Model, Not Idol

*The Recasting of the Image of Muḥammad in Mukhtaṣar sīrat al-rasūl
by Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792)*

Martin Riexinger

Hitherto the academic study of “Wahhābism” – originally a derogatory term that will be used for the sake of convenience – has been primarily based on the study of a number of treatises of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, in particular his *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (Book on God’s unity) and *Kashf al-shubūhāt* (Unveiling of what is unclear). These works had been written under difficult circumstances before Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s alliance with the Āl Su‘ūd resulted in a successful state formation. They are short and allegedly refer primarily to the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* and relatively little to writings of other scholars. This matter of fact has been used to belittle Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s credentials as scholar, as he allegedly lacked sufficient knowledge of the scholarly tradition apart from the works of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328).¹ This – problematic – image appears not least politically convenient as it allows dismissing violent aspects of Wahhābī teachings as not rooted in the scholarly tradition, if not as “un-Islamic”.

In contrast to his mentioned earlier writings, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s most extensive work, *Mukhtaṣar sīrat al-rasūl* (Abridgement of the life of the Prophet), hardly attracted attention until 2010, neither in publications on the early history of Wahhābism nor in general works on the biography and veneration of the Prophet. One reason for this might be that Brockelmann wrongly dismissed it as “extract (Auszug) from Ibn Hishām”;² another one that neither state nor religious authorities in the third Saudi state were very eager to publish this text, for reasons to be discussed. The text was first printed in Egypt based on a manuscript of Sulaymān b. Suḥmān with whom Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā had edited the compendium of Wahhābī writings, *Majmū‘at al-tawḥīd* (Collection on God’s unity).³ This edition of the *Mukhtaṣar* was re-edited in

1 On the selection of sources already quoted in these works and in his correspondence, see Riexinger, “Der Islam”, 321130.

2 Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur, Supplementband II (GAL S II)*, 531; ‘Abd al-Malik b. Hishām (d. 833), compiler of the most common abbreviation of the lost *sīra* of Ibn Ishāq.

3 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 236; Boberg, *Ägypten*, 253–57.

Saudi Arabia in 1980. A new edition in 2004 follows that text but contains – in addition to remarks on the *ḥadīth* quotations – a rejection of the affirmation of *qiṣṣat al-gharānīq* (the “story of the cranes” or “satanic verses”) by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.⁴

The few mentions in academic literature before my own contributions in 2013 and 2015⁵ are, besides Brockelmann, to be found in Chase Robinson’s introduction to Islamic historiography, where he briefly characterises this *sīra* as one example supposed to justify and encourage *jihād*. The other two examples were written by the Almohad authors Ibn Ḥubaysh and Kalā’ī but Robinson did not realise that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb used the latter as a source for the *Mukhtaṣar*.⁶ In his article on the reception of *qiṣṣat al-gharānīq* Shahab Ahmed points out that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was among the few authors in the later centuries who – against the current – accepted the episode as true. He asserts, however, that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s position differs from the affirmation of Ibn Taymiyya, for whom it served to exemplify his understanding of the prophets’ infallibility (*iṣma*). As will be shown, he therewith misses completely the centrality of this episode in the *Mukhtaṣar* where it is mentioned twice.⁷ Furthermore, it also figures among the six most important episodes of the *sīra*, to which Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb dedicated a short treatise, and will be used here to highlight those episodes that he considered particularly relevant.⁸ Recently the publication of the text by the Islamic State (ISIS, Daesh) has attracted media attention, but this has not yet resulted in academic studies.⁹

In the following it will be demonstrated that the *Mukhtaṣar* was written for the purpose to undermine prophetologic conceptions that were prevalent among Sunnī Muslims in Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s lifetime; ideas which had come to dominate their understanding of the Prophet since the twelfth century. The centrepiece of these conceptions is the idea that Muḥammad and the prophets preceding him possessed certain attributes, which elevated them beyond the status of ordinary humans. In Sufi circles it was furthermore held that God had bestowed on the *awliyā’* properties which reflect those of the prophets on a lower level. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, however, did not write his account as a polemical treatise directly attacking the positions and arguments of specific authors. In the *Mukhtaṣar*, which was like many other works on the life and person of Muḥammad directed at a broader audience than that of the

4 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar* (2004), 24n4.

5 Riexinger, “Rendering Muḥammad Human”; Riexinger, “Der Islam”.

6 Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 123; Riexinger, “Der Islam”, 24–25, 35, 58.

7 Ahmed, “Ibn Taymiyyah”, 117.

8 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, “Sittat mawāḍi’”.

9 Croitoru, “Der Gründer”.

‘*ulamā*’, he works instead with selecting and discarding specific episodes and aspects of the *sīra* in order to refute or emphasise elements that he objects to or considers central. As the main source of inspiration for much of the later devotional literature on Muḥammad, *al-Shifā’ bi-ta’rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā* (The healing through the determination of what the elect is entitled to) by Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ al-Yaḥṣubī (1083–1149) will be used as major reference for these positions, supplemented by some other works as well as by secondary literature.¹⁰ For the clarification of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s position, some other works by him and by the following generation of Wahhābī authors are taken into account. References to other puritan authors shall allow for an assessment of the position of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb within the puritan Sunnī current. As I have elaborated on the sources of the *Mukhtaṣar* in 2015, they are primarily mentioned here where this contributes to the argument.¹¹

2.1 The Structure and Content of the *Mukhtaṣar sīrat al-rasūl*

The most salient aspect of the *Mukhtaṣar* is that the book deals twice with the lifetime of the Prophet but as well with much more than that. It begins with a long prologue covering elements of Islamic myth and history from the creation of Adam until the era of the Mongol invasions. The *sīra* proper starts with the genealogy of Muḥammad and ends with the early ‘Abbāsīd period, but also contains two “flashbacks” to Nūḥ (Noah) and the institutionalisation of polytheism in Mecca, respectively.

2.1.1 *Prophecy in Universal History: The Prologue*

The prologue starts with an introductory paragraph in which Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb praises the “stories of those before and after Muḥammad” (*qīṣas al-awwalīn wa-l-ākhirīn*)¹² as “true armies of God” against which the enemies have no means of defence as they provide an array of examples for how God kept his promise to send messengers to mankind and to punish the disobedient. In addition, he introduces the *ḥadīth* which came to serve as the slogan of Wahhābism: “Islam began as something strange, and as something strange Islam will return as it began” (*bada’a l-islāmu gharībān wa-sa-ya’ūdu gharībān ka-mā bada’a*). Arguably it appears pertinent to translate ‘*āda* as a modal verb

10 Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 135–92; Schöller, *Mohammed*, 114–18.

11 Riexinger, “Der Islam”.

12 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 9; here *ākhirīn* seems to supplement the Qur’ānic *asāṭir al-awwalīn* (Q 6:25); see: Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets*, 13.

with the meaning “to become again”, but as it will become clear in this contribution Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb understands tradition in the sense of a triumphant return into a hostile environment. His understanding conforms to that of earlier reform movements such as the Almohads and that of Salafī and Jihādī circles at present.¹³

Beginning his account of the prophets with Ādam, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb considers it as most important that, according to Q 7:172, all mankind was drawn out of his back and replied to the question “am I not your Lord?” with “Indeed, we bear witness”. Ādam was then shown the supposed lifetimes of all prophets in the form of candles of different length. When he was told that only sixty years were destined for the lifetime of the prophet Dā’ūd, he donated him forty of his own one thousand years. This gift, however, he would later stubbornly deny when the angel of death appeared to him: “He forgot, as mankind forgot (its oath), Ādam denied, as they denied.” Nine human generations after him would follow Islam. But then, out of an exaggerated love for the pious (*ghu-luwḥ fī l-ḥubb al-ṣāliḥīn*) due to the lack of scholarship, mankind began to commit *shirk* by erecting and adoring statues of them.

The correction of this deviation was to come with Nūḥ, but Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb points out that even after Nūḥ mankind relapsed into *shirk*. God responded by sending other prophets, many of whom are unknown or – as in the case of Ṣāliḥ and Hūd – difficult to locate in time and space. Nūḥ serves here to highlight what the author regards as the essential aspects of prophethood.

Whereas the construction of the Ka’ba is arguably the most important feat associated with Ibrāhīm in the Islamic tradition, another aspect ranks first in Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s account. For him it seems to be more relevant that in three instances Ibrāhīm consciously did not say the truth according to a report in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: (1) when he simulated an illness before his kin (Q 37:89); (2) when he claimed that it was the largest of idols, and not he, who had destroyed the idols (Q 21:63); and (3) when he presented Sara to the tyrant (*jabbār*) as his sister.¹⁴ Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb then quotes a long *ḥadīth* reported by Ibn ‘Abbās on how Ibrāhīm together with his two sons Ishāq and Ismā’īl discovered the well of Zamzam, settled in Mecca, and erected the Ka’ba. God granted to Ibrāhīm that all future prophets would come from his offspring, although all but Muḥammad came from the line of Ishāq, not Ismā’īl.¹⁵ Notably,

13 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 9; Ibn Tūmart, *Kitāb a’azz*, 266–67; Yasin, “Powerful Lecture”, 1:18–30 min.; “Salafitische Initiativen”; Riexinger, “Der Islam”, 5–6.

