*murabbi* sahib".

In my interview material, the interlocutors place considerable emphasis on the importance of Jamia Ahmadiyya in terms of *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat*. For instance, Arif explained that the Jamia campuses educate future Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries, adding, "So then, [the Ahmadis'] *tarbiyyat*, those who will give [community members] teaching, they are those who are taught at Jamia. So, in this way, the whole world's teachers – the actual teachers – they are being born there, they are in the making there [at Jamia]" (interview 2019). Asim also explained that his role as a future imam and missionary will be to "transfer the knowledge [that] you have received at Jamia to the people in the community" (interview 2020).

On the same note, it is important to clarify the use of the titles "imams" and "missionary" with regard to my interlocutors. Within the AMJ and in my interview material, my interlocutors used these terms interchangeably. Arif, however, disambiguated these terms and titles during our interview. First, he explained that he is educated as a missionary from Jamia – a *muballakh* – which means "the one who does *tabligh*". Furthermore, he specified that this role is outward-facing, echoing Kupier's (2018) definition of *tabligh* and Stokkedal's (2019) findings as well. Within the community, Arif explained that his role is that of a *murabbi* – one who performs the *tarbiyyat* of the community members. Within the Scandinavian context, however, the AMJ publicly uses the imam title rather than missionary, and Arif explained that this has to do with the majority society's familiarity with the term for Islamic religious leaders. Moreover, he also points out his assumptions that "missionary" is a word that people from the majority society connect with Christianity and its history of violent mission activities amongst non-Christians (interview 2019).

"It starts with Jamia": UK Campus, Religious Education, and Missionary Training

To preserve the Ahmadiyya faith and teachings and secure future Ahmadi scholars, a *madrasa* (religious learning institution) was established by the group's founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as early as 1905, called Madrassa-e-Ahmadiyya. The Ahmadiyya *madrasa* laid the foundations of the Jamia Ahmadiyya, a theological seminary, which was established in 1928 in Qadian. Today, there are 10-13 Jamia campuses around the world, perceived as fundamental for the movement (Jamia Ahmadiyya UK website, n.d.; Sorgenfrei 2018, 97), and the higher Islamic religious education of Ahmadis is limited to these institutions. Every Ahmadiyya imam and missionary, including those deployed in the Scandinavian communities, has been trained and educated at a Jamia campus. During the recruitment process I learned that young Ahmadi men from Scandinavia apply to the Jamia campus in the UK to pursue missionary training, primarily because it is close to their home countries, the languages of instruction (English and Urdu) are familiar to them, and they are able to have frequent meetings with the Khalifa (interviews 2019 and 2020; Mahmood 2020, 2022).

In the following section I turn to the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK (Jamia UK) and discuss the students' and alumni's' emphasis on missionaries as teachers and role models as well as their *tarbiyyat* work.

Jamia Ahmadiyya UK

Jamia UK was established in 2005 by the fifth Khalifa, Mirza Masroor Ahmad. In 2012, the campus was relocated to an old hotel building in Haslemere, Surrey, due to a growing student body and insufficient facilities, my guide explained. The Jamia has a clear international profile, and Ahmadis from around the world apply for admission there. Twenty-nine students from the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, and Norway enrolled at Jamia UK in its first year. During my visit in 2019, the school had 136 students, of whom six were from Scandinavia. Admission to Jamia Ahmadiyya is similar in every campus, my guide informed me, and reserved for young Ahmadi men above the age of 16. The different Jamia websites list the specific admission requirements for their campuses and provide application forms.[7]

Jamia UK offers a seven-year study program, called the Shahid ("witness") course.[8] The seven years are divided into three phases, and the subjects are also broken down by year and presented in an orderly fashion. I refer the interested reader to the Jamia UK website, where a detailed overview of the different stages and subjects that make up the Shahid course are described in more detail.[9] Some subjects are taught throughout the program (Arabic and English language subjects and Qur'an, Translation Studies, General Knowledge [includes subjects such as social and natural sciences], and Lecture Training) while other subjects are introduced in later stages of the course. The students start to work on their final dissertation in the sixth year and submit it in the seventh year when the final exams are also held.

The Jamia UK's curriculum mostly, but not exclusively, consists of the AMJ's own literature and is generally in Urdu and, according to my guide, is compiled by an academic committee appointed by the Khalifa. The Khalifa also has the final approval of the curriculum and discusses any updates or changes to it with the teachers, although the guide explained that this does not happen on a regular basis. Consequently, the curriculum is characterized by a high degree of continuity rather than change. I was not given the chance to see any of the set textbooks, although I was told that the students are also encouraged to read outside of the curriculum, including more general textbooks, echoing the Islamic ideal of always seeking more knowledge (Mahmood 2022, 25).

Finally, the Jamia student's trajectories after graduation are not limited to missionary work, although the main purpose of Jamia Ahmadiyya is often described as producing future missionaries for the movement (Mahmood 2022, 26). For instance, the guide clarified that the learning institution can be understood as a training center that aims to produce "people who serve the Ahmadiyya movement in any way they are asked to". This entails not only missionary and imam work, but also roles such as Amirs, Jamia teachers or other administrative positions. Another opportunity for Jamia graduates is the four-year specialization course, *takhassus*, offered at the Jamia campus in Rabwah. Nonetheless, "their mission remains the same", as the guide put it, which is to serve Ahmadiyya. Ultimately, the institution of Jamia Ahmadiyya is understood as a foundation for the movement; as Bilal explained it: "It's starts with Jamia", and he believes that the spreading of the Ahmadiyya faith and

7 The Jamia UK website has been updated since my fieldwork and data collection, and I could not find any link to the form this time around. I refer interested readers to the German form which is available at: https://www.jamia.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Aufnahmeantrag.pdf. (accessed December 8, 2022). Compared to the form retrieved from Jamia UK websites for my MA thesis, it is only the language that differs.

8 During the leadership of the fourth Khalifa, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, a four-year study course was introduced to meet the demand for missionaries around the world, called Mubashir ("one who brings good news") (Stokkedal 2019, 60). To my knowledge, the course is no longer offered.

9 Link to the Jamia course-home-page: https://www.jamiaahmadiyya.uk/jamia-course/ (accessed Dec 8, 2022)

teachings across the whole world is carried out by Jamia students. In the following I focus on the *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* work that the senior imams, alumni and students perform in Scandinavia.

Ahmadiyya Imams and Missionaries' *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* tasks

Barkat, a student, explained that Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries focus on *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* in equal measure in their work, although *tarbiyyat* and related tasks are given more emphasis in the other interviews. For instance, Gohar, an alumnus, compared his work to the role of parenthood: "Like a father or mother raises their children, and the children [imagine a world] – that is an image they have received from their parents, and that is the role I see as my work." Gohar added that he thinks about this a lot and explains his work as a "great responsibility to be carried out now" and when he plays out the Khalifa's role where he works, he said, the responsibility intensifies. He also explained that a *murabbi* is always there to help members of the movement, which entails remembering them in his daily prayers. As Gohar said, "Their hardships, they tell me about them. And it takes up all the time [of my prayers]" (interview 2019). Ehsan, another student, likewise pointed out the responsibility an Ahmadiyya imam has for his community's members as a *murabbi*: "[An imam's] first priority is his members. Like, do their *tarbiyyat*. And second, is to present the true image of Islam, and spread it, [to counteract] Islamophobia and all that" (interview 2020). Bilal also listed *tarbiyyat* as one of the main tasks "within *jama'at* [the AMJ]", while "outside *jama'at*, it's preaching work [*tabligh*]". He added that his tasks include guiding young people, who face both Islamism and Islamophobia in Scandinavia. As he explained, "[I]n Western countries, especially at this time, it's Islamophobia, how to counteract, how to work against that, or the work that has to be done to end it," meanwhile teaching the young "how to make efforts to end [Islamism/fundamentalism]."[10] According to the informants' reflections on their roles, they do not have contradicting views on the centrality of *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* to their work. Furthermore, their understanding of *tabligh* echoes Kupier's (2018, 4) description of it as centrifugal, as moving outward to the non-Muslim general public while *tarbiyyat* tasks are directed inwards to

community members and seem to range from spiritual guidance for AMJ's members to helping Ahmadi youth to navigate both Islamophobia and Islamism/fundamentalism.

Bilal explained that the *tarbiyyat* work takes place during monthly classes, as well as at parallel monthly meetings for the movement's women, men, and children. He also emphasized the teaching of young people "[with an] Islamic background, how to live in Western society". In her work on education among Ahmadi women in the USA, Ahmed-Gosh (2006, 43) explains that AMJ communities work to ensure that their members can "cope with their adopted land". Thus, the *tarbiyyat* Bilal mentions here is not exceptional to the Scandinavian context; however, common to all my interlocutors is that they believe the new generation, or "home grown", imams and missionaries can better execute this *tarbiyyat* task, thus emphasizing their epistemic authority (Vinding 2018, 241-245). This is connected to the perception of imams and missionaries as role models, and the high valuation placed on the "home grown" students and alumni's social and cultural capital – their fluency in their respective Scandinavian languages and familiarity with local societal norms and manners – together with their religious education (Mahmood 2022, 26-29). According to the senior imams, this is especially true for the youth and teenage boys; for instance, as Bilal emphasized, he does not have the same language skills and familiarity with the realities of being Muslim in Scandinavia as the alumni who are born and raised there, and cannot relate to young people's questions and problems in a similar manner (interview 2019). The students and alumni also stressed that their socio-cultural background and knowledge of the local society and language is beneficial for their potential roles as imams and missionaries in Scandinavia. Asim, for example, highlighted his and his fellow students' Scandinavian (or European) upbringing as Ahmadis (Mahmood 2022, 27), while Darwish, another student, also pointed out that he and his peers may be able to manage certain situations more easily than imams and missionaries born and raised in Pakistan. They have grown up in Europe, he explained, and therefore "[the students] can understand, maybe we can understand the youth in a better way because we are raised in the same culture, at the same time" (interview 2020).

Previous studies have pointed out the importance of local knowledge for imam and missionary work in Scandinavia

10   It is not very clear what Bilal means by "Islamism" and "fundamentalism" in the interview transcripts. In the original it says, "And then, alongside it [Islamophobia] Islamism is spreading quickly – you can say fundamentalism, how to make efforts to end it." I interpret the terms as referring to what Bilal views as dogmatic interpretations of Islam.

(Døving 2012, 22), and this, together with the formal education they have gained from the Jamia institution, clearly applies to the new generation of Ahmadiyya religious leaders. While the centrality of epistemic authority is foregrounded in studies about imams in the Global North (Vinding 2018, 242-244; see also Gaffney 1994; Hallaq 2001; 2009; Lincoln 1994; Rosenthal 1970), Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries' own emphasis on authority based on knowledge and personal qualities can also be linked to the AMJ's profile as a strong missionary project. While my informants focus on the beneficial impact their local knowledge has on their *tarbiyyat* tasks, it also enhances their ability to undertake *tabligh* tasks in their respective communities, as they are familiar with their languages and societal norms, although both types of tasks are, of course, intertwined. As Ehsan explained, the members do not only look to the imam and missionary for answers to questions regarding faith and religious practice, but also when allegations are made against Islam: "So, if anyone attacks [or challenges, questions] Islam in your society, you look to the imam. It is he who will respond to these questions" (interview 2020). Consequently, as noted above, both the students and alumni's social and cultural capital in combination with their religious education reinforce their religious capital and positions as religious leaders who undertake *tarbiyyat* and *tabligh*, as well as speaking and preaching about Islam.

Waqf-e-nau and auxiliary organizations

In the previous section I focused on the Jamia Ahmadiyya institution and the religious education of Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries, as well as their *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* work. However, the organization and practice of religious education and learning within the AMJ go beyond the Jamia campuses and are not solely reserved for the movement's imams and missionaries. In the following section, therefore, I turn to the movement's numerous auxiliaries and the children's upbringing program, *waqf-e-nau*, other central sites for religious education and learning within the AMJ (Khan 2015, 81-81; see also Ahmed-Ghosh 2006).

Waqf-e-nau

During the period of his leadership during the 1930s, Mahmood Ahmad asked the movement's members to offer themselves as "living endowments" (*waqf*) to increase the number of missionaries. Mahmood Ahmad's appeal included encouraging parents to persuade their children to dedicate their lives to the movement, which meant enrolling them in the newly founded Jamia Ahmadiyya seminaries and undergoing missionary training. Moreover, influential Ahmadis were asked to give lectures and take part in producing Ahmadiyya literature. Ahmadis pursuing higher education were advised to seek the Khalifa's counsel in choosing a study course beneficial for the movement before applying (Khan 2015, 82-83). The *waqf-e-nau* scheme ("new sacrifice", henceforth: "*waqf* program") was launched in 1987 by the fourth Khalifa, Mirza Tahir Ahmad. It can be viewed as an expanded and updated version of Mahmood Ahmad's *waqf* initiative, and encourages parents to dedicate their children, often before they are born or during infancy, to "the Ahmadiyya cause". The children are trained as *waqfin*, devotees, and are selected for special training in order to spend their lives fulfilling community needs (Valentine 2008, 184-185; Balzani 2010, 293, 300-301 n28-30). In accordance with the increased requirement for Ahmadi missionaries around the world during the period, future Ahmadiyya missionaries were also secured through the program (Khan 2015, 82-83). My interlocutors explain that the *waqf* program is practiced in the same way in every AMJ community. Thus, there are no clear Scandinavian-specific practices, although it is worth noting that the *waqf* program operates and is present in Ahmadis' lives and religious practice in the region.

According to my interlocutors, at the age of 15 or 16 (18 in some cases), children are invited to a mosque meeting and asked if they want to continue their *waqf*; if they do, they are expected to devote a period of study to religious training and follow the community's guidelines about appropriate career paths (Balzani 2010, 301 n30). My interlocutors referred to this as *waqf-e-zindagi* ("life-long waqf"), and explained that the devotees sign a form and are expected by the community to take responsibility for specific tasks given to them. To my knowledge, the number of *waqfin* is high; however, less than half choose to continue lifelong *waqf*.[11] Common career paths *waqfin* are encouraged to pursue are medicine or teaching, which enable them to work as doctors or teachers at AMJ hospitals and schools around the

world (interviews 2019).

In terms of the transmission of religious education, Valentine (2008, 185) describes the *waqf* program as an "important element in maintaining the structure and discipline of the movement"; it is also an arena for the *tarbiyyat* of the children, instructed by both the community and parents who are helped in the training and upbringing of *waqfin* by the community secretary (Valentine 2008, 184-185). The *waqf* program entails weekly "special classes", as Valentine refers to them, and weekly meetings are also held at the mosques. Language skills are an integrated part of the training, and Valentine writes that in Britain, for instance, the *waqfin* are taught in Urdu and English, as well as German, French, Danish or Spanish. The idea, according to Valentine (2008, 185), is to "create a potential army of well-educated bi-lingual missionaries".

As *waqfin*, the alumni and students of my study explained that they were dedicated to the AMJ before they were born and introduced to religious teachings and practices from an early age, participating in weekly classes at the mosque, or "Sunday classes", as they called them, and following a *waqf* curriculum. The students and alumni remember their Sunday classes as opportunities to meet their friends from the community and learn Urdu, the correct recitation of the Qur'an, and the history of the movement from the mosque's main imam. They would also participate in sports and religious knowledge competitions and occasionally meet Jamia students and listen to them talk about their studies (interviews 2019).

Majlis Khuddam al-Ahmadiyya, Majlis Atfal al-Ahmadiyya and Majlis Ansarullah

The AMJ has three men's auxiliary organizations based on age. The Majlis Khuddam al-Ahmadiyya ("organization for the servants of Ahmadiyya", henceforth Khuddam) was founded in December 1938 and consists of young men aged 15 to 40. Khuddam elects its local leader (*qaid*) and its national president (Sadr Majlis Khuddam al-Ahmadiyya) who report directly to the Khalifa. In July 1940, a separate organization was created for boys between the ages 7 and 15, Atfal al-Ahmadiyya. Khan (2015, 82) describes it as a subset of Khuddam, mainly because it falls under the jurisdiction of the *Qaid* and does not have its own local leader. Finally, the third men's auxiliary organization is the Majlis

1 The AMJ's own figures from August 2004 estimate that there were 28,300 members in the *waqf* program at that time (Balzani 2010, 304 n30).

Ansarullah ("the helpers of Allah", henceforth Ansar), which was established for men over 40. According to Khan (2015, 82), Ansar often provides intellectual and spiritual guidance for younger (male) members as the movement's "elders". The organizational structure of Ansar follows the same lines as Khuddam: they elect a local leader (*Zaim*) along with a national leader (Sadr Majlis Ansarullah), who reports directly to the Khalifa.

In what follows I focus on the Khuddam organization, as the students and alumni with whom I talked are all members of this group. Poston (1990, 113) describes it as a "principal feeder group" that encourages "teenage males to become actively involved in the missionary outreach of the movement". My interview material suggests that the children and teenagers who are the most active and devoted, both in *waqfin* classes and Khuddam activities, are those directly encouraged to continue their *waqf* and pursue Jamia education. Upon the opening of the Jamia UK campus, for instance, Gohar remembered how he and some others from his Sunday class were given more information about the Jamia by the main imam at their mosque (interview 2019).

Khuddam membership entails attending regular meetings and participating in various activities, such as sports and different types of voluntary work both in the mosque and elsewhere. These activities are not directly related to religious education as such, but I understand them as ways in which Ahmadi teenage boys and young adults are socialized in the AMJ and become familiarized with its structure and organization. They also exemplify the *tarbiyyat* of Khuddam members. As my interlocutors recall, Khuddam activities are opportunities for them to socialize and create fraternal bonds with each other (interviews 2019, 2020). In Haslemere, where the Jamia UK campus is located, my guide explained that the students participate in voluntary work at the community center and donate blood, or smaller gestures such as handing out chocolate to the local children during the Christmas season, which exemplify Jamia UK's attempts to integrate the AMJ and its Jamia students into their host society and engage with the local community. He told me that the Khalifa had given the Jamia administration instructions to make the students "part of the local community" and for them to be "well-behaved, not to create uneasiness amongst the locals". These initiatives are similar to the Scandinavian AJM communities' traditions of cleaning public places, such as town hall squares after the New

Year celebrations.

In the interview material, the practice of *waqfe arzi* ("temporary dedication") emerges as an important element of religious devotion and instruction for the members, which Valentine (2008, 216) describes as a form of *tabligh*. *Waqfe arzi* entails that members of the movement dedicate their private time, usually for a period of between two and six weeks, to work for the AMJ. Tasks are undertaken in pairs and include visiting community members' homes, for instance, and encouraging them to pray more, read the Qur'an, and attend the mosque. Open to both men and women, the students explained that *waqfe arzi* is an opportunity for community members to dedicate their private time to working for the movement at their own expense. They apply by sending a letter to their Amir, who forwards it to the Khalifa for his approval, whereupon the volunteers are placed wherever they are needed. The students describe the initiative as an opportunity to try out the tasks of a missionary and learn more about the structure and organization of the AMJ. Darwish, for instance, undertook *waqfe arzi* when he graduated from high school, working in the AMJ administration in London for two weeks, because he did not know what he wanted to pursue next. Meanwhile, on a family member's recommendation, Ehsan had been active in *waqfe arzi* since the age of 15 and had been sent to London every year; he recalled the experience as an opportunity to see how the imams and missionaries work and learn about the movement's organization (interviews 2020). As a form of *tabligh*, *waqfe arzi* once again emphasizes the central place mission has within the AMJ; however, it also illustrates how the communities' own members take part in each other's *tarbiyyat*.

Ahmadi women and religious education

During my visit to Jamia UK, my guide stressed that religious education is open to both women and men; however, as both Stokkedal (2019, 60) and my material attest, entry to Jamia Ahmadiyya is restricted to Ahmadi men because Ahmadi women cannot take on roles as imams and missionaries within the movement. Due to the nature of missionary work, the movement requires women's proximity to their family when propagating on behalf of AMJ, one of Stokkedal's (ibid.)

informants explained, because Ahmadi women's duties lie with the family, primarily the children.[12] The topic of women's missionary work and education was not discussed in detail with my interlocutors. However, my guide at the Jamia UK did mention that there is a *madrasa* solely for Ahmadi women in Rabwah and that the British Ahmadiyya community wishes to open a somewhat similar institution in the UK (interviews 2019; Stokkedal 2019:60; see also Gualtieri 2004).

Corresponding to the auxiliary organizations for Ahmadi men and boys, in December 1922 Mahmood Ahmad established the women's auxiliary organization Lajna Ima'illah (henceforth Lajna) for Ahmadi women aged over 15. The name can be translated as the "council for the handmaidens of God". According to Khan (2015, 81) it was the second Khalifa's attempt to "give them [Ahmadi women] voice" and some autonomy in the administration of their own affairs. Mahmood Ahmad also formed the Nasirat al-Ahmdaiyya in December 1938 for Ahmadi girls aged between 7 and 15. Each association has a local organization and elects its own local president; on national level, Lajna elects a national president (Sadr Lajna Ima'illah), who reports directly to the Khalifa (Khan 2015, 81). According to the AMJ's own literature (Zirvi 2010, 362), Lajna formulates programs for the educational and moral training of it members, as well as undertaking social work and preaching to non-Ahmadis. Lajna's primary aims, defined by Mahmood Ahmad are listed by Zirvi (ibid.):

> To educate Ahmadi women and reinforce the necessity of living their lives according to Islamic teachings.
> To prepare them to serve their fellow beings lovingly and to preach Islam in the best manner possible.
> To encourage them to instruct, guide and train their children in the precept and practices of Islam.
> To promote in Ahmadi women such a spirit of sacrifice as to keep them ever ready for offering their lives, properties and their children in the cause of Islam and for the preservation of the Ahmadiyya Khilafat.

These aims are echoed in the Ahmadi women's magazine "The Ayesha", based in California: "[Lajna] shall serve the spiritual and intellectual development of Muslim women and enable them to better rear their children in Islam and to serve humanity with beneficial program[s]" (Ahmed-Ghosh 2004, 81). Ac-

12   Stokkedal (2019, 84-85) notes that Ahmadi women may take part in indirect mission but emphasizes that his material cannot support this claim.

cordingly, Lajna, including the organization's branches in Scandinavia, aims to encourage women to pursue higher education, participate in debates, organize meetings, and make speeches (Wærsted 2018, 12). Lajna's official Swedish website lists the seventeen objectives presented by Mahmood Ahmad, the tenth of which particularly focuses on the upbringing of children:

> x) You should especially realize your duty regarding the Tarbiyyat (upbringing) of your children and not allow them to be distracted, negligent, or lazy in religious matters. Instead, you should try to make them active, alert, and capable of bearing difficulties. Teach them all the factual matters of religion of which you are aware and instill in [them] love and obedience to Allah, the Prophet (saw)[13] [Muhammad], the Promised Messiah [Ghulam Ahmad], and the Khalifa. Instill in them the passion to use their lives to further the true religion and, in accordance with their desire, formulate the means to make this possible and act accordingly. ("Om oss", Swedish Lajna website, n.d.)[14]

In her article about Ahmadi women in California and their religious learning, Ahmed-Ghosh (2006, 38) describes how education within Lajna is organized and practiced. Her findings suggest that the AMJ argues that every member should have the same opportunities for education, while Ahmadi women's education is also especially emphasized in the context of children's upbringing and proselytization of Ahmadiyya. The general idea is that women need to be knowledgeable themselves to be able to transmit Ahmadiyya faith and values to their children; moreover, religious education is also important when they talk about their religion to non-Ahmadis (Ahmed-Ghosh 2006, 38-40; Wærsted 2018, 17-18). The topics of women's religious education revolve around women's role in Islam (for instance as mothers and wives), how to counteract stereotypes of Muslims in the West, and knowledge about other religions (especially Christianity) (Ahmed-Ghosh 2006; Beyeler 2012; Wærsted 2018).

