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Shia as Internal Others: A Salafi Rejection of the ‘Rejecters’

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ABSTRACT

Conflict and polemic between Sunni Muslims and Shiites have a long history. In the contemporary era, this polemic has been accentuated by the conflictual situation in the Middle East, and it is also colouring the minority Muslim situation. This article is concerned with Islamic interpretations related to ‘othering’, taking as its main focus an analysis of publications on a Swedish Sunni website, ‘Maktabah Dār-ul-Hadīth’, which has clear Salafi leanings. Reports show that Shiites currently feel threatened by Salafis in minority contexts and the material cited in this article ‘others’ Shiite Islam and Shiites (amongst others), creating a stereotypical image that may have the potential to influence sectarian violence in real life. Several of the texts on the website deal with theological issues concerning the alleged false beliefs of Shiites. However, the article does not focus on theological creed but rather on *manhaj*, the programme for action, that is, the behaviour towards Shiites that is recommended in various situations, such as at work, in greeting Shiites or being invited to a Shiite wedding, thus affecting everyday situations. The analysis looks into what kind of ‘othering’ is promoted and what effect this othering might have if put into practice.

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Introduction

The long historical conflict between Sunnis and Shiites is a fact. Geneive Abdo (2013, 5) holds that, in the Middle East, ‘the increase in sectarian conflict is primarily the result of the collapse of authoritarian rule and a struggle for political and economic power and over which interpretation of Islam will influence societies and new leaderships’. However, sectarian conflicts have also spread to minority settings in a different context, but one that is influenced by Middle Eastern conflicts and polemic. In Belgium, for example, a Shiite mosque was firebombed and the imam was killed in 2012 and Salafis were suspected (‘Sword and the Word’ 2012; see Maréchal and Zemni 2013 for examples of Sunni–Shia relations around the world, but excluding Europe; see Ourghi 2014 for Salafi perspectives on Shiites in Germany; see also Linge [2016, 5] for some international examples from the 1970s). Media reports from the UK show that conflict between Shiites and Sunnis is increasing; physical attacks have occurred and fear exists of a divide between Sunnis and Shiites (Elgot 2013; Milmo 2013; Wyatt 2015). Interviews with Shiites in Sweden indicate that it is not unusual for them to feel threatened by Sunni Muslim groups. The

hostilities seem to be connected to international conflicts, and information technology has had a role in spreading messages of both dialogue and conflict (Larsson and Thurffjell 2013, 40; see also Linge 2016). This article is concerned with Islamic interpretations related to ‘othering’, using as its main focus an analysis of publications on a Swedish Sunni website, ‘Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’, which has clear Salafi leanings.¹ All of the publications used in this article ‘other’ Shiite Islam and Shiites, creating a stereotypical image that *may* have the potential to influence sectarian violence in real life. However, this article will only focus on an analysis of texts published on the website and makes no attempt to comment on whether they have any effect on those who read them or influence actual behaviour.

Constructions and negotiations of identity are central to ‘othering’ and, as will be seen below, the material tries to focus on, or construct, a group identity, such that a certain identity is presented around normative values and behaviours and set against those considered part of the out-group. Stereotypical images assist in the creation of an in-group (us) and an out-group (them). Since the material consists of texts published on-line, we can assume that the quest for, and the construction of, identity that appears very much displays the identity that the website wishes to foster, and how others should perceive it. Othering in practice consists of societal polarization and distancing from those not belonging to the in-group, based on intergroup attitudes and aversion. Othering refers to identity formation processes, where groups define identity over and against other groups, marking differences and delineations from them, formed in a dialectical opposition. The other is considered inferior and is delegitimized, disliked and mistrusted. Such othering leads in practice to social exclusion. Othering is a concept that overlaps with other socio-psychological terms and processes, such as stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (Canales 2000; Johnson et al. 2004; Jensen 2011; Çelik, Bilali, and Iqbal 2016). In the case of the website, we shall see below that the strategy of othering is deliberate and explicit. It aims directly at construing clear borders between self and other.

The othering framework used in this article sets out to analyse the mechanisms and strategies for constructing an image of in-group identity as apart from, or different from, the out-group/others, that is, all those considered as not belonging to the in-group, who allegedly hold false beliefs and practices, such as Shiites and Sufis. We can also note that the main ‘others’ focused on are Islamic interpretations and practices not compatible with what is considered true Islam by the website’s editors. Hence, the focus of this article is on ‘internal others’.

‘Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’ is a website owned and run by Muslim youth in southern Sweden (Skåne). According to the description on the website (darulhadith.com), it is a bookstore, a website and a study circle, and it is also claimed that ‘Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’ is free from sectarian leanings and foreign ideologies, and completely founded on the Qur’an and Sunna. The website does not seem to have any direct connections to other Salafi-oriented groups and does not focus explicitly on current conflicts, such as that in the Levant.²

Like many groups who are Salafi oriented, ‘Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’ calls for a purification of Islam (*tasfiyya*) in order to educate (*tarbiyya*) and unite Muslims under *one* method and *one* dogmatic teaching, and thus extinguish *shirk* (idolatry), *kufr* (unbelief) and *bid‘a* (innovation), as well as blind following (*taqlid*).³ *Tarbiyya* is defined as teaching the true understanding of revelation and returning to the understanding of the pious

forebears at all times. A verse from the Qur'an is cited in the 'about' section, showing the need to follow the 'guidance' once it is received:

But whoever breaks with the messenger after the guidance has become clear to him, and follows a way other (than that) of the believers – We shall turn him (over) to what he has turned to, and burn him in Gehenna – and it is an evil destination! (Q 4.115). (All references to the Qur'an follow the annotated translation by Droge 2014.)

The website explains that the 'believers' in this quotation are the pious predecessors of the first generation, and that it is obligatory to have the same faith as they and the Prophet had. This is stated as the call of 'Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth' (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/om-oss/>), which shows its Salafi orientation.

The opening page on the website includes an information box, explaining that the website is intended to function as a vehicle for the learned and that articles are continuously translated from Arabic books, cassettes and interviews. The section containing articles includes six main headings: 'Aqîdah' (dogma), 'Fiqh' (jurisprudence), 'Women related', 'Manhadj' (programme of action), 'Sîrah' (biography), and 'Tawhîd' (monotheism). This article focuses on the programme of action (*manhaj*) of 'Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth', and concentrates particularly on issues related to 'othering', more specifically how Shia Islam and Shiites are 'othered'.