14 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 12–13.

15 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 13–16.

not all major prophets are treated in the prologue, as Mūsā and ʿĪsā obviously could not serve as good examples for the punishment of unbelievers.

From the construction of the Kaʿba Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb proceeds to the introduction of polytheism to Mecca, which he ascribes to ʿAmr b. Luḥayy. Like the people to whom Nūḥ was sent, he acted out of misguided piety. He imported a statue of the god Hubal from Syria, installed it in the Kaʿba, and acquired the role of a priest-king. Meccans never completely abandoned the rites Ibrāhīm had taught but added further ones which the authorities of the day approved of (*istahsana*) as a positive and thus permissible innovation (*bidʿa ḥasana*). The purpose of the anachronistic use of *fiqh* terminology is to equate the idolaters of the past to Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb’s opponents. The new practices also spread throughout the Ḥijāz. He explains the cult of al-Lāt in accordance with a *ḥadīth* as a practice that started with the veneration of the grave of a pilgrim who died on the way home from the *ḥajj*. As a result of such violations of the principle of *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* (discussed below) Islam became something strange again.¹⁶

As for the period before Muḥammad’s birth, Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb recounts in detail the idols for which each tribe or clan around Mecca was responsible. He denounces the leaders of the Quraysh who infused innovations (*ibtadaʿū*) into the *ḥajj*-rites, as they considered the standing at mount ʿArafāt (*wuqūf*) not obligatory for the descendants of Ibrāhīm, and ruled that the Kaʿba should be circumambulated with all parts of the body uncovered except for the genitals.¹⁷

Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb then continues with the proofs for the divine message of Muḥammad. The first thing that the Prophet enjoined was the belief in *tawḥīd* and not prayer. Accordingly, he regards the idea that nobody “who acknowledges the direction of prayer” (*ahl al-qibla*) may be denounced as unbeliever as flawed. He asserts on the contrary that Islam has always been met with little responsiveness, and in order to guarantee that Islam remains upright (*yastaqīm*) the believers have to confront those who leave and dishonour this religion with hostility. This reflects most likely the controversy on this issue with Ibn ʿAfālīq, the leading traditional Ḥānbalī scholar on the Peninsula between 1740 and 1745. This is a hint that the text was written in the late 1740s at its earliest.¹⁸

16 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 16–17.

17 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 18–24.

18 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 24–25; the preaching of *tawḥīd* and the admonition against *shirk* are the first two of the “Sittat mawāḍiʿ”, 103–5; for the polemics against those who judge mildly those who do not pray, see: 31, 33, 35, 37; cf. Peskes, *Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-wahhāb*, 49–58, 83–89.

One exception to such general reflections on Muḥammad's prophethood in the prologue is the *qiṣṣat al-gharānīq*, which is used by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb in this instance to illustrate the concept of *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*. For him the idea that anybody could possibly act as intercessor between God and man was explicitly refuted by the Qur'ānic verses related to this event.¹⁹ Furthermore, he stresses that true belief outweighs the bonds of kinship,²⁰ and it manifests itself in acts.²¹ Another important, specific point for Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb is that Abū Ṭālib, Muḥammad's uncle and the father of 'Alī, remained an unbeliever until his death and may not expect salvation in spite of his benevolence towards the Prophet and to the first Muslims (Q 9:113). Here he positions himself against the originally Shī'ī opinion that Abū Ṭālib was granted access to paradise. In the time of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, it seems that this idea had reached Sunnī, not least Sufī, circles, a matter that has not yet been studied in depth.²² It is noteworthy that the outstanding anti-Wahhābī author of the mid-nineteenth century Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān wrote a defence of Abū Ṭālib's salvation, titled *Asnā' al-maṭālib fī najāt Abī Ṭālib* (Excelling claims concerning the question whether Abū Ṭālib was saved). It was directed against a treatise by a certain Muḥammad b. Ḥasab Allāh whose opposing views had caused a scandal in Mecca.²³ Throughout this section, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb connects the text again to present issues with the help of an anachronistic language use. Both Meccan Qurayshī and Medinan Jewish opponents of the Prophet are referred to as '*ulamā'*'.

In the discussion of the *ridḍa*, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb goes into detail regarding the transgressions for which the tribes that gave up Islam after the death of Muḥammad were to blame. He stresses that all of them were punished with death and confiscation of property in case they did not repent. Their treatment at the companions' hands thus belies the assertions of contemporary '*ulamā'*' that Bedouins who do not pray and even deny resurrection may not be persecuted as long as they pronounce the first part of the *shahāda*. Punishment was even meted out against the Banū Ḥānīfa who committed the worst transgressions under the *ridḍa*, although they prayed and professed the belief in God. But their example is also used to demonstrate that active repentance – in this case their eager participation in *jihād* under the *rāshidūn* – cleanses off the stain of the *ridḍa*.²⁴

19 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 25–26.

20 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 26–27.

21 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 28.

22 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 25; Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, "Sittat mawāḍi'", 106.

23 Rubin, "Abū Ṭālib"; Brockelmann, *GAL S II*, 500–501.

24 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 29–33; Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, "Sittat mawāḍi'", 108–10.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb then turns to the appearance of extreme deviation in religious thought (*ghuluww*) during the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd periods. In the case of Mukhtār b. Abī ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafī he points out that he prayed and took care that the law was applied in the territories entrusted to him, but when he claimed divine inspiration, the ‘*ulamā*’ unanimously considered him an unbeliever. The same was the case with Ja’d b. Dirham, who had been highly estimated for his orthopraxy and his knowledge, but once he denied certain attributes of God and that God had not taken Ibrāhīm as *walī* and not spoken to Ādam and Mūsā, his pious practice became irrelevant for the assessment of his faith. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb stresses that those who hold such positions are far worse than the Christians and Jews and hence deserve to be burnt alive unless they repent.²⁵

Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb then skips several centuries and points out that the Banū ‘Ubayd (Fāṭimids, ruling in Egypt 969–1171) spread unbelief and hypocrisy while they adhered to the rites of Islam. Therefore, all ‘*ulamā*’ denounced them as unbelievers and rejoiced when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (r. 1174–93) put an end to their rule. The last example he refers to are the Mongols who began to pray after their mock conversion to Islam but did not accept the *sharī’a* as a whole. Therefore, some ‘*ulamā*’ opposed them until they were expelled from the realm of the Muslims. Ibn Taymiyya is not mentioned by name, but the hint to his fatwa against the Mongol rulers of Mardin is unmistakable.²⁶

Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb concludes the prologue with the accusation that the ‘*ulamā*’ of his time insist that somebody who says *lā ilāha illā Llāh* may not be called unbeliever, although all the examples to the contrary are to be found in the very books they refer to.²⁷

2.1.2 *The Sīra Proper*

2.1.2.1 Ancestors and Events Shortly before Muḥammad’s Birth

The *sīra* proper is preceded by an account of the campaign of the Aksumite army general Abraha against the Ka’ba, which was protected against the Ethiopian assault by birds throwing stones on the army, thus irritating the war elephants, and the punishment of Abraha with a deadly disease thereafter. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb also mentions Muḥammad’s paternal grandfather, Abū Hāshim ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, his father, ‘Abd Allāh (with special consideration of

25 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 34–35. On Mukhtār al-Thaqafī, see Halm, *Shi’ism*, 16–18; on Ja’d b. Dirham, see van Ess, *Theologie*, 2:449–58, 4:388–89.

26 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 36–37. On the recent reception of Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa in Jihādī circles and its importance for them, see Michot, *Muslims*; Said, “Konferenz”.