According to the Norwegian Lajna website, the organization has monthly meetings which focus on the religious, moral, social, and general training of its members. It also mentions "knowledge courses" (*kunnskapskurs*) for the younger members, which enable Muslim girls to socialize. Moreover, specific

13 Abbreviation of the phrase "peace be upon him".
14 My translation.

activities and courses are listed, including cooking courses, sewing courses, educational seminars, Qur'an courses, and more. The Lajna group also engages in "public service" (*folketjeneste*), which includes visits to nursing homes and collaboration with the Red Cross. True to the AMJ's *tabligh* practices, Lajna has a unit for bridge-building work that works to promote dialogue and understanding "across backgrounds". Lastly, Lajna members aged between 15 and 25 are part of a subgroup called "Lajna A". According to the website, the group serves as an arena for their youngest members to meet bimonthly to "talk about things that concern them" ("Om oss", Norwegian Lajna website, n.d.). Stokkedal's (2019, 63-64) one and only women informant mentioned the annual Hijab Day event and 17th May celebrations at the mosque as two examples of Lajna's *tabligh* practices in Norway. The informant also explained that the Lajna sets up courses to give women *tabligh* training. Nevertheless, much more remains to be explored and neither Stokkedal's (2019) nor my material adequately illuminates women's education within the AMJ in Scandinavia. In line with more recent studies on Muslim women's religious education, practices, and organization in Scandinavia (Jensen 2022; Lyngsøe 2022), the limitations of my study suggest new avenues of research concerned with the AMJ and women's education both in and outside the Scandinavian context.

Conclusion

By studying religious education and learning within the AMJ with a focus on Scandinavian Ahmadiyya imams, missionaries, and Jamia UK students, the article has provided minority perspectives on Islamic higher education, complementing existing research on this, the changing structures of Islamic religious authority in the region, and generational dynamics within South Asian Muslim groups. The study has illustrated the centrality of educational institutions in the preservation and transmission of faith and also examined other settings outside of such institutions as sites for religious learning and teaching, including the Jamia Ahmadiyya, the children's upbringing program *waqf-e-nau*, and various auxiliary organizations for Ahmadi men and women. I have identified two important common denominators across Ahmadiyya religious learning

and teaching sites – *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* – the centrality of which demonstrates that the learning and maintenance of Ahmadiyya faith and teachings are tied to the movement's mission project, thus highlighting the strong missionary element of the AMJ.

Based on interviews with the Scandinavian AMJ communities' imams and missionaries, as well as Jamia UK alumni and students from the region, I have described the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK and how it is understood as fundamental for religious learning within AMJ, both in terms of its training and, in turn, in how the imams and missionaries it produces are responsible for the transmission of Ahmadiyya faith and teachings both outwards and within AMJ. Furthermore, as noted, other elements of religious education exist alongside and are intertwined with Jamia Ahmadiyya. I have described the movement's upbringing program *waqf-e-nau* and the various auxiliaries for men, especially Khuddam, of which the alumni and students featured in my study are members. Lastly, although my own material is limited to the organization and practice of education and learning for Ahmadi men, I have included brief accounts of religious education amongst Ahmadi women based on studies by Ahmed-Ghosh (2006), Wærsted (2018) and Stokkedal (2019), and Lajna's respective Scandinavian websites. Thus, while the organization and practice of religious education within the AMJ are multifaceted, the Jamia, upbringing program, and the various auxiliary organizations are strictly Ahmadiyya arenas. This illustrates the limitations of religious learning and preservation of faith within the movement.

As suggested in previous works (Stokkedal 2019; Valentine 2008; Mahmood 2022), it is necessary to understand the AMJ as a missionary movement in order to grasp how religious education is organized and practiced. In my material and in previous studies of Ahmadi women and education (Ahmad-Ghosh 2006) *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* emerge as recurring elements of the various sites of religious education I discuss above. Within the Jamia Ahmadiyya context, *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* can be understood as required learning in order for students to fulfil their roles after graduation; both are explained as important tasks for an Ahmadiyya imam and missionary, and proper training in them is secured by the seminary. Yet the students' and alumni's social and cultural capital, as well as their religious education, is significant for their ability to undertake *tabligh* and

tarbiyyat in Scandinavian contexts. All my interlocutors emphasized that the relevant socio-cultural background and knowledge of Scandinavian society and language is beneficial for the roles of imams and missionaries in the region. Issues such as Islamophobia, racism, anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments, and growing up as a Muslim in Scandinavia were raised as examples of the topics that Scandinavian-born imams and missionaries are better equipped to teach and explain to the local youth.

Lay Ahmadi men aged between 15-40 also engage with *tabligh* activities through the auxiliary organization Khuddam, while young Ahmadi women get *tabligh* training and participate in AMJ's mission project via events at the mosque and various courses organized by Lajna. Meanwhile, both Khuddam and Lajna serve as arenas where young Ahmadi adults and teenagers are socialized within the AMJ community, learn more about the movement's structure and organization – which can be regarded as an example of their *tarbiyyat*, as the focus is on moral and religious training – and discuss topics that relate to being Ahmadi Muslims in Scandinavia. As the examples of Lajna activities show, the auxiliary organizations provide opportunities to invite non-Ahmadis to the mosque and other settings, and undertake inter-religious dialogue with both majority and minority religious groups in Scandinavia. Through the upbringing program *waqf-e-nau*, some Ahmadi children are introduced to the Ahmadiyya faith and teachings from a very young age. Instruction that is part of the moral and spiritual upbringing of the children takes place in special classes at the mosques; however, it is the parents who are crucial to the maintenance of the *waqf*-program. As the studies of both Stokkedal (2019, 60) and Ahmad-Ghosh (2006) demonstrate, this task is often assigned to the mothers; consequently, women's religious education within the AMJ is primarily linked to the moral training, or *tarbiyyat*, of AMJ's women members and their children. However, a more comprehensive study of the religious education of Ahmadi women and children in Scandinavia is needed, and I hope the article gives rise to interesting questions for future research.

Acknowledgements

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Naveed Baig

Islamic spiritual care and negative religious coping

Islamic practical theology and psychology of religion at crossroads

Abstract: This article discusses religious coping behaviors in relation to Islamic spiritual care practices. Islamic spiritual care is an established practice, integrated in many European countries' health and welfare services, and an emerging field of research. I have 17 years of experience as a Muslim chaplain in Danish hospitals and a prison, working with counseling, educating staff, and policymaking in the field of Muslim chaplaincy. In this article, I use psychological theory to analyze positive and negative religious coping, first demonstrating that spiritual care is a practice in Islam that is embedded in its theological and psychological (re)sources. Then, based on two case examples, I analyze negative religious coping among Muslims, which is a topic that has received little scholarly attention. The article contributes to the emerging field of Islamic practical theology and the interdisciplinary relationship between practical theology and psychology of religion.

The purpose of this article is to elucidate the field of Islamic spiritual care and contribute to understandings of negative religious coping by juxtaposing the fields of Islamic theology and psychology of religions. Spiritual and/or pastoral care in public institutions, including the healthcare sector, caters to the spiritual care needs of its patients, their relatives, and staff at many institutions today (Gilliat-Ray et al. 2014; Swift et al. 2015). The rationale is that all people in need of spiritual and religious care, including those who adhere to minority religions, should be offered it (Swift 2014). Islamic spiritual care has its roots in the Qur'an and the teachings and practices of the Prophet

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Muhammad (Long and Ansari 2018) and is 'based on the view of a human being as an integral composite of physiological, psychological, and spiritual components' (Isgandarova 2011, 3).

Islamic spiritual care has been defined in relation to pastoral care, with characteristics that include 'shepherding' (taking care of the flock and in Arabic *al-ri'āyah)*, being mindful and attentive, providing a merciful presence, and helping people to grow and flourish (Long and Ansari 2018; Gilliat-Ray et al. 2014). Although Islamic spiritual care is not named as a discipline in the Arabic language, it has a presence in the form of formation (*tarbiyyah*), charitable service (*ḫidmah*), preaching (*dawah*), character ethics (*iḫlāqiāt*), spiritual purification (*taḏkiyyah*), and prophetic medicine/healing (*ṭibb an- nabawi*) (Baig 2022, 114). Islamic spiritual/pastoral care as a formal discipline has been the center of attention for practitioners and academicians alike, especially in relation to the work being done by Muslim chaplains in public institutions, particularly in the Global North.

Islamic spiritual care originates from Islamic practical theology – a generic term – which also includes disciplines such as Islamic social work (exemplified by the institutions of *awqāf* and the distribution of *zakāh*), Muslim chaplaincy, Islamic psychotherapy (*i'lāğ al-nafs*), palliative care, and so on (Badawia 2022; Isgandarova 2022; Abu Shamsieh 2019). While Islamic practical theology is not an established academic discipline in theological faculties around the world, it is an applicable term that 'closely considers the lived experience of faith or how Muslims experience or adapt and change religious or spiritual approaches in daily life' (Isgandarova 2022, 169). Badawia (2022), Abu Shamsieh (2019), and Isgandarova (2022) all highlight critical and theological reflection on Muslim practices as the core ingredient of Islamic practical theology. Isgandarova, one of the contemporary pioneers in advocating Islamic practical theology, argues that there is a gap between the lived and the studied, and that the understanding of Islamic practical theology is narrow and needs further development in the world (Isgandarova 2022). A concrete example of Islamic practical theology in action could be the question of the burial/disposal of still-born babies and fetus deaths in hospitals, about which parents/families have to make decisions in a fairly short span of time. How many weeks old should the baby/fetus be before it can be given a Muslim burial, and can it be buried in a combined grave (with other babies/fetuses) in a Christian graveyard? What

if one parent is Muslim and the other Christian and they want different religious/cultural ceremonies at the graveyard and wish to be consoled by both a Muslim and Christian chaplain? Islamic practical theology (a Muslim chaplain/Islamic scholar would study, reflect on, and find solutions to these questions) would in this instance draw upon a range of authoritative sources from the Islamic tradition and formulate answers to the questions, notwithstanding the sensibilities involved. On a practical level, the Muslim chaplain could facilitate an interfaith ceremony in dialogue with the Christian chaplain, striving to stay true to the traditions and boundaries of both, as well as those of the family involved. Finding and formulating day-to-day theological reflections and answers for specific life situations makes theology practical and in constant motion.

Coping is a psychological phenomenon that 'involves the ability to overcome challenges and setbacks' (Skibniewski-Woods 2022, 1). Religious coping – a particular coping strategy – can be understood as 'how particular people use religion concretely in specific life situations and contexts' (Pargament and Ano 2004, 119). In the coping literature, originating in the discipline of psychology of religion, both positive and negative religious coping are addressed. Pargament et al. (1998) differentiate between two categories of religious coping: positive and negative. They state 'that positive religious coping activities reflect a secure relationship with God, a belief that there is a greater meaning to be found, and a sense of spiritual connectedness with others. Negative religious coping activities reflect an ominous view of the world, and a religious struggle to find and conserve significance in life' (Pargament et al. 1998, 712). Furthermore, negative religious coping or 'religious struggles' are expressions of conflict, question, and doubt regarding matters of faith and religious relationships, containing notions of 'a punishing God', and 'being abandoned by God' (Abu-Raiya and Pargament 2015; Pankowski and Pankowska 2023); a broader definition refers to 'underlying spiritual tensions and struggles within oneself, with others, and with the divine' (Pargament et al. 2011, 51). Because there is a tendency to see religion and spirituality alone as having positive outcomes on health and well-being, negative religious coping is an important area of interest, exemplified by the fact that 'religious struggles' (problematic manifestations of religion and spirituality) have recently received growing attention in the literature (Abu-Raiya

et al. 2016). Xu writes that religion wields a double-edged sword in coping studies and the notion that religion is benign for all and everything can lead to biased stances (Xu 2016).

The primary focus of most research on Muslim patients and religious coping is on positive religious coping (Abu-Raiya and Pargament 2014). This is not surprising since research and scholarly debates in this particular field on potentially negative forms of religion and spirituality have generally not received much attention (Abu-Raiya et al. 2016), possibly because religious coping literature has predominately found positive religious coping methods among research participants in Christian populations in the United States (Pargament et al. 1998).

It is of academic and healthcare concern to explore the perceived negative religious styles of 'help-seeking' in Islamic spiritual care because negative religious coping can have serious implications for the physical and psychosocial health of humans (Rassool 2016). Identifying its role and effect can also give us a better understanding of Islamic spiritual care and potential negative coping ideals/practices that are related to it. Muslims use positive religious coping, negative religious coping, non-religious means of coping, and sometimes a combination of these (Rassool 2016). From an institutional perspective, as of 1 October 2023 the World Health Organization's homepage stated that 'relieving serious health-related suffering, be it physical, psychological, social, or spiritual, is a global ethical responsibility' (WHO n.d.). Since this 'global ethical responsibility' also includes the spiritual domain, it is important to identify and ascertain what this spirituality is, in the Islamic tradition as well, so that people in need can receive spiritual care according to their values and belief systems.

In this article, I first elaborate on the methodology and method used, exploring the tradition and context of Islamic spiritual care through its theological sources. Secondly, I discuss the relationship between negative religious coping and Islamic spiritual care practices. The purpose of the article is to answer the question: how does Islamic spiritual care relate to negative religious coping behavior, and what potential sensitivities exist amongst care recipients during negative religious coping?

Methodology and method

Abu Shamsieh defines practical theology as 'an action-oriented discipline that responds to issues ranging from the role of faith in society, the understanding of individuals and communities of faith regarding normative texts, and transformation through understanding and practice' (Abu Shamsieh 2019, 143). It is relevant for Muslims in that it may widen horizons, transcending the authoritative texts to 'correlate the present situation with all its complexities and mysteries' (Abu Shamsieh 2019, 143). This understanding of practical theology takes into account the movement between theory and practice, and is well aware that contexts are ever-changing, and that theology is for the benefit of its adherents and their daily lived lives.

The principal methodological framework within which practical theology takes place is theology, wherein the hermeneutical/interpretive paradigm is immersed (Swinton and Mowat 2016). Although Islam is an orthopraxy, practical theology is a relatively new discipline in the Islamic tradition compared to Christian theology (Abu Shamshieh 2019). As a hermeneutics of Islamic spiritual care, practical theology can play a pivotal role in creating correlations between: a) religious/ spiritual practice and its tradition and sources; and b) theological and social-scientific accounts of religious/spiritual practice. Practical theology is not only theoretical inquiry into understanding practice, it is also an exercise in taking human experience seriously. While practical theologians exert themselves to understand the 'real' lived situations of ordinary human beings, this is also for the sake of 'public interest', called *maṣlaḥah* in Islamic theology (Hasan 2023). Public interest is seen as the intent of the divine law (*maqāṣid al-šariah*) in Islamic thought, and the preservation and development of the intellect and human life are part of the higher intent of revelation in Islam (Attia 2007). According to Abu Shamsieh, contextual jurisprudence (*fiqh waqiʿ*) or the correlation of theory with practice is congruent with Islam (Abu Shamsieh 2019). More specifically, contextual jurisprudence requires three key factors: a) understanding the text (Qur'an and *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad); b) understanding the context; and c) cultivating the ability to apply text to context (Isgandarova 2016, 15-28). In this article, I have attempted all three, examining negative religious coping (context) where Islamic spiritual care theology

(text) is applied, and new insights are sought.

This article is part of my article-based PhD dissertation, which examines the lived hospital lives of 12 patients with Muslim backgrounds diagnosed with COVID-19 and hospitalized in Denmark. Using a qualitative empirical research design to gather data (semi-structured interviews), I am particularly interested in understanding how Muslim patients experience and view crisis situations and what resources they use/adopt to come through severe sickness, including the use of religion and spirituality. However, this article – as noted above – uses a hermeneutical/interpretative approach to conceptualize and contextualize negative religious coping in relation to Islamic spiritual care, analyzing relevant literature and portraying two coping examples from the lived lives of Muslims in crisis situations.

In the next section, I delve into the Islamic practice of spiritual care by mapping its understanding of the human being and discussing the relation and sensitivities between Islamic spiritual care and negative religious coping.

Islamic Spiritual Care: The tradition, context, and contemporary issues

Islamic spiritual care has been 'primarily seen as a sideline to the mosque imam and not as an independent function' (Ajouaou 2014, 42). Although many Muslim spiritual caregivers in the early periods of Islamic history had a background as mosque imams and scholars, many others who did not, including Muslim women, were also active in Islamic spiritual care practice, education, and preaching (Bewley 2004).

The notion of 'Abrahamic shepherding' entails that the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam understand pastoral care (the word pastor originating from the Latin meaning shepherd and in Arabic *al-rāʿī*) as caring for the flock – a metaphor for family, neighbors, and human beings' friends or foes (Ansari 2022). Hence, pastoral care as 'the precondition and state' or even the rationale for delivering spiritual care can be added to the list of practices that are interlinked to spiritual care in Islam. There is no contradiction in principle between the understanding of pastoral care in the Judeo-Christian tradition and that in Islamic practice, and in all

three faith traditions there is a clear scriptural basis to be found (Ansari 2022). Perhaps a part of the farewell sermon of the Prophet Muhammad, which not only is a key historical event in the Islamic *sīrah* literature but also has deep existential significance for Muslim life, explains the value and sanctity of humans: 'all people are equal like the teeth of a comb. You are all from Adam and Adam is from dust. There is no superiority of white over black, nor of Arab over non-Arab except for God-consciousness' (Hathout 2008, 82; Musnad Aḥmad 23489; Waliullah, n.d.).

Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad stated in a narration, 'the servant does not reach the reality of faith until he loves for the people what he loves for himself of goodness' (Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān 238). The sermon and this saying have spiritual care implications because they highlight equality and fraternity between humans for the caring practice, transcending ethnic, cultural, and religious boundaries. The Qur'anic verse in which it is said, 'My [God] mercy embraces everything' (7:156), and the hadith of mercy, 'The Compassionate One shows compassion to those who are compassionate so show compassion to those on earth and the One in the heavens will show compassion to you' relate the nature of God and the task of humankind in Islamic theology (Tirmiḏī 1924). Thus, spiritual care in Islam is not a new idea or practice; rather, it is the professionalization and organization of it – for example in the form of Muslim chaplaincy in the Global North – that is fairly new (Ansari and Long 2018), starting from American prisons in the 1960s (Kowalski and Becker 2016).

Today, the term chaplaincy is mostly used in English-speaking countries (although spiritual care services are found in non-English speaking countries) to refer to those employees/ volunteers (from different faith traditions and life stances) who provide religious, spiritual, and life stance services primarily at public institutions. These types of services are value-based and include, among other things, existential conversations, spiritual support, religious rituals, counseling, and often teaching and guidance to staff on ethical and existential issues, including in cross-disciplinary settings (Snorton 2020). Chaplains have, for instance, working relationships with other hospital staff and wards at different levels (Egerod and Kaldan 2022; Swift et al. 2015), and are sometimes deeply integrated and even embedded in specific wards like the palliative, where patient cases are

discussed at cross-disciplinary meetings (Gilliat-Ray et al. 2016; Proserpio 2011).

Muslim chaplaincy is present in various forms in public institutions, not only in the Global North but in majority Muslim countries, especially prisons and healthcare, where it is slowly gaining credibility, acceptance, and presence (Shariff 2021).

The mapping of the human being in Islamic spirituality

One contention is that the Islamic notion of the human being does not approve the part of modern psychology that is 'influenced by Western secularism and its ungodly worldview and its deviant conceptions about the nature of man' (Badri 2009, 9). The critique launched by Badri, the late psychology professor who is also known as the founder of modern Islamic psychology, has ramifications for patient-centered care in plural societies. The criticism pertains especially to the limited understanding of human nature in modern psychology, which relies heavily on the mind and brain as the focal point of the self and does not recognize the perception that Muslims connect to God through the spiritual heart (*qalb*) (Badri 2009). However, this is an oversimplified account. Jungian psychology (which can be described as working in the periphery of modern psychology today), for example, recognizes the workings of the 'inner self', which has similarities to the functions of the *qalb* (Rothman 2022), and the possibility of a self-revealing God-image in the self (Corbett 2013), echoing *tašbih* (self-disclosure of God's attributes) in Islamic mystical thought (Abidi 2021). Notwithstanding that the movement between Jungian psychology and Islamic psychology may release some tension, the belief in a living and present God outside of the self – something characterized as the 'original beyond the images' by Jung – is outside the scope of the modern psychological venture (Corbett 2013). This of course does not mean that theology and psychology do not have a two-way dialogue and cannot enrich each other with critical perspectives, especially on aspects of human nature like forgiveness but also on more theoretical issues concerning mind/body relations, unity/multiplicity of the self, and freedom/determinism (Watts 2012).

Underpinning the Islamic worldview is that the whole

person is viewed from three aspects: biological/physical, psychological/emotional, and spiritual. Islamic theology maintains that the spirit (*ruḥ*) is the inner essence of the human being (metaphysical reality, pervading the whole body), a 'life source' from God, literally meaning 'breathe, wind or life' (Ushuluddin et al. 2021; Baig 2022). The *ruḥ,* centered on the spiritual *qalb* (heart), forms a bridge from the human to God (Ushuluddin et al. 2021). The word *ruḥ* is mentioned at least nineteen times in the Qur'an (Osama 2005), also referring to various other metaphysical entities and concepts like angels, Archangel Gabriel, revelation, and divine inspiration. While the Qur'an offers scant information about the *ruḥ*, it does mention humankind's being gifted a special position in the universe due to containing a 'divine spark': 'When I have fashioned him (Adam) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall you down in prostration unto him' (15:28-29).

Although the spirit (*ruḥ)* is essential in mapping the essence of humans in Islamic thought, other elements that constitute the human being are indispensable in determining their faculties and functioning. These include the spiritual heart (*qalb*), intellect/cognition (*ʿaql*), soul or self (*nafs*), and spirit (*ruḥ*) (Long 2022). The intellect/cognitive aspect of human nature in Islamic thought is not alien to modern psychology, although the individual is a composite of many entities because of the accidental modes or states (*aḥwāl*) of the human being, as Al-Attas suggests:

> [when] involved in intellection and apprehension it is called 'intellect'; when it governs the body it is called 'soul'; when it is engaged in receiving intuitive illumination it is called 'heart'; and when it reverts to its own world of abstract entities it is called 'spirit'. Indeed, it is in reality always engaged in manifesting itself in all its states (Al-Attas 1995, 148).

Hence these components of the human are one entity, indivisible and unified. Also included in these states is the 'animal self '(*nafs al-ḥaywāniyah* or *nafs al-ammarah bi-l- su'*), which is a powerful force that impacts the soul/self and can drag it down 'to the lowest foothills of the bestial nature' (Al-Attas 1995, 147). Conversely, faith, exemplary character, and sincerity can inspire humans to soar toward the angelic realm where divine peace thrives (Al-Attas 1995).

The physical body (*ǧism*), its impact, and its significance are often underrated in discussions concerned with spirituality in Islamic literature (especially on Sufism and asceticism), where renunciation is adopted to 'defeat' the body and its desires (Rabbani 1995). The body must be vanquished through painful psychical practices for the sake of the soul (Glucklich 2001). There is 'a lesser value given to the corporeal within the overall Islamic outlook' (Chowdhary 2021, 50), which has to do with the notion that God gives the inner dimensions of the human utmost importance, (noble intentions, God consciousness, quality of worship etc.), making the outer dimensions, including the body, redundant. Nevertheless, the human being is not alone created by God but is shaped 'in the image of God' – meaning fashioned and honored by God (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī 5873). The Qur'an states that 'it is He who created you and fashioned you into whatever form He willed' (82:7-8), with a purpose. The holistic worldview of the human being in Islam therefore obliges the physical body to be perceived as a part of the grand scheme of things (Rahman 1998). For Al-Ghazali, the spiritual journey towards God entails the body, as he himself states in allegorical terms: 'the body may be figured as a kingdom, the soul as its king, and the different senses and faculties as constituting an army. Reason may be called the vizier, or prime minister, passion the revenue collector, and anger the police officer' (Al-Ghazali 2016, 22). Thus, according to Al-Ghazali, the revenue collector and the police officer must be subservient to the king, but if they rebel and fight against the king, the soul (king) and thereby the body (kingdom) will be ruined (Al-Ghazali 2016).