Several of the texts deal with theological issues concerning Shia Islam and nothing unexpected is presented in the material. Göran Larsson (2016, 208–212) has made an analysis of the Salafi website 'Islam Question and Answer' (islamqa.info), which presents legal opinions (fatwas: Ar. *fatāwa*) by shaykh Salih al-Munajjid (b. 1960) in several languages. He summarizes the accusations against Shia Islam that occur most frequently on the website, which largely correspond to what is found in the material used for the present article. Briefly, the main arguments against Shia Islam set out on islamqa.info are the overemphasis on and worship of the imams, the view that many of the *ṣaḥāba* were unbelievers, the introduction of new doctrines and practices, and the practice of *taqiyya* (dissimulation). Moreover, accusations of altering the Qur'an and committing *shirk* are found, and these also recur on the website of 'Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth' (Larsson 2016, 210; see also Halldén 2007; Haykel 2010). Larsson's analysis of the 'Islam Question and Answer' website shows that *manhaj* is not stressed to any large extent, but the principal focus is rather on proving that and Shiites hold false beliefs and what these are.

Under the heading 'Manhadj' on the 'Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth' website, we find several subheadings related to 'othering', such as 'Traits of Ahl-ul-Bid'a', 'Rejecting the myth of the good innovation', 'The relation to dissidents (Swe: *oliktänkande*) and their teachings', 'Groups and sects whose fundamental faults the learned have warned about', 'Imārah – Leadership', 'Persons whose fundamental faults the learned have warned about', and 'Salafiyah' (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/category/manhadj/>). Each subheading consists of numerous topics including one or more (sometimes over 100) articles of varying lengths. Some are very short. Some include video links translated into Swedish. For the present article, the material used is categorized under the main heading 'Manhadj', and the subheading 'Groups and sects whose fundamental faults the learned have warned about'. Many groups are mentioned,⁴ but the present article focuses only on the texts referring to Shia Islam ('Shi'ah'). The main question it addresses is how 'Maktabah Dâr-ul-

Hadith' describes Shia Islam and Shiites in the sense of how it 'others' them and, more specifically, how it describes the way they should be treated. This article is thus mainly concerned with 'internal othering' and analyses how other Muslim interpretations and practices are rejected. The section on Shiite Islam had a total of 298 articles at the time the analysis was made, some of which were replicated.⁵ In the various articles, other interpretations of Islam and other practices, apart from those of the Shia, are mentioned, but these will not be addressed here.⁶ Articles concerning the main 'others' are collected under separate headings on the website.

This website is not the only Swedish site that addresses this topic, and it cannot be said to represent Sunni Islamic views in general, either in Sweden or elsewhere. It is merely one contemporary example, selected because of the large amount of relevant articles it presents and its clear organization of the material, using thematic subtitles.

Salafism

I have designated the website as Salafi oriented. The term Salafi does not refer to a homogenous outlook on life or practice, nor does it refer to only one interpretative stance. Salafism is an umbrella term framing fragmented and contradictory attitudes, which nevertheless have some characteristics in common. Muslims who use the term as a self-designation claim authenticity based on a return to the sources. As a self-description, it is related to the term *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, referring to the first generations of Muslims, the 'pious predecessors', and amounts to a claim that Salafis follow their example (Wiktorowicz 2005, 111–112).⁷ The predecessors are usually said to comprise the first three generations of Muslims and are regarded as having a pure understanding of Islam, while later generations are accused of innovation. The predecessors include the Companions of Muhammad and their followers (*tābi'ūn*) including the next generation (*tābi'ū al-tābi'īn*). Included in this group is Ibn Hanbal (780–855), who is regarded as the last 'follower', but later reformists are also included as important, and are regarded as following the example of the early predecessors; they include Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) and 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792) (Wiktorowicz 2005, 111–112). Among contemporary scholars we may note particularly Bin Baz (1910–1999), the former Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and head of the Council of Senior Scholars, a prestigious religious learned body that advises the Saudi monarchy.⁸ Salih ibn al-Fawzan (b. 1935) is another authority. He has been the head of the Supreme Court of Justice and a member of the Council of Senior Scholars and the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Issuing Fatwas.⁹ Ibn al-ʿUthaymin (1925–2001) has been one of the most influential Wahhabi scholars on contemporary Salafism, and Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914–1999) was a Hadith-scholar working at the University of Medina under Bin Baz who caused controversies with his fatwas. Rabi' al-Madkhali (b. 1931) is also frequently used by Salafis; he is currently supporting the Saudi regime and is described politically as a 'quietist'.¹⁰ As the presentation of the material will show, these scholars are frequently used as authorities on the website.

The Salafi interpretative strategy is characterized as a return to the texts of the Qur'an and Sunna. Salafis do not accept imitation of codified jurisprudence (*taqlid*) (Wiktorowicz 2005, 119). They often call themselves *ahl al-ḥadīth*, the people of the Hadith, to underline the importance of Sunna, and this is reflected in the name of the website under scrutiny

here. There is also an inclination to imitate in detail the behaviour and practice of the Prophet Muhammad, which is at least upheld as an ideal.

The Salafi view on sources is distinct in its stress on adherence and commitment to the Qur'an and Sunna. Salafis stress the oneness of God (*tawhīd*), which may be a means by which to accuse others of 'association' (*shirk*), which they reject. They reject all forms of 'innovation' (*bid'ā*), mainly in relation to creed and law not sanctioned in the sources they consider authentic; they believe it to be a duty to avoid innovation and stay true to the Prophetic example. This also constitutes a strategy for delegitimizing all who hold different opinions. Salafi intolerance of other theological opinions is founded on the idea that only one view can be correct (Haykel 2009, 38–42; see also Wiktorowicz 2006 for a more thorough presentation of the common beliefs of Salafis). This may also explain the hostility directed against other interpretations and practices, and the large number of texts that focus on how 'others' are deviant.

Salafis' interpretative approach (at least ideally) is to read the authoritative sources decontextualized and as literally and universally relevant, irrespective of time and place. The programme of action (*manhaj*) and the content of faith (*aqīda*) are seen as never changing and should at all times be adhered to and imitated (Duderija 2010, 76; see also Duderija 2011). The use of logic and human reason is not seen as necessary: 'Approaches that are guided by human logic will necessarily fall foul of human desire, which will lead to the selective and biased extrapolation of religious evidence to support human interests rather than religious truth' (Wiktorowicz 2006, 210). Salafis try to avoid interpretation of the texts and cannot be said to advocate *ijtihād* (independent reasoning). However, authority is based on other scholars who present 'the truth', and their works and opinions constitute the authoritative sources. Salafis are thus literalists and stress the authority of the Sunna and the importance of holding the true faith and practising Islam correctly and in detail.¹¹ Socially, gender segregation is promoted and, since the focus is on a life of devotion, all actions should be informed by Islam. Political activism is usually frowned upon by Salafis, and participation in electoral democracy is prohibited. Rulers should be obeyed, unless they call Muslims to that which is forbidden, and Islamic scholars ought not to be politically engaged. This kind of Salafism promotes piety and moral conduct (Shavit 2015, 52–57). However, some Salafis do accept political participation and some promote and practise an active violent discourse.