27 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 38.

his role in the erection of the Ka'ba), and his paternal uncle Abū Ṭālib. His mother, Āmina, seems not to be worthy of consideration.²⁸

2.1.2.2 The Meccan Phase

The conception and birth of the Prophet as well as their circumstances are passed over in a stark contrast to the importance of these aspects in other *sīra* works and in the devotional literature about Muḥammad. Moreover, events usually associated with the childhood of the Prophet, in particular the opening of his thorax by two angels who purified and weighed his heart, are not mentioned. The first event from Muḥammad's life reported is his participation in the mercantile expedition led by Abū Ṭālib to Syria, where they encountered the monk Bahīrā who warned the party to protect Muḥammad from the Jews. It is neither mentioned that he discovered the mark of prophethood between his shoulders, nor that trees and stones expressed their veneration for Muḥammad. The marriage to Khadija and further expeditions to Syria are related. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb then recounts that Muḥammad began to seek reclusion at Ḥirā' because he wanted to come close to God and to distance himself from the detested idolatry.²⁹ Much space is dedicated to the restauration of the Ka'ba. After it had been damaged by a flood or landslide, Muḥammad participated in the rebuilding, and he was the one chosen to put the black stone in its place. One event that shows Muḥammad in a less favourable light is referred to as well: like others, he took his loincloth off to bolster his shoulders while carrying stones. As a result, his genitals became visible which earned him a reprimand by "someone", whereupon his private parts were never again to be exposed to any unbecoming spectator. Regarding this episode he follows Ibn Sa'd as well as Ibn al-Jawzī, but does not specify the person reprimanding Muḥammad, which is mentioned by both as Abū Ṭālib.³⁰

After this episode Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb comes back to Nūḥ as the archetypal prophet, and once more recounts the introduction of paganism in Mecca, apparently in order to contrast it with Muḥammad's prophethood. The generational model of an establishment and decay of Islam is repeated, as are also the etymological legends for the cults of the various gods, to which he provides some additions. It is equally stressed again that the rites of the *dīn Ibrāhīm* were never completely abandoned.³¹

28 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 39–48.

29 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 48–49.

30 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 49–51; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:93–95; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 2:320–27.

31 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 51–56.

The account of the first revelation, based on the report ascribed to ʿĀ'isha, is presented by Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb as a decisive confrontation with paganism. He quotes Ibn Qayyim, who states that Muḥammad was told to address an ever-growing audience, starting from his immediate environment, then extending his call to the Arabs in the vicinity, thereafter to the Arabs as a whole, and finally to both worlds of mankind and jinn. Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb adds that God ordered him to practise *daʿwa* peacefully for ten years, until he allowed him emigration (*hijra*) and to fight against those who fought him, before engendering upon him to fight all those who associate someone else with God.³²

Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb continues by naming those who first responded to Muḥammad's call, without delving into the question of priority. According to him, the Quraysh were first not aware that Muḥammad was proselytising, until they realised that the idols were reviled by Sumayya, the mother of ʿAmmār b. Yāsir, who became the first martyr when Abū Jahl killed her with a lance. When Muḥammad publicly came forth with his *daʿwa* in the fourth year, this led to fighting during which Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ for the first time shed blood in the name of Islam when he beat up one of the *mushrikūn*.³³

By referring to the plight of the first Muslims in the face of Quraysh persecution and to the first emigration to Ethiopia, Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb prepares for the second discussion of the *qiṣṣat al-gharānīq* in the text. He insists that the wording came from Satan but was physically uttered by Muḥammad (*alqā ʿalā lisānihi*), upon which the Meccan pagans prostrated. The revocation of the verses then led the Quraysh to intensify the persecution of Muḥammad and the Muslims.³⁴ Thereafter the conversion of ʿUmar, the death of Khadīja, and the confirmation of Jewish scholars on the *rūḥ* and the Seven Sleepers are briefly mentioned.³⁵

The splitting of the moon, narrated as the central miracle of confirmation (*muʿjiza*), is treated rather briefly, as responding to the accusation of Muḥammad being a poet and magician. It is followed by elaborations on the relevance of miracles for prophethood, which will be dealt with later.³⁶ As for the stories of *isrāʾ* and *miʾrāj*, Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb further abridged the already short description in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Zād al-maʿād*. His presentation thus contrasts already starkly with Ibn Hishām but also with Ibn al-Jawzī, not to speak of later works. He mentions:

32 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 57–58; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Zād*, 1:20.

33 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 59–61.

34 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 62–68; with regard to *qiṣṣat al-gharānīq* (63) he follows the wording in Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:137.

35 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 68–76.

36 Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 77–82.

1. The nocturnal ride on Burāq
2. Muḥammad leading the prayer of the prophets
3. The encounter with the earlier prophets
4. The vision of the saved in heaven and the damned in hell
5. Mūsā's envy because more members of Muḥammad's *umma* than of his own will enter paradise
6. The view of *al-bayt al-ma'mūr* (Q 52:4) and *sidrat al-muntahā* (Q 53:14)
7. The reduction of the numbers of daily prayers from fifty to five³⁷

After the depiction and discussion of these miracles, which did not impress the Meccans, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb relates the negotiations with the Medinan tribes of the Aws and Khazraj, which led to the *hijra* but also ended a 120-year feud between them, an occasion to stress the pre-eminence of the commitment to Islam over blood ties.³⁸

In the context of the *hijra* two further miracles of the Prophet get mentioned: the blessing of the emaciated sheep of Umm Ma'bad, which then gives milk to Muḥammad, and this Bedouin woman who praised him for it. The author remarks that Umm Ma'bad exalted the Prophet and his physical traits but did not ascribe anything to him that would elevate him beyond the status of an ordinary human. The other miracle is a poem in praise of him, which was heard over Mecca.³⁹ Events mentioned in relation to the arrival and settlement in Medina are the construction of the mosque, the marriage with 'Ā'isha, which in breach of the *jāhiliyya* conventions was concluded in the month Shawwāl, and finally the fraternisation of the *muhājirūn* and *anṣār*, which again brings out the priority of religious over family ties.⁴⁰

2.1.2.3 The Medinan Phase

With the Medinan phase Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb starts to present the course of events in an annalistic style. At the end of each year, he lists eminent persons who passed away during it, a feature that shows the strong formal influence of Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rikh al-umam wa-l-muluk* (The well-ordered

37 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 83–84; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Zād*, 1:47–48; cf. Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 1:403–8; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 3:25–32; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Wafā'*, 218–24; Qaṣṣallānī, *Mawāhib*, 2:339–98; Vuckovic, *Heavenly Journeys*, 47–72; Schöller, "Biographical Essentialism", 167. "The visited house" and "The lote tree of the outer limit" mentioned under (6) are two enigmatic Qur'ānic terms mostly interpreted as a heavenly correspondent of the Ka'ba and a plant in the highest heaven, respectively, on the basis of the *mi'rāj* traditions.

38 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 84–91.

39 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 94–95.

40 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 98–101; the central importance of the *hijra* is also highlighted by the fact that it is one of the "Sittat mawāqī", 106–8.

work on the history of the nations and rulers), one of the major sources of the *Mukhtaṣar*.⁴¹ In this section the thematic scope becomes very narrow: Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb focusses on the military campaigns, the abolition of pagan rites after conquests, and some central revelations. He passes over other aspects, as, for example, Muḥammad’s further marriages and his domestic life. To Muḥammad’s special qualities (*khaṣā’iṣ*) he dedicates a special paragraph. But even in these passages he emphasises his abilities as leader.⁴² Nevertheless two events which are not related to conquests are presented and they must hence be considered to be of central importance for the work in general: the so-called necklace affair, and the conversion of the poet Ka’b b. Zuhayr and his praise of Muḥammad’s military abilities in his famous panegyric *Bānat Su’ād*.⁴³

After listing the first skirmishes Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb mentions how ‘Amr b. al-Ḥaḍramī was killed as the first opponent of Islam.⁴⁴ The battle at Badr is then recounted extensively, with a final narration of a miracle of the Prophet: he threw a handful of sand in direction of the enemies, which was carried by the wind and thoroughly impaired the eyes of those who were touched by it.⁴⁵ The defeat at Uḥud is given equal attention, its unfavourable outcome explained with an intervention of Satan.⁴⁶

Whereas the defeat of the Jewish tribes in Medina is reported without much detail or explanation, the conquest of Mecca has a central position in the work. Muḥammad expresses his disgust at statues of Ibrāhīm and Ismā’il with oracle arrows in the Ka’ba and orders the idols to be smashed. Only after it has been converted into a mosque and Bilāl has called to prayer he enters the building. The description of the purification of the Ka’ba is supplemented by the reports on the expeditions of ‘Amr b. al-Āṣ and Sa’d b. Zayd, respectively, in which they destroyed the idols of Sawā’ and the statue of Manāt and eradicated the cults related to them.⁴⁷ This triumph is, however, followed by the campaign against the Banū Hawāzin who were defeated, accepted Islam, and underlined this by their commitment to prayer. As they soon afterwards (i.e. after Muḥammad’s death) gave up Islam again, the Muslims had for the first time “to taste the bitterness of defeat”.⁴⁸

41 Riexinger, “Der Islam”, 19.

42 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 105–5.

43 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 161–63; Sells and Sells, “*Bānat Su’ād*”.

44 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 106–7.

45 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 108–13.

46 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 115–20.

47 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 140–149.

48 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 149–55.