A prevalent theme in contemporary healthcare settings that involves the body and can cause friction in the physician-patient relation is 'patient indifference'. This implies a 'resigning' of the body during times of severe sickness and even rehabilitation by expressing disdain and a lack of concern for one's physical condition. This could include abstaining from eating, inactivity after an operation, or not taking painkillers or medicine at all. Patient fatalism, which is an intimidating concern for many healthcare professionals, may also amplify the notion of indifference, of leaving everything to the will of God (Tackett et al. 2018), although Islamic teachings encourage healthcare treatment to be sought during illness (Rahman 1997). One possible explanation for this resignation, for example during the end-of-life phase in the rejection of sedatives, is that pain is seen

as the expiation of sins and the desire to be 'conscious' for as long as possible for worship and similar (Al-Shahri 2016). There is a need for more research on views of the body, on relationships between body and spirit, among patients and clinicians alike, and reasons for the apparent 'resignation' of the body. It would also be of interest to explore this 'indifference' and whether it should be included in definitions of negative religious coping, positive religious coping, or both.

Negative religious coping and Islamic spiritual care

Most of the religious coping literature has focused on Christian samples and, as such, its findings cannot be generalized to individuals of other faiths (Abu Raiya and Pargament 2015; Abu-Raiya 2013). Additionally, this body of research in the field of psychology of religion has largely overlooked potentially negative coping forms of religion and spirituality (Abu Raiya et al. 2016). Therapists working within the Muslim community state that there is a strong inclination towards a condition that reveals 'a negative picture of themselves and a negative experience of God' (Rothman 2022, 126); however, these types of descriptions only touch the surface and call for more context and further research.

Islamic spiritual care and its clinical usage also engage with *ǧinn* possession and exorcism, whisperings, black magic, evil eye, visions, and dreams, among other phenomenon, across the Muslim world and beyond (Rassool 2019). These unseen powers and influences are actual and a part of the fabric of the beliefs of Muslims (Rassool 2019; Böttcher and Krawietz 2021). There is at present limited empirical research and knowledge on the relationship between such unseen influences, how they are understood, and their implications, especially in relation to negative religious coping. Since Islamic spiritual care also takes mental health into account due to its holistic understanding of health, it is advantageous for spiritual care providers to have insight into the Muslim view of the unseen – which includes cultural healing contexts and cure-seeking expectations – alongside having counseling skills and evidence-based mental health training (Isgandarova 2019). Being aware of patients' negative religious coping behaviors can be useful in both

assessment and intervention (Ali and Aboul Fotouh 2012).

Even though previous research has shown a positive correlation between religious coping and health (physical and psychological) among different faith groups, some findings tell a different story (Skalisky et al. 2022), indicating either no relationship at all or even that religious coping may have negative implications for health (Skalisky et al. 2022). Although Muslims report using positive more than negative religious coping (Skalisky 2022), this finding calls for critical comment. One possible interpretation of it could be that Muslims are hesitant to admit to negative aspects of their religion (Abu Raiya 2013) due to fear of reprisals or being declared 'outcasts' by their own religious communities. Doubting God or Islam may be seen as being sacrilegious and contemptuous toward God, which amounts to disbelief (Rassool 2013); furthermore, there are tacit theological understandings that inform Muslims how to cope during tribulations (Skalisky 2022). This could be 'accepting' that it is God's will and plan that life is full of trials, and that patience and thankfulness are preferred over rebellion and questioning one's fate (Kermani 2011).

Therefore, answering, for example, Pargament's RCOPE scale questionnaire (the most commonly used, 14-item measure of religious coping, which helps to contribute to knowledge about the role served by religion during crisis and transition) could trigger a propensity to specific responses because of theological and cultural underpinnings. One could imagine, for instance, an abstention on the 'Realized that there were some things that even God could not change' question in RCOPE (Pargament 1999) if one has been taught that God is the 'all-Powerful' (*Al-ʿAzīz*) and 'possessor of all strength' (*Al-Qawi*) during one's upbringing. Many names for God, at least 99 in number, are mentioned in the Qur'an and are crucial for understanding God and one's purpose in life; they are used as part of a lived, practical, and embodied ritual for Muslims worldwide who recite, recall, sing, and reflect upon them (Haciibrahimoğlu 2020). God's attributes as expounded in the *asmāʾ al-ḥusna* (beautiful names of God) literature are the Patient (*as-Ṣabr*), the Giver of serenity (*as-Salām*), the Protector (*al-Muhaymin*), the Protecting Friend (*al-Walī*), the Pardoner (*al-ʿAfu*), the Clement (*al-Ḥalīm*), the Merciful (*ar-Raḥmān*), the Subtle (*al-Laṭīf*), the All-embracing (*al-Wāsiʾ*), the All-responsive (*al-Muğīb*), the One Who expands (*al-Bāsiṭ*), and the Loving (*al-*

Wadūd), to mention a few. The usage of these names can also be seen as an example of practical theology in action, as the names are used in concrete crisis situations by individuals or groups who can 'call' upon the Merciful or the ultimate Healer (*al-Shafi*'), for instance. The Qur'an says, 'God has the Most Beautiful Names. So call upon Him by them' (7:180).

One may even have a skeptical approach to the questionnaire in its entirety, expressing criticism and confusion around the use of spiritual terms and/or of being part of a 'psychology project', as one study showed (Amer et al. 2008). Different versions of RCOPE (and others inspired by it) have been translated, but studies are needed to evaluate the extent to which it is useful in cultures outside of largely Christian contexts in the Global North (Amer et al. 2008). The same skepticism can be true of people from different socio-economic groups and minority cultures where surveying religion and spirituality in this specific way is not a cultural norm. However, respondents who react negatively to RCOPE or express skepticism can be identified by the professionals, and that knowledge may be useful in determining what is specific to Muslim respondents, potentially helping them in the future.

Religious coping behaviors dealing with life's tribulations and giving individuals a meaningful explanation in an Islamic context are mainly drawn from the two primary sources of Islamic theology, the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, known as the 'Prophetic example' (Rassool 2016). In Islamic theology 'religious struggles' can be understood as 'divine trials', known as *balā* or *ibtilā* (plural), at the individual or societal level (Rouzati 2015). These may include superstition, bad omens, *jinn* possession, and losing hope and faith in God and/or religious institutions/faith leaders. Although *ibtilā* is a general term that encompasses all 'trials' in life, including sickness, divorce, and poverty, the above-mentioned dilemmas and situations can be included in that pool as well. The Qur'an makes it clear that humankind, irrespective of its religious and ethnic divides, will be tested as part of the human experience in this cosmos: 'He is the One Who created death and life to test which of you is best in deeds. And He is the Almighty, All-Forgiving' (67:2). Hence, according to the Qur'an, humans are not just tested in order to perform good works in this life, but also that they may excel above others in morality. Furthermore, it is important to add that *ibtilā* includes being tried during times of prosperity and 'wellness' as well (Rouzati

2015). In Islamic theology, the understanding is that life on earth is a trial – a raison d'être for humans (Rouzati 2015). Therefore, religious coping is not merely a systemic or strategic adaptation for times of crisis, a 'doing' (using religion), it is more than that; it is a 'being' (living religion): a deep existential conviction infused in the self-understanding and lived lives of Muslims that trials are part of the larger divine plan for humans.

God can be viewed as a punishing, avenging power, and 'quarreling' with God and religious doubt would fall into this category (Pargament 1997). However, asking God questions, such as 'Why is God testing me?' and lamenting or 'quarrelling' with God may hold positive, transformative, and relational opportunities (Pargament 2007). The expression of religious pain and conflict may have benign effects since struggle, according to the religious literature, can be a precursor to growth, with the prophet Ayuub (Job) providing one well-known narrative example (Glucklich 2001; Pargament et al. 1998). Pargament notes that negative religious coping impacts humans differently and in three ways, being 'relatively harmful to some people, inconsequential to others, and still to others, a source of growth and introspection' (Pargament et al. 1998).

It is an opportune moment to relate an example of negative religious coping offered by La Cour (2010), wherein doubts pertaining to religious relationships led to religious/social isolation in a Danish context: A Muslim woman with chronic pain who was highly dependent on others characterized herself as very religious. She prayed, fasted, and heard Qur'an recitation regularly. She did not attend the mosque and thought that it was exclusively for men. She was socially isolated, had near to no Danish language skills, no friends, and only saw her husband and children. She said that her religion was the only thing she had, but at the same time, it also maintained her in social isolation because she did not want to meet with others including non-Muslims or Muslims who were different to her (case study from La Cour 2010). This example of negative religious coping is somewhat ambiguous since it is unclear how the woman's religiosity is connected to her social isolation. One could argue that not meeting other people who are different from oneself may be due to other reasons than religion, or a combination of reasons. Furthermore, we have no information on how the woman's religion and faith beliefs influenced her in other dimensions of life.

The application of positive and religious coping terms can be criticized for being tautological in nature since it seems neither informative nor surprising that patients who have, for example, a religiously pessimistic or 'dark worldview' feel more depressed in stressful situations (Abu Raiya and Sulleiman 2020; Abu Raiya and Pargament 2015; Pargament et al. 2011). However, the descriptions can give us a clearer picture of what the negative 'involves' and potential danger signs (La Cour 2010).

Another point to be considered is that the division between positive and negative religious coping can emerge as a dualistic trap, dogmatic in nature and unable to yield the fruits of dialectical inquiry into religious coping. It is reasonable to believe that patients use both positive and negative religious coping simultaneously to deal with the same crisis event (Xu 2016), dubbed 'heretical piety' by Kermani in his book entitled *The Terror of God: Attar, Job and the Metaphysical Revolt* (2011). The 'heretical' – denoting anger and frustration over God's plan and actions (negative religious coping) – and 'piety', along with observing traditional Islamic ritual practice (positive religious coping), signifies the stringent need to accept good and evil as coming from the same divine source, with a meaningful purpose for the individual (positive/negative religious coping). Even though Kermani's book and the heterodox image of God presented in it is a minority stance within Islamic theology, it may be argued that it gives legitimacy to the holistic stance of the worldview in Islam that stresses integration, non-duality, or a 'radical *tawḥīd* (oneness)'. The heterodox image of God in Kermani's book is one in which humans revolt, complain, and express anger against God and his plan inwardly and openly. The God-talk is without filter, blunt and messy because God can take it. God is always ever-present and the focus of constant attention (Kermani 2011).

This 'radical oneness', or *tawḥīd*, may call for an integrative approach to religious coping when seen with the lens of Islamic spiritual care, wherein a 'pendulating religious coping' (between positive and negative coping strategies) is present for the same stressful event. This integrative approach would also include non-religious coping behavior, where culture, family, and nature play a role in overcoming personal tribulation (Ahmadi and Ahmadi 2018).

To explain this 'pendulating religious coping' the following personal inner dialogue of Hasan, a hospitalized Muslim patient,

who has been waiting for a new liver transplant for nearly a year, is quoted below:

> In the beginning of my sickness, I thought a lot inside of myself, wrestled with
> Allah, complained to Him. Asked 'why me?' Then I thought I was the cause of my sickness. I had committed an offense. So, I sought forgiveness from friends and family and called everyone. That gave me a feeling of satisfaction.
> I had a direct line to Allah. I didn't think about anyone else. Read a lot of Istaġfār (reciting the repentance formula). (Hasan, a liver patient). (Baig 2017, 139).

Hasan has an insecure and quarrelling relationship with God at the onset, asking the 'why me' question (negative religious coping) and blaming himself for his disease (negative religious coping); after that he uses asking for forgiveness and gaining pardon as positive coping strategies, along with tuning into his relationship with Allah, which he describes as 'a direct line to Allah'. He sustains this relationship by reading repentance formulas, but also the Qur'an and the 'beautiful names' of Allah, as he further elaborates in the interview. Hasan had good days and bad days for many months and pendulated back and forth between the two coping conditions during this time. He practices his religion by reading the repentance formula, but also by telephoning his family members and seeking their pardon. This is an action-oriented approach for Hasan: seeking transformation through practice, as Abu Shamsieh's definition of practical theology tells us. He is using a variety of means to cope with the situation rather than following a specific theology manual for religious rituals during crisis.

In the previous section, the following points have been discussed: a) Muslim patients use positive and negative religious coping; b) there is uncertainty in validating the extent of negative religious coping amongst Muslim patients due to the 'intrinsic theology' relating to fate, tribulations, images of God (e.g., the All-Powerful or 'quarreling with God'), and doubts about Gods plan, which cannot necessarily be put into the negative versus positive dichotomy; c) this uncertainty is increased by patients' fears of thinking 'negatively' about Islam, and subsequently becoming 'outcasts' and vulnerable to reprisals; d) there may be both positive and negative religious coping taking place during the same crisis event.

Conclusion

The main aim of this article has been to explore the relationship between Islamic spiritual care theology and negative religious coping. This began with defining key terms to give conceptual clarity; then Islamic spiritual care and its theology were juxtaposed with negative religious coping, also bringing to the discussion the different sensitivities connected with negative coping behavior. I have also discussed and problematized the tensions between the Global North and Islamic paradigms for understanding the nature of the human being. Although the distinction between Global North/Western and Islamic is oversimplified and even misleading, it does offer space for reflection on how different paradigms influence our perceptions of the human being. This is a key area of retrospection, especially for spiritual care providers who cater to the needs of their clients/patients in an increasingly diverse and multicultural world.

As noted above, contextual jurisprudence (*fiqh al-wāqi ʿ*), as framed by Abu Shamsieh, was attempted in this article. At first glance appearing to be a technical term, contextual jurisprudence has more to do with practical adaptability in lived life situations. In other words, it is the correlation between theory and practice that is also called practical theology. I have tried to give an understanding of the text (Islamic spiritual care theology) through examples induced by the Qur'an and *sunnah*, and their relation to care practices like 'shepherding' and 'mercy'; key terms like 'tribulations' and 'image of God' were also interpreted in light of the authoritative texts of Islam. But more significantly, the text was applied to the context of negative religious coping from the field of psychology of religion. This can be seen as a movement of Islamic theology toward understanding and critically reflecting on a different academic field, and resulted in discussions of negative religious coping, its presence, and its impact on the lived lives of Muslims.

We have seen that negative religious coping is a factor in Islamic spiritual care, but the picture is blurry. It is, however, impossible to know the extent and exact character of negative religious coping in the complexities of the lived lives of patients, which calls, therefore, for more empirical research, theological reflection, and subsequent theory development. In this article, negative religious coping contra positive negative religious cop-

ing has also been problematized. The definitions of religious coping may create sharp contrasts and demarcations preventing us from seeing the dynamics and dialectics of different coping behaviors. It may also be altogether difficult to grasp what negative religious coping actually is, especially for the person her/himself in the specific situation.

The notion of 'pendulating religious coping' behavior was introduced, suggesting an integrative approach. I have briefly described the sensitivities pertaining to coping behavior, such as the fear and hesitation connected with expressing 'negative' thoughts and feelings about one's religion, and also noted that, as a scientific term, coping may be somewhat mechanical for Islamic theology where trials and how to respond to them are integrated into human behavior and the modus operandi of belief.

A stronger and more vigorous academic relationship between Islamic practical theology and psychology of religion can contribute to a fuller and deeper understanding of human suffering and the resources that are needed when people are undergoing tribulations. The first few steps in this regard could be to raise the level of curiosity about each other's fields and find potential common ground by studying the origins and the contexts of the two disciplines and how they seek to understand humans, human life, and human tribulations from their distinctive positions.

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Andreas Dohn

Ibrahim på ramadan-tv

Hverken jøde, kristen eller militant idolknuser

Resumé: Profeten Ibrahim er en central figur i islam, som i disse år bliver påberåbt både som fælles stamfader til muslimer, kristne og jøder og som symbol for jihadister. Mens Ibrahims plads i Koranen og de klassiske islamiske tekster er velbeskrevet, synes nyere fortolkninger af profeternes far i mindre grad at være studeret. Denne artikel bidrager til forståelsen af nutidige forestillinger om Ibrahim i arabisk massekultur ved at undersøge, hvordan han bliver fremstillet i to dokumentariske tv-serier om islams profeter. Artiklen forklarer forskellen mellem de to tv-seriers skildring af Ibrahim ud fra tv-producenternes forskellige interesser og de medvirkende prædikanters religiøse orientering. Endeligt diskuteres, hvordan tv-serierne er positioneret i forhold til samtidens militante og økumeniske Ibrahim-fortolkninger ved at inddrage aktuelle eksempler på disse modpoler.

Patriarken Abraham/Ibrahim lægger i disse år navn til to modstridende narrativer i den arabiske verden. På den ene side bliver den fælles stamfader til muslimer, kristne og jøder brugt til at plædere for sameksistens under overskrifter som "Abrahams børn" og "de abrahamiske religioner"; på den anden side prædiker salafister og jihadister afstandtagen fra ikke-muslimer i bredeste forstand med henvisning til profeten Ibrahim, arabisk for Abraham, og hans opgør med datidens afgudsdyrkere.

De to narrativer vidner om profeten Ibrahims særlige betydning i den islamiske tradition, hvor han regnes som grundlægger af Kabaen og pilgrimsfærden *hajj* og af nogen betragtes som den næstvigtigste profet efter Muhammad (Busse 2008; Firestone u.å.). Islamforskningen har gennem de seneste 100 år genereret en omfangsrig baggrundslitteratur om Ibrahim med udgangspunkt i hans plads i Koranen, den klassiske *tafsīr*

Andreas Dohn er cand.mag. i Mellemøstens sprog og samfund fra Københavns Universitet. Artiklen bygger på hans kandidatspeciale fra 2022, som undersøgte nutidige fremstillinger af profeten Ibrahim i arabisk massekultur.

(eksegese), hadith, islamisk historieskrivning og inden for de såkaldte fortællinger om profeterne (*qisas al-anbiyā*ʾ) (Nickel 2012). Få studier behandler imidlertid Ibrahim-fortolkninger fra vores tid, og de, der gør, har snarere haft blik for Ibrahim som symbol end som *sīra* (biografi). For eksempel udgør Abū Muhammad al-Maqdisīs (f. 1959) radikale ideologi under slagordet *millat Ibrāhīm* (Ibrahims religion) et mindre forskningsfelt i sig selv (Wagemakers 2008; 2012; al-Saud 2018), og flere af de senere års økumeniske initiativer i Abrahams/Ibrahims navn har ligeledes været behandlet inden for forskellige akademiske discipliner (for eksempel Lande 2008; Jeong 2021; Winter 2022). Derimod har jeg ikke kunnet identificere undersøgelser dedikeret til nutidige fortolkninger af profeten Ibrahim i en bredere kontekst, som jeg her vil betegne som arabisk massekultur[1].

Hvis vi skal forstå Ibrahims aktuelle betydning i islam og appel til både tværreligiøse og jihadistiske programmer, kan vi dog ikke nøjes med at undersøge, hvem han var i de klassiske islamiske kilder, for ikke at sige i virkeligheden. Vi må også forstå, hvem "[…] han løbende blev", som islamforsker Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (2020, 8) skriver i indledningen til sit fortolkningshistoriske værk om profeten Muhammad. Inspireret af denne tilgang har nærværende artikel til formål at undersøge, hvordan profeten Ibrahims liv bliver fremstillet i nutidig arabisk massekultur. Dette skal konkret ske gennem en analyse af to store nonfiction tv-serier fra de seneste 20 år, som begge fortæller historien om Ibrahim og andre islamiske profeters liv. Eller rettere: Historien om "profeternes land", som begge tv-serier bruger som titel. Den ældre af serierne, Profeternes land (*Ard al-Anbiyā*ʾ*)*, blev sendt på den saudisk-ejede transnationale nyhedskanal al-Arabiya under ramadanen i 2007, mens den nyere serie, Egypten – profeternes land (*Misr Ard al-Anbiyā*ʾ), udkom på tre egyptiske kanaler, *al-Ūlā* (Kanal 1), DMC og CBC, under ramadanen i 2020.

Tv som vindue til trosforestillinger

Når jeg anvender tv-indhold som empiri for en undersøgelse af trosforestillinger i samtiden, er det relevant at pege på tidligere udgivelser, der har beskæftiget sig med tv-mediets betydning for kulturelle og religiøse forestillinger. I begyndelsen af årtusindet

[1] Med massekultur forstås typisk produkter og forestillinger, der "[…] er udbredt hos den brede del af befolkningen i et moderne samfund, og som bl.a. formidles gennem massemedier" (Den Danske Ordbog u.å.). Begrebet havde i første halvdel af det 20. århundrede negative undertoner og blev opfattet som modsætning til finkultur, men siden 1990'erne er massekultur ofte blevet brugt synonymt med eller helt erstattet af betegnelsen populærkultur, hvilket har dæmpet de negative konnotationer. I *Islam and Popular Culture* anlægger Van Nieuwkerk, Levine og Stokes (2016, 10) tilsvarende en bred definition af populærkultur, som de definerer som "[…] the expressive practices of everyday life, which include mass media products such as television shows and video games, individualized forms of expression like food and holidays, and of course, religion".

argumenterede mediehistorikeren Gary R. Edgerton for, at tv spillede en afgørende rolle for en befolknings kendskab til historien og for skabelsen af det, han betegnede som *collective memory*: "[…] the full sweep of historical consciousness, understanding, and expression that a culture has to offer" (Edgerton 2001, 5). I en mellemøstlig kontekst er det svært at komme uden om antropologen Lila Abu-Lughods undersøgelser af tv-sening i Egypten. Hun betegner tv som "[…] a key institution for the production of national culture in Egypt […]" (Abu-Lughod 2004, 7) og argumenterer for vigtigheden af at studere tv for derigennem at finde svar på større spørgsmål om kultur og magt.

Mest specifikt i forhold til islam har Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen beskrevet tv-mediet som et oplagt sted at slå ned, "[…] hvis man vil undersøge, hvad der karakteriserer araberes viden om og forhold til islam i dag" og "[…] hvordan forskellige versioner af islam sameksisterer og brydes i disse år" (Skovgaard-Petersen 2013, 12, 14).

Selvom tv og andre traditionelle medier i det seneste årti har fået konkurrence fra nye online formater og sociale medier, har tv-forbruget i arabiske lande generelt vist sig mere modstandsdygtig end mange andre steder i verden (Dennis, Martin og Hassan 2019, 10). Det gælder ikke mindst under ramadanen, hvor tv- og internetforbruget typisk stiger betragteligt, når millioner af muslimske familier hver aften samles derhjemme i stuen (Patrizi 2021, 81).

De to ramadan-serier om profeternes land er skabt til denne kontekst. Grundlæggende trækker tv-serierne på det samme repertoire af fortællinger om Ibrahim. De stammer fra både Koranen, hadith, *tafsīr*, islamisk historieskrivning og *qisas al-anbiyāʾ* og tegner tilsammen konturerne af en livshistorie med en indre kronologi, der i islamforskningen er blevet betegnet som *the Abraham cycle*. Denne livscyklus har tre dele: Den første udspiller sig omkring Ibrahims fødested i Mesopotamien, den anden er centreret i Levanten, mens den sidste fase foregår i Mekka og omegn. Dermed afspejler Ibrahims livsforløb også et geografisk hierarki, der kulminerer ved det helligste sted i islam (Busse 2008; Firestone u.å.).

Råmaterialet fra Ibrahims livscyklus bliver imidlertid forvaltet forskelligt af tv-seriernes tilrettelæggere og af en række kendte sunnimuslimske lærde og prædikanter, der medvirker som eksperter. Deres fortællinger om Ibrahim kan derfor også

tjene som vidnesbyrd om religiøse og politiske brydninger i den arabiske verden; om forskellen på saudisk-ejet og egyptisk tv, om forskelle mellem 2007 og 2020 og mellem islamisme og en ny anti-islamisme. Det er den læsning – eller sening – af tv-serierne, som denne artikel anlægger i det følgende.

For at kunne diskutere tv-seriernes skildring af profeten Ibrahim vil jeg først skitsere baggrunden for de to tv-serier og dernæst introducere en typologi til at karakterisere de sunnimuslimske autoriteter, som optræder i serierne. Herefter forløber analysen over tre tematiske afsnit. Det første undersøger, hvordan de to tv-serier rodfæster Ibrahims liv i en bestemt geografi, som ikke overraskende matcher tv-producenternes profil. Det andet afsnit behandler Ibrahims opgør med datidens afgudsdyrkere, der som nævnt er det tema, som har gjort Ibrahim til et radikalt symbol i nutiden. Endeligt analyserer det tredje afsnit, hvordan de to tv-serier forholder sig til et andet centralt tema i samtiden, nemlig forbindelsen mellem Ibrahim og Abraham i jødisk og kristen forstand.