The political character of Salafism is categorized by Roel Meijer (2009, 17) in a typology of Salafis who are: (1) quietist and discrete; (2) covert, in the sense of calling for quietism but still acting politically; and (3) openly activist, coming closer to Islamism, as in the Salafi *Sahwa*-movement, who call for more clerical political participation and influence (see also Haykel 2009, 48). The website studied here would fit in the first type. The 'Maktabah Dār-ul-Hadīth' website is designated as Salafi in this article, and it clearly represents part of the contemporary Salafi trend among minority Muslims, but, on the basis of the material under study, it could also be described as Wahhabi. The authorities it cites are Saudi Wahhabi scholars who influence many Salafi groups in Europe and elsewhere. The use of such Wahhabi authorities is a typical Salafi strategy for claiming to represent authoritative views and true Islam.

Regarding the focus on a programme of action (*manhaj*), Bernard Haykel (2009, 47–48) illustrates the importance of the concept of *manhaj* among Salafis since it details how they should live. This is a contemporary usage of the term, and Haykel

links it to al-Albani, who referred to Q 5.48 to explain it: ‘So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which hath come unto thee.’ He understood it as calling Muslims to reject affiliation with any group, including political ones. There are, however, Salafis who reject his interpretation and argue that it is obligatory to actively engage in rejection of associationism of any sort, which they claim pertains to *shirk*. So political engagement *may* be seen as part of the Salafi *manhaj*. (Compare, for example, the development of the political party al-Nour after the 2011 revolution in Egypt. See also Olsson 2014, 2016, forthcoming, for a further discussion on Salafism.) However, as the presentation below will show, ‘Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’ is very much influenced by al-Albani and others like him, and a ‘quietist’ *manhaj* is promoted.

The phrase *al-walâ’ wa-al-barâ’*, (allegiance/loyalty and disavowal) is another important phrase, often used by contemporary Salafis to support the view that a Muslim should avoid ignorant (*jâhili*) societies and those considered non-Muslims in some respect. Those considered to be infidels should be met with hatred, and loyalty should only be given to (true) Muslims (Devin, Regens, and Edger 2009, 50–51; Wagemakers 2009). Today, the phrase is often used in relation to othering and the vilification and excoriating of those regarded as deviant. Joas Wagemakers (2009, 82) argues that *al-walâ’ wa-al-barâ’* can be used ‘as a bulwark against successful integration into society’ in the West. The phrase is also related to *takfir*, which is another strategy found in othering discourses and practices; *takfir* is the accusation of others (including other Muslims) of being infidels. *Al-walâ’ wa-al-barâ’* has been used by Salafis as a ‘pious instrument’ to justify and articulate disavowal (*barâ’*) of others and does not necessarily entail any aggressive action. Wagemakers notes that the concept is hardly used outside of Salafi circles (Wagemakers 2008), which may indicate that it is useful for promoting a specifically Salafi viewpoint today. Even though the phrase is not explicitly used on the website, the performance of othering is very much part of *al-walâ’ wa-al-barâ’*. Loyalty should be to that which pleases God. Disavowal includes despising infidels and being uncompromising in enmity towards them. Both loyalty and disavowal are important for complete devotion (Shavit 2015, 58–61). Uriya Shavit (61–62) also stresses that, as part of *al-walâ’ wa-al-barâ’*, Salafis prohibit resembling infidels, whether in worship, customs or worldly affairs. We may also note that, from a Salafi perspective, being a true believer must be expressed in both words (*qawl*) and works (*‘amal*). It is not enough merely to have faith. This is a reason why those who are not considered as practising Islam correctly, that is, who do not follow the Salafi *manhaj*, may be targeted as ‘others’, in need of correction.¹²

Historical Sunni–Shiite relations

From the outset, Sunnis and Shia divided over political issues that influence the conflict to this day. The political succession after Muhammad led to a split in which those we call Shiites today held that it was ‘Ali who should inherit the leadership and did not accept the caliphs as the rightful successors. Differences in theological dogma developed and variants in legal views, religious sources and interpretations, ritual practice and leadership doctrine have since influenced relations between Sunnis and Shiites. The rational approach that influences Shiite theological and juridical thought was rejected by the

Sunnis, who took a more literalist approach. In the modern era, Sunnis and Shiites have accused each other of sectarianism (*tā'ifiyya*). The accusation that the Shiites are of Zoroastrian origin has been common, which has been interpreted as a way to question the Arab identity of the many Shiites in the Mashriq region and attempt to identify them as Persian (Bengio and Litvak 2011, 7). From the 1970s, political Islamic groups caused further tension and the Arab world also saw Shiism grow as a communal identity, with growing political activism on behalf of Shiites in Iraq and Lebanon, which culminated in the revolution in Iran and the following Iran–Iraq war. The rebellion in 1991 against Saddam Hussein illustrated the sectarian divide, with Sunnis supporting the regime, possibly due to fear of a Shiite takeover (8). The 2003 American invasion brought about a Shiite-led Iraq, which causes turbulence to this day. Haykel (2010, 204) also stresses that the Shia question has increased in importance because of the American invasion of Iraq, which to a large extent benefited the Shiites politically at the expense of Sunnis. The history of power struggles and allegations between the Sunnis and Shiites continues to affect the situation today (Bengio and Litvak 2011, 1–16; see also Larsson 2016 for an overview of the background of historical and theological Sunni–Shia polemic).

Wahhabi anti-Shiism

Guido Steinberg (2011, 163) shows that Wahhabi anti-Shiism has gained attention internationally since 2005, following the civil war in Iraq. Since Wahhabism is often considered to be associated with Jihadism, many look to Saudi Arabia to find the explanation for anti-Shiism. The founder of Wahhabism, Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab, considered Shiites to be heretics, and their veneration of the imams as *shirk*.¹³ He did not spend much time writing on Shiism, largely due to his effort to build up a new society, but he did write a treatise entitled 'The refutation of the rejectionists' (*Al-radd 'alā al-rāfiḍa*). The term Rafida was also used by Ahmad ibn Hanbal to designate Shiites, referring to those who 'rejected' the legitimacy of the first caliphate and promoted 'Ali as the Prophet's rightful successor (166; see Kohlberg 2012 for more information about the historical use of the term, where he shows that its use in polemic occurred early on, but that it has been appropriated as a positive term throughout history by some Shiites, who 'reclaimed' it). The treatise *Al-radd 'alā al-rāfiḍa* shows that the main problem for 'Abd al-Wahhab was the Shiite rejection of the early Companions, which he saw as a threat to the foundation of religion, and he therefore considered Shiites to be unbelievers (*kuffār*), and more dangerous than Jews and Christians since they claimed to be Muslims (Steinberg 2011, 166–167).