Another event of central importance is the siege of Ṭā'if and its consequences. As the siege did not lead to a victory for the Muslims, and nor did the Banū Thaqīf see the possibility to resist the Muslims for a long time, they sought negotiations. Muḥammad rejected their proposal because it implied a three-year period during which the cult of al-Lāt should remain permitted. To this episode Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb adds a digression on "the legal aspect of the Ṭā'if campaign", where he describes the pagan cults with a *fiqh* terminology which was used to legitimise the veneration of graves. He asserts that none of the pagans believed that the respective gods had created the world and were sustaining it. Nevertheless, they were adored in imitation to established custom (*taqlīd*). Truth thus was weakened whereas unbelief grew stronger. Such places are, however, never to be tolerated. By alluding to the *ḥadīth* "Islam began as something strange" he concludes stating that groups who eliminate such innovations would time and again turn up.⁴⁹

The account of the Tabūk campaign, the first conquest beyond the limits of the Arabian Peninsula, appears markedly in a less triumphalist way. The widespread disinclination to participate in *jihād* during the summer heat close to the date harvest was reprimanded and overcome by the revelation of Q 9:8. This serves Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb as an occasion to highlight the centrality of *jihād* in Islam.⁵⁰ In his account of the tribal delegations of tribes which arrived in Medina for declaring their submission to Muḥammad and their allegiance to Islam, he mentions the pseudo-prophet Musaylima among those who came along with the Banū Ḥanīfa and claims that he was already at this point in time exposed by Muḥammad.⁵¹

The final illness of Muḥammad and his death, as well as the succession of Abū Bakr after the negotiations at the *saqīfa* (veranda), are rather briefly treated. He stresses that Abū Bakr was acclaimed as caliph because of his ability to uphold the Islamic realm and guarantee the implementation of the Islamic norms. This reflects the theory of Islamic government as presented by Ibn Taymiyya, according to which leadership is legitimised by the ruler's ability to expand the realm of Islam and to reinforce its rules within it.⁵²

2.1.2.4 The *Ridda*

After his narration of the life of the Prophet, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb turns to the top of the *ridda*, to which he dedicates the largest portion of his work

49 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 155–59.

50 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 164–69.

51 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 170–74.

52 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 174–82.

(30 of 229 pages in the edition used). He starts his account by listing the various forms in which different tribes apostatised, and he stresses once more the necessity to fight apostates until they repent by pronouncing both parts of the *shahāda*, accepting to pray, and to pay *zakāt*. Nevertheless, Abū Bakr had to face appeasers who tried to convince him to show mercy and to wait until everything would calm down again, against which he objected that the duty to wage *jihād* had not ceased with the Prophet's death. Furthermore, he mentions that 'Umar finally convinced Abū Bakr not to participate in the campaigns himself, as his possible death in battle might lead many fighters to defect. A justification of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's retreat to Dir'īyya?⁵³

As source for his account Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb refers to Wāqidi's *Kitāb al-ridda*, which, however, was most likely lost by then. It is extensively referred to by the Almohad historian Ibn Ḥubaysh (504/1111–584/1188) in his *Kitāb al-ghazawāt al-dāmina al-kāfila* and in its abridged version titled *Kitāb al-iktifā' bi-mā taḍammanahu min maghāzī rasūl Allāh wa-maghāzī al-thalātha al-khulafā'*, authored by his pupil Kalā'ī (565/1170–634/1237). The dependence on Kalā'ī is discernible by the order of events, by certain poems, and, most relevant in our context, by the fact that the activities of the pseudo-prophet Musaylima are treated as something that happened during the *ridda* and not during the lifetime of Muḥammad.⁵⁴ Both these Almohad texts share with the *Mukhtaṣar* the intention to justify *jihād* against persons who declare themselves as Muslims, implying that it is permitted to kill them and to confiscate their property.⁵⁵ The adoption of an Almohad text by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb is remarkable as even Ibn Taymiyya abhorred this movement and issued a fatwa condemning Ibn Tūmart's indiscriminate use of violence.⁵⁶

A characteristic trait of the *ridda* narrative is the unrelenting description of the violence meted out to the apostates, including massacres in which whole clans were burnt alive. In the *Mukhtaṣar* these reports are juxtaposed here and in later sections with examples of those who returned to the straight path and in some cases even played an important role in the expansion of Islam. The violence is justified with the fact that the appalling news motivated some tribes to return to Islam.⁵⁷ Details concerning the specific aspects of each tribe's apostasy are only briefly listed, as are details about the

53 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 184–87.

54 Dunlop, "Ibn Ḥubaysh"; Pellat, "al-Kalā'ī". For further details see Riexinger, "Der Islam", 24. On the diverging chronology in Ibn Ḥubaysh's account, see Al Makin, *Representing the Enemy*, 102.

55 Ibn Tūmart, *Kitāb a'azz*, 261–66; Urvoy, "La pensée", 32–33.

56 Laoust, "Une fetwā".

57 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 184–209.

campaigns. A conspicuous exception is the role Musaylima is supposed to have played among the Banū Ḥānīfa. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb narrates in accordance with the Ibn Ḥubaysh/Kalā’ī tradition that Musaylima used to bless the newborns and to pray for the sick, and that people addressed him with requests for miraculous help. One example is a rich father who saw all his sons die before they came of age. He then asked Musaylima to pray for his two sons to survive. The next day the elder one fell into a well and drowned whereas the newborn was lying in agony. Another example is that a well that Musaylima had blessed became salty immediately.⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s presentation of Musaylima contrasts with other traditions where Musaylima’s activities are placed in the lifetime of Muḥammad for the first place, and where his thaumaturgical claims are explained by his tribesmen urging him to do “like Muḥammad”.⁵⁹

2.1.2.5 Further Events after the *Ridda*

From the *ridda* Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb proceeds to the ensuing conquests beyond the Arab Peninsula, but in a striking contrast with the campaign against the *ridda* he mentions them rather in passing, as if to convey the message that the internal consolidation of Islam was much more relevant than the external expansion. Both aspects are connected in the mention of the repentant pseudo-prophet Ṭulayḥa, who fell in the *jihād* against the Persian Empire, as one of the important events under the caliphate of ‘Umar.⁶⁰

Accusations of nepotism, which do often explain the opposition to ‘Uthmān, are not repeated by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Instead, he explains the rift among the Muslim community that started under his reign with political dissatisfaction among the Kufans, which was exacerbated by the conspiracies of the converted Jew ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’. He anachronistically calls the assassins of the third caliph *mujrimūn khārījīyyūn*, and thus anticipates the fragmentation that was to ensue from the following events.⁶¹

According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, ‘Alī came forth with the claim to be caliph after ‘Uthmān’s death, but only after the *ahl al-Badr* had pledged allegiance to him. He thus discounts the Shī‘ī allegation that his claim was based on a designation by Muḥammad. He briefly mentions Mu‘āwiya’s refusal to pledge allegiance to him, implying his intention to revolt. But the account then moves quickly on to the Battle of the Camel, which according to him started after ‘Ā’isha’s emissaries Ṭalḥa and Zubayr had been expelled from Basra and her

58 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 196–98.

59 Riexinger, “Der Islam”, 38–39.

60 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 215–19.

61 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 220–26.

attempt at reconciliation had failed. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb then claims that it was the Khārijites, instigated by ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’, who were to be found in both camps and who provoked fighting, which without them would not have taken place.⁶² In the context of the battle he mentions another miracle. After ‘Ā’isha’s camel had collapsed, Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, who was supposed to guard her, sacrilegiously extended his hand into her howdah, to which she responded saying, “the one to whom belongs this hand violates the *ḥaram* of the Messenger and shall be punished!” to which the malefactor responded, “with the fire of this world or the next world?” upon which she responded, “No, from this world!” whereat his hand was burnt off immediately. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb then stresses that ‘Alī treated ‘Ā’isha respectfully and let her return to Medina.⁶³

About the Battle of Ṣiffīn he shortly notes only the most important aspects, whereas he dedicates much more attention to one event in its aftermath, that is, the address of ‘Alī’s emissary Ibn ‘Abbās to the Khārijite defectors in their camp at Ḥarūrā’. Being asked which acts of ‘Alī they object to, they responded:

1. The mediation contradicts Q 12:40.
 2. Had the opponents been believers, it would have been unlawful to combat them; if they were unbelievers, however, it would have been permitted to persecute them, to take them as prisoners, and to take their property. But ‘Alī allowed neither to take prisoners nor booty.
 3. He accepted to abstain from using the title *amīr al-mu’minīn*.
- Ibn ‘Abbās responded to (1) that the Qur’ān encourages to mediate in case of marital disputes and the danger of retaliation and to (3) that the Prophet had abstained from using the title *rasūl Allāh* for tactical reasons. To objection (2), which is lacking in many accounts other than Ibn al-Jawzī’s, Ibn ‘Abbās replied that, with ‘Ā’isha, one of the *ummahāt al-mu’minīn* was on the battlefield. Would they, then, enslave their mothers and have intercourse with them? After this argument, all but a few repented.⁶⁴

After this episode Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb briefly mentions the insurrection against ‘Alī by the remaining Khārijites, without naming Nahrawān, and his assassination by Ibn Muljam. Ḥasan is praised for giving up his claim for the caliphate and it is argued that his stance was preferable to that of his father, as he too should have acknowledged that he had a majority against him. Nevertheless, one should not denounce followers of one camp as

62 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 226–27.