Bag om tv-serierne

Overordnet skiller begge serier sig ud fra ramadanens store udvalg af populære fiktionsserier, *musalsalāt,* ved at blive præsenteret som nonfiction. Der er imidlertid forskel på de formater inden for faktagenren, som serierne gør brug af: Profeternes land fra 2007 er formidlet som en klassisk dokumentarserie, mens Egypten – profeternes land fra 2020 er et interviewprogram. Udsendelsernes skildring af mytiske begivenheder som historiske kendsgerninger er formentlig ikke det, de fleste forbinder med klassisk dokumentarisme, og man kunne argumentere for, at tv-serierne er tættere på hagiografi, skildring af helgener eller højagtede personers liv, end på historisk tv-dokumentar. Nedenfor beskrives produktion og programkoncept for hver af de to serier.

Profeternes land (2007)

Serien Profeternes land blev oprindeligt sendt på nyhedskanalen al-Arabiya under ramadanen i 2007 og er produceret af selskabet O3 Productions (al-Arabiya 2007a, 00:15). Begge tilhørte det saudiskejede mediemastodont Middle East Broadcasting Center

(MBC Group u.å.), hvis historie viser en del om udviklingen i arabisk tv i de seneste tre årtier. MBC blev lanceret i 1991 som den første private arabiske satellitkanal og var ejet af en saudisk forretningsmand, Walid al-Ibrahim, med familiære forbindelser til kongefamilien. Lanceringen indvarslede en storhedstid for arabisk satellit-tv, som brød med de statslige mediers monopol, da det pludseligt blev muligt for indehavere af en satellitmodtager at zappe gratis gennem *free-to-air* kanaler fra udbydere i alverdens lande (Khalil 2020, 442). MBC var oprindeligt baseret i London, men flyttede i 2002 til Dubai Media City. Dermed var MBC også et eksempel på det, mellemøstforskeren William A. Rugh (2004) beskriver som *offshore* medier, fordi deres hovedsæde ligger uden for det land eller den region, hvor størstedelen af publikum befinder sig. Selskaber som MBC bliver også betegnet som transnationale, da de potentielt har seere i alle arabiske lande (Rugh 2004, 167, 220; Kraidy 2011, 189).

Tidligere studier tillægger da også MBC's placering uden for Saudi-Arabien en væsentlig betydning for koncernens tv-produktioner. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (2013, 61) bemærker, at MBC gennem årene har lanceret tv-indhold, som var mindre konservativt, end det wahhabitiske[2] establishment i Saudi-Arabien tillod, men som via satellit alligevel kunne nå frem til de saudiske tv-stuer. Ifølge medieforskeren Mohamed Zayani (2012, 308, 325) har denne dynamik været et centralt element i en dobbelt mediestrategi i Saudi-Arabien: På den ene side skulle MBC og andre *offshore* medier promovere et mere åbent, moderat og moderne billede af kongedømmet udadtil, mens de hjemlige medier på den anden side værnede om traditionelle værdier og den politiske stabilitet i landet.

Senest er MBC imidlertid også blevet et eksempel på det, medieforskeren Joe F. Khalil betegner som "[…] a strong return for the states as owners of television channels", da det i Saudi-Arabien er lykkedes kronprins Mohammad bin Salman at opnå "[…] substantial control in the two largest regional private television networks, Rotana and MBC" (Khalil 2020, 445). I efteråret 2022 flyttede MBC således sit hovedsæde fra Dubai Media City til hjemlandets nye Media City i Riyadh, der indgår i den såkaldte Vision 2030-plan om modernisering af kongeriget (Al Arabiya English 2020; al-Arabiya 2022). Det bliver interessant at følge, om flytningen får betydning for MBC's produktioner, men da emnet her er en tv-serie fra 2007, vil MBC's daværende status som *offshore* medie være en

2   Se næste afsnit: *Medvirkende og trosretninger.*

gennemgående variabel i analysen.

Mens Profeternes land kørte over tv-skærmene under ramadanen i 2007, beskrev det saudiske medie al-Riyadh (2007) tv-serien som den første dokumentarserie, der fortæller historierne om Guds profeter. Enkelte af de 25 profeter i Koranen – som netop Ibrahim og ikke overraskende Muhammad – fik ekstra sendetid med udvidede episoder, og dermed nåede serien rent praktisk op på 30 afsnit, som svarer til én daglig episode under ramadanen. Af omtalen fra al-Riyadh fremgik det desuden, at programmerne er optaget i en række forskellige muslimske lande – Saudi-Arabien, Egypten, Tyrkiet, Yemen, Palæstina, Syrien, Oman, Jordan og Irak – og indeholder særlige optagelser fra de steder, hvor profeterne levede. De autentiske optagelser bidrager således til tv-seriens dokumentariske udtryk. Den er bygget op med typiske elementer fra dokumentargenren

Billede 1: Egyptiske dr. Muhammad ʿImāra er en af de religiøse lærde, der optræder som ekspert i Profeternes land (al-Arabiya 2007a, 04:56).

i den tradition, man for eksempel kender fra historiske BBC-dokumentarer. Det gælder speak over dækbilleder, interviews med eksperter optaget som klassiske *talking heads* (billede 1) samt reportagesekvenser, hvor andre ekspertkilder fremviser historiske steder.

Egypten – profeternes land (2020)

Serien Egypten – profeternes land, som altså tilføjer et "Egypten" til forgængerens titel, er produceret af selskabet Synergy og blev sendt på tre forskellige egyptiske kanaler under ramadanen i

2020: Kl. 13:30 på *al-Ūlā* (Kanal 1), kl. 16:00 på DMC og kl. 18:00 på CBC (Almasry Alyoum 2020)[3]. Meget tyder på, at både produktionsselskabet og de tre tv-kanaler, som viste Egypten – profeternes land, har tætte forbindelser til statslige institutioner i Egypten. Kanalen *al-Ūlā* er statsejet gennem Den Nationale Mediemyndighed (*al-Haiʾa al-Watanīya lil-Iʿlām*) – også kendt som Maspero efter den store radio- og tv-bygning i det centrale Kairo, hvor institutionen har hovedsæde (Maspero u.å.). De to andre tv-kanaler, DMC og CBC, samt produktionsselskabet Synergy er ejet af mediekonglomeratet United Media Services (UMS u.å.a; u.å.b). Ifølge en nyere forskningsartikel skrevet af Zahraa Badr (Badr 2021, 788) fra Kairo Universitet ejer UMS og den egyptiske stat i dag hovedparten af alle egyptiske medier tilsammen. Badr påpeger samtidig, at forbindelsen mellem den egyptiske stat og UMS "[…] arguably transcends business cooperation" (Badr 2021, 781). Blandt andet tilhørte en række af UMS' medievirksomheder tidligere selskabet Eagle Capital, der angiveligt var ejet af den egyptiske efterretningstjeneste (Badr 2021, 780).

Som titlen Egypten – profeternes land indikerer, fortæller tv-serien om de af islams profeter, der satte deres fødder på egyptisk jord. Fire af seriens afsnit er dedikeret til profeten Ibrahim. Tv-serien udspiller sig hovedsageligt som et klassisk studieinterview mellem to gennemgående skikkelser, den tidligere statsmufti i Egypten, dr. Ali Gomaa, og programmets vært, Amr Khalil. Interviewet er dog ikke optaget i et traditionelt tv-studie, men i gården til *Fādil*-moskeen i 6. oktober-byen i Kairo (7fnon 2020). Et hav af studielamper oplyser moskeens

Billede 2: Amr Khalil og Ali Gomaa sidder over for hinanden med den oplyste *Fādil*-moske i baggrunden (CBC Egypt 2020a, 05:09).

mure og aftenhimlen over dem, så man som seer kunne foranlediges til at tro, at der var tale om filmkulisser – indtil en brise pludselig puster lidt til Ali Gomaas kappe og de traditionelle ramadan-lanterner, *fawānīs*, som er ophængt i gårdhavens søjlegang.

Undervejs i interviewprogrammerne vises der desuden kortere, redigerede indslag. Nogle består af animationsfilm, mens andre viser billeder fra "[…] de virkelige steder, hvor de ærede budbringere og profeter boede eller passerede"[4], som det hedder i en programomtale fra Almasry Alyoum (2020).

Medvirkende og trosretninger

Mens Ali Gomaa er den eneste gæst i studiet i Egypten – profeternes land, optræder der en række islamiske eksperter i forgængeren Profeternes land. Alene i seriens to gange 25 minutter om profeten Ibrahim har jeg talt til 16 forskellige medvirkende, hvoraf nogle er historikere, andre er religiøse lærde, såkaldte *ʿulamāʾ*, som typisk har en juridisk uddannelse bag sig, mens endnu andre er kendte prædikanter fra den arabiske verden.

Det går for vidt at portrættere alle medvirkende her. For løbende at kunne diskutere de medvirkendes religiøse ståsteder vil jeg i stedet introducere en typologi, som islamforskeren Usaama al-Azami (2019; 2021) har anvendt til at karakterisere nutidens sunnimuslimske *ʿulamāʾ* (lærde). Al-Azami inddeler dem i tre hovedstrømninger: *Neo-traditionalister, islamister* og *salafister.* Der er tale om idealtyper i webersk forstand (Månson 2007, 93), som først og fremmest skal ses som referencepunkter, da der inden for hver kategori findes betydelige forskelle og understrømninger.

Neo-traditionalisterne udgør ifølge al-Azami den bredeste strømning blandt nutidens sunnimuslimske *ʿulamāʾ*. De er tilhængere af de fire sunnimuslimske lovskoler, primært to teologiske skoler og flere forskellige sufi-ordener (al-Azami 2019, 226; 2021, 5). Neo-traditionalisterne vil typisk identificere sig selv som sunnimuslimer slet og ret, fordi de mener at repræsentere den dominerende form for sunniislam inden for de sidste cirka 500 år. I forskningen har udtrykket *Traditional Islam* blandt andet været brugt om samme strømning (al-Azami 2021, 5, 302). Neo-præfikset betoner imidlertid, at traditionalismen

4 Oversættelser fra arabisk til dansk i artiklen er forfatterens egne. Dog er citater fra Koranen hentet fra Ellen Wulffs danske oversættelse (4. udgave, 2018). Artiklen anvender forkortelsesformatet K 1:2, hvor ettallet henviser til suraens nummer, mens totallet angiver det specifikke vers (*āya*) i denne sura.

praktiseres i en moderne kontekst, ligesom neo-traditionalisterne er særligt inspireret af islamisk mystik, sufisme, i sammenligning med andre strømninger.

Islamisterne udgør en anden hovedorientering, som al-Azami definerer "[…] somewhat loosely […] as refering to those ulama whose vision of Islamic politics has close affinities with the MB [Det Muslimske Broderskab] and its offshoots" (al-Azami 2021, 4). Han afstår fra at ville bruge udtrykket *Political Islam*, fordi det forudsætter en adskillelse af religion og politik, som ikke nødvendigvis kan tages for givet uden for den vestlige idéhistorie. Omvendt kunne man sige, at sammenstillingen af islam og politik netop understreger, at islamisme er en moderne politisk idé, som først opstod i 1900-tallet. Islamisterne mener, at samfundet bør være islamisk organiseret, men hvordan målet skal nås, er der ikke enighed om. Det har resulteret i forskellige understrømninger, hvor nogle islamister stiller op til valg, som det skete i Egypten i 2011-2012, mens andre er direkte antidemokratiske. Islamister er dog som udgangspunkt antivestlige både på det politiske og kulturelle plan (Skovgaard-Petersen 2020, 267, 287). Måske er det også derfor, at skillelinjerne mellem islamister og jihadister (se nedenfor) ofte bliver udvisket i vestlige samfundsdebatter, som al-Azami (2021, 5) noterer. Sammenblandingen sker dog i disse år også i mellemøstlige lande som Egypten og Saudi-Arabien, hvilket iagttagere har udlagt som en strategi til at miskreditere alle politiserede fortolkninger af islam, der kan true de siddende regeringer (Mandaville 2022, 28; al-Azami 2021, 191).

Den tredje hovedstrømning er salafisterne, som mere end nogen andre ophøjer den tidligste periode i islam og derfor også har fået navn efter de første tre generationer af muslimer, de såkaldte ærværdige forfædre, *al-salaf al-sālih* (al-Azami 2021, 6; Meijer 2013, xiii). Salafisterne følger det, de selv opfatter som forfædrenes eksempel meget bogstaveligt og er optaget af at rense islam for forkerte fortolkninger, der er opstået sidenhen – herunder de fortolkningstraditioner, der danner grundlag for de fire sunnimuslimske lovskoler (Meijer 2013, 4). Modsat islamisterne er salafisternes mål ikke så meget et retfærdig samfund i dette liv som den enkeltes frelse. Salafister har derfor typisk betragtet Det Muslimske Broderskab som almindelige politikere og er af den grund blevet promoveret som et apolitisk alternativ til islamister i Egypten (Skovgaard-Petersen 2020, 278; 2013, 114). Saudi-Arabien blev grundlagt på salafisme i den

version, der betegnes som wahhabisme efter Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (Meijer 2013, 7; Mandaville 2022, 3).

En fjerde kategori, som al-Azami (2021, 5) dog nævner udenom de etablerede *ʿulamāʾ*, er jihadister. De repræsenterer en militant ideologi og bruger voldelige midler til at opnå deres mål. Mange jihadister deler salafisternes drøm om et rent samfund efter de tidligste muslimers opskrift, og de bliver derfor betegnet som salafi-jihadister (Hegghammer 2014, 251; Skovgaard-Petersen 2020, 299). Eksempler på dette er terrororganisationerne al-Qaeda og Islamisk Stat, som der dog også er betydelige indbyrdes forskelle på. Mens de tre første hovedstrømninger er repræsenteret i de to tv-serier, er der ikke så overraskende ingen jihadister på skærmen, men vi skal senere vende tilbage til deres dyrkelse af profeten Ibrahim.

Myter på moderne kort

Efter at have skitseret baggrunden for tv-serierne og en typologi for de medvirkende skal vi i dette første analytiske afsnit se, hvordan de to tv-serier knytter Ibrahims liv til en bestemt geografi, og hvordan serierne derigennem skildrer specifikke steder i nutiden som profetisk land. Jeg vil argumentere for, at Profeternes land placerer Ibrahim i en transnational arabisk verden, mens Egypten – profeternes land åbenlyst forbinder Ibrahim til Egypten. Forskellen kan indledningsvist illustreres med to landkort, som optræder i udsendelserne. I MBC-serien fra 2007 indgår en animation baseret på Google Maps, som viser Ibrahims livsrejse gennem en række mellemøstlige lande med nutidens grænsedragning (billede 3). I titelsekvensen til den egyptiske serie fra 2020 bliver et område svarende til nutidens Egypten omvendt præsenteret som profeternes land (billede 4). Begge serier etablerer dermed en kobling mellem mytiske begivenheder i fortiden og arabiske lande i nutiden, som jeg vil uddybe i det følgende.

Den rejsende missionær

I Profeternes land *(2007)* bliver de transnationale forbindelser slået tydeligt an fra starten af det første ud af to afsnit om profeten Ibrahim. Serien åbner hver episode med en over tre minutter lang titelsekvens, der viser nogle af de historiske steder,

Billede 3: I Profeternes land visualiseres Ibrahims rejse gennem en række arabiske lande med Google Maps (al-Arabiya 2007a, 04:16).

Billede 4: Titelsekvensen til Egypten – profeternes land viser et landkort over nutidens Egypten (CBC Egypt 2020a, 00:27).

som tv-serien opsøger, mens profeternes navne undervejs glider over skærmen i kalligrafisk skrift. Efter seriens titel er tonet frem på skærmen, fortæller programmets gennemgående speakerstemme, at profetiens spor (*athār al-nubūwa*) i dag står som et vidnesbyrd om de mænd, som Gud havde udvalgt til at formidle budskabet om monoteisme (al-Arabiya 2007a, 01:22). Man forstår, at det er disse profetiske spor, som tv-serien forfølger i sit dokumentariske format – både rent fysisk i den arabiske verdens geografi og gennem de medvirkende eksperters fortællinger om Guds profeter. Da titelsekvensen er forbi, lyder speakerens indledende ord i det første afsnit om Ibrahim:

> Ibrahims kald (*daʿwa*), fred være med ham, var det mest omfattende kald af sin art i profetiernes historie. Omfanget af dets udbredelse blev kun nået af Muhammads kald, fred være med ham, som blev et kald

til alverden og omfavnede hele verden. (al-Arabiya 2007a, 03:50).

På billedsiden ses muslimske pilgrimme på ʿArafāt-sletten, som er et af de obligatoriske steder under pilgrimsfærden *hajj*, der forbindes med Ibrahim. Netop på ʿArafāt-sletten cirka 20 km uden for Mekka skulle Ibrahim have indset (ʿarafa; herfra navnet ʿArafāt), at det var Gud, og ikke djævlen, som havde befalet ham at tilbyde sin søn som offer (Busse 2008). Ibrahims forbindelse til ʿArafāt og *hajj* nævnes ikke i speaken, men vil formentlig være genkendelig for mange seere som et element i *the Abraham cycle*.

Hovedlinjerne i denne livscyklus bliver til gengæld ridset op i den næste speak, som fortæller, at Ibrahims kald ifølge nogle fortællinger begyndte i Irak. Herfra rejste han angiveligt til det sydlige Tyrkiet, Syrien, Palæstina og Egypten, inden han tog til Mekka i missionsgerningens vigtigste faser for til sidst at vende tilbage til Palæstina, hvor han endte sine dage (al-Arabiya 2007a, 04:12). Animationen fra Google Maps (billede 3) udpeger de omtalte steder, indtil der klippes til levende billeder af Ibrahim-moskeen (*al-Masjid al-Ibrāhīmī*) i Hebron, hvor Ibrahim ifølge overleveringerne er begravet. Seerne møder herefter den første ekspert, der medvirker i seriens to afsnit om Ibrahim. Det er den egyptiske tænker Muhammad ʿImāra, som fortæller følgende om Ibrahim:

> Kendetegn ved hans personlighed er, at han er den omrejsende budbringer. Det er det universelle i budskabet ... og han er profeternes far. Altså, universalismen i budskabet om, at han [rejser] ... fra Irak til Palæstina til Egypten og derefter vender tilbage [til Palæstina], alt dette er kendetegn ved vor herre Ibrahims personlighed og budskab. (al-Arabiya 2007a, 04:48).

Den vidtrækkende missionsgerning er også temaet for den næste interviewsekvens i udsendelsen. Her fortæller den daværende statsmufti i Syrien, Ahmad Badr al-Dīn Hassūn, følgende:

> Hvis vi undersøger hans rejse, finder vi ud af, at vor herre Ibrahim står for den mest vidstrakte rejse i dette område, som strækker sig fra omtrentlig Tyrkiets grænser til Egypten og til Mekka (al-Arabiya 2007a, 05:17).

Muhammad ʿImāra (d. 2020) og Ahmad Badr al-Dīn Hassūn (f. 1949) repræsenterer umiddelbart to forskellige sunnimuslimske

strømninger. Ud fra al-Azamis typologi kunne den forhenværende statsmufti Ahmad Badr al-Dīn Hassūn karakteriseres som en regeringstro neo-traditionalist – i lighed med 2020-seriens faste gæst, Ali Gomaa, som vi skal vende tilbage til. Muhammad ʿImāra var derimod i 1960'erne kendt for "[…] his leftist leanings in interpreting Islam", men ligesom andre venstreorienterede intellektuelle konverterede han senere til en moderat version af islamisme (Abaza 2002, 359). Al-Azami karakteriserer ham som "[…] one of the world's leading (mainstream) Islamist ulama with extensive writings in the area of political jurisprudence and political philosophy, despite never having been a member of MB [Det Muslimske Broderskab]." (al-Azami 2021, 154).

Fortællingen om den rejsende missionær appellerer tilsyneladende til begge positioner. Men fremstillingen er først og fremmest et udtryk for, at tv-seriens tilrettelægger ud af adskillige minutters interviewoptagelser med ʿImāra og Hassūn har udvalgt netop ovenstående passager om Ibrahims kald til de indledende minutter i udsendelsen. En oplagt forklaring er, at billedet af den rejsende missionær passer godt til MBC's ambitioner om at nå ud til et stort, transnationalt publikum, der befinder sig i tv-stuer i de arabiske lande, som Ibrahim rejser igennem.

Tv-serien fortsætter da også gennem resten af de to afsnit om Ibrahim med at rodfæste hans liv fra vugge til grav i den arabiske verden med en enkelt afstikker til nutidens Tyrkiet, som dog er muslimsk jord. Seerne bliver blandt andet præsenteret for to forskellige bud på Ibrahims fødested – det ene i nutidens Irak, det andet i Tyrkiet – og for en længere reportagesekvens fra Mekka, hvor Ibrahim ifølge overleveringerne grundlagde Guds hus, Kabaen, ligesom serien som nævnt indeholder optagelser fra Ibrahims gravsted i Hebron. Det er kort fortalt en omrejsende, arabisk Ibrahim-figur, som Profeternes land (2007) introducerer.

Det egyptiske tilflugtssted

Egypten – profeternes land (2020) zoomer derimod ind på Ibrahims egyptiske forbindelser. Den mest oplagte er historien om hans anden hustru, egyptiske Hagar, som tv-serien dedikerer det ene ud af fire afsnit om Ibrahim til. Til sammenligning fylder historien om Hagar og Ibrahims tid i Egypten knap tre minutter

i MBC-serien fra 2007.

I Egypten – profeternes land bliver Hagar beskrevet som arabernes stammoder (*umm al-ʿarab*). Det fremgår af Ali Gomaas fremstilling, at hun var en gave fra en egyptisk konge, og at hun fødte Ismāʿīl, før Ibrahims første hustru, Sara, fødte Ishāq (Isak). Derfor er Ismāʿīl og ikke Ishāq den søn, som Ibrahim var villig til at ofre for Gud i den berømte historie fra Koranen [K 37] (CBC Egypt 2020c, 16:45-19:05). Fortællingen om Hagar bliver også et afsæt til at berøre historien om Ibrahim og Ismāʿīls opførsel af Kabaen og de ritualer, som i dag er forbundet med pilgrimsfærden (CBC Egypt 2020c, 19:25-24:50). I et af seriens animerede indslag svæver Hagars navn hen over et billede af Kabaen (CBC Egypt 2020c, 03:16). I et andet redigeret indslag fortæller værten, Amr Khalil, at Hagar voksede op ved Nilens bredder og fødte Ismāʿīl, som blev stamfader til Profeternes Segl, Muhammad (CBC Egypt 2020c, 13:43-13:59). Alt sammen understreger en egyptisk forbindelse til ikke bare Ibrahim, men til det helligste sted i islam og til profeten Muhammad.

Der er imidlertid et andet aspekt ved seriens portrættering af Egypten gennem Ibrahim, jeg finder særligt relevant for undersøgelsen. Det gælder fremstillingen af Egypten som et sikkert tilflugtssted, der synes at udgøre en grundtone gennem hele tv-serien. I forbindelse med lanceringen udtalte tv-seriens instruktør, Ibrāhīm al-Sayyid, om programkonceptet: "Egypten har altid været et tilflugtssted, hvortil profeterne kunne flygte fra tyrannernes undertrykkelse og søge fred, sikkerhed og føde" (7fnon 2020). Da Ibrāhīm al-Sayyid og hans tv-hold blænder op for andet afsnit om Ibrahim, lyder oplægget fra studieværten, Amr Khalil, tilsvarende:

> Da vor herre Ibrahim kom til det velsignede Egypten, søgende efter fred og sikkerhed oven på den grimme oplevelse, han gennemlevede med Nimrūd [hedensk konge], forestillede han sig næppe, at han også i Egypten ville gennemgå en menneskelig oplevelse, som kan være hård. Men æret være Gud … ligesom den almægtige Gud var venlig mod vor herre Ibrahim i hans tidligere ople-velser, var han [Gud] også venlig over for ham [Ibrahim] på egyptisk jord. (CBC Egypt 2020b, 00:37).

