Shortly after dawn on April 14, 1909, the morning calm in the Somali village of Biyoole was shattered by the hoof beats of a raiding party loyal to the religious reformer Sayyid Muhammad ‘Abdullah Hasan. The horsemen were searching for Shaykh Uways b. Muhammad, who maintained a compound within the village and who was rumored to be there with his wives, children and a handful of followers. Shaykh Uways, who had spent the previous two years preaching against the teachings of the Sayyid, refused to leave, swearing that he would remain in the village until death rather than flee in the face of the enemy. When the riders entered the village, they were met with a spirited resistance from Uways and his followers. The battle raged throughout the morning with Uways’ followers valiantly defending the village and their Shaykh. By mid-afternoon, however, out-numbered and out-gunned, he and all but one of his followers lay dead or dying.

The murder of Uways and his students at the hands of a rival religious group was a stunning act of violence unprecedented in Somali religious circles. The tragedy, not surprisingly, resulted in a good deal of literature vilifying the Qadiriyya. Shaykh Qassim al-Barawi’s edited collection of poems, al-Majmu’ al-Qasid, for example, first published around 1917, contains an untitled poem by Shaykh Uways that disparaged the Qadiriyya as—among other things—“mournful dogs” who “sell paradise for cash” and fornicate with their mothers. During the same period, as we saw in the last chapter, Shaykh ‘Abdullahi al-Quhtbi published two pamphlets, The Butcher’s Knife for the Howling Dogs, and

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1 Though frequently referred to in European literature as “Sayyid,” Muhammad ‘Abdullah Hasan was not a descendant of the Prophet. Rather the term was an, admittedly unusual, Arabization of the Somali honorific “Ina” or “son of.” With this caveat in mind we will continue to use the title Sayyid when referring to Muhammad ‘Abdullah, as it is the more commonly used in both colonial and contemporary literature.

2 Al-Barawi, Ins al-Anis, pp. 52–58.

3 Al-Barawi, al-Majmu’a al-Qasid, pp. 68–70.
Victory of the Believers Over the Heretics with the Righteousness of Religion, that ridiculed the Šalīḥiyya as dangerous heretics in league with the likes of the Arabian Wahhābiyya. While often shrill and always defamatory, however, these writings were never simple anti-Šāliḥī polemics. Instead, they also served as platforms for disseminating Qādirī ideology and cosmology to both popular and scholarly audiences. In this chapter we embark on a detailed exploration of the Qādirīyya order’s teachings as well as methods for spreading the word as essential to comprehending the popularity of the Qādirīyya message. We will begin by examining the works of ‘Abdullāh al-Qūṭī as heresiography, looking at the Shaykh’s charges against the Šalīḥīyya and using the fragmentary Šāliḥī sources available to help determine their validity. This, however, is simply a gateway to exploring a number of important questions that help us draw a much more detailed picture of Qādirī beliefs in the early twentieth century. The bulk of this chapter will be concerned with uncovering Qādirīyya ideology in terms of the proper path to salvation; the role of the Prophet and the saints in the theology preached by the Qādirī shaykh; and, finally, how these ideas impacted the Qādirī mission in the interior. In part, such an examination begins to explain why the Qādirīyya believed it crucial to oppose the Šalīḥiyya. More importantly, it will provide us with a deeper understanding of what the Qādirīyya actually believed and how such ideas related to the lives of ordinary Somalis.

To accomplish this, two works compiled within a decade of Shaykh Uways’ murder will be examined to provide insight not only into Qādirī ideology of the period but also how they sought to disseminate it to a wide, largely non-literate public. We begin with al-Majmū‘a al-Qaṣā‘id, a collection of popular devotional poetry compiled by Shaykh Qassim al-Barawī that served as one of principle means of disseminating the Qādirī message to this widespread, diverse and largely non-literate constituency. The poems contained in the collection outline the theological ideas (especially tawassul) the Qādirīyya regarded as central to the cosmological organization of the universe, the following of which were necessary for individual salvation. Al-Barawī’s careful editing of each

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4 The important question of why the Qādirīyya message was ultimately more popular than that of the Šalīhiyya is beyond the scope to the present work and needs to be a topic of further research.