63 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 227.

64 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 228–29; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 5:124–25; Riexinger, “Der Islam”, 29–30.

unbelievers – this term should be reserved for the Khārijites – but nonetheless the most praiseworthy are those who abstained from siding with one of them. Ḥusayn's death at Karbalā' is briefly mentioned, as is also the second *fitna*, with regard to which Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb does not express any preferences. Under 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz the community supposedly returned for a brief period to circumstances similar to those under the Rightly Guided Caliphs, whereas with Ja'd b. Dirham somebody claimed for the first time that the Qur'ān was created. According to Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Yazīd b. al-Walīd was the last generally accepted caliph, and the *umma* has never recovered from the split that the third *fitna* (i.e. the overthrow of the Umayyads in 750) had caused.⁶⁵

In the early 'Abbāsīd period, the author discerns all the problems which in future were to haunt the Muslims. As the main culprit he singles out Ma'mūn, who had Greek books translated while true Muslims like Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal were subjected to the *miḥna*. The *Mukhtaṣar* closes with a remark about the decay of scholarship due to becoming text based, a process that had started under Manṣūr, when *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* (Mālik b. Anas, 'Amr al-Awzā'ī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā), *ra'y* (Abū Ḥanīfa), and *maghāzī* (Wāqidi) were written down.⁶⁶ For the question of why Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb finishes the *Mukhtaṣar* with such a rant against the text's own prerequisites I cannot yet offer a satisfying explanation.

2.2 Objectives of the *Mukhtaṣar*

The *Mukhtaṣar* has two interconnected main objectives. For the first, this *sīra* is obviously designed to justify concrete policies of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and his Āl Su'ūd allies, as well as to ward off criticism of their position. The other objective is to formulate a puritan prophetology which is embedded in a circular (or better undulate) concept of history and supposed to serve as a general legitimisation of the Wahhābī project of religious reform.

2.2.1 *The Justification of Specific Measures*

An iterating topic in the *Mukhtaṣar* is the well-known Wahhābī concept of *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* and the idea that its violation is to be considered *shirk* amounting to apostasy. This is reflected in many instances where Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb remarks that the *mushrikūn* do not deny the existence of God and his status as the Highest Lord, but that they rather violate his rights by asking

65 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 230–35.

66 Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 235–36.

beings inferior to him for intercession. One prominent example is the double affirmation of *qiṣṣat al-gharānīq*, where the concept of praying for *shafā'a*, held by Muḥammad's Qurashī opponents, is contrasted with Islam. Another one is the digression on the legal content of the campaign against Ṭā'if, where Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb equates the pagan rites and their institutionalisation with anachronistic terms derived from *fiqh* and Sufism, in order to demonstrate how reprehensible the veneration of graves is, leading to the conclusion that such practices are to be abolished immediately.

By choosing Ibn al-Jawzī's version of Ibn 'Abbās's speech to the Khārijites at Ḥārūrā', Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb addresses a legal issue as well. The second objection, that 'Alī did not allow the combatants in the Battle of the Camel to make prisoners and booty, is lacking in most other accounts of the event. Ibn 'Abbās explains this prohibition by alerting to one specific circumstance: with 'Ā'isha, one of the *ummahāt al-mu'minīn*, present on the battlefield, enslaving her, and – implicitly – thereafter having sex with her would be like fornicating one's own mother. The selection seems to have been motivated by the intention to dismiss the use of 'Alī's injunction in the Battle of the Camel as a valid example for one legal objection which was raised against Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and his allies: the distinction between *jihād*, where prisoners and booty may be taken, and the struggle against Muslim rebels (*bughāt*), who are supposed to be repelled and impeded, but who shall not be persecuted and captured.⁶⁷

2.2.2 The Transformative Reformulation of Prophetology

2.2.2.1 Undermining the *Mawlid*-Complex: The Denial of the Prophet's Pre-existence

The insistence on Ādam as the first human and the neglect of the begetting, birth, and childhood of Muḥammad are intimately related. With both, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb tries to undermine the belief in the pre-existence of Muḥammad as a divine light preceding all other creation. This concept is perhaps the most salient aspect of the devotion for the Prophet Muḥammad that began to flourish in the eleventh century. The transmission of the Prophetic light completed with 'Abd Allāh's impregnating of Āmina, as reported in Ibn Hishām, does not imply the concept of Muḥammad's pre-existence, but in the course of the centuries and most likely under the influence of Shī'ī prophetology and imamaology this idea gained ground in Sunnī circles.⁶⁸ The concept has also led

67 Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion*, 34–37.

68 Rubin, "Pre-existence"; Katz, *Birth*, 13–24; Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 157–58; the question of the *nūr muḥammadī* and Muḥammad's pre-existence was a central controversial issue between puritans and Sufis: Riexinger, *Ṣanā'ullāh Amrītsarī*, 243; Preckel, "Islamische

to the development of new rituals. Given that Muḥammad is conceived of as pre-existent, his birthday is worth being commemorated as the manifestation of this light in the earthly world.⁶⁹ The most important expression of these beliefs is therefore the celebration of Muḥammad's birthday, a tradition that emerged among Sunnīs in Syria and the Arabian Peninsula in the late twelfth century, most likely inspired by the state-sponsored celebration under Fāṭimid and/or Twelver Shī'ī practices, although no definite proof for this has been established. The Shī'ī connection was harped upon by Sunnī opponents of the *mawlid*.⁷⁰ In the course of centuries its celebration spread among Muslims in all regions, and it played a particular role in many regions to which Islam came in close connection with Sufism. It was, however, constantly resented by puritans like Ibn Taymiyya who denounced it as *bid'a* together with other place- and time-related rituals apart from Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr.⁷¹

A typical element of *mawlid*-related poetry is the emphasis on the begetting, birth, and childhood of Muḥammad associated with the mentioned variety of ominous signs, whereas his life in the phase of prophethood gets little attention. Related to the denial of Muḥammad's luminal pre-existence are miraculous events linked to his conception like Āmina's pregnancy, during which she saw the city of Bosra, and the idols breaking and the holy flames extinguishing at the moment of his birth.⁷² This selection is thus completely reverted in the *Mukhtaṣar* with its clear focus on revelation and the establishment of a society based on the revealed laws, and its neglect of Muḥammad's childhood.

In addition to the Muḥammadan light, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb refrains from mentioning other characteristics which could suggest that Muḥammad possessed characteristics that transcend those of ordinary humans. When he relates the encounter with the monk Bahirā, he does not mention the mark of prophethood, and also passes over the veneration which the trees and stones in the vicinity allegedly expressed for Muḥammad. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb equally omits the purification and weighing of Muḥammad's heart by two angels, an episode which in Ibn Hishām and many other *sīra* works is associated with the childhood of the Prophet. Tied with this complex is the question of Abū Ṭālib's status as unbeliever. Katz shows that *mawlid* texts tend to ascribe a salvific

Bildungsnetzwerke", 478–83. The question of whether Muḥammad cast a shadow (Yahṣubī, *al-Shifā'*, 1:731) was very controversial in South Asia but seems not to have been considered relevant among Wahhābīs; on the concept as an expression of psychological essentialism, see Svensson, *Människans Muhammed*.

69 Katz, *Birth*, 13–15, 24–29.

70 Katz, *Birth*, 1–7, 158; Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 301–14.

71 Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle*; Katz, *Birth*, 153–68; Ukeles, "Sensitive Puritan".

72 Katz, *Birth*, 29–39.

status to personal relationships to Muḥammad and thus consider persons who were attached to him during his childhood as saved.⁷³

The lack of any hints to the effect that Muḥammad and the prophets possessed personal characteristics that set them apart from ordinary humans is a clear response to the ascriptions of such traits, a phenomenon which is not restricted to devotional literature. A very good example is Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's assertion that only the physical side of the prophets, including death and decay, is human, whereas their souls and interior (*bawāṭin*) resemble that of the angels, as they have to encounter the angels when revelation occurs, which would exceed the capabilities of ordinary humans.⁷⁴ For Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, only the revelation and his actions are aspects which single out Muḥammad, and therefore deserve to be noted.