Karakteristikken fortsætter, da Amr Khalil nogle minutter senere beder Ali Gomaa forklare, hvad der skete med Ibrahim i

Egypten. Den tidligere mufti begynder sit svar med følgende:

> Egypten er et godt land. Da Ibrahim flygtede fra de hedenske afgudsdyrkeres stridigheder […] rejste han for at undslippe striden. Men derefter spidsede situationen til i denne region, så de søgte tilflugt i Egypten, hvor der er fred. Til Egypten, hvor der er sikkerhed. Til Egypten, hvor der er mad. Til Egypten, hvor der er husly. Folk er altid taget til dette land, som har en særlig tiltrækningskraft, som Gud, den almægtige, har givet det [landet] […]. (CBC Egypt 2020b, 04:20).

Budskabet om Egypten som tilflugtssted, som inkarnationen af fred og sikkerhed, virker til at være afstemt, når det kommer fra tv-seriens instruktør, vært og faste gæst. Ali Gomaa indikerer tilmed, at Egypten ikke blev et sikkert land ved et tilfælde eller som et resultat af historiens udvikling. Det er derimod Gud, der har installeret en "særlig tiltrækningskraft" i Egypten og gjort Egypten til et tilflugtssted.

Denne karakteristik af Egypten kan lyde som et ekko af en kontroversiel forelæsning, som Ali Gomaa gav til de egyptiske sikkerhedsstyrker få dage efter massakren på *Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiya*-pladsen i august 2013, hvor mindst 1.000 personer menes at være blevet dræbt (al-Azami 2021, 142). I talen hyldede Ali Gomaa soldaternes indsats mod demonstranterne, som havde protesteret mod militærets magtovertagelse og afsættelsen af den folkevalgte præsident Muhammad Mursi fra Det Muslimske Broderskab. Som en del af sin argumentation hævdede Ali Gomaa, at nutidens egyptiske sikkerhedsstyrker havde opbakning fra profeten Muhammad og de af hans efterkommere, "som flygtede til Egypten for at søge ly der" (Dawah 2013, 05:26).[5] Ali Gomaa begrundede dette med, at profeten Muhammed ifølge en hadith skulle have sagt: "De folk, som er sikrest fra strid (*fitna*), er de vestlige soldater." Og disse vestlige soldater var ifølge Ali Gomaa netop en reference til Egyptens folk, politi og hær (Dawah 2013, 05:33; al-Azami 2021, 168). Ræsonnementet syntes således at være, at Gud har udvalgt Egypten som et særligt sikkert sted og givet nutidens egyptiske sikkerhedsstyrker mandat til at forsvare landet mod ekstremisternes kaos.

Vi har tidligere berørt de angiveligt tætte forbindelser mellem det egyptiske statsapparat og UMS, mediekonglomeratet bag Egypten – profeternes land. Dertil kommer, at tv-seriens

5   Den fulde version af Ali Gomaas forelæsning blev offentliggjort på YouTube i oktober i 2013 af brugeren Hani Dawah, efter at brudstykker fra forelæsningen var blevet lækket til pressen. Vedkommende var kommunikationsmedarbejder fra den egyptiske statsmuftis kontor, som Ali Gomaa havde stået i spidsen for indtil sin fratræden som statsmufti tidligere samme år (al-Azami 2021, 166).

faste gæst, Ali Gomaa, i de senere år er blevet kendt som en trofast støtte for præsident Abdel Fattah al-Sisi og som en af de fremmeste fortalere for en anti-islamisme, der først og fremmest er rettet mod tilhængere af Det Muslimske Broderskab (al-Azami 2021, 136). Det er derfor oplagt, at tv-serien kan spille en rolle i en større nationalistisk dagsorden. Hvis ideen om Egypten som et guddommeligt sanktioneret helle bliver indprentet tilstrækkeligt i tv-seernes bevidsthed gennem en tilsyneladende apolitisk ramadan-serie, vil billedet formentlig stå stærkere, når det i andre sammenhænge bruges i et politisk argument. Tv-serien kan derfor også tjene som en indirekte påmindelse om, at krænkelser af lov og orden i Egypten ikke bare er en trussel mod nationen, men en krænkelse af Guds vilje.

Som førnævnte Lila Abu-Lughod (2004) dokumenterer, har den egyptiske stat en lang tradition for at promovere nationalstaten og dens interesse gennem tv-mediet. Da præsident Gamal Abdel Nasser fra 1960 begyndte at udrulle tv i den nyligt uafhængige egyptiske nation, var det fra start med en ambition om at uddanne borgerne (Abu-Lughod 2004, 10). På trods af stigende kommercialisering overlevede denne tilgang længe i egyptisk tv, i hvert fald frem til 1990'erne, hvor en chef for film- og serieproduktionen til egyptisk stats-tv fortalte Abu-Lughod følgende om sit syn på seerne: "The individual needs guidance. He needs information, and we need to inculcate the spirit of patriotism, morality, religion, courage, and enterprise." (Abu-Lughod 2004, 11).

I 2011 førte revolutionen i Egypten til en periode med et mere pluralistisk medielandskab, hvor nye tv-kanaler og nyhedsmedier knopskød. Men som Zahraa Badr fra Kairo Universitet (2021) viser i en tidligere omtalt forskningsartikel, er ejerskabet over de egyptiske medier nu igen koncentreret på få hænder, som tilhører staten og statsaffilierede virksomheder. Overskriften på Badrs artikel hedder "More or More of the Same", og spørgsmålet er, om ikke også tv-serier som Egypten – profeternes land skal ses som mere af den samme didaktik, som har præget egyptisk tv i årtier: med en ambition om at indpode patriotismens ånd i seerne. Det er i så fald dette projekt, som tv-holdet skriver profeten Ibrahim ind i med sin fusion af islam og egyptisk nationalisme.

Det næste analytiske afsnit behandler tv-seriernes fremstilling af de fortællinger, der knytter sig til Ibrahims opgør med datidens afgudsdyrkere. Udover at være et stort tema i

Koranen er det også de scener, som bliver anvendt til de mest militante fortolkninger af Ibrahim i nutiden. Vi begynder med et eksempel på dette for at kunne diskutere tv-serierne over for de radikale fortolkninger.

Ibrahims opgør med afgudsdyrkerne

I tiden mellem de to Profeternes land-serier dukkede der en video op på internettet, som på yderst kontroversiel vis påberåbte sig Ibrahims navn. Den viser medlemmer af terrororganisationen Islamisk Stat (IS), som med hammere og boremaskiner smadrer tusind år gamle statuer og andre klenodier på et museum i den irakiske by Mosul i februar 2015. Før ødelæggelserne begynder, fremviser IS i propagandavideoen nogle af de genstande, der står for skud, mens en stemme reciterer en passage fra Koranen om Ibrahim:

> […] han sagde til sin fader og sit folk: "Hvad er det for billedstøtter, I tilbeder?" De sagde: "Vi har set vore fædre tjene dem." Han sagde: "I og jeres fædre befandt jer i åbenlys vildfarelse. [K 21:52-54] (Al Arabiya English 2015).

På trods af den spektakulære destruktivitet er videoen fra Mosul ikke noget enestående eksempel på Ibrahims appel til moderne jihadister. Den kan tværtimod ses som en del af en salafistisk-jihadistisk Ibrahim-diskurs, som jeg henviste til indledningsvist i forbindelse med Joas Wagemakers' forskning i den jordanske ideolog Abū Muhammad al-Maqdisī (f. 1959). Vokabularet trækker på flere koranvers om Ibrahims ikonoklasme og opgør med sit afgudsdyrkende ophav som i eksemplet ovenfor. Men helt centralt står K 60:4, som i jihadisternes fortolkning forbinder Ibrahim med den såkaldte *al-walāʾ wa al-barāʾ*-doktrin om udelt loyalitet over for Gud og afstandtagen fra alt u-islamisk (bin Ali 2012, 10; Wagemakers 2012, 148). I den danske oversættelse lyder første del af koranverset:

> I har et smukt eksempel i Abraham og dem, der var med ham. Da de sagde til deres folk: "Vi siger os fri [*buraʾāʾu*; af samme rod som *barāʾ*] af jer og af det, som I tjener foruden Gud […].

Med en radikal fortolkning af K 60:4 satte al-Maqdisī lighedstegn

mellem afgudsdyrkerne på Ibrahims samtid og nutidens politiske ledere, som regerer med menneskeskabte love. De blev dermed berettigede mål for *barāʾ* og jihad (Wagemakers 2008, 367).

Vi skal i det følgende se, hvordan de to serier om profeternes land forvalter temaet om Ibrahims opgør med afgudsdyrkerne, og hvordan de indirekte positionerer sig i forhold til tidens radikale Ibrahim-fortolkninger. I denne sammenligning er det værd at notere, at Profeternes land (2007) er fra tiden før de arabiske oprør i 2010-2011 og dermed også fra en tid, før de senere års konflikt mellem den arabiske verdens regeringer og islamister og jihadister for alvor spidsede til. Omvendt har Ali Gomaa ved flere lejligheder evnet at sammenblande islamister og jihadister for at miskreditere førstnævnte (al-Azami 2021, 191).

Opgøret i Profeternes land (2007)

Konflikten mellem Ibrahim og hjemegnens afgudsdyrkere bliver i Profeternes land udfoldet over hele syv minutter, hvor tv-serien fører seerne igennem flere af de scener fra *the Abraham cycle*, som er knyttet til temaet: Ibrahim forsøger at overbevise sin far og sit folk om monoteismen; han omstyrter deres idoler; de straffer ham med bålet, men Gud gør ilden kold og uskadelig for Ibrahim.

Til forskel fra IS' fortolkning af temaet lægger både speak og de medvirkende *ʿulamāʾ* vægt på, at Ibrahims ikonoklasme var en slags retorisk virkemiddel, der skulle styrke hans argumentation over for afgudsdyrkerne. Historien forbliver samtidig i sin historiske kontekst, og ingen af de medvirkende opfordrer til at omsætte Ibrahims opgør med afgudsdyrkerne til voldelige handlinger i nutiden. Alligevel er der forskel på, hvad de medvirkende autoriteter betoner i deres udlægning af begivenhederne. For at tydeliggøre disse nuancer skal vi i det følgende se nærmere på udsagn fra tre af de medvirkende, som ud fra al-Azamis typologi kan karakteriseres som henholdsvis salafist, neo-traditionalist og islamist.

Den første lærde, som udtaler sig om Ibrahims opgør med sit ophav, er ʿAbdallah Abū Saif fra Det Islamiske Universitet i Medina (IUM); en indflydelsesrig uddannelsesinstitution, der blandt andet er blevet beskrevet som centrum for "the promotion of Wahhabi-infused Salafism" (Bano og Sakurai 2015, 2).

ʿAbdallah Abū Saif fortæller om Ibrahim:

> I sin barndom fordømte han folk, og han nærmede sig
> ikke disse idoler. Han hverken elskede eller ophøjede
> dem [idolerne]. Tværtimod latterliggjorde han folk, som
> faldt tilbage til at tilbede dem. Gud den almægtige
> betroede ham med denne store stilling, idet han
> opdragede ham fra barndommen og gjorde ham egnet til
> denne position til at være profeternes far og ven af Gud,
> den velsignede og ophøjede. (al-Arabiya 2007a, 08:20).

I ʿAbdallah Abū Saifs fortolkning fremstår Ibrahim som aldeles
konsekvent over for afgudsdyrkerne, og man må samtidig forstå,
at Ibrahims retskaffenhed ikke kom ud af ingenting, men er et
resultat af Guds bearbejdning af ham fra barnsben. ʿAbdallah
Abū Saif kan her lyde lidt som den radikale muslimbroder
Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) og hans idé om Koranen som et program
(*minhaj*). Ifølge Qutb bygger Gud det enkelte menneske op efter
det samme program, som han lagde for profeten Muhammad,
og den troende må gennemgå de samme faser, som Muhammad
gennemgik. Det indebærer om nødvendigt at cutte båndene til
alle vantro og udvandre fra de vantros samfund (Skovgaard-
Petersen 2020, 292). Ligesom Ibrahim netop gjorde før
Muhammad.

Selvom Qutb som en radikal islamist umiddelbart tilhører
en anden strømning end det salafistisk-/wahhabistisk-funderede
universitet i Medina, kom hans værker til at indgå i læseplanerne
på IUM, og hans broder, Muhammad Qutb, fik endda plads i et
rådgivende organ på universitetet (Farquhar 2013, 259, 156).
ʿAbdallah Abū Saifs Ibrahim-figur kan derfor sagtens være
inspireret af Qutbs tanker. I en MBC-serie, der ellers udmærker
sig ved også at give taletid til islamister og neo-traditionalister,
repræsenterer han dog først og fremmest en mere traditionel
wahhabistisk stemme i Saudi-Arabien.

Budskabet synes derimod at være mere omfavnende, da den
næste ekspert får taletid i tv-serien. Ahmad Halīl er ifølge teksten
på skærmen *qādī al-qudāh* fra Jordan, den højeste religiøse
dommer og dermed også en neo-traditionalistisk repræsentant
for det officielle Jordan. Om Ibrahims tilgang til den vantro
fader fortæller han:

> Vi bemærker de sublime manerer og beundringsværdige
> stil fra vor herre Ibrahim, fred være med ham, i hans

omgang med selv sin afgudsdyrkende far, som ikke troede på Gud, den almægtige, og hvis forståelsesramme var hedenskab og tilbedelse af idoler. På trods af dette siger vor herre Ibrahim: "Far! Far! Hvorfor tjener du … [idoler] Far! Jeg har fået … [viden] Far!" [K 19:42-43 parafraseret], hvorimod talen fra faderen til Ibrahim, fred være med ham, lød: "Kan du ikke lide mine guder, Abraham? Hvis ikke du holder inde, vil jeg bortstene dig. Hold dig på afstand af mig en tid!" [K 19:46] (al-Arabiya 2007a, 08:52).

Hvor den forrige ekspert påpegede Ibrahims resoluthed, fremhæver Ahmad Halīl med støtte fra to passager i Koranen omvendt Ibrahims retoriske elegance og tålmodighed over for den afgudsdyrkende far.

Endeligt betoner en tredje ekspert, den kendte islamistiske prædikant Tāriq al-Suwaidān, Ibrahims ensomme kamp for monoteismen. Om den situation, som Ibrahim befandt sig i, fortæller Tāriq al-Suwaidān: "Selv hans allernærmeste afviste ham. Kun hans nevø Lot og hans kusine Sara [og senere hustru] troede på ham. Ingen andre troede på ham." (al-Arabiya 2007a, 10:17). Tāriq al-Suwaidān gestikulerer med armene i hele tv-skærmens bredde og lukker dybtfølt sine øjne, mens han serverer budskabet. Ibrahims lidelser og den mistro, han mødte fra sine nærmeste, har historisk set været et attraktivt tema for islamister, som føler, at de selv må lide for Guds sag. Grundlæggeren af Det Muslimske Broderskab, Hassan al-Banna (d. 1949), kredsede for eksempel om tematikken i sine erindringer, hvor han skrev om den modstand, enhver profet møder fra sine egne (Skovgaard-Petersen 2020, 270). Ibrahim bliver i denne fortolkning billedet på en vedholdende missionær. Et godt eksempel for Muhammad i Mekka, men også for Det Muslimske Broderskab og andre muslimske missionærer, der bliver afvist af deres samtidige.

Tāriq al-Suwaidān faldt selv i unåde hos kongefamilien i Saudi-Arabien, og han blev i 2013 fyret som frontfigur for den saudisk-ejede tv-kanal *al-Risāla* (budskabet) på grund af forbindelser til Det Muslimske Broderskab (BBC News 2013). Dette lå flere år ude i fremtiden, da Profeternes land blev sendt i 2007, og det er særligt i årene efter de arabiske oprør, at Saudi-Arabien har strammet den politiske linje over for Det Muslimske Broderskab, som kongedømmet i 2014 officielt erklærede for en terrororganisation (BBC News 2014). Alligevel kan al-Suwaidāns medvirken i tv-serien også ses som et udtryk for MBC's

daværende position som en saudisk satellit i Dubai, der gav taletid til populære prædikanter, der ville være bandlyst fra tv-produktioner i hjemlandet, med accept fra den saudiske kongefamilie og som en del af landets dobbelte mediestrategi (jf. Zayani 2012).

Opgøret i Egypten – profeternes land (2020)

Uoverensstemmelserne mellem Ibrahim og hans afgudsdyrkende ophav er også et centralt tema i det første ud af fire afsnit om Ibrahim i den egyptiske tv-serie fra 2020. Her bruger Ali Gomaa ikke mindst konflikten til at fremstille Ibrahim som en barmhjertig profet. Da værten spørger ind til den store diskussion mellem Ibrahim og den hedenske konge Nimrūd – den typiske forståelse af en ordveksling, som findes i K 2:258 – begynder Ali Gomaa sit svar med at fortælle om betydningen af Ibrahims navn:

> Vor herre Ibrahim ... det blev sagt, at hans navn var sådan, fordi han var en barmhjertig fader (*aban rahīman*). Ib, Ib-Rahim, Ibrahim. Altså far (*ab*) og barmhjertig (*rahīm*). Den barmhjertige fader betyder, at han vækker barmhjertighed. (CBC Egypt 2020a, 13:14).

Den tidligere mufti forklarer, at barmhjertighed – som indleder Koranen med udtrykket "I den nådige og barmhjertige Guds navn" – er selve fundamentet for en række andre kvaliteter: "Fra barmhjertighed bliver kærlighed genereret. Fra kærlighed udspringer det at give [...] Given genererer refleksion, forståelse og visdom." (CBC Egypt 2020a, 14:05). Ifølge Ali Gomaa handler historien, hvor Ibrahim omstyrter afgudsdyrkernes billedstøtter, netop om disse kvaliteter:

> Han [Ibrahim] ville gerne vende folk i retning af forståelse og refleksion. Han gjorde ingen skade. Han gjorde ingen skade, men gik blot hen til afgudsbillederne, der ikke føler, ikke mærker og ikke tænker. De er oprindeligt fremstillede, de er oprindeligt ren forførelse, så han omstyrtede dem. Da han blev spurgt, sagde han: "Nej, det er ham den største af dem [billedstøtterne], der har gjort det" [K 21:63]. Måske vil de vende tilbage til deres Gud og tænke […] Alt dette er fordi, han er en barmhjertig far (*abūn rahīm*). (CBC Egypt 2020a, 15:10).

Ali Gomaa fremstiller således Ibrahims ikonoklasme som en udløber af barmhjertighed, fordi formålet med ødelæggelserne var at sætte tanker i gang hos afgudsdyrkerne. Denne læsning af Koranens sura 21 står selvfølgelig i kontrast til IS' fortolkning af samme passage, som indledte dette afsnit – selvom IS muligvis også selv ville betegne sin ikonoklasme som barmhjertig. Mens jihadister som nævnt bruger Ibrahim-figuren til at legitimere voldelige handlinger, understreger Gomaa omvendt, at Ibrahim ikke gjorde skade på nogen. Dermed tager Ali Gomaa på sin vis fortolkningen endnu videre end de medvirkende i Profeternes land (2007): Ikonoklasmen er ikke bare et retorisk virkemiddel i Ibrahims argumentation, men en direkte barmhjertig handling.

Som endnu et eksempel på Ibrahims barmhjertighed henviser studieværten herefter til den førnævnte dialog fra Koranens sura 19, hvor Ibrahims far truer med at bortstene sønnen. Ali Gomaa og Amr Khalil reciterer i kor Ibrahims svar til faderen: "Jeg vil bede min Herre tilgive dig" [K 19:47]. Men Ali Gomaa indskyder straks, at Ibrahim faktisk overgik denne barmhjertige gestus: Han tog nemlig faderen med, da han udvandrede (CBC Egypt 2020a, 15:52-16:13). "Tog han ham med på *hijra*?", spørger værten tilsyneladende forbløffet, hvortil Ali Gomaa svarer bekræftende: "Han tog Sara, sin far, Lot og sin mor og drog afsted med dem." Ali Gomaa forklarer, at det endda skete, efter at Ibrahim havde beklaget sin tidligere bøn til Gud om at tilgive faderen: "Fordi det skete kun som følge af et løfte, som han havde givet ham. Da det blev klart for ham [Ibrahim], at han var en fjende af Gud, sagde han sig fri af ham [*tabarraʾa*; af samme rod som *barāʾ*]" [K 9:114]. (CBC Egypt 2020a, 16:14-16:41).

Ali Gomaa gengiver her et af de koranvers, som knytter Ibrahim til jihadisternes slagord om afstandtagen (*barāʾ*), men han bruger det til at understrege sin pointe om, at Ibrahim forbarmede sig over faderen og tog ham med på *hijra*. Den tidligere mufti nævner hverken al-Maqdisī eller radikale grupper, men man kunne alligevel se hans fremstilling af scenen som et forsøg på at erobre den tilbage. Barmhjertighed kan da også være en attraktiv værdi for en neo-traditionalist som Ali Gomaa, der tilskynder til ro og orden frem for aktivistisk omstyrtning af idoler eller samfundsinstitutioner i nutiden.

Mens det forrige har handlet om forskellige fortolkninger af profeten Ibrahim inden for islam, undersøger det sidste analytiske afsnit, hvordan tv-serierne forholder sig til Abraham

i kristen og jødisk forstand og til idéen om den tværreligiøse stamfader. Vi begynder igen uden for tv-serierne med en voldelig begivenhed knyttet til kampen om Abrahams/Ibrahims arv.

Ibrahim og de andres Abraham

Før daggry den 25. februar 1994 gik den amerikanskfødte jødiske bosætter Baruch Goldstein ind i Ibrahim-moskeen i Hebron, som er bygget over den hule, hvor profeten Ibrahim/Abraham og hans nærmeste familie tænkes at være begravet. Stedet er helligt for både muslimer og jøder, og dette år faldt den jødiske helligdag purim sammen med ramadanen. Mens palæstinensiske muslimer var samlet til morgenbøn, åbnede Goldstein ild mod forsamlingen og dræbte 29 personer, inden han selv blev tæsket ihjel af chokerede overlevende.

Hvad der præcist fik Goldstein til at begå massemord på det givne tidspunkt er aldrig helt blevet klarlagt. Sikkert er det dog, at gerningsmanden tilhørte en militant nationalistisk bevægelse, som ikke tolererede de delvise begrænsninger af jøders adgang til helligdommen, der var indført for at mindske risikoen for konfrontationer (The Jerusalem Report 1994; Hoffmann 2007; Martin 2011; Middle East Monitor 2019).

Selvom Ibrahims/Abrahams rolle i begivenhederne må siges at være indirekte, repræsenterer massakren i Ibrahim-moskeen alligevel et skræmmende eksempel på spændinger, som er forbundet med retten til hans arv. Ligesom jihadisternes *millat Ibrāhīm* står Goldsteins forbrydelse også i skarp kontrast til økumeniske initiativer, der opfordrer til tværreligiøs forbrødring i Ibrahims/Abrahams navn. To af disse har vakt særlig opsigt i de seneste år: Det første er de såkaldte *Abraham Accords* fra 2020, som dækker over normaliseringsaftaler mellem Israel og Forenede Arabiske Emirater, Bahrain og senere også Sudan og Marokko (Jeong 2021, 37). Det andet eksempel er det stort anlagte Abrahamiske Familiehus (*al-Bait al-ʿāʾila al-Ibrāhīmiyya*), som blev indviet i Abu Dhabi i februar 2023. Bygningskomplekset består af en moske, en kirke og en synagoge og udspringer af en erklæring om mellemmenneskeligt broderskab, som pave Frans i 2019 underskrev sammen med den egyptiske storimam fra al-Azhar-institutionen, Ahmad al-Tayyib (For Human Fraternity 2021).

I det følgende skal vi først se, hvordan Profeternes land

(2007) fremstiller stridighederne ved Ibrahims gravsted i Hebron og derefter, hvordan Ali Gomaa forholder sig til ideen om de abrahamiske religioner.