Steinberg (180) further shows how complex the situation has been in Saudi Arabia between religious scholars and the royal family and that the Shiite question was always more or less on the agenda. He states that, as long as this alliance between clergy and monarchy persists, Shiites will at best remain second-class citizens (see also Meijer and Wagemakers 2013 regarding the situation of Shiites in Saudi Arabia).

Thus, the anti-Shiite rhetoric that we find in the material studied here has deep roots and it is certainly not unique. All the authorities relied on are Hanbalis, such as Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya, or present-day Wahhabi '*ulamā*' who continue to spread the anti-Shiite line within the Hanbali tradition. This long historical context serves as an explanation for why anti-Shiite polemic developed historically and why it persists within a Wahhabi context, at least in Saudi Arabia. But it is clearly also spreading to other regions and

groups, even outside the Arab world, and new contexts change relationships and views of ‘others’ (see Linge 2016, 3). Although this may be due to identity politics and the conflictual situation in the Arab region, this article will not focus much on contextual explanations for the growth of this kind of rhetoric, but will address this subject in the conclusion (for further contextual explanations, see Larsson 2016; Steinberg 2009, 2011).

Salafism in a more general sense teaches that, in order to be true Muslims, they are obliged to show their rejection and even hatred (*barāʾ*) (Haykel 2010, 208) for Shiites and to dissociate from them. Shiites are pejoratively presented as theological deviants, enemies of true Islam and true Muslims, and infidels. (Some empirical examples are presented from Muslim minority contexts in Shavit 2015.) Haykel notes that scholars from the Arabian Peninsula have been important figures in attacking Shia, and argues that other ideologues who wish to identify with an Arabian-style Salafism take up this cause in order to acquire authority on a global scale. He notes, for example, that prominent figures, such as Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri only very late, and seemingly unwillingly, set about making attacks on Shiites (Haykel 2010, 209). We shall return later to the question of why anti-Shiism appears to be such a relevant issue among at least some Swedish minority Muslims.

Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’s rejection of Shiism

False Shiite beliefs

As is to be expected, the material on the ‘Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’ website includes many texts that set out how Shiites are wrong in rejecting some of the early Companions of the Prophet. That is why they are called Rafida, ‘rejecters’. A number of studies have been made that show that Sunni polemic against Shia is based on this rejection, and the same image emerges in the material used for this article; several texts deal with or touch upon this aspect of Shiite Islam. However, the focus in the present article is on action (*manhaj*) and not theological dogma (*ʿaqīda*).

As we shall see below, a rather quietist approach is recommended, but there are no indications that one should refrain from gaining knowledge about Shiite Islam. On the contrary, to gain knowledge about Shiites is considered a good thing. One questioner asks al-Fawzan about Hussein al-Musawi’s book *Li-llāh thumma li-al-taʾrikh* (‘For God, and then for history’), concerning why he left the Shia. Al-Fawzan says that al-Musawi, having been a Shiite himself, reveals some of the Shiites’ faults, but he states that there are enough books written by people belonging to *ahl al-sunna* to make it superfluous, and he recommends instead Ibn Taymiyya’s book *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*.¹⁴ Public televised debates with Shiites are also recommended, but only if the debater is learned and has the ability to expose the Shiites.¹⁵

The un-Islamic origin of Shiism

In order to ‘other’ Shiite Islam, the ‘Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’ website describes it as being established in order to annihilate Islam. It is not considered to be Islamic and effort is put into demonstrating its un-Islamic origin. The origin of Shiite Islam is said to be connected to Zoroastrianism, or ‘fire worship’, which is a concept quite commonly used in the

material.¹⁶ As mentioned above, this has been a strategy used by Wahhabis in order to make Shiites appear as foreign, connected to a Persian heritage. There are also in the website material repeated attempts to show that the Shia has Jewish roots.¹⁷ Many texts refer to Shiism as being founded by the Jew ‘Abdullah bin Saba’, who, on the basis or various sources that are cited, is claimed to have really existed, contrary to Shiite claims that he is a fantasy figure invented by Sunnis in order to defame Shiites.

Ibn Saba’ was a Jew who professed Islam. The purpose of this was that he, although a Jew deep inside, could spread his poison in this way. He is the first who maligned Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and the rest of the Sahaba. He is the first who claimed that leadership belonged to the commander of the faithful ‘Ali (*as*). He is the first who said that Muhammad (*saas*) ordered that ‘Ali be the first caliph [...]. (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/en-jude-till-grundare/>)

Al-Fawzan is also cited as an authority in order to prove that the Shia was founded by the Jew ‘Abdullah bin Saba’. He argues that there are two kinds of Shia, one stemming from the ‘fire worshippers’ (Zoroastrians) and one from the Jews, that both are united against Islam and that the Shia was created in order to destroy Islam (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/shiah-ar-varre-an-khawaridj/>). Ibn Taymiyya is also cited to confirm this opinion (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/judarna-ibn-saba-och-paulus/>).

In the material, Shiism is rejected in various ways and there is a tendency to differentiate between various forms of Shia. Indeed, some of the texts specifically clarify that there are different kinds of Shiism. Al-Fawzan answers a question on whether it is better not to call Shiites Rafida because it may anger them. He does not answer the question explicitly, but states instead that the Rafida are one kind of Shia, and that the Shia are made up of many different groups, which are called by different names.¹⁸ The Isma‘ilis are also described as Shiites (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/rafidhah-eller-shiah/>; see also <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/rafidhah-och-nusayriyyah-ar-otrogna/>). Nusayris are described as extreme Shiites by Ibn Taymiyya, who is used as an authority.¹⁹ The Isma‘ilis are considered an infidel group, worse than Nusayris (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ibn-uthaymin-om-att-kora-ut-rafidhah-ur-moskeerna/>) and they may not even be buried in a Muslim cemetery (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/nusayriyyah-far-inte-begravas-med-muslimer/>) or be a part of a Muslim army (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/nusayriyyah-skall-inte-fa-vari-i-muslimernas-arme/>). The texts on the website deal mainly with those referred to as Rafida or Rafida Imamiyya, designating Twelver Shiism (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ledarskapet-hos-rafidhah/>).²⁰