The question remains whether this implies that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb objected to the idea of the Prophetic light, the mark of prophethood, and the purification of the heart as presented by Ibn Hishām, or whether he considered them to be hardly relevant and unsuited for those lacking firm knowledge, who are thus prone to the temptation of *shirk*. An indication tending towards the latter is the *Mukhtaṣar sīrat al-rasūl* written by his son 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb. This more voluminous work lacks the embedding of Muḥammad's life in the universal history of prophethood, but repeats many of the episodes his father had considered particularly important with regard to the ontological status of Muḥammad.⁷⁵ He dwells, however, more extensively upon the childhood of Muḥammad and follows the *sīra* of Ibn Hishām when it comes to the auspicious signs accompanying begetting, pregnancy, and birth, purifying of the heart, and the encounter with Bahīrā, although the space dedicated to Muḥammad before prophethood remains limited in this work as well.⁷⁶ Another indication that Wahhābīs and most probably Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb considered these aspects as not necessarily untrue but of little relevance or potentially dangerous is an ordinance issued after the conquest of Mecca which prohibits the recitation of childhood events from the *sīra* exclusively, without his actions as a prophet.⁷⁷

73 Katz, *Birth*, 123–28.

74 Yaḥṣubī, *al-Shifā'*, 2:224–27; Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 164–66: “unirdischer Wesenskern”.

75 Ibn Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 23–24 (exposure of the private parts during the rebuilding of the Ka'ba), 93 (*qiṣṣat al-gharānīq*).

76 Ibn Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 13–14, 16; as opposed to that he also mentions that Muḥammad's private parts became visible during the reconstruction of the Ka'ba (24) and he affirms *qiṣṣat al-gharānīq* as well (93).

77 Ibn Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, “al-Risāla al-thāniya”, 47–48; Margoliouth, “Wahhābiyya”, 187; Katz, *Birth*, 171.

With regard to the neglect of the childhood in the *Mukhtaṣar*, one further aspect deserves to be mentioned. According to Katz the strong role of female figures in this kind of devotional literature might explain the popularity of this genre among women, as it compensates for the lack of female role models in the Islamic tradition in general. Seen in this perspective, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s narrative has a very “male” focus.⁷⁸

2.2.2.2 Readjusting the Understanding of *ʾiṣma*

ʾiṣma is an attribute which Muslims ascribe to the prophets, and in the Shīʿī case also to those whom they regard as their legitimate successors. Frequently, the term is translated as “infallibility”, but this choice means siding with one specific understanding of it, which prevailed in Shīʿī circles from early on. Many Sunnīs, however, objected to such an interpretation, and it became never uncontested among them. Nevertheless, a tendency to understand the term increasingly as being free from sin and error among Sunnīs is unmistakable, and it is a decisive element in the devotion to the Prophet Muḥammad flourishing in Sufi circles. It would, however, be wrong to associate this notion with “popular Islam”, an expression of “lived religion” or a “low tradition” opposed to a more scripture-based “high tradition”. Justifications for this position were formulated by eminent theologians like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and by leading *fuqahāʾ*. The most important example of the latter was articulated by Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ. His emphasis on the complete freedom of the Prophet from error and sin is, however, not derived from Sufism, but from Mālikī legal scholarship with its emphasis on the Medinan tradition.⁷⁹

The main opponent of this tendency among Sunnī Muslims in the post-classical period was Ibn Taymiyya, who insisted that *ʾiṣma* does not preclude that prophets say false things or commit minor sins. The term has to be understood in the sense that God guarantees that falsehood will not prevail, and that the prophets will correct what was untrue, and even repent.⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb follows Ibn Taymiyya on *ʾiṣma* and highlights this position within his choice of episodes from the life of Muḥammad and the other prophets. The most salient example is the affirmation of *qīṣṣat al-gharānīq* which appears twice in this work, and also in the shorter “Fī sittat mawāḍi‘ manqūla min sirāt al-nabī” (Six issues reported from the vita of the Prophet). Hence it can be regarded as being of central importance for the overall purpose. Therefore, Shahab Ahmed’s position that Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb has diluted Ibn Taymiyya’s

⁷⁸ Katz, *Birth*, 49–50.

⁷⁹ Rāzī, *ʾIṣmat*; Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 183–84.

⁸⁰ Ahmed, “Ibn Taymiyyah”, 71–78, 86–90, 123.

stance because he lets Satan put the frivolous words on Muḥammad's tongue can be dismissed. With respect to this episode Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb follows Ibn Taymiyya, who discussed and affirmed it in his *Minhāj al-sunna*, and in his special treatise on the topic, which Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb apparently was aware of. In contrast to this opinion, the episode was anathema to Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, who dismissed it on the basis of the unsoundness of the relevant traditions. In addition, he uses the prophetological circular argument that it cannot be relevant as it contradicts the general image of Muḥammad.⁸¹

Like other ideas of Ibn Taymiyya his position on this event was rediscovered and propagated in the circle of the Kurdish scholar Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (1025/1616–1101/1686), which played a decisive role in the resurfacing of puritan doctrines from the eighteenth century onwards, and in the surge of puritan movements in that period: Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb was a disciple of the Indian scholar Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī, a disciple of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī's son Abū l-Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī. Ibrāhīm had written a treatise on this subject where he considered the idea that the words were laid on Muḥammad's tongue by Satan.⁸² Presumably that had led to a renewed interest in the issue in the Ḥijāz, as witnessed by the extensive discussion of the episode in the chronicle *Simṭ al-nujūm al-ʿawālī fī anbaʾ al-awāʾil wa-l-tawālī* (The chain of sublime stars on reports of the first ones and the followers) by the Ḥijāzī historian al-Iṣāmī al-Makkī.⁸³ Nevertheless it is apparent that the affirmation of the *qisṣat al-gharānīq* was a minority position in the period when the *Mukhtaṣar* was written. A rare late example from outside this circle is Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, who in *Ithāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, his commentary on Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ*, briefly states that this event happened with reference to Ibn Ḥajar.⁸⁴ In contrast to that, many scholars otherwise inspired by Ibn Taymiyya do not accept the story. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya does not mention it in *Zād al-maʿād*, neither does Ibn Kathīr when he deals with the life of the Prophet in his *Tārīkh*: he explicitly refutes the story with reference to Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ when he elaborates on Q 22:52–54 in his *Tafsīr*.⁸⁵ His position was adopted by Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Shawkānī, an inspiring figure for the puritan Ahl-i Ḥadīth as well as for Rashīd Riḍā, in his *tafsīr*, *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr*.⁸⁶ As a consequence Rashīd Riḍā objects strongly to Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's

81 Yaḥsubī, *al-Shifāʾ*, 2:288–310.

82 Guillaume, “*Lumʿat*”; Nafi, “*Taṣawwuf*”; Nafi, “*Teacher*”.

83 Iṣāmī, *Simṭ*, 327–31; Guillaume, “*Lumʿa*”; Ahmed, “*Ibn Taymiyyah*”, 116; Riexinger, “*Der Islam*”, 42–43.

84 Reichmuth, *Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī*, 293, 305.

85 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1987–90.

86 Shawkānī, *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr*, 3:628; on the general aspects of his works and the influence on puritan movements, see Haykel, *Revival*; Riexinger, *Ṣanāʾullāh Amritsarī*, 108–21; Preckel, “*Islamische Bildungsnetzwerke*”, 120–33.

affirmation of the episode in a footnote to “Sittat mawāḍīʿ”.⁸⁷ For the strong rejection by the latter and by other followers of Ibn Taymiyya from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards it has to be taken into account that the episode played a major role in Christian polemics against Islam. In the most recent Saudi edition of the *Mukhtaṣar* the editors have added a footnote where they reject the historicity of the episode with reference to Albānī’s criticism of the relevant *ḥadīth* material in his *Naṣb al-majānīq ‘alā qīṣṣat al-gharānīq* (Positioning the catapults in direction of the story of the cranes).⁸⁸

Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s presentation of this episode is clearly motivated by his tendency to distinguish between *tawḥīd* and the demand for intercession. The fact that it is treated as one of the most important topics in his *sīra* ties in with his stress on the merely human essence of Muḥammad. Apart from *qīṣṣat al-gharānīq* two other episodes are supposed to undermine the idea that prophets are completely free from sin, error, or affliction by Satan. Whereas the discussed episode demonstrates that Muḥammad was not protected from satanic interference, even after he had received divine revelations, the story of the restoration of the Ka’ba implies that the Prophet was not yet aware of what is forbidden and licit, and that he could even be reprimanded by one of his pagan contemporaries. Notably, the idea that Muḥammad’s genitals were ever seen by anybody is rejected by Qāḍī ‘Iyād, for whom all of the prophets were protected against major transgressions even before receiving the divine message.⁸⁹

The intention to readjust the understanding of *‘iṣma* with regard to the prophets in general explains as well the choice of the three instances where Ibrāhīm said factually incorrect things as one of the two relevant aspects from the life of this prophet.

2.2.2.3 Downplaying the Importance of Miracles

Miracles have always been an important element in biographies of the Prophet, as well as in other genres associated with his person. Concomitant with the development of the idea of Muḥammad’s pre-existence and the understanding of *‘iṣma* as complete freedom from error and sin an incremental tendency with regard to miracles ascribed to Muḥammad is undeniable. The little importance attached by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb to miracles in the *Mukhtaṣar* is therefore one of the salient characteristics of this text.

87 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, “Sittat mawāḍīʿ”, 105n1.