Kampen om Ibrahims grav og arv

Tv-serien Profeternes land (2007) afsætter små to minutter til at behandle spørgsmålet om Ibrahims gravsted mod slutningen af de to afsnit om Ibrahim. Det sker med optagelser fra Ibrahim-moskeen i Hebron, der ifølge speaken både rummer graven for Ibrahim, hustruen Sara, sønnen Ishāq (Isak), hans søn Yaʿqūb (Jakob) og dennes søn Yūsuf (Josef). Tilrettelæggerne holder imidlertid kameraet på rimelig afstand af selve gravstederne og fokuserer i stedet på de skilte, som markerer, hvor profeterne er begravet.

Det er ikke desto mindre bemærkelsesværdigt, at MBC-serien i det hele taget opsøger profeternes grave. Selvom gravbesøg (*ziyārat al-qubūr*) er en traditionel muslimsk praksis, mener salafister typisk, at gravene udgør en risiko for, at de døde bliver dyrket som afguder, og wahhabistisk funderede institutioner i Saudi-Arabien har løbende slået til lyd for en udjævning af gravpladser (Beránek og Ťupek 2017, 1-5). Tv-billederne af profeternes gravsteder i tv-serien kan derfor ses som endnu et udtryk for MBC's særlige position som en satellit uden for Saudi-Arabien, der har forsynet den saudiske offentlighed med indhold, der ikke altid falder i det religiøse establishments smag i hjemlandet.

Der ligger imidlertid også en mere politisk pointe bag tv-seriens dyrkelse af Ibrahims grav. Den præsenteres, da udsendelsen klipper til billeder af besøgende i den jødiske afdeling af helligdommen, mens speaken oplyser følgende:

> Efter massakren besatte Israel mere end halvdelen af området ved helligdommen og forvandlede den til en synagoge for jøder, hvor de praktiserer deres ritualer, ligesom der blev oprettet en jødisk skole (al-Arabiya 2007b, 20:46).

Hvilken massakre der er tale om, uddybes ikke, for hændelsen i 1994 er tilsyneladende så velkendt for seerne, at det er tilstrækkeligt blot at omtale den i bestemt ental. Herefter følger et interview med den palæstinensisk-jordanske professor Ahmad Nawfal, som gentager oplysningerne om, at Guds ven,

Ibrahim, og Ishāq er begravet i Hebron. Møntet på de jødiske bosættere proklamerer han til sidst: "Det er ikke dem, der er hans [Ibrahims] efterkommere. Vi er hans efterkommere." (al-Arabiya 2007b, 21:30).

Ahmad Nawfal er kendt for sin støtte til Det Muslimske Broderskab og for en skarp kritik af Israel, som han i de senere år har kunnet udbrede gennem sit faste program på tv-kanalen al-Yarmūk (al-Yarmouk TV 2019). Blandt de mere kontroversielle ytringer har Ahmad Nawfal kaldt holocaust en illusion, som højest kostede 600.000 – og ikke seks millioner – jøder livet (MEMRI 2019). Kritik af staten Israel har traditionelt været et hovedtema for islamister, der netop retter deres opmærksomhed mod at realisere islam i dette liv og koncentrerer sig om de fjender, de står over for her og nu (Skovgaard-Petersen 2013, 71). Som tidligere nævnt er serien fra en tid før, Saudi-Arabien for alvor strammede kursen over for de muslimske brødre, og der er ikke noget i Ahmad Nawfals konkrete udtalelser i tv-serien, der direkte kolliderede med den saudiske stats interesser. Tværtimod fortsætter programmets speak og den næste ekspert ad samme spor. Først er det speakeren, som retter følgende anklager:

> Det, der nu foregår ved Ibrahim-moskeen, og det, der ledsager det af forfalskningskampagner og propaganda om forholdet mellem Ibrahim, fred være med ham, og jøderne, er en del af forsøgene på at forfalske historien (al-Arabiya 2007b, 21:36).

Den egyptiske tænker Muhammad ʿImāra afslutter herefter sekvensen om Ibrahims gravsted ved at citere fra et berømt vers fra Koranen: "Abraham var hverken jøde eller kristen. Han var en gudsøgende (*hanīfan*)" [K 3:67]. Muhammad ʿImāra holder en kort kunstpause, inden han tilføjer ordet "alene" (*wāhidan*) i stedet for versets oprindelige udtryk: muslim/en, der havde overgivet sig til Gud (*musliman*) (al-Arabiya 2007b, 21:53). Måske for at understrege pointen om muslimsk eksklusivitet over Ibrahims arv.

Profeternes land fra 2007 forholder sig af gode grunde ikke til de senere års abrahamiske projekter, men det er ikke desto mindre et billede af en eksklusiv muslimsk Ibrahim-figur, som serien efterlader. Han var hverken jøde eller kristen, og det er ikke dem, men muslimerne, som er hans retmæssige efterkommere.

En pagt til hele menneskeheden

Modsat forgængeren bruger Egypten – profeternes land (2020) ikke tid på at behandle massakren ved Ibrahims grav i 1994. I fjerde og sidste afsnit om Ibrahim slår den faste studiegæst, Ali Gomaa, dog også fast, at Ibrahim og Sara med sikkerhed er begravet ved moskeen i Hebron, men åbner en mulighed for, at deres efterkommere Yaʿqūb (Jakob) og Yūsuf (Josef) i virkeligheden kan være begravet i Egypten (CBC Egypt 2020d, 07:19-08:20). Umiddelbart herefter taler Ali Gomaa sig ind i den aktuelle diskussion om såkaldte abrahamiske religioner og grænserne for tværreligiøs forbrødring. Afsættet er Koranens beskrivelse af Ibrahim som ordholdende [K 53:37] (CBC Egypt 2020d, 08:52).

Ali Gomaa funderer over, hvad det var, Ibrahim var ordholdende omkring – eller opfyldte, som verbet *waffā* også kan oversættes til. Han konkluderer, at Ibrahim opfyldte de ord, som Gud havde indgået en pagt med Adam om, og som indeholdt alle troens dele (*kull shuʿab il-imān*). Ifølge Ali Gomaa var Ibrahim gavmild, barmhjertig, troende, loyal, overbevist om Gud og så videre (CBC Egypt 2020d, 08:59-10:44). Han forklarer herefter:

> Det, Ibrahim opfyldte, er den pagt, som Gud sluttede med menneskeheden [Adams børn]. Og se hvordan … derfor baserede vi det ikke på at sige de abrahamiske religioner. De sagde til os, alle dem fra … østen, fra Kina og Indien og så videre: 'Nuvel, vi har også religioner.' Vi sagde til dem: 'Er I da ikke imod sådan og sådan og sådan og sådan?' De sagde: 'Nej, det er vi ikke imod.' Vi sagde: 'Hvad er så det? Det er den pagt, som Gud sluttede med menneskeheden.' (CBC Egypt 2020d, 10:45).

Der er flere interessante pointer på spil i ovenstående passage. For det første betoner Ali Gomaa, at Ibrahim var ordholdende og loyal, hvilket signalerer lydighed over Gud. Loyalitet frem for oprør er som nævnt en attraktiv værdi for den egyptiske stat. For det andet er det opsigtsvækkende, at den tidligere mufti lægger afstand til ideen om abrahamiske religioner. Ali Gomaas ræsonnement synes her at være, at Guds pagt med menneskeheden er universel og ikke forbeholdt nogle mennesker frem for andre. Det er ligeså meget en pagt med kinesere og indere, buddhister og hinduister, som med jøder og kristne. Men det er dog stadig en pagt, som udgår fra muslimernes Allah, den

eneste Gud.

Den abrahamiske retorik har de senere år mødt kritik fra flere fronter, hvilket ikke mindst kan tilskrives normaliserings-aftalerne mellem arabiske lande og Israel under betegnelsen *The Abraham Accords*. I efteråret 2021 måtte et af ansigterne på Det Abrahamiske Familiehus, storimam Ahmed al-Tayyib, præcisere nogle misforståelser, som den abrahamiske retorik angiveligt havde skabt omkring initiativer til tværreligiøs forbrødring. Ahmed al-Tayyib afviste det, han omtalte som et forsøg på at skabe en ny abrahamisk religion (i ental), som hverken har farve, smag eller lugt (BBC Arabic 2021). Ved indvielsen af Det Abrahamiske Familiehus i februar 2023 deltog storimamen ikke, selvom moskéen i bygningskomplekset bærer hans navn (*Masjid al-Imām al-Tayyib*). Al-Tayyibs fravær er blevet forklaret med, at han frygter kritik fra andre lærde fra al-Azhar (Middle East Monitor 2023) og viser, at forbrødring i Ibrahims/Abrahams navn kan være en delikat balance.

Også Ali Gomaa har i de senere år kritiseret "kaldet til den abrahamiske religion" (i ental) for at være et politisk projekt, som ikke har noget med andre religioner at gøre (El Balad 2021). I tv-serien – som blev sendt før *The Abraham Accords* – lader Ali Gomaas indvendinger mod ideen om abrahamiske religioner (i flertal) dog til at være af mere teologisk karakter. Også for Ali Gomaa er Ibrahim først og fremmest en vigtig islamisk profet, som ikke må reduceres til et økumenisk symbol.

Konklusion

Denne artikel har undersøgt, hvordan profeten Ibrahims liv bliver fremstillet i nutidig arabisk massekultur gennem en analyse af to nonfiction tv-serier fra de seneste 20 år. Undersøgelsen har vist, at begge tv-serier skildrer Ibrahims liv gennem en række begivenheder, som er kendte fra den islamiske tradition, og som tv-serierne dermed viderefører i massekulturen.

Analysens første afsnit dokumenterede, at de to tv-serier rodfæster Ibrahim i en bestemt geografi, som svarer til henholdsvis en transnational arabisk verden og Egypten. Jeg argumenterede for, at forskellen mellem de to Ibrahim-figurer – den transnationale missionær og den egyptisk gifte stamfader – kan forklares ud fra tv-producenternes forskellige profiler, hvor saudiske MBC skal tiltrække seere fra hele den arabiske

verden, mens UMS kan knyttes til egyptisk nationalisme. Den egyptiske tv-serie brugte tilmed historien om Ibrahim til at skildre Egypten som et guddommeligt sanktioneret helle. Tv-seriens faste gæst, Ali Gomaa, benyttede i 2013 en lignende karakteristik til at legitimere de egyptiske sikkerhedsstyrkers indsats mod demonstranter, der protesterede mod afsættelsen af den folkevalgte præsident Muhammad Mursi fra Det Muslimske Broderskab. Derfor kan tv-seriens Ibrahim-portræt også tjene som en diskret påmindelse til seerne om, at krænkelser af lov og orden i Egypten er en krænkelse af Guds vilje.

I analysens andet afsnit om Ibrahims opgør med afgudsdyrkerne så vi, at MBC gav taletid til lærde fra flere sunnimuslimske hovedstrømninger (jf. al-Azami 2021), som betonede forskellige aspekter af historien: Salafisten fremstillede Ibrahim som resolut og bearbejdet af Gud; neo-traditionalisten fremhævede Ibrahims retoriske elegance og tålmodighed over for sin afgudsdyrkende far; mens islamisten skildrede Ibrahim som en forfulgt, men vedholdende missionær. Jeg argumenterede for, at denne bredde blandt medvirkende var mulig på grund af MBC's særlige position som *offshore* medie og helt i tråd med det ene ben i Saudi-Arabiens dobbelte mediestrategi om at signalere åbenhed og moderation over for omverdenen (jf. Zayani 2012). Det hører dog med til billedet, at tv-seriens brug af populære islamistiske prædikanter var mindre ømtålelig på lanceringstidspunktet i 2007, end den ville have været efter de arabiske oprør, hvor de autokratiske regimer i regionen ikke mindst blev udfordret af islamister. I den egyptiske tv-serie udlagde Ali Gomaa ikke bare Ibrahims ikonoklasme som et retorisk virkemiddel, men som en barmhjertig og uskadelig handling, der skulle få afgudsdyrkerne til at erkende deres vildfarelser. Jeg spekulerede i, at dette kunne være et forsøg på at erobre historien tilbage fra de senere års jihadistiske fortolkninger og samtidig appellere til barmhjertighed frem for aktivistisk omstyrtning af idoler; for ikke at sige samfundsinstitutioner i nutidens Egypten.

Endeligt undersøgte analysens sidste afsnit, hvordan de to tv-serier forholder sig til Abraham i jødisk og kristen forstand med afsæt i henholdsvis massakren i Ibrahim-moskeen i 1994 og den omdiskuterede idé om de abrahamiske religioner. Jeg fandt, at begge tv-serier promoverede Ibrahim som en entydig islamisk profet. Stillet over for de økumeniske og jihadistiske modpoler repræsenterer tv-seriernes fremstilling af Ibrahim

således bredere strømninger blandt sunnimuslimer i den arabiske verden. De reducerer på den ene side ikke Ibrahim til en militant idolknuser, men er på den anden side heller ikke ligeglade med, om han var jøde, kristen eller muslim.

Abstract: The Prophet Ibrahim is a figure of primary importance in Islam, who in recent years has been frequently invoked as a shared ancestor of Muslims, Christians, and Jews on the one hand and as a symbol for jihadis on the other hand. While significant scholarly attention has been paid to renderings of Ibrahim in the Quran and classical texts of the Islamic tradition, existing scholarship is yet to explore contemporary interpretations of the Father of the Prophets. To fill this lacuna, this article aims at exploring how the Prophet Ibrahim is portrayed in Arab mass culture through an analysis of two Arabic nonfiction TV series on Islamic prophets. The article explains the difference between the two TV series' portrayal of Ibrahim based on the different interests of the production companies and the religious orientation of the participating preachers. Finally, it is discussed how the TV series are positioned in relation to contemporary militant and ecumenical interpretations of Ibrahim by including current examples of these opposites.

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Tobias Andersson

Islamisk vinpoesi från Ibn al-Farid till Ian Dallas

Abstract Genom islams historia har sufiska poeter ofta beskrivit den överväldigande kärleken till Gud som en berusning på vin – den gudomliga kärlekens eviga vin som genomsyrar allt som existerar. Föreliggande artikel utforskar tre uttryck för sufisk vinpoesi från olika historiska sammanhang: först den egyptiske poeten 'Umar b. al-Farids (1181–1235) omtalade vinsång, *khamriyya,* därefter den marockanske sufishejken Ahmad b. 'Ajibas (1747–1809) kommentar till Ibn al-Farids vinsång och slutligen den skotske sufishejken Ian Dallas (1930–2021, även kallad Abdalqadir as-Sufi) kommentar till Ibn 'Ajibas tidigare nämnda kommentar. Syftet är att lyfta fram vinpoesins betydelse i sufiska sammanhang som ett sätt att inte bara beskriva Guds kärlek och uttrycka erfarenheten av denna kärlek utan även vägleda andra människor till liknande andliga tillstånd. Artikeln belyser därmed vinpoesins didaktiska användning som utgångspunkt för sufisk undervisning och som uttryck för de andliga insikter och tillstånd som denna undervisning avser att förverkliga. Det framträder särskilt tydligt i Ibn 'Ajibas och Ian Dallas kommentarer. Artikeln belyser även vinpoesins fortsatta betydelse i sufiska sammanhang, långt efter genrens stora genomslag på 1200-talet, numera även i engelskspråkiga sammanhang. Medan Ibn al-Farids poesi är förhållandevis väl utforskad har varken Ibn 'Ajibas kommentar eller Ian Dallas superkommentar inkluderats i tidigare studier av islamisk vinpoesi

Islamisk poesi om vin förvånar många med tanke på Koranens vinförbud (5:90–91), men inom sufismen är vindrickande en av de vanligaste bilderna för den berusande kärleken till Gud. Denna artikel utforskar tre uttryck för sufisk vinpoesi från olika historiska sammanhang genom en jämförande läsning: först den egyptiske poeten 'Umar b. al-Farids (1181–1235) omtalade vinsång, *khamriyya*, därefter den marockanske sufishejken Ahmad b. 'Ajibas (1747–1809) kommentar till Ibn al-Farids vinsång och slutligen den skotske sufishejken Ian Dallas (1930–2021, även kallad Abdalqadir as-Sufi) kommentar till Ibn 'Ajibas

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kommentar. Syftet är att lyfta fram vinpoesins dåtida och nutida betydelse i sufiska sammanhang som ett sätt att inte bara beskriva Guds kärlek och uttrycka erfarenheten av denna kärlek, vilken man menar genomsyrar allt som existerar, utan även vägleda andra människor till liknande andliga tillstånd. Därmed belyser artikeln vinpoesins didaktiska användning som utgångspunkt för sufisk undervisning och som uttryck för de andliga insikter och tillstånd som denna undervisning syftar till att förverkliga. Ibn al-Farids poesi är förhållandevis väl utforskad (Homerin 2001, 2005, 2011), vilket speglar dess historiska inflytande, men varken Ibn ʿAjibas kommentar eller Ian Dallas superkommentar ("kommentar till en kommentar") har inkluderats i tidigare studier av islamisk vinpoesi.[1] Ibn ʿAjibas kommentar på arabiska är ett exempel på en traditionell utläggning av sufiska läror utifrån Ibn al-Farids vinsång, medan Ian Dallas jämförelsevis enklare superkommentar på engelska är ett exempel på användningen av vinsången i sufisk undervisning på 2000-talet. Ibn ʿAjiba och Ian Dallas tillhörde samma darqawiska gren av den shadhilitiska sufiorden, men under olika epoker, vilket gör jämförelsen mellan deras kommentarer särskilt intressant.

Ibn al-Farids vinsång

Vin var ett betydelsefullt tema i arabisk poesi redan under för-islamisk tid. De äldsta bevarade exemplen är oden, så kallade *qasaʾid*, där vin dyker upp som ett av flera teman i ett och samma ode. Under de första århundradena efter islams framväxt etablerades en specifik poetisk genre med vin som sitt främsta tema. En sådan monotematisk dikt om vin, *khamr*, kallades för *khamriyya* och var vanligtvis kort, sällan mer än ett femtontal verser (Bencheikh 1997, 1008). Även om vin redan på den tiden användes som uttryck för längtan, begär och förälskelse associerades genren inledningsvis med libertinism och hedonism snarare än mystik (Homerin 2011, 143–152). Genrens obestridde mästare var den i Bagdad verksamme Abu Nuwas (ca 747–815), vars skaldebegåvning kom att hyllas av de lärda lika mycket som hans vinromantik kom att fördömas. Ett exempel är hans berömda *daʿ ʿanka lawmi* ("Klandra mig inte"):

> (1) Klandra mig inte, för klander bara sporrar mig;
> bota mig istället med det som gjort mig sjuk.

1 Vad beträffar kommentarer och superkommentarer i islamisk tradition, se Andersson 2022, 43–69.

(2) Ett ljust vin, vars hus inga sorger besöker,
som till och med gläder stenen som vidrör det. […]
(11) Säg åt den som säger sig ha kunskap i filosofi:
"Du har lärt dig en del, men mycket undgår dig.
(12) Begränsa inte Guds förlåtelse, om du är en trångsynt
man;
att begränsa den vore sannerligen att häda."[2]
(Kennedy 1997, 276)

Det var bland annat mot denna litterära bakgrund som den egyptiske poeten ʿUmar b. al-Farid författade sin vinsång på 1200-talet. Han gjorde det dock utifrån en sufisk tradition där vinet hade omvandlats till en poetisk bild för mystikernas överväldigande kärlek till Gud. Bland andra al-Hallaj (ca 858–922), al-Suhrawardi (1154–1191) och Abu Madyan (1126–1198) använde vinet som bild för kärleken till Gud och den omedelbara samvaron med Gud – den förälskades efterlängtade förening med den älskade (Homerin 2011, 152–157). Ibn al-Farid var således inte den förste sufiske poeten att skriva vinpoesi, men hans berömmelse kom att överskugga alla andra, därav hans hederstitel *sultan al-ʿashiqin* ("de förälskades sultan").

Sufismen kan beskrivas som islamisk dygdetik med betoning på människans personliga närmande till Gud genom ständig åminnelse av Gud (*dhikr*) och förvärv av etiska och andliga dygder (*akhlaq*), vanligtvis under vägledning av en andlig mästare. Historiskt sett har den sunnitiska traditionen – som Ibn al-Farid liksom Ibn ʿAjiba och Ian Dallas tillhörde – definierats av de ömsesidigt erkända skolor (*madhahib*, sg. *madhhab*) som utvecklades inom tre grundläggande vetenskaper: rättsläran, teologin och sufismen. Skolorna inom rättsläran är den hanafitiska, den malikitiska, den shafiʿitiska och den hanbalitiska, medan skolorna inom teologin framför allt är den ashʿaritiska, den maturiditiska och den hanbalitiska. Inom sufismen talar man sällan om skolor på samma sätt utan snarare om en gemensam sufisk tradition som håller sig inom rättsskolornas ramar och som utövas inom en rad olika "ordnar" (*turuq*, sg. *tariqa*), såsom den qadiritiska, den naqshabanditiska och den shadhilitiska. Den sufiska traditionen inbegriper därmed olika deltraditioner och inriktningar som genom historien har tagit flera olika uttryck (t.ex. Karamustafa 2007; Keller 2011; Knysh 2017). Ibn al-Farid, Ibn ʿAjiba och Ian Dallas tillhörde alla huvudfåran inom den sufiska tradition som såg tillbaka på gemensamma auktoriteter som al-Junayd al-

2 Alla översättningar från arabiska till svenska är mina egna. I det här fallet har jag översatt den arabiska texten som återges i Kennedy 1997, 276.

Baghdadi (830–910), Abu l-Qasim al-Qushayri (986–1072), Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111), ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1078–1166) och senare även Ibn al-ʿArabi (1165–1240). Ibn ʿAjiba och Ian Dallas tillhörde dessutom samma shadhilitiska orden, om än under olika epoker, vilket jag återkommer till nedan.

Åtminstone sedan al-Junayd på 800-talet har sufier talat om två avgörande steg på den andliga vägen: *fana'* ("försvinnande") och *baqa'* ("förblivande"). Inledningsvis betecknade termerna "försvinnande inför Gud" genom att man fullständigt underkastar sig Guds vilja, och "förblivande genom Gud" genom att ens vilja därefter helt och hållet överensstämmer med Guds vilja (t.ex. al-Kalabadhi 1994, 92–100; al-Qushayri 1989, 148–150). Termerna kom dock att referera mer specifikt till tillståndet under respektive efter upplevelsen av att inte erfara något annat än Gud så som Gud manifesterar sig för människan. För många sufier på Ibn al-Farids tid innebar det första stadiet, *fana'*, att människans psykologiska själv, genom strikt etisk och andlig disciplin samt ständig åminnelse av Gud "försvinner inför Gud" så att hon mer eller mindre tillfälligt erfar Gud utan att erfara de skapade tingen, kanske inte ens sig själv. Det andra stadiet, *baqa'*, innebär i sin tur att människan återvänder från den mystika upplevelsen och "förblir genom Gud" i och med den erfarenhetsmässiga vissheten att allt i skapelsen, däribland hon själv, är ändliga manifestationer av Guds oändliga vara. Därmed erfar hon Gud genom erfarenheten av Guds skapelse (t.ex. Ibn ʿAjiba 2008, 93–95). På ett liknande sätt används termerna *sukr* ("berusning") och *sahw* ("nykterhet"). "Berusning" betecknar tillståndet då den överväldigande kärleken till Gud suddar ut åtskillnaden mellan den förälskade och den älskade, medan "nykterhet" betecknar tillståndet då den förälskade nyktrar till efter berusningen utan att glömma de erfarenheter och insikter som berusningen gav – och framför allt utan att kärleken på något sätt avtar (t.ex. al-Kalabadhi 1994, 85–87; al-Qushayri 1989, 153–154; Ibn ʿAjiba 2008, 104–106). De flesta sufier har vidhållit att det främsta andliga tillståndet är yttre nykterhet så att man kan upprätthålla den uppenbarade lagen och inre berusning så att ens laglydighet, liksom allt annat i livet, blir ett uttryck för kärleken till Gud.