A comparison is also made between Khawarij and Rafida, based on the authority of al-Albani. With regard to Hadith, when reported by someone from the Khawarij, it is considered as probably true, ‘because they would rather fall from the sky than lie’, al-Albani argues, citing Imam Malik. In contrast, the Rafida are considered liars, making up Hadiths as they please, and al-Albani argues that many weak Hadiths have Rafida in the chain of narrators (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/khawaridjs-logner-ar-inget-nytt/>). Here, al-Albani refers to Ibn Taymiyya, who reportedly said that there is no sect in Islam that lies as much as the Rafida.) Al-Fawzan is also cited to prove that Shiites are worse than Khawarij with regard to *‘aqida* and fear of God. He states that they should not be compared (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/shiah-ar-varre-an-khawaridj/>). The allegation of Shiite ‘misuse’ of sources is also repeated. Several texts justify rejection of the Shiites by

accusing them of misusing the Qur'an and Sunna (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/rafidhahs-anvandning-av-bevisen/>, citing al-Maqdisi). Moreover, al-Fawzan states that the Ja'fariyya and Zaydiyya schools of *fiqh* are not accepted (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ar-djafariyyah-och-zaydiyyah-erkanda-fiqh-rattskolor/>).

All this shows that the 'othering' of Shiites and Shiism is based on a variety of theological stances, approaches to the sources and views of the early Companions. We shall refer below more explicitly to the *manhaj* promoted by the website. How should a 'true Muslim' treat/relate to those defined as Rafida?

On greeting a Shiite

In the website material, we find clear advice on how to greet Rafida Shiites. This is one of the most recurring themes, and considers questions such as how to treat family members and work colleagues who are Shiites. Questions concern whether or not it is permissible to greet them with the peace greeting, *Salam*. Al-Albani answers that one should return a *Salam*, but not initiate it with people one does not consider to be Muslims (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/al-albani-om-rafidhah/>). Ibn al-'Uthaymin also argues that it is a duty to respond in a way similar to the way in which one is greeted. 'Islam is, as you know, a just religion, and gives all people what they deserve without causing them injustice' (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ibn-uthaymin-om-att-behandla-rafidhah-rattvist/>). Al-Fawzan is of a similar opinion (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/domen-for-att-halsa-pa-rafidhah-och-besvara-deras-inbjudan/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/halsa-inte-rafidhah-med-fredshalsningen/>). He also refers to the question of how to handle an invitation by a neighbour who is Rafidi, and states that one should visit him as he has that right as a neighbour; and he also states that Muhammad visited Jews when he was invited, presenting his behaviour as the norm (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/domen-for-att-halsa-pa-rafidhah-och-besvara-deras-inbjudan/>). One question concerns family members who are Isma'ilis and al-Fawzan makes it clear that the peace greeting should only be given to Muslims, clearly not including Isma'ilis (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ingen-fredshalsning-till-slaktingar-som-ar-ismailiyyah/>).

Bin Baz rejects the idea of befriending Shiites in any way because of their faulty *'aqida*. To unite with them is impossible, he states, just as it is not possible for one of the *ahl al-sunna* to unite with Jews, Christians or infidels (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/brobygge-med-rafidhah/>). Bin Baz also states that he finds it impossible to unite with Rafida even in order to fight a common enemy: He states:

ahl al-sunna are obliged to stick together, to consider themselves as one society and one body. They shall enjoin the Rafida to stick to the book of God and the Sunna of the Prophet (*sas*). If they do so, they will be considered our brothers. Then we can work with them. (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/domen-for-att-kampa-tillsammans-med-rafidhah-mot-de-otrogna/>)

The word 'enjoin' here refers to the phrase 'to command/enjoin the right and forbid/prevent the wrong' (*al-amr bi-al-ma'ruf wa-nahy 'an al-munkar*).

Shunning Shiites

The question of greeting, giving *Salam* to, a Shiite is connected to the question of *takfir*. Al-Albani advocates a moderate view on *takfir* in this respect:

I [Albani] personally do not declare *takfir* on all people in a [religious] community, a group or a people who we know for sure witness that there is no true god apart from Allah and that Muhammad is Allah's messenger. I belong to those who do not dare to declare *takfir* on them all. If you really have to declare *takfir*, then it concerns each person individually after it has been made clear that he is committing heresy and after he has been informed about the truth. (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/al-albani-om-rafidhah/>)

The same opinion is presented by Ibn al-ʿUthaymin, who states that some Shiites are common people who do not understand anything and it is therefore necessary to judge in each individual case and not to declare *takfir* on the entire group (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/judarna-ibn-saba-och-paulus/>). Al-Fawzan also shares al-Albani's view:

We only declare *takfir* on one who knows the truth and rejects it. He is a heretic. Concerning one who is unaware or follows someone blindly, you explain [the truth] to him. If he then continues with his error, then you declare *takfir* on him. (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/al-fawzan-om-takfir-pa-rafidhah-och-att-okunnighet-ar-en-ursakt/>)

In another text concerning whether Shiites are *kuffār*, al-Fawzan states:

One who worships something besides Allah is an infidel. One who claims it is obligatory to follow someone other than the Messenger (*saas*) is an infidel. It does not matter if they are Rafida or somebody else. The Rafida think that their imams are on a higher level than the messengers and that they are free from faults and that they have the right to allow and to forbid what they want. Is this not the biggest form of infidelity? (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/al-fawzan-om-takfir-pa-rafidhah-och-att-okunnighet-ar-en-ursakt-2-2/>)

Moreover, al-Fawzan differentiates between the learned among the Shiites and the laypeople, because learned people should know that what they know is false but they still follow it, he argues (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/al-fawzan-om-takfir-pa-rafidhah-och-att-okunnighet-ar-en-ursakt-2-2/>). One question concerns whether Shiites who study correct *ʿaqīda* in Saudi Arabia are Muslims or infidels. Al-Fawzan replies that knowledge is not useful if it is not put into practice. Moreover, the fact that they study and learn about the true *ʿaqīda* but do not follow it will be used as proof against them on Judgement day (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/saudiska-rafidhah-ar-inga-lekman/>).