88 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 24n4; Albānī, *Naṣb*.

89 Yaḥṣubī, *al-Shifāʾ*, 1:159, 2:335–39.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb wrote the *Mukhtaṣar* in an apparent protest against the exuberance of miracles that characterises later biographies of Muḥammad, although he does of course not deny miracles as expressions of divine omnipotence. A look at the miracles affirmed by him provides some clues as to how he considers their importance. As the central miracle of affirmation (*mu’jiza*) the splitting of the moon is of course mentioned, but rather in passing. So is the *mī’rāj*, which is connected to central elements of the revelation, not least to prayer and Last Judgement. But Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s treatment consists of an abridgement of the already rather short treatment in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s *Zād al-ma’ād*, and thus contrasts markedly with the inflation of reports relating to this event in other biographical accounts and in the *mawlid* poetry, where the ascension serves to illustrate Muḥammad’s outstanding qualities.⁹⁰ The divine intervention in the Battle of Badr, and the milk which the emaciated ewe of Umm Ma’bad suddenly could provide, contributed to the success of Muḥammad’s prophetic mission. Only the voice praising Muḥammad which could be heard over Mecca at the time of the *hijra* to Medina is a miracle that serves no other purpose than to glorify Muḥammad. Miracles are also mentioned in association with earlier prophets (Nūḥ and the Flood, Ibrāhīm healing the paralysed hand of the tyrant), with the Ka’ba, which was protected against Abraha’s army, and with the family of Muḥammad after his death when Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr was punished with the loss of his hand for holding it into ‘Ā’isha’s howdah.

The selection of miracles does not only differ with regard to number but also with regard to quality from the literature reflecting a devotional attitude to Muḥammad. Many miracles are supposed to glorify Muḥammad, whereas others help to solve concrete problems of the believers, like hunger and sickness, and they are apparently modelled after the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels. Moreover, the miracles are detached from a function related to the success of the prophetic message and they are rather not explained as divine intervention interrupting the ordinary course of matters (*kharq al-‘āda*) but as events emanating from the essence of the prophets, which implies the control of the elements or the ability to communicate with animals.⁹¹ In this sense *baraka* is associated with water touched by Muḥammad and even his urine and blood,

90 On the general conception that these two are the most important miracles of Muḥammad, see Gramlich, *Wunder*, 23.

91 Yaḥṣubī, *al-Shifā*, 1:617–35.

substances otherwise impure.⁹² Water emerged from between his fingers,⁹³ he brought forth water with his *baraka* to saturate the believers, and multiplied food for them,⁹⁴ and he made his weakened wet nurse Ḥalima able to breast-feed again.⁹⁵ He was venerated by and communicated with animals, plants, and minerals, and he was even able to resurrect dead animals.⁹⁶ Ṣāliḥī goes even further than Qāḍī 'Iyād in emphasising the centrality of miracles with regard to Muḥammad by attributing to each single one the same value as to the Qur'ān.⁹⁷

But Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb clarified his stance on the role of miracles in prophecy not only with the help of the selection and omission of material from the tradition. Immediately after mentioning the splitting of the moon, he adds a theological explanation as to why miracles are of so little importance in the life of Muḥammad in comparison to that of the other prophets, and what implications this has for the present. With regard to Q 17:59, which is considered a response to the contemporary opponents' challenge to transform silver to gold or to remove the mountains around Mecca, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb points in particular to the miraculous punishments described in the Qur'ān in which whole nations have perished. With the prophethood of Mūsā and 'Īsā the focus shifted already to repentance and conversion. But with the appearance of Muḥammad there occurred a further shift. He was supported by miracles, but central to his prophethood was the institutionalisation of *jihād* and the ḥadd punishments, two devices which the believers are enjoined to apply for the punishment of the obstinate or for forcing them to repent. Nevertheless, one would be mistaken to consider the attitude of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and other puritans as a kind of rationalism, as in fact some modernists like Sayyid Aḥmad Khān have done. Miracles as expression of divine omnipotence are possible, and they are to be accepted if attested by the Qur'ān or by sound *ḥadīth*. That the authority of these sources even applies to matters of cosmology led to negative responses to modern science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹⁸

92 Yahṣubī, *al-Shifā'*, 1:157–59, 249–50.

93 Yahṣubī, *al-Shifā'*, 1:550–54.

94 Yahṣubī, *al-Shifā'*, 1:555–62.

95 Katz, *Birth*, 41.

96 Yahṣubī, *al-Shifā'*, 1:563–616; Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 105–6, 202, 287–88, 293, 323.

97 Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 296.

98 Riexinger, "How Favourable?"; Riexinger, "Ibn Taymiyya's Worldview"; Tamer, "Curse of Philosophy".

2.3 The Denial of *ʿilm bi-l-ghayb*

One of the few non-military events in the Medinan phase which Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb deems worthy of mention is the so-called necklace affair when ʿĀʾisha lagged behind the campaign and returned to it in the company of Ṣāfawān b. Muʿaṭṭal. In spite of her excuse that she was searching for a necklace she had lost and was discovered by the young companion, who accompanied her to protect her, numerous *ṣaḥāba*, most prominently ʿAlī, accused her of *zinā* and demanded her to be punished accordingly, putting stress on Muḥammad who tried to avoid a decision. According to the standard account, the problem was solved for Muḥammad by the revelation of Q 24:11–26, which in addition to the punishment of adulterers contained the punishment of those who falsely accuse others of *zinā*.⁹⁹

The reason for Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's choice of this episode is most likely that Muḥammad's wavering until the revelation could serve him as argument in another issue puritans had with the devotional attitude of the Prophet. This was the question whether "knowledge of the hidden" (*ʿilm bi-l-ghayb*) was one of the ontological attributes of Muḥammad, against which they maintained that any such knowledge could only result from divine revelation. In a moderate form this idea can be found with Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ: he does not claim that the prophets had full knowledge of worldly affairs as their preoccupations are the hereafter and the rules of the *sharʿa*,¹⁰⁰ and information of future and past events are described as *ʾijāz*,¹⁰¹ but he claims that the knowledge about the revelation (*sharʿa*) has been complete from the start¹⁰² as exemplified by neither Ibrāhīm nor Muḥammad ever being in doubt.¹⁰³

Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb never elaborated more explicitly on this issue. Other early Wahhābī texts, however, corroborate the impression that the nature of Muhammad's knowledge was a relevant topic at that time. His son explicitly connects the episode to this question¹⁰⁴ and his grandson ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan insists that Muḥammad was only aware of future events including "the Hour" when God had revealed them to him.¹⁰⁵

99 Schoeler, *Charakter*, 119–70.

100 Yaḥsubī, *al-Shifāʾ*, 2:269–70.

101 Yaḥsubī, *al-Shifāʾ*, 1:518–21.

102 Yaḥsubī, *al-Shifāʾ*, 2:272.

103 Yaḥsubī, *al-Shifāʾ*, 2:231–33, 236–37.

104 Ibn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 279.

105 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan, "Bayān", 253–54.

2.3.1 *Delegitimisation of the Awliyā'*

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's attempt to undermine the belief in the special status of Muḥammad implies an attack on the claims of the *awliyā'* whose exalted status is inferior to that of the Prophet, but nonetheless derived from it. By depriving the person of Muḥammad of all superhuman aspects not related to revelation and divine intervention to support it, any claims that would lift the saints out of the flock of ordinary humans is implicitly denied. But Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb does not restrict himself to attacking the concept of sainthood indirectly, as his presentation of Musaylima can be seen as a caricature of what was expected from *awliyā'* and often claimed for them by themselves or at least by their entourage. Whereas it is commonplace that miracles with unintended consequences occur with pseudo-prophets and expose them as liars,¹⁰⁶ Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb deselected a tradition of reports where Musaylima responds to requests to effect miracles "like Muḥammad". Instead, he opted with Kalā'ī for a tradition that does not presuppose that the most remarkable aspect of Muḥammad was that he effected miracles providing relief in worldly matters.

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's caricature does not aim at "official" Sufi doctrines. Sufi literature treats *karāmāt* in association with secrecy or insecurity of *awliyā'* about their status, whereas brazen self-advertisement is denounced.¹⁰⁷ In contrast it presents a realistic assessment of what the popularity of the *awliyā'* was based on in real life. Miracles of healing were associated with *awliyā'* and considered a reason for visiting graves from early on,¹⁰⁸ and they are an important feature of hagiographic literature.¹⁰⁹

2.4 The Vision of Muḥammad and the Concept of History

The *sīra* never developed into an official discipline within traditional Muslim scholarship, and actually many of the works dedicated to the life and characteristics of the Prophet were written quite late.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, it would be false to downplay the importance of the genre. Biographies of the Prophet are supposed to function as fiction of coherence in the sense of Assmann, that is, a text or narrative supposed to demonstrate the "connection between ... the whole and the parts".¹¹¹ With regard to the function of the *sīra* genre in the

¹⁰⁶ Gramlich, *Wunder*, 57.