Med tanke på sufismens tal om berusning och nykterhet, försvinnande och förblivande, är det inte förvånande att vinet ansågs vara en lämplig poetisk bild. Det rättsliga förbudet mot vin gav dessutom bilden en särskild udd med tanke på

associationerna till överskridande av gränser och brott mot sociala normer. Redan i hadithlitteraturen berättas det till exempel att profeten Muhammed sade: "Minns/nämn Gud så mycket att folk säger att ni har blivit galna."[3] (Ibn Hanbal 1999, 18:195) Den sufiska vinpoesin uttrycker något liknande. Samtidigt gav vinsångerna ett nytt perspektiv på vinförbudet. Sufierna avstår från det timliga vinet i denna värld, inte bara för att de väntar på det eviga paradisiska vinet i den kommande (Koranen 37:45–47, 47:15, 52:23, 56:18–19), utan framför allt för att de redan har druckit sig berusade på det senare och därmed inte har något behov av det förra. Dessutom fungerade vinet som en bild för Guds kärlek som genomsyrar allt som existerar. Många sufier betonade att Gud skapade skapelsen av kärlek, för att uppenbara sin kärlek, och att det är genom deltagande i denna kärlek som de förälskade återvänder till Gud. Det är tydligt i Ibn al-Farids vinsång där vinet står för Guds kärlek som fullständigt uppfyller den förälskade. Som Emil Homerin uttrycker det med hänvisning till Dawud al-Qaysaris (ca 1260–1350) kommentar till Ibn al-Farids vinsång:

> Thus, it is God's love that led to creation, and it is with His love that God leads His lovers back to Him. He guides them via the straight path of Islam as charted by the best of creation, the prophet Muhammad, the "beloved of God," who possesses perfect love. By following the prophet Muhammad and the other prophets and saintly guides, the loving worshipper draws ever closer to God until He assumes His servant's will and senses, overwhelming the lover with ecstasy and rapture, annihilating his being and essence into His own, where the lover abides forever. (Homerin 2005, xx)

Vinet i den sufiska poesin står således för Guds allestädes närvarande kärlek, vilken uppenbaras i alla skapade ting, och i förlängningen för människans berusning i mötet med denna kärlek. Ibn ʿAjiba, vars kommentar till Ibn al-Farids vinsång utforskas nedan, förklarar till exempel att "vin" (*khamra*) i sufiska sammanhang främst betecknar "både det högsta varat innan dess manifestation [genom de skapade tingen] och hemligheterna som finns i tingen efter dess manifestation", men att det även kan beteckna "själva berusningen och extasen" hos människan. Han förklarar att anledningen till att sufierna talar om "det eviga vinet" (*al-khamrat al-azaliyya*) på detta sätt är att

3 Verbet *dhakara* betyder både "att minnas" och "att nämna". I sufiska sammanhang används termen *dhikr*, från verbet *dhakara*, mestadels för att minnas och åkalla Gud genom att, tyst eller hörbart, upprepa böner och lovprisningar. Mer allmänt kan termen även beteckna människans svar på Guds påminnelser, framför allt genom profeterna, om människans ursprungliga närhet till Gud och i förlängningen människans återvändande till denna närhet.

"när det manifesterar sig för människors hjärtan tappar de all sinnesförnimmelse precis som de gör vid berusning på det sinnliga vinet (*al-khamrat al-hissiyya*)" (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 109; 2008, 125). På grund av det ovan sagda var de sufiska poeterna noga med att skilja på evigt vin och timligt vin. Ibn al-Farid gör det redan i den första versen av sin vinsång:

> (1) Till den älskades minne drack vi vin,
> berusade oss, innan vinrankan skapades.[4]

Ibn al-Farid tydliggör att berusningen på detta vin skedde "innan vinrankan skapades" och att det därmed inte handlar om jordiskt vin från vindruvor. Istället knyter Ibn al-Farid an till föreställningen om människans andliga tillvaro hos Gud före jordens skapelse. Denna föreställning antyds redan i Koranens framställning av mänsklighetens förjordiska bekräftelse av Guds herradöme: "Och [minns] när din Herre tog fram ättlingarna från Adams barn ur länderna på dem och lät dem vittna mot sig själva: 'Är jag inte er Herre?' varpå de svarade: 'Jo, vi vittnar', så att ni inte ska säga på uppståndelsens dag: 'Vi var inte medvetna om detta'" (7:172). Som andliga varelser ingick människorna ett förbund med Gud före den sinnliga världens skapelse. Profeternas uppdrag är följaktligen att påminna människorna om detta ursprungliga förbund med Gud och vägleda dem tillbaka till det. Många sufier, däribland Ibn al-Farid, tolkade det som ett kärleksförbund (Homerin 2005, xxii). De menade dessutom att människans jordiska skapelse innebar att hon tillfälligt skildes från Gud, men att hon genom andlig disciplin och åminnelse av Gud, under profeternas vägledning, kan återvända till denna ursprungliga kärlek och närhet till Gud redan under det jordiska livet. Ibn al-Farid beskriver detta förjordiska tillstånd som en berusning på ett evigt vin. Detta vin är visserligen oåtkomligt eller åtminstone svåråtkomligt i sin ursprungliga form på jorden, men bara doften av det eller tanken på det räcker för att berusa:

> (3) Utan dess doft skulle jag inte ha funnit dess krog;
> utan dess glans skulle man inte kunna föreställa sig det.
> (4) Tiden har inte bevarat något av det, utom ett sista andetag,
> dolt som en hemlighet i de visas bröst.
> (5) Om det bara nämndes i en stam skulle dess folk
> bli berusade utan vare sig skam eller synd.

4 För hela vinsången i arabiskt original, se Ibn al-Farid 1934, 73–75; Arberry 1952, 39–41. För en engelsk översättning, se Homerin 2011, 165–169. Versnumreringen i min översättning följer numreringen i Homerins översättning som omfattar totalt 33 verser. De flesta arabiska versioner av Ibn al-Farids vinsång innehåller ytterligare åtta verser, infogade mellan vers 22 och 23, men de är antagligen senare tillägg. Se Homerin 2006, 240–242; 2011, 279.

(6) Från djupet av dess kärl steg det, även om
inget egentligen finns kvar utom dess namn.
(7) Men om någon kommer att tänka på det en dag
bosätter sig glädjen hos honom och ångesten ger sig av.
(8) Om dryckesbröderna bara såg förslutningen på dess karaff,
skulle förslutningen, utan vinet, räcka för att berusa dem.

Ibn al-Farid beskriver vinets mirakulösa egenskaper genom att knyta an till typiska bilder i tidigare vinpoesi samtidigt som han förser dem med nya betydelser (v. 5–20). En skvätt från vinet sägs till exempel kunna återuppliva döda i deras gravar (v. 9), vilket i sitt bildspråk knyter an till förislamiska dryckesoffer, även om innebörden i vinsången är en helt annan. Närheten till vinkrogen skulle kunna få lama att gå, beskrivningen av vinets smak skulle kunna få stumma att tala (v. 11) och spridningen av dess doft i öst skulle till och med kunna återställa luktsinnet hos "den förkylde i väst" (v. 12). I en berömd vers beskriver Ibn al-Farid sedan vinet som "renhet men inte vatten, subtilitet men inte luft, ljus men inte eld, ande men inte kropp" (v. 22). På invändningen att "du har druckit synd" svarar han att "jag har bara druckit det som, enligt mig, vore syndigt att avstå från" (v. 25). Han knyter även an till bilden av kristna munkar som vinleverantörer i tidigare arabisk poesi genom att önska munkarna välgång och sedan utbrista: "Hur ofta var de inte berusade på det, trots att de aldrig drack, utan bara längtade efter det!" (v. 26). Därefter återkommer den förjordiska berusningen i Guds närvaro som "gjorde mig berusad innan jag föddes" och som "förblir med mig när mina ben vittrar bort" (v. 27). Vinsången avslutas med ett självsäkert ställningstagande för mystikernas berusning:

(32) Den som lever nykter har inget liv i denna värld;
den som inte dör berusad har vettet gått förbi.
(33) Låt den som slösar bort sitt liv begråta sig själv;
en sådan har inte fått ta del av detta vin.

I de flesta versioner av Ibn al-Farids vinsång finns ytterligare åtta verser, infogade mellan vers 22 och 23 i den kortare versionen, vilket gör att det totala antalet verser blir 41 istället för 33. Dessa uttryckligt metafysiska verser är antagligen senare tillägg, men många kommentatorer, däribland Ibn ʿAjiba, utgår från den längre versionen (Homerin 2006, 240–242; 2011, 279). I dessa verser sägs det bland annat att vinet "fanns före alla existerande

ting" och att "genom det inrättades tingen" varpå "det doldes i visdom för alla som saknar förståelse" (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 129). Oavsett om verserna är författade av Ibn al-Farid eller inte stämmer deras innehåll väl överens med den så kallade filosofiska sufismen som Ibn al-ʿArabi och hans efterföljare utvecklade. Denna inriktning brukar kallas för akbarismen eller den akbaritiska skolan utifrån Ibn al-ʿArabis hederstitel *al-shaykh al-akbar* ("den störste läromästaren"). Ibn al-Farid var omkring femton år yngre än Ibn al-ʿArabi och kan ha influerats av honom. Ibn al-Farids dikter blev populära bland Ibn al-ʿArabis efterföljare som författade flera kommentarer till både hans vinsång och hans 761 verser långa *al-Ta'iyyat al-kubra* ("Den större dikten som rimmar på *ta*"), även kallad *Nazm al-suluk* ("Dikten om den andliga vägen").[5]

Akbariterna byggde vidare på den tidigare sufiska traditionen, men gav den en mer filosofisk framställning. De betraktade Gud som varat självt, oändligt och obegränsat, som manifesteras genom allt som finns till. Som William C. Chittick förklarar Ibn al-ʿArabis förståelse av *wujud,* den arabiska termen för "vara" eller "existens":

> On the highest level, *wujud* is the absolute and nonde-limited reality of God, the "Necessary Being" (*wajib al-wujud*) that cannot not exist. In this sense, *wujud* designates the Essence of God or of the Real (*dhat al-haqq*), the only reality that is real in every respect. On lower levels, *wujud* is the underlying substance of "every-thing other than God" (*ma siwa Allah*) – which is how Ibn al-ʿArabi and others define the "cosmos" or "universe" (*al-ʿalam*). […] As the Essence of the Real, *wujud* is the indefinable and unknowable ground of everything that is found in whatever mode it may be found. (Chittick 1994, 15–16)

Denna ontologi låg sedan till grund för akbariternas strävan efter att närma sig Gud, efter att "försvinna inför Gud" och "förbli genom Gud", genom andliga övningar och ständig åminnelse av Gud. På grund av sin postuma association med akbarismen drabbades Ibn al-Farid av samma ogrundade anklagelser om panteism som Ibn al-ʿArabi och hans efterföljare. Anklagelserna berodde till stor del på att deras meningsmotståndare, inte minst Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), missförstod deras ontologi. Därmed hamnade Ibn al-ʿArabi och Ibn al-Farid i centrum för senare

5 Ett exempel är al-Qaysaris kommentar till Ibn al-Farids vinsång som finns översatt i Homerin 2005.

generationers hätska debatter om "läran om varats enhet" (*wahdat al-wujud*). Akbarismen var dock en av de mest inflytelserika teologiska och filosofiska inriktningarna under den så kallade postklassiska perioden (ca 1250–1900). En av dess främsta företrädare västerut i den muslimska världen var Ahmad b. ʿAjiba från Tetouan i norra Marocko.

Ibn ʿAjibas kommentar

Ibn ʿAjiba tillhörde den darqawiska grenen av den shadhilitiska orden, den förra uppkallad efter Muhammad al-ʿArabi al-Darqawi (1760–1823) och den senare efter Abu l-Hasan al-Shadhili (1196–1258), även de från norra Marocko. Hans initiationskedja, *silsila*, sträcker sig med andra ord tillbaka via al-Darqawi och en rad ytterligare shejker till al-Shadhili. Ibn ʿAjiba var samtida med al-Darqawi och hade nära kontakt med honom, bland annat genom brevväxling, men Ibn ʿAjibas huvudsaklige shejk – hans ledsagare på den andliga vägen – var Muhammad al-Buzidi (d. 1814) som i sin tur hade haft al-Darqawi som shejk (t.ex. Michon 1973; 1999). Al-Darqawis berömda brevsamling, författad på enkel arabiska med vissa dialektala inslag, vittnar om en sufishejk som rakt och tydligt instruerade sina adepter (*muridun*, sg. *murid*) i ständig åminnelse av Gud och strikt avhållsamhet från allt annat än Gud (al-Darqawi 2009; 2018). Till skillnad från al-Darqawis brevsamling är Ibn ʿAjibas avsevärt mer omfattande böcker fulla av avancerad filosofisk sufism i akbaritisk anda. Al-Darqawi och Ibn ʿAjiba tillhörde samma sufiska tradition, samma gren av samma orden, men uttryckte den på olika sätt i skrift. Det rör sig inte bara om en skillnad i genre. Ibn ʿAjiba hade en annan filosofisk skolning än al-Darqawi. Ibn ʿAjiba författade bland annat en inflytelserik kommentar till Koranen i flera volymer, *al-Bahr al-madid fi tafsir al-qurʾan al-majid* ("Det vidsträckta havet: Kommentar till den ädla Koranen"), vari han sammanförde traditionell exegetik med esoteriska tolkningar och allusioner, liksom en nästan lika inflytelserik kommentar till Ibn ʿAtaʾ Allahs (1259–1310) sufiska aforismer med titeln *Iqaz al-himam fi sharh al-hikam* ("Aspirationernas väckelse: Kommentar till aforismerna"). Bland hans övriga verk återfinns en koncis kommentar till Ibn al-Farids vinsång på strax över fyrtio sidor tryckt text.[6] Han inleder den med att kontextualisera Ibn al-Farids vinsång utifrån en

uppdelning av kunskapen, eller läran, om Guds enhet (*'ilm al-tawhid*):

Den består av två typer: dels kunskapen om Guds enhet genom argument och bevis, vilken tillhör de troende i allmänhet, dels kunskapen om Guds enhet genom bevittnande och skådande, vilken tillhör eliten av de andliga dygdernas folk bland de som har smakat och i extas erfarit det gudomliga. Genom att dricka ur kärlekens bägare har de blivit berusade och frånvarande från sin egen existens. Därefter har de nyktrat till från berusningen och kunnat njuta av skådandets och bevittnandets sötma. (Ibn 'Ajiba 1999, 104)

Ibn 'Ajiba förklarar att de främsta exemplen på personer med sådan erfarenhetsmässig kunskap om Gud är profeterna, särskilt Muhammed, och därefter Guds "förtrogna vänner" (*awliya'*) bland profeternas efterföljare. Han beskriver denna kunskap som profeternas verkliga arv och dess innehavare som profeternas verkliga arvtagare. Han räknar Ibn al-Farid, "de förälskades sultan och de visas imam", till de senare och beskriver hans vinsång som ett av de främsta litterära uttrycken för denna berusande kunskap om, och kärlek till, Gud (Ibn 'Ajiba 1999, 105, 108).

Ibn 'Ajiba förklarar verserna språkligt och litterärt, men framför allt med hänvisning till sufismen. Förutom att, som Ibn 'Ajiba uttrycker det, "förklara dess uttryck och utlägga dess betydelser" (Ibn 'Ajiba 1999, 108) tycks kommentarens syfte vara att visa hur vinsången belyser sufiska läror. Dessutom sjöngs Ibn al-Farids vinsång troligen under de sufiska sammankomster, så kallade åminnelsecirklar (*halaqat al-dhikr*), vari Ibn 'Ajiba deltog, vilket gav kommentaren en omedelbar praktisk relevans. Ibn 'Ajiba nämner ofta ett par möjliga tolkningar av en vers och tydliggör sedan vilken tolkning som han anser vara rimligast.

Redan efter den första versen förklarar Ibn 'Ajiba att Ibn al-Farids vinsång förutsätter att läsaren eller åhöraren känner till en rad sufiska facktermer, däribland *dhawq* ("smakande"), *shurb* ("drickande"), *sukr* ("berusning"), *sahw* ("nykterhet"), *jam'* ("förening") och *tafriqa* ("åtskillnad") (Ibn 'Ajiba 1999, 109–111). Han definierar samtliga termer och förklarar bland annat berusning och nykterhet med hänvisning till de tidigare nämnda termerna *fana'* ("försvinnande") och *baqa'* ("förblivande"). Genom dessa definitioner sammanfattar han grundläggande sufiska läror på ett sätt som sedan styr hans tolkning av Ibn al-Farids vinsång. Definitionerna känns igen från hans övriga verk, inte minst från hans sufiska fackordbok *Mi'raj al-tashawwuf ila*

6   Kommentaren är publicerad i en volym med titeln *Sharh salat al-qutb ibn mashish* ("Kommentar till Ibn Mashishs bön") som innehåller flera av Ibn 'Ajibas kortare skrifter, inte bara hans kommentar till Ibn Mashishs berömda bön. Referenserna till denna volym i artikeln avser uteslutande Ibn 'Ajibas *Sharh khamriyyat ibn al-farid* ("Kommentar till Ibn al-Farids *khamriyya*") på sidorna 104–148.

haqa'iq al-tasawwuf ("Längtans uppstigning till sufismens realiteter") (Ibn ʿAjiba 2008; 2012). Senare i kommentaren förklarar han att det finns två typer av berusning och två typer av nykterhet: berusning med eller utan andlig vägledning och nykterhet med eller utan berusning. Det mest fullkomliga och eftersträvansvärda är berusning med andlig vägledning och nykterhet med berusning – det vill säga nykterhet som följer på berusning utan att erfarenheterna och insikterna från berusningen glöms bort. Den som däremot berusar sig utan att vägledas av vare sig den uppenbarade lagen eller de andliga läromästarna förtjänar klander, precis som den som förblir nykter utan att någonsin ha erfarit den berusande kärleken till Gud (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 145).

Ibn ʿAjibas kommentar är förhållandevis förutsägbar om man är bekant med den sufiska tradition som han tillhörde. Han hänvisar genomgående till föregångare som Sahl al-Tustari (818–896), al-Junayd, al-Qushayri, Abu Madyan, Ibn Mashish (1140–1227), al-Shadhili, Abu l-ʿAbbas al-Mursi (1219–1287), Ibn ʿAtaʾAllah, ʿAli al-Jamal (d. 1779) och al-Darqawi. Han påpekar vikten av lärjungaskap under en sufishejk som själv har genomgått berusningens och nykterhetens stadier och som har förmågan att vägleda andra: "Insikternas ljus skiner på den som överlämnar sin själ åt en fulländad shejk och låter denne styra" (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 113). I förhållande till det gudomliga vinet påpekar han även att "du kommer inte att förstå vad detta vin är, erfarenhetsmässigt och kunskapsmässigt, om du inte slår följe med dess folk" (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 131). Det utgår från den princip som Ibn ʿAjiba ofta återkommer till: "Den som inte har sett någon som har lyckats kommer inte själv att lyckas" (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 123; 2010, 93). Enligt Ibn al-Farids vinsång är vinet numera "dolt som en hemlighet i de visas bröst" (v. 4) och inget finns egentligen kvar av det "utom dess namn" (v. 6). I sin kommentar påpekar Ibn ʿAjiba att de stora andliga läromästarna, de som har uppnått de högsta stadierna av berusning och nykterhet, förvisso tycks vara mer dolda än under tidigare epoker, men att de aldrig är helt frånvarande. "Guds välsignelse tar aldrig slut", som han uttrycker det (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 116). Han beskriver sina egna möten med sådana läromästare som "har färdats genom avhållsamhetens länder och sedan kastat sig ut i den gudomliga enhetens hav" – som har "försvunnit inför Gud" och "förblivit genom Gud" – för att sedan vägleda andra genom sina ord, handlingar, dygder och andliga tillstånd (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 116).

Troligtvis har han sina egna shejker, al-Darqawi och al-Buzidi, i åtanke. Genom sådana referenser till sina egna shejker och sina egna erfarenheter framhåller Ibn ʿAjiba att Ibn al-Farids vinsång är ett uttryck för en levande sufisk tradition i vilken han själv deltar – något som senare återkommer hos Ian Dallas på 2000-talet. Det framhåller Ibn ʿAjiba även genom att återkommande citera sin egen vinsång *al-Taʾiyyat al-khamriyya* ("Vinsången som rimmar på *ta*") som anspelar på Ibn al-Farids vinsång (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 127, 131, 133–135, 140, 145).

Utmärkande för Ibn ʿAjibas kommentar är att han förklarar att verserna om vinets mirakulösa egenskaper (v. 5–20) skulle kunna tolkas bokstavligt som beskrivningar av faktiska mirakel med vilka Gud förärar sina förtrogna vänner – såsom att de botar sjuka eller får lama att gå – men att det är rimligare att tolka dem bildligt som allegorier om andliga tillstånd, eftersom Guds förtrogna vänner "inte bryr sig om sinnliga mirakel" och kanske inte ens erfar sådana (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 122). I förklaringen till versen om hur närheten till vinkrogen får lama att gå (v. 11) nämner Ibn ʿAjiba, till exempel, att det finns berättelser om hur närheten till vissa andliga läromästare bokstavligen har fått lama att gå, men att versen även kan, och antagligen bör, tolkas bildligt i betydelsen att "lama på den andliga vägen" återfår förmågan att närma sig Gud genom att slå följe med Guds förtrogna vänner – de som serverar det eviga vinet (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 123–124).

Ibn ʿAjiba delar även med sig av sina egna erfarenheter för att förklara verserna. Ett exempel är hans kommentar till versen om att omnämnandet av vinet i en stam får dess folk att "bli berusade utan vare sig skam eller synd" (v. 5). Han beskriver hur han själv bevittnade detta när han besökte en stam i norra Marocko under sitt första år med sin shejk då han, enligt egen utsago, mestadels befann sig i ett berusat tillstånd: "När vi sov över i ett hus blev alla som bodde där berusade och ägnade sig helhjärtat åt att minnas Gud." Han beskriver vidare att han i samband med det såg "skattmästare och statstjänstemän hänga på sig radband, ångerfullt vända sig till Gud och överge det som de hade ägnat sig åt tidigare" (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 117). Ett annat exempel är hans korta berättelse i samband med förklaringen av versen om hur blotta åsynen av karaffens förslutning räcker för att berusa (v. 8): "Jag såg några kristna vid Ceutas front när vi kom dit. Så snart vi samlades för att minnas Gud blev de hänryckta och följde efter oss till gränsen som skiljde oss åt. Där

stod de alldeles förbryllade bakom oss medan vinets ljus sken över dem. Och Gud – upphöjd är han – vet bäst" (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 119). Sådana förklaringar baserade på egna erfarenheter dyker upp ännu oftare hos Ian Dallas, men återfinns även hos Ibn ʿAjiba. I båda fallen bidrar de till att konkretisera de storslagna mystika upplevelserna som vinsången antyder och till att föra dem närmare åhörarna och läsarna.

Ian Dallas superkommentar

Ian Dallas föddes i Skottland 1930 och blev muslim 1967 varpå han antog förnamnet Abdalqadir. Kort därefter initierades han i darqawiorden av den marockanske sufishejken Muhammad b. al-Habib (1871–1972) från Meknes. Mot slutet av 1970-talet, efter ytterligare en tid som adept under den libyske shejken Muhammad al-Fayturi (d. 1979) från Benghazi, framträdde han själv som sufishejk och fick ett stort antal följare i Europa, särskilt i Storbritannien och Spanien.[7] Dallas har förblivit en omstridd person på grund av sina politiska ställningstaganden, däribland hans uppmaning till jihad på 1970- och 1980-talen för att etablera ett samhälle enligt profetiskt mönster och hans radikala modernitetskritik inspirerad av Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) och Ernst Jünger (1895–1998) (t.ex. as-Sufi 1978; 1982; 1984; 1996; Dallas 2007; 2009). Även hans skarpa kritik mot andra islamiska inriktningar – shiiter, salafister och modernister, men även vissa sufiska grupper – har skapat en del kontrovers. Hans bestående inflytande på västerländsk islam har dock inte handlat om jihad eller inomislamiska dispyter, utan snarare, som Mark Sedgwick konstaterar, om det ökade intresset för traditionell islamisk lärdom, framför allt malikitisk rättslära och shadhilitisk sufism (Sedgwick 2017, 246).