Al-Fawzan comments further on a question regarding *takfir*. He argues that the person asking the question has only to realize that it is infidelity to worship anything other than God, to consider anyone but the Prophet as free from faults, or to speak badly about the Prophet's Companions or curse Abu Bakr and ʿUmar. The questioner is told that God has not entrusted him with the task of declaring *takfir* (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/takfir-pa-rafidhahs-lekman/>). He states elsewhere that no one who curses Abu Bakr, ʿUmar or the Companions is a Muslim (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/vi-ar-inte-alla-muslimer/>). Al-Fawzan usually recommends a rather quiet position. One should reject Shiites, avoid them and warn about them (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/vi-avsvar-oss-rafidhah-och-varnar-for-dem/>). He never recommends 'hands on' methods. Ibn al-ʿUthaymin follows a similar line and states that one should not attack the Rafida, but only give advice. 'Hostility and hate will only be greater [if you attack]' (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ibn-uthaymin-om-att-behandla-rafidhah-rattvist/>). Thus, the method promoted is to give advice and no forms of violence are recommended.

Jihad is mentioned several times, often in connection with the situation in Yemen and the Shiite population, who are called Huthis (Huthiyya) in all the texts. The Huthis are a Yemeni

rebel group in conflict with the government, inspired by a former member of the Yemeni Parliament, Husayn al-Huthi (d. 2004). The Huthis are Zaydis (Winter 2011; Day 2012), but al-Fawzan explains that Huthis are in fact Rafida Ja'fariyya (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/huthiyyah-ar-rafidhah/>). The battle against them is therefore considered a defensive war, and thus a legal jihad, in which it is obligatory for Muslims to participate. Al-Jabiri says: 'The war [*ḥarb*] against these infidel Rafida [*kafara al-rāfida*] is obligatory [*farḍ 'ayn*] for everyone who is responsible for his actions and able to contribute physically and economically, or only economically' (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/krijet-mot-huthiyyah-i-jemen-ar-djihad/>. Al-Jabiri, audio link). There are two reasons for this. First, the Huthis are not defined as a group of rebels but as heathens, heretics and Rafida, supported by Iran, who aim to eliminate Islam and the Sunna. Second, the lawful leader [*ra'īs shar'ī*, i.e. the president], 'Abdu Rabbih bin Mansur, has given this order (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/krijet-mot-huthiyyah-i-jemen-ar-djihad/>. Al-Jabiri, audio link).

When a person in power gives the order to go to war, it is obligatory for all to obey according to what I have said. The one who does not obey his order to make war on these infidel Rafida Batiniyya [...] is a war criminal who destroys the earth and defies Allah and his Messenger (saas). (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/krijet-mot-huthiyyah-i-jemen-ar-djihad/>. Al-Jabiri, audio link)

Thus, we may note that, when a battle is considered legitimate jihad, it is considered to be the individual's duty to participate. In other cases concerning individuals' ordinary daily life, the authorities call for a more quietist programme of action, with the usual strategy being to give advice, and no violent means are allowed. To declare *takfir* is presented as something that must be done in relation to individuals and not to entire groups. The section above on the Huthis also has a political dimension worth noting, which is the insistence on obeying the leader and following his call to jihad. In the local Yemeni context, the Huthis are, in addition, connected with Iran, which condemns them even more, and justifies jihad against them. This also shows how religious interpretations are affected by local circumstances and the actual historical setting.

On various relationships with Shiites

Many questions on the 'Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth' website concern situations that may affect daily life at work or in the mosque. We find a similar attitude to that revealed in the answers to questions concerning greeting. For example, al-Fawzan comments that it is a trial and a test to work with Shiites. He states that, if they do not speak about their evil, they should be left alone. However, if a Shiite speaks up about his beliefs, al-Fawzan says he should be stopped and his doubts rejected, though he does not give concrete examples of how to prevent or reject (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/korrekt-behandling-av-rafidhah/>). One question concerns how to fight the spread of Rafida peacefully. Most answers are of the sort recommending advice and clarifying faith. Al-Fawzan states that it should be done by clarifying the Sunna and the teaching of the Prophet, his Companions and *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jamā'a* (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/sa-bekampas-rafidhah-pa-ett-fredligt-satt/>). It is stressed that, if one works with Rafida, one should take care to stick to the correct religion and not feel comfortable with them or laugh with them. They should work for themselves and if possible the Sunnis should avoid them (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/forhallandet-till-arbetskamrater-som-ar-rafidhah/>, by al-Fawzan). If a Shiite wants to pray together with Sunnis it is permitted,

but he is not allowed to lead the prayer (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/forhallandet-till-rafidhah-som-arbetskamrater/>). Ibn al-ʿUthaymin states that he thinks that Rafida should be allowed into mosques to pray, and then be given advice, and he states that he has heard that this has caused many Rafida to leave the ‘slavery of their beliefs’ in favour of the teaching of *ahl al-sunna wa-al-jamāʿa* (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ibn-uthaymin-om-att-kora-ut-rafidhah-ur-moskeerna/>).

Al-Fawzan states that, even though the Shiite *ʿaqīda* must be rejected (without stating how the rejecting should take place in practice), Sunnis can have relationships with Shiites in worldly matters, such as trade, and he says this even applies to infidels. Lawful business, such as importing goods, weapons and other things that Muslims need, can be conducted with infidels (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/skillnaden-mellan-varldsliga-och-religiosa-samarbeten-med-de-oliktankande/>). Bin Baz is of the same opinion. If there is a need to do trade, it does not appear to present a major problem, but one should not love the Shiites or eat their illegally slaughtered meat (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ibn-baz-om-handel-med-rafidhah/>). Eating such meat is repeatedly rejected (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/vad-ar-domen-for-att-ga-pa-rafidhahs-brollop/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ibn-baz-om-handel-med-rafidhah/>). Al-Fawzan is clear that meat slaughtered by someone who commits *shirk*, ‘whether they are Shiites, Sufis or grave worshippers’, is forbidden (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/al-fawzan-om-shiahs-slakt-och-fiske/>).

Al-Fawzan is clearly against marriage between a Sunni and a Shiite (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/en-takfiri-eller-rafidhi-till-make/>). However, one may attend a Rafida wedding if this may provide an opportunity to help them to change their minds. Moreover, he states that if they are neighbours they have the rights of a neighbour, and one should ‘call’ them to the truth (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/vad-ar-domen-for-att-ga-pa-rafidhahs-brollop/>). Ibn Taymiyya is also cited to pronounce on the illegality of marriage with Shiites (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/domen-for-att-gifta-bort-dottrar-till-rafidhah/>).

One question asks what to do if one has Shiite parents and Bin Baz answers that one should call them to God’s religion and reject their beliefs. However, one should also treat them well, give them advice and ask God to guide them. One should not use violence. As parents, God has given them rights. These rights are valid even if a convert to Islam has Jewish or Christian parents (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/forhallandet-till-foraldrarn-a-som-ar-rafidhah/>). This shows how the scholars take care to follow the rulings of the Hanbali school, adapting them to the *manhaj* of othering Shiites.