¹⁰⁷ Gramlich, *Wunder*, 60–63.

¹⁰⁸ Beránek and Ťupek, *Temptation*, 29, 37–40.

¹⁰⁹ Gramlich, *Wunder*, 306–15.

¹¹⁰ Schöller, *Mohammed*, 86–87.

¹¹¹ Assmann, *Ägypten*, 17–18.

Islamic context this means that the purpose is to explain Muḥammad's role in universal history, usually in a kind of *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history), in order to make the related norms plausible.¹¹² The targeted audience were not least the laymen who listened to recitations – combined with explanations – from the *sīra* in edifying sessions in mosques. In this respect the *Mukhtaṣar* resembles other biographies of the Prophet, whereas it differs radically with regard to purpose and content of the fiction of coherence.

2.4.1 *Transformative, Not Thaumaturgical*

It can be problematic to identify emic categories in a religious discourse with theoretical concepts from the sociology of religion. In the particular case of this *sīra*-cum-pamphlet, we indeed find Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb juxtaposing two religious attitudes that practically coincide with goals of religious actions that the sociologist of religion Stephen Sharot has labelled as "thaumaturgic" and "transformative". Whereas with the help of thaumaturgic actions "special dispensation and release are sought from specific ills within a nature and a society whose basic features are not expected to change," the goal of transformative religious action "is to produce a fundamental or pervasive change in nature, society, and individual being or nonbeing".¹¹³ Sharot does not consider both functions mutually exclusive; instead he shows that the thaumaturgic and the transformative have in the course of history often been combined in compromises if not syntheses. He does not identify these goals with any specific religions either but rather asks which role these goals play in different religious traditions and how they can be related to elite–laymen relations in these religions. A common feature of the tension between the transformative and the thaumaturgical is the delegation of the thaumaturgical function to beings inferior to the "high gods", but more susceptible to the supplications and demands of humans as well as to their rewards.¹¹⁴

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb was far from formulating such a synthesis. In contrast he defines a transformative understanding of Islam as mandate to order society according to the blueprint of the divine law. To this he juxtaposes a misunderstanding of religion as a means to alleviate life. Hence Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb does not only reject the cult of graves and the veneration of saints, because they are directed at beings inferior to God, but objects to such practices because they are based on a faulty assumption about the purpose of religion. He makes this

¹¹² Schöller, *Exegetisches Denken*, 32.

¹¹³ Sharot, *Comparative Sociology*, 36; the other two goals, "nomic" (to maintain the order of the world) and "extrinsic" (non-religious goals), are not relevant in our context.

¹¹⁴ Sharot, *Comparative Sociology*, 247–29.

explicit by quoting Ḥasan al-Baṣrī in the prologue: “belief is not adornment (*tahallin*) and desire (*tamannin*), it weighs heavily on the heart, and deeds bear witness to it.”¹¹⁵ Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb himself repeats again and again that belief manifests itself in correct acts. The correct relation to Muḥammad is thus an obligation. In contrast to this, the devotional attitude to Muḥammad, and the relations to the saints modelled after it, have the character of a deal within an “economy of salvation” where *baraka* is paid for with devotion.¹¹⁶

The *Mukhtaṣar* addresses Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s concern about a misconception regarding the person of Muḥammad on the basis of the corruption of religion. Where Muḥammad should be a model for emulation, he has been transformed into the supreme thaumaturge.¹¹⁷ Miracles, of which only a few are true and relevant according to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, have overgrown the message. Therefore, he straightens them out of the narrative. His attitude towards miracles is far from Islam-specific but has parallels in other religious traditions, where reformist currents wanted to establish a clear primacy of the transformative over the thaumaturgical aspects by establishing the primacy of the word (“rede”) over the miraculous deeds (“wercke”, “wunderthaten”), as Luther does in his preface to the New Testament.¹¹⁸ This is most aptly illustrated by one episode from the Medinan phase. In a competition between the two poet brothers Muslim Bujayr and pagan Ka’b b. Zuhayr, the latter finally submits, becomes a Muslim, and composes the panegyric on Muḥammad, titled *Bānat Su’ād*. The poem is characterised by the imagery of *jāhiliyya* poetry and emphasises the warrior qualities of Muḥammad. This fits perfectly into Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s concept, who hence quotes numerous lines. No mention, however, is made of the cloak Muḥammad allegedly bestowed on Ka’b. The legend of this cloak implies the transmission of Muḥammad’s *baraka* to privileged believers, and it does not least provide the starting point for Būṣīrī’s *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*, one of the most popular texts glorifying the thaumaturgical Muḥammad.¹¹⁹ The implicit attack on the panegyric, devotional poetry with its strong emotive character can be interpreted as a statement against what Harvey Whitehouse has defined as the imagistic mode of religiosity, which leads to arousal through relatively rare and highly emotive rituals. The mode of religiosity Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s understanding of Islam represents is

115 Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Mukhtaṣar*, 28.

116 Katz, *Birth*, 63–103; Svensson, *Människans Muhammed*, 176–93.

117 On this tension, see also Svensson, *Människans Muhammed*, 98–101.

118 Luther, “Vorrede”, 11; I thank my colleague Hans Jørgen Lundager for alerting me to this parallel.

119 Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 320–21: “Der inhaltlich, insbesondere der dogmatische Abstand zwischen beiden Mantelgedichten ist riesig”; Svensson, *Människans Muhammed*, 162–75.

as opposed to that doctrinal, based on routinised, less emotive practices supposed to support the internalisation of norms.¹²⁰

The reduction of the miraculous in the *sīra* has one more function. It is supposed to stress the commonality between Muḥammad and ordinary humans in all matters not related to revelation. It thus also serves the purpose to demonstrate that his actions not related to revelation can be emulated. This aspect has to be seen in connection with Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s concept of history, the final aspect of our discussion.

2.4.2 *Back and Forth, Not a Radical Shift: The Concept of History and the Implicit Mandate for Action*

In his analysis of the veneration of Muḥammad, Tilman Nagel has demonstrated that literature dedicated to the devotion of Muḥammad divides history sharply up in two radical different phases, the darkness before and the “new eon” illuminated by the Muḥammadan light.¹²¹ As opposed to this, the concept of history underlying the *Mukhtaṣar* is quite pessimistic, with a tendency towards the negation of a *Heilsgeschichte*.

The life of Muḥammad is part of a sequence of continuous movements backwards and forwards. Ādam had been instructed in *tawḥīd* but generations later, his descendants succumbed to the veneration of their pious ancestors and established paganism. Nūḥ was the first prophet assigned with the task to call for a return to *tawḥīd*. Divine punishment led to a re-establishment of Islam, which, however, was succeeded by further relapses, only to be corrected by further prophets within a specific regional setting. With Mūsā and ‘Īsā the purpose of divine intervention shifted from punishment to confirmation. With Muḥammad not only prophecy came to an end, but the establishment of the divine order was from now on imposed on the believers, with the example of Muḥammad’s founding of an Islamic society by the means of *jihād* and the *ḥadd* punishments. Muḥammad is not the central purpose of creation in this concept of history, contrary to a common opinion expressed in the unsound but often-quoted *ḥadīth qudsī* “*law lā-ka mā khalaqtu l-aflāka*”.¹²² Instead, he has a function within creation and for the created beings.

That the re-establishment of Islam would constantly become necessary is demonstrated with various examples. Already during Muḥammad’s lifetime the Banū Hawāzin apostatised, and after his death the Muslims had to face

120 Whitehouse, *Arguments*; Katz, *Birth*, 104–23, 128–39; Svensson, *Människans Muhammed*, 264–75.

121 Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 253–54.

122 Nagel, *Allahs Liebling*, 326–27.

the challenge of the large-scale defection known as *ridda*. Thereafter various heretics and pseudo-Muslim rulers appeared but were defeated by scholars and/or military and political leaders. The clue to the interpretation of these examples is delivered by the *ḥadīth* “Islam began as something strange”, which also exists in a longer version, which concludes with a blessing of those who re-establish (*yusliḥūna*) what the people have corrupted from Muḥammad’s *sunna*. By an implicit description of the present times in the framework of the terminology used for the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyya*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s concept of history emphasises the necessity to follow the model of Muḥammad and to re-establish the divine order.¹²³

And this is the junction where prophetology and the concept of history merge: whereas the clearing of the image of Muḥammad of every superhuman aspect is supposed to demonstrate that this act of emulation is feasible, the description of the present shall highlight that this emulation is urgent.

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¹²³ Thus, the text is an example for the monotheist self-perception as “counter-religion” (*Gegenreligion*) as a radical break with the polytheist past and for the recurrent emergence of puritan movements within monotheist religions which claim to reenact this secession after periods of decay: Assmann, *Mosaische Unterscheidung*, 26, 53; Assmann, *Totale Religion*, 16–17.

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