På 2000-talet flyttade Dallas till Kapstaden och det var där han i februari 2006 kommenterade Ibn al-Farids vinsång för sina adepter med utgångspunkt i Ibn ʿAjibas kommentar. Denna ursprungligen muntliga kommentar – i praktiken en muntlig superkommentar till Ibn ʿAjibas kommentar – sammanställdes sedan i skrift och publicerades i samlingsvolymen *Commentaries* (2012). Sedan 1970-talet har Dallas författat ett trettiotal böcker. Hans böcker om politik och europeisk historia samt hans skönlitterära verk är utgivna under namnet Ian Dallas, medan hans böcker om islam är utgivna under namnet Abdalqadir as-

7   För en översikt av Ian Dallas liv och verk, inklusive den sufiska rörelse som han grundade, se Sedgwick 2017, 236–248; Bocca-Aldaqre 2021.

Sufi (alternativt Abdalqadir al-Murabit eller Abdalqadir al-Darqawi). Hans *Commentaries* tillhör den senare kategorin, utgiven under namnet Abdalqadir as-Sufi, men för enkelhetens skull kommer jag även fortsättningsvis att benämna honom Ian Dallas. Kommentaren består av fyra delar om strax över tjugo sidor styck. Den går bara igenom Ibn 'Ajibas kommentar till de första sex verserna av Ibn al-Farids vinsång, men gör resten av vinsången begriplig genom att redogöra för vingenrens betydelse inom sufismen och för avgörande termer, såsom berusning och nykterhet.

Mest utmärkande för Dallas kommentar är dess didaktiska utformning. Det är tydligt att han avsåg att instruera sina adepter i sufism med hjälp av Ibn al-Farids vinsång och Ibn 'Ajibas kommentar. Kommentaren innehåller därför många praktiska och kontextspecifika direktiv. Ett tydligt exempel är den inledande uppmaningen till adepterna att bekanta sig med sufiska facktermer för att förstå vad Ibn 'Ajiba talar om i sin kommentar:

> He is using terms which you have to find out about and learn as you cannot advance on the Path without knowledge of these terms. For this you need 'The Hundred Steps' because these terms are all defined very clearly in that book and you really must get access to it and study it because without it you are ignorant and there is no use in sitting in ignorance. You have to work and acquaint yourself with these terms. (as-Sufi 2012, 142)

Precis som Ibn 'Ajiba är Ian Dallas noga med terminologin. Ibn 'Ajiba författade, som tidigare har nämnts, en sufisk fackordbok med titeln *Mi'raj al-tashawwuf ila haqa'iq al-tasawwuf* som var tänkt att fungera som föremål för både reflektion och aspiration. Dallas författade i sin tur ett liknande verk, *The Hundred Steps* (1980), som till stor del bygger på Ibn 'Ajibas *Mi'raj al-tashawwuf*. Det är detta verk som Dallas uppmanar adepterna att studera. De måste lära sig termerna och förstå sufismens terminologi "if we are going to continue with this" (as-Sufi 2012, 143). Dallas visar inga tecken på att romantisera vinpoesin; han framställer den som en lämplig utgångspunkt för sufisk undervisning som ska omsättas i praktiken genom intensiv åminnelse av Gud (as-Sufi 2012, 172–173). Sammanhanget för den ursprungliga kommentaren var nämligen en sammankomst

för gemensam recitation av korankapitel och profetiska böner samt sufiska litanior (*awrad*, sg. *wird*) och sånger (*qasa'id*, sg. *qasida*) – en så kallad åminnelsecirkel (*halaqat al-dhikr*) – under Dallas ledning. Hans förklaringar är förhållandevis standardmässiga och skiljer sig inte i någon större utsträckning från Ibn ʿAjibas. Däremot uttrycker han dem med ett enklare språkbruk och framför allt med ännu fler hänvisningar till egna erfarenheter av andlig vägledning som belyser de berörda verserna (as-Sufi 2012, 152–153, 184, 192–193, 197–199, 202–203, 206, 220–221). Ett exempel är anekdoten som han delar med sig av i samband med förklaringen av termerna *jamʿ* ("förening") och *tafriqa* ("åtskillnad"):

> I was once in the circle with Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib, rahimahullah, and at the mealtime he told me that after the dhikr people should not be frivolous. They should not laugh with their mouths open and talk silly talk – they can talk about serious or light-hearted matters but they should not come out from themselves and lose their intellect. They must guard what happens in the dhikr. Again, many of the secrets of knowledge come when you are eating together with the Fuqara.[8] They say that the Baraka[9] is in the food. If people come to the dhikr and leave before the meal, then there is actually something they have not tasted and it is not the food. This is the fact of the unity of the brotherhood.
>
> Now, I was sitting at the table, as I told you, with Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib, and there came upon me this state where I began to feel this extraordinary love for all the people who were there at table. Then I suddenly looked and I saw that one man didn't have any grapes. We had all been given some grapes but he did not have any, so I took my grapes and I put my grapes in front of him, but the minute I did that, Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib, without looking, took his grapes and FLUNG them across the table and they landed right in front of me, so the grapes had gone to my brother and the next thing they were there in front of me. And at that point I was gone. Do you see? Gone. There is a trigger moment and it comes from your concentration. It comes from the concentration in the Diwan,[10] concentration in the Wird,[11] an intensity of inner concentration on your

8 *Faqir* (pl. *fuqara'*) betyder "fattig" och är en vanlig självbeteckning bland sufier.

9 *Baraka* ("välsignelse") betecknar den påtagliga godhet som förekommer hos personer, på platser och i ting med särskilt nära anknytning till Gud – i det här fallet maten som delas mellan människor som har samlats för att minnas Gud. En vanlig definition av *baraka* i islamisk tradition är "varaktig förekomst av gudomlig godhet i ett ting" (*thubut al-khayr al-ilahi fi l-shay'*). Se t.ex. al-Raghib al-Asfahani 2009, 119.

10 Muhammad b. al-Habibs samling av sufiska litanior (*awrad*) och sånger (*qasa'id*).

11 Muhammad b. al-Habibs litania, bestående av böner och åminnelser, som reciteras en eller två gånger om dagen av hans efterföljare.

own heart that allows the possibility that Allah may choose to manifest lights to the Faqir.

So this is Jamʿ, that point where you and the brothers and the Shaykh – it is all one unified state of existence, and that continues and continues until all the phenomenal beings, all the stuff, all these people are in the end like dust in water, and you do not differentiate anything any more. Those are the stages of Jamʿ. (as-Sufi 2012, 192–193)

Dallas förklaring skiljer sig från Ibn ʿAjibas förklaring som fokuserar på upplevelsen av att uppgå i det gudomliga snarare än upplevelsen av att uppgå i den sufiska gemenskapen. Ibn ʿAjiba förklarar att *jamʿ* är "ett uttryck för det timligas upplösning i och med bekräftelsen av det eviga" och att *tafriqa* är "ett uttryck för bekräftelsen av yttre regler och förhållningssätt". Han påpekar dock att det mest fullkomliga är att förena *jamʿ* och *tafriqa*, förening och åtskillnad, precis som det mest fullkomliga är att förena *sukr* och *sahw*, berusning och nykterhet (Ibn ʿAjiba 1999, 111). Dallas förklaring bidrar dock, som tidigare har nämnts, till att konkretisera upplevelsen och föra den närmare åhörare och läsare; det är ett alldeles särskilt tillstånd, men i viss mån möjligt att föreställa sig, även om man inte har varit med om det. Som en del av dessa erfarenheter hänvisar Dallas ständigt till sin egen sufishejk, Muhammad b. al-Habib, och återger dennes instruktioner. Han refererar även till Ibn al-Habibs *al-Taʾiyyat al-wusta* ("Den mellersta dikten som rimmar på *ta*") som inleds med raderna:

(1) Vi drack av ljusen på närvarons krog,
ett vin som, utan tvivel, skingrade allt dunkel.
(2) Och vi förnam att handlandet i varje atom
tillhör Skaparen som tillbeds överallt.
(3) Och vi insåg att Gud uppenbarar sig i allt
genom sina sköna namn och allmaktens hemligheter.[12]
(Ibn al-Habib 2001, 34)

Ibn al-Habibs *al-Taʾiyyat al-wusta* är i sig själv ett tydligt exempel på vingenrens didaktiska betydelse, precis som flera andra sånger eller *qasaʾid* i hans *Diwan* (t.ex. Ibn al-Habib 2001, 34–38, 56–57, 71–72). Efter de inledande raderna följer åtskilliga uppmaningar till åhöraren som sammanfattar sufismens grunder med betoning på att minnas Gud (*dhikr*) och reflektera över Guds skapelse (*fikr*) samt att kämpa mot självets missriktade begär (*jihad al-nafs*) i syfte att förverkliga olika etiska och

12   För en engelsk översättning, se Ibn al-Habib 2015, 110–120.

andliga dygder – till exempel:

> (7) Säg till självets begär: "Följ inte med mig
> och hindra inte min resa till skapelsens Herre!"
> (8) Den som minns Gud, reflekterar och strävar högt
> kommer alltid att höja sig över allt annat än Gud.
> (Ibn al-Habib 2001, 34)

Senare i vers 31 fastlår Ibn al-Habib att "dessa är grunderna för vår fulländade väg, så följ den och undvik upphöjdhet och berömmelse" (Ibn al-Habib 2001, 35). Dallas citering av Ibn al-Habibs *al-Ta'iyyat al-wusta*, som återges i sin helhet i kommentaren, illustrerar vinpoesins fortsatta betydelse i sufiska sammanhang. I 2000-talets Sydafrika kommenterar Dallas Ibn al-Farids vinsång från 1200-talet med hänvisning till såväl Ibn 'Ajibas kommentar från 1700- eller 1800-talet och till Ibn al-Habibs vinpoesi från 1900-talet. Och han gör det genom att betona deras gemensamma tradition: "You must understand that Shaykh Ibn 'Ajiba is one of the Shaykhs of our Tariqa" (as-Sufi 2012, 215).

Ännu tydligare än Ibn 'Ajiba betonar Dallas nykterhetens företräde framför berusningen och återkommer ständigt till devisen "ingen *haqiqa* utan *shari'a*" – det vill säga att den uppenbarade lagen, *shari'a*, inte bara är den främsta vägen till erfarenhetsmässig insikt om den sanna verkligheten, *haqiqa*, utan det enda sättet att hantera och efterleva denna insikt (as-Sufi 2012, 148, 183, 222–223). Han förklarar att den "nykterhetens väg" som associeras med al-Junayd inte innebär en avsaknad av berusning, utan snarare att berusningen övergår i yttre nykterhet med bibehållen inre berusning (as-Sufi 2012, 155–156). Dallas betonar nykterheten ännu starkare än Ibn 'Ajiba eftersom det, som han uttrycker det, finns en massa amerikaner som "take this Sufic poetry and try to make out that really these Sufis were lovely Muslims who used to get drunk" – ett uppenbart utfall mot nyandlig appropriering av sufisk poesi (as-Sufi 2012, 164). Om den motkulturella udden tidigare fanns i vinet finns en liknande udd numera i den islamiska lagen, åtminstone i västerländska samhällen. Det är kanske därför Dallas verkar vara mindre intresserad av vinberusningen som allegori; han rör sig snabbt från vinsångens bilder till de faktiska andliga insikter och tillstånd som de uttrycker. Vinpoesin fyller fortfarande sin huvudsakliga funktion som underlag för sufisk instruktion och aspiration, vilket Dallas kommentar tydligt illustrerar, och den

omgärdas fortfarande av viss kontrovers i muslimska sammanhang, men den blir mindre utmanande i västerländska sammanhang där vinet inte associeras med överskridande av gränser och brott mot sociala normer. I slutändan är dock vinet som bild för Guds allestädes närvarande kärlek och berusningen som bild för människans överväldigande erfarenhet av denna kärlek lika begriplig och lika stark oavsett om det omgivande samhället föredrar "det eviga vinet" eller "det sinnliga vinet", för att använda Ibn ʿAjibas tidigare citerade uttryck.

Avslutning

Genomgången av Ibn al-Farids vinsång tillsammans med Ibn ʿAjibas kommentar och Ian Dallas superkommentar har tydliggjort den sufiska vinpoesins fortsatta betydelse, långt efter genrens stora genomslag på 1200-talet, numera även i engelskspråkiga sammanhang. Den har framför allt tydliggjort vinpoesins betydelse som ett sätt att inte bara beskriva Guds kärlek och uttrycka erfarenheten av denna kärlek utan även vägleda andra till liknande andliga tillstånd. Vinpoesins didaktiska dimension framträder tydligt i Ibn ʿAjibas och Dallas kommentarer. Båda lägger stor vikt vid att definiera sufiska termer och förklara sufiska idéer och praktiker. De använder sig ofta av egna erfarenheter, särskilt erfarenheter av deras läromästares vägledning, för att konkretisera de mystika erfarenheter som vinpoesin uttrycker. Därmed inordnar de både sig själva och sina adepter i en historiskt utsträckt tradition av sufisk undervisning, förmedlad från mästare till lärjunge, generation efter generation. Som Dallas uttrycker det i citatet ovan: "You must understand that Shaykh Ibn ʿAjiba is one of the Shaykhs of our Tariqa" (as-Sufi 2012, 215). Det återspeglas även i formen på deras verk. Att författa kommentarer och superkommentarer innebär att man deltar i en historiskt utsträckt konversation utifrån vissa auktoritativa texter – i det här fallet Ibn al-Farids vinsång – inom ramen för en viss intellektuell tradition. En övergripande slutsats är att studiet av islamisk kommentarlitteratur, med fokus på kommentarer till särskilda texter och deras utveckling över tid, är ett givande sätt att närma sig de historiskt utsträckta och ännu pågående konversationer som islams intellektuella traditioner till stor del består av (se även Andersson 2022). Denna artikel är ett bidrag

till ett sådant studium av kommentartraditionen kring Ibn al-Farids vinsång. Den skulle med fördel kunna kompletteras med ytterligare studier av andra kommentarer, inte bara inom den shadhilitiska orden som Ibn 'Ajiba och Ian Dallas tillhörde, utan även inom andra ordnar.

English abstract

Throughout the history of Islam, Sufi poets have often described the overwhelming love for God as a state of intoxication on wine – the eternal wine of divine love that permeates all of existence. This article explores three expressions of Sufi wine poetry from different historical contexts: first, the famous wine song or khamriyya of the Egyptian Sufi poet 'Umar b. al-Farid (1181–1235); second, the commentary on Ibn al-Farid's wine song by the Moroccan Sufi shaykh Ahmad b. 'Ajiba (1747–1809); and third, the commentary on Ibn 'Ajiba's aforementioned commentary by the Scottish Sufi shaykh Ian Dallas (1930–2021), also known as Abdalqadir as-Sufi. The purpose is to highlight the significance of wine poetry in Sufism as a means of not only describing divine love and expressing one's experience of direct communion with God but also guiding others to similar spiritual states. The article thereby sheds light on the didactic use of wine poetry for teaching Sufism and for expressing the spiritual states that this teaching seeks to realise. This is particularly evident in the commentaries of Ibn 'Ajiba and Ian Dallas. Additionally, the article emphasises the continued significance of wine poetry in Sufi contexts, long after Ibn al-Farid composed his famous wine song, now also in English-speaking contexts. While Ibn al-Farid's poetry has been relatively well explored, neither Ibn 'Ajiba's commentary nor Ian Dallas' super-commentary has been included in previous studies of Islamic wine poetry.

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Boganmeldelse

Anmeldelse af Mette W. Tops *Den forkerte muhammedtegner – og andre nuancer af karikaturkrisen*, (Forlaget Vandkunsten, 2023)

Ved inngangen til 2023 debatterte det danske Folketinget igjen om karikaturkrisen skulle gjøres til obligatorisk pensum i den danske folkeskolen. Karikaturkrisen omtales gjerne som Danmarks største utenrikspolitiske krise etter den andre verdenskrig. Det er nå 18 år siden den sto på som verst, og Mette Winding Top bruker denne vedvarende interessen som en anledning til å «støve krisen af og lyse den igennem fra nye vinkler» (s. 8).

Mette Winding Top er cand.mag. i tverrkulturelle studier og har arbeidet med sivilsamfunn og mangfold i mange år. Hun har også tidligere tatt del i ordskiftet om karikaturkrisen, men sier at hun først innenfor de siste årene har beskjeftiget seg med dens detaljer. Det hun har funnet, gir, slik hun ser det, grunnlag for å bringe inn nye nyanser i forståelsen av krisen, og på de siste sidene oppsummerer hun noen av bokens poenger som sju slike «nyanser».

Boken er på 180 små sider og ført i et lett og ledig språk. Referanser er begrenset til 55 sluttnoter og en litteraturliste som inkluderer titler til videre lesning. Den gir seg ikke ut for å være en vitenskapelig tekst. I en vitenskapelig publikasjon om krisen ville man også forventet det som kunne være en interessant diskusjon om terminologi: «karikaturkrise» – «muhammedkrise» – «tegningekrise», og en nærmere avklaring av hvordan krisen som undersøkes avgrenses i tid og rom. En innledende tidslinje angir en uttalelse fra forfatteren Kåre Bluitgen (se nedenfor) i juni 2005 som karikaturkrisens begynnelse. Denne avgrensningen er slett ikke selvsagt. Forfatteren argumenterer noe mer for å avgrense seg mot de utenrikspolitiske dimensjonene ved krisen, og det er greit nok. En norsk leser merker seg at boken ikke inneholder en eneste referanse til Norge hvor karikaturkrisen fikk et særegent forløp vinteren 2006.

Forfatteren påpeker at de fleste av hennes kilder er åpne og tidligere publiserte analyser og kommentarer til krisen. Det er

altså ikke først og fremst nye fakta som bringes til torgs, men nye analyser og perspektiver. Forfatteren har imidlertid én kilde som er avgjørende for bokens retning, og som gir verdifulle ny og viktig bidrag til å forstå karikaturkrisen: lange intervjuer med karikaturtegneren Lars Refn samt tilgang til noen av hans opptegnelser og lydopptak.

Lars Refn er boktittelens «forkerte muhammedtegner». Hans bidrag til Jyllands-Postens samling av muhammedtegninger var en tegning av en gutt (ifølge Refn eleven Muhammed i klasse 7 A på Valby skole) som peker på en tavle der det står på persisk: «Jyllands-Postens redaksjon er en flokk reaksjonære provokatører». Refn kaller tegningen en «practical joke» som han i utgangspunktet var svært fornøyd med: Hvis Jyllands-Posten brukte tegningen, gjorde de narr av sitt eget prosjekt; hvis de nektet å bruke den, ville de selv utøve sensur. Ingen i redaksjonen oversatte teksten, og tegningen kom på trykk sammen med de 11 andre. Det var Kristeligt Dagblad som noen dager senere oversatte teksten og oppdaget Refns spøk. Da var han allerede blitt viklet inn i et prosjekt som han siden har hatt et ambivalent forhold til.

Som «den forkerte muhammedtegner» er Refn én av de nyanserende stemmer som Winding Top mener har fått for liten oppmerksomhet når historien om karikaturkrisen har vært fortalt. I hennes bok blir han den mest sentrale premissleverandøren. Noen steder gjengis det direkte fra intervjuer og samtaler mellom forfatter og tegner, andre steder sammenfattes samtaler om tegnerens analyser av begivenhetene. Noen steder skildres hendelser der Refn var til stede, med en slik intensitet og nærvær at man får følelsen av at forfatteren refererer fra egne opplevelser. For dem som mest har forholdt seg til sentrale aktører som karikaturtegner Kurt Westergårds og Jyllands-Postens kulturredaktør Flemming Roses versjoner av historien, tilfører Refns perspektiver nettopp undertittelens «nuancer».

Refns ambivalens forsterkes av angrepet på Charlie Hebdos redaksjonslokaler i januar 2015. Refn hadde stilt seg kritisk til det han oppfattet som Jyllands-Postens unødig provoserende prosjekt. Samtidig holdt han tett kontakt med tegnere i Charlie Hebdo og hadde noen av dem på besøk i København bare måneder før angrepet. Han blir dypt berørt av drapene, og skildringene fra Bernard «Tignous» Verlhacs begravelse og Refns samtaler med hans enke gir nerve til hele boken. Charlie

Hebdo-angrepet omtales som en «gamechanger» som viser alvoret i truslene mot tegnere, men også som en hendelse som på ubehagelig vis har karikaturkrisen som et av sine opphav. Siden 2015 har Refn engasjert seg sterkt i organisasjonen Cartooning for Peace.

Ved siden av å fortelle «den forkerte muhammedtegners» historie setter Winding Top seg fore å nøste i karikaturkrisens umiddelbare bakgrunn og påstanden om at danske tegnere på tidlig 2000-tall vegret seg for å tegne profeten Muhammed. Også i denne lille etterforskningen er Refn en viktig kilde, men langt fra den eneste. Det var en nyhetssak om at forfatteren Kåre Bluitgen ikke hadde funnet tegnere som under fullt navn ville illustrere en bok om Muhammed, som satte Flemming Rose på ideen om å invitere tegnere til å karikere profeten. Basert på tidligere publiserte kilder og sine egne intervjuer med tegnere og kontakt med Bluitgen, trekker Winding Top den konklusjonen at påstanden om at tegnere nektet å tegne Muhammed av frykt for represalier, i beste fall var en overdrivelse, men trolig en «løgn». For forfatteren er dette av stor betydning fordi det viser at Jyllands-Posten ikke tok tak i et faktisk problem, men snarere skapte en selvoppfyllende profeti: Karikaturkrisen har ikke opphav i et ytringsfrihetsproblem, men bidrar til at problemet oppstår.

Boken tilfører altså forståelsen av karikaturkrisen både nye perspektiver og ny verdifull informasjon. På sitt svakeste er den imidlertid i noen avsnitt hvor forfatteren vil vise at frykten for islamistisk terrorisme er irrasjonell. Dette poenget kommer igjen i oppsummeringen. Ved hjelp av statistikk blant annet fra Politiets Efteretningstjeneste vil hun vise at risikoen for å rammes av terror er minimal, hvilket utvilsomt er riktig. Hun velger imidlertid å se forbi det åpenbare poeng at risikoen for de svært få som faktisk har tegnet muhammedkarikaturer, er betydelig. Det viser nettopp angrepene på Charlie Hebdo og Kurt Westergaard som boken omtaler. Ved hjelp av ytterligere statistikk viser hun at partnervold er et langt større problem i Danmark enn vold mot tegnere, og at det store flertall av journalister som angripes eller drepes i verden, drepes av andre enn voldelige islamister. Forfatteren anfører at hun bringer dette inn for å beholde proporsjonene. Selv om det rent faktuelt er riktig, er det et argument som altfor lett lar seg forstå som «whataboutism» og dermed bidra til å avspore mer enn anspore videre samtale – noe mottakelsen av boken også har vist.

Denne svakheten til tross mener jeg boken er et verdifullt og lesverdig bidrag på sine premisser. Blant disse premissene er det forholdet at det først og fremst er Westergaard, Rose og deres likesinnede som har fått tegne bildet av karikaturkrisen, og at det er deres versjon som trenger nyansering.

I oppsummeringen erkjenner forfatteren at hun har «måttet skyde en hvid pind efter min ambition om at grave mig ned til en grundlæggende Sandhed eller et fundament af ubestridelige fakta» (s. 166). Mottakelsen av boken viser da også at siste ord ikke er sagt, og ikke minst at hvor man står, er helt avgjørende for hvordan man ser karikaturkrisen også 18 år senere. Foreningen Danske Bladtegnere svarte på utgivelsen med et kritisk åpent brev samt en ni siders oversikt over hva de mener er faktafeil i boken. Brevet er interessant lesning i seg selv siden det viser hvordan det er vanskelig å skjelne fakta fra analyser. Brevet påpeker nemlig svært få (og lite vesentlige) faktafeil, men går på punkt etter punkt i rette med Winding Top og Refns analyser og vurderinger.[1]

Karikaturkrisen vil altså fortsatt bli debattert, og den lange listen over bøker som beskjeftiger seg med den, vil trolig fortsette å vokse. Men for dem som raskt vil skaffe seg et overblikk over krisen eller har som oppgave å undervise nye generasjoner om den, er *Den forkerte muhammedtegner* et verdifullt bidrag.

[1] Se brevet og Winding Tops svar her: https://www.folkeskolen.dk/citat-historie-og-samfundsfag-kulturfag/danske-bladtegnere-ny-bog-om-muhammed-krisen-er-fuld-af-fejl/4712015