Shiites are brothers of Satan

Several questions concern whether the Shiites are the questioners’ brothers (in faith) and of course the answer is no. Al-Fawzan is asked his opinion about ideas circulating that Sunnis should approach Shiites in order for them to come closer to each other. He answers:

Yes, if the Shiites leaves their false teaching and join us [...]. To go to them, on the other hand, and to leave the truth that we have for their falsehood will never happen, God willing. [...] This is false. Two antipodes can never unite. Never! These two antipodes will not unite! (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/da-enas-vi-med-shiah/>)

Al-Fawzan says it is forbidden to approach Shiites if they continue to stick to their teaching (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/da-enas-vi-med-shiah-2/>). In a telling passage, he also says that the Shiites are not the Sunnis' brothers. 'I swear by Allah that they are not our brothers. They are the brothers of Satan' (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/rafidhah-ar-inte-vara-broder/>). This is, as so often, based on the Shia's rejection (*takfir*) of some important early Muslims, such as the Prophet's wife 'Ai'sha. Al-Fawzan makes it clear that there are many differences in dogma (*'aqida*) between Sunnis and Shiites, and explains that the Shiites are against Islam, which means it is forbidden to say that they are their brothers (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/rafidhah-ar-mot-islam-och-muslimerna/>).

Concluding discussion

The authorities cited on the 'Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth' website are mainly contemporary Saudi '*ulamâ*' from within the Wahhabi fold, with clear Hanbali leanings, but Ibn Taymiyya and some other historical Hanbali jurists are also referred to. There are no attempts to go directly to revelation, at least not in the material studied. The strategy to prove that one is correct is rather to place total reliance on the authoritative shaykhs, who are regarded as bearers of the truth. Their fatwas and other texts are used to promote a certain *manhaj* in relation to Shiites. The notion that the position of 'Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth' represents the truth becomes clear in the image given of Shiites as infidel liars who reject and curse Companions of the Prophet. There are no reflections in the material studied on blind adherence (*taqlid*) to law schools and only one comment appears on this subject, which rejects Shiite schools of law. There is a strong sense of authority based on certain scholars who, in turn, base themselves on the Qur'an and Sunna to a large extent. In many cases though, it seems that the authoritative position given to the selected scholars allows them to give opinions without giving scriptural references.

We have considered what is written about Shiism and Shiites on the website. The tone is derogatory and Shiites are presented as liars and infidels. A lot of the material that has been excluded from this study deals with theological issues, claiming to prove that Shiites have a faulty '*'aqida*', but the present article has set out to focus mainly on how Shiites should be treated in practice, and so texts relevant to that issue have been selected. From the above, it is clear that Shiism is rejected as non-Islamic. Those considered true Muslims should avoid Shiites and have contact with them only when necessary, and then stick to certain guidelines for behaviour, which can be seen as examples of how *al-walâ' wa-al-barâ'* should be performed in practice. For example, one should not marry a Shiite, but one may attend a Shiite wedding if there is hope that may help them realize the truth. One may return a peace greeting, but not be the first to offer it. One may trade with and pray in the same mosque as Shiites, but one should then also take care to 'give advice' about the truth – peacefully. No violence is promoted as a legitimate method. Thus, the collected material gives the impression that a rather quietist method is recommended. A person is not allowed to declare *takfir* and call all Shiites as a group infidels, since cases must be individually examined. The only thing that the texts present as being strictly forbidden is eating meat slaughtered by a Shiite, which is justified with the view that Shiites are non-Muslims and their slaughter is therefore deemed to be *haram*. If these recommendations are followed in a minority setting, it would not make

for peaceful relationships, since Shiites are called ‘brothers of Satan’ and they should continuously be ‘advised’. However, an ‘isolationist’ tendency is also found, since there are no recommendations to actively seek out Shiites in order to ‘advise’ them.

Why is this ‘othering’ so important today? In a situation where there are many conflicts regarding the interpretation and practice of Islam, it is understandable that such othering occurs. Throughout history, there has been animosity between Shiites and Sunnis, which has become more violent in times of crisis (Hurvitz 2011). Earlier research has also shown that old conflicts and theological differences have come to the fore and legitimize violence against the perceived other (Steinberg 2009; Larsson 2016). The current situation, with many conflicts in the MENA region, further accentuates ‘othering’ between groups.²¹ Moreover, the Saudi position and its strong Wahhabi orientation conflicts with other more liberal Islamic interpretations, and most certainly with Shiism, Iran being an arch enemy of Saudi Arabia. The specific Saudi context is also reflected in the website material in a letter written by al-Madkhali, which is included in the section on Shia, where al-Madkhali thanks Saudi Arabia for executing terrorists and trouble makers, and asks God to increase the stability of the kingdom and extinguish its enemies and above all the Rafida, who were offended by these punishments.²²

Moreover, the so-called Islamic State movement probably also influences this particular interpretation of Islam. The texts studied mainly focus on Shiism, but the website carries many texts rejecting other Sunni interpretations, not the least Islamist ones, because it recommends a politically passive attitude, which includes loyalty to leaders, a long-standing trend in Hanbali *fiqh*.²³ This background may explain the focus on a ‘quietist’ *manhaj* of ‘othering’ among the Saudi scholars. They are participants in a conflict over authoritative interpretation, safeguarding the borders of what they regard as orthodoxy.

But why is it relevant to address this case of ‘othering’ in a Swedish minority group? As mentioned at the outset, reports show that some Shiites in Sweden feel threatened by Sunnis, which makes it relevant to investigate the content of Sunni polemical texts. With regard to the website studied, those responsible for it choose what to publish and it requires some time and effort, since the Arabic material is translated into Swedish, which suggests that they translate what is considered relevant to a Swedish reading audience, promoting a distancing and non-violent approach to individual Shiites. In a Swedish minority setting, this ‘passive’ othering may be understood as appropriate to avoid direct confrontation with other minority groups. Simultaneously, distancing is clearly recommended and no means of creating dialogue are suggested. Meetings or trade with Shiites should be taken as an opportunity to inform them of ‘the truth’, which probably does not promote harmonious co-existence, but rather encourages separation between the groups. Perhaps this *manhaj* can be explained by the Swedish context. Salafism can be described as a counter-movement, which opposes immorality and capitalism, but perhaps also fears taking more space, since there is a strong awareness of both the ideal of secularization and privatization of religion, and of Islamophobic attitudes, and this may make it more attractive to promote a more ‘quietist’ *manhaj* in order not to cause alarm or gain attention from the public or media (Olsson forthcoming).²⁴

The *manhaj* can be explained as a ‘Traditionist resistance’, where active correction is not recommended. It is a theological position that requires loyalty to the image of a golden past, when the Prophet and the pious predecessors are presented as moral paragons to be imitated. Active engagement in establishing strict boundaries between in-group and

out-group seems to be very important; it underlies group identity and supports a strict division of people into ‘us’ and ‘them’. This makes it important to elaborate on ‘the other’ and point out what makes them wrong, which may explain why so much material on the ‘Maktabah Dâr-ul-Hadîth’ website is devoted to othering.

The polemic against Shiites on this website seems to be originating mainly from Salafis in Sweden, and the emphasis on creating boundaries between in- and out-group may explain this. This may be compared to the situation in Belgium, where Salafis, or already ‘radicalized’ movements, are the main proponents of anti-Shiite rhetoric (see Puelings 2010, 36–37).

For most of the Muslims [in Belgium], the demonization of Shi‘a Islam is not an issue. Only already radicalized circles, Salafi and Salafiya Jihadiya, consider the new political anti-Shi‘a discourse as a mobilizing factor. As a matter of fact, recently, ‘conferences’ treating this theme have been organized in Belgian radical mosques. The tone is denigrating and xenophobic towards the Shi‘a community. A trend most concerning, that merits further follow-up. (Puelings 2010, 36)²⁵

Jelle Puelings concludes the report on Sunni–Shia conflicts by saying: ‘It seems unlikely that large-scale violence between the different currents of Islam will occur in Europe itself, not in the least due to the small number of Shiites’ (35). This may certainly be the case. However, if the Sunni fundamentalist trend increases the identity struggle and group consolidation strategies, this may cause concern to the small number of European Shiites, and further increase intra-Islamic polemic.

Notes

1. For more information on the Swedish context, see Olsson 2012.
2. One of this article’s anonymous reviewers commented that this aspect is quite interesting, given that the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts could well be used as proof of Salafis’ ideas about Shiites. The website does not build on these conflicts much, but some articles do address them. Many articles criticize the so-called Islamic State movement, for example, and there are also articles where, for example, the Nusayriyya sect is rejected, and in this sense the Syrian conflict is certainly used and built upon, but not as explicitly as one might expect. The search term ‘Syria’ or ‘Iraq’ (in Swedish) pulls up several articles, but they are not prominently exposed on the website and one must search under other headings to find the articles.
3. The focus on cleansing and education among Salafis is most likely inspired by the Islamic scholar Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914–1999), who stressed this as part of his quietist *manhaj* (see Wagemakers 2016, 82–83).
4. A long list of groups is presented, including, Ahabash, Ansar al-Sunnah, Ashariyya, Bahai, Jabriyya, Jahmiyya, Jama‘at al-Tabligh, Hizb al-Tahrir, Iqwan al-Muslimin, Khawarij, Maturidiyya, Murji‘a, Mu‘tazila, Qadariyya, Ahmadiyya, Quraniyya, Qutbiyya, Shia, Sufism, Sururiyya. Thus, it is clear that both political and theological positions are rejected under this heading.
5. The subheadings (in Swedish) are: ‘Abdul-‘Aziz Âlûsh-Shaykh om [about] Shi‘ah (1); Abû Hâmid al-Maqdisî om Shi‘ah (1); al-Albânî om Shi‘ah (4); al-Âlûsî om Shi‘ah (1); al-Djâbirî om Shi‘ah (1); al-Faqîhî om Shi‘ah (2); al-Fawzân om Shi‘ah (39); al-Isfarâyînî om Shi‘ah (1); al-Luhaydân om Shi‘ah (4); al-Mûsawî om Shi‘ah (1); al-Qâri om Shi‘ah (3); al-Wâdî om Shi‘ah (6); an-Nadjmî om Shi‘ah (2); an-Nawawî om Shi‘ah (3); as-Subayyil om Shi‘ah (1); as-Suyûtî om Shi‘ah (2); Avvisning av Shi‘ahs tvivel och argument [Rejection of the doubts and arguments of the Shiites] (14); Fâtimiyyah (3); Ibn Bardjas om Shi‘ah (1); Ibn Bâz om Shi‘ah (7); Ibn Kathîr om Shi‘ah (3); Ibn Mâniom Shi‘ah (2); Ibn Taymiyya om

Shí'ah (34); Ibn 'Uthaymín om Shí'ah (12); Ibn-ul-Bannâ om Shí'ah (1); Ibn-ul-Qayyim om Shí'ah (1); Ismâ'îliyyah (5); Muhammad al-Madkhali om Shí'ah (1); Nusayriyyah (10); Rabi' al-Madkhali om Shí'ah (15); Raslân om Shí'ah (1); Shí'ah och [and] Allâh (10); Shí'ah och Fiqh (6); Shí'ah och profetens följeslagare [Shia and the Companions of the Prophet] (25); Shí'ah och profetens hustrur [Shia and the wives of the Prophet] (3); Shí'ah och Qur'ânen (111), al-Intisâr li Kitâb-il-'Azîz al-Djabbâr (105); Zayd al-Madkhali om Shí'ah (1). The number in parenthesis indicates the number of articles in the subheading (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/category/manhadj/>).

6. In the texts concerning Shiites and Shia Islam, we find several that assert that Sufism is rejected. Sufis are among the heretics and grave worshippers (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/al-fawzan-om-shiahs-slakt-och-fiske/>). Al-Fawzan states that most Sufis today are grave worshippers. They worship graves, and they build shrines, ask dead people for help and worship them next to God, which is described as infidelity and idolatry (<http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ar-alla-shia-otroigna/>). There is also an entire section on Sufism, similar to that on the Shia.
7. Some of Ibn Taymiyya's students are also frequently mentioned in Salafi circles, such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350), al-Dhahabi (d. 1348) and Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), who wrote *Al-sira al-nabawiyya*, which is used by many Salafis. Another frequently mentioned scholar is Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali (d. 1393), a *tafsir* expert and student of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Some scholars from other traditions are also frequently used, such as the Egyptian Shafi'i scholar Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 1448), who wrote *Fath al-bârî*, a widely read commentary on al-Bukhari's collection of Hadiths (13 volumes, published online at <https://archive.org/>; accessed September 6, 2016).
8. Advice, in Arabic *naṣiḥa*, is the word used for the literature genre Fürstenspiegel. However, the practical (religio-juridical) aspect of *naṣiḥa* as it developed within the Hanbali tradition is a method of influencing leaders by using a non-violent approach. The leader should be obeyed and religious scholars should give political leaders advice, or good counsel, as part of the principle of *al-amr bi-al-ma'rûf wa-nahy 'an al-munkar* (see Black 2011, 161; see further footnote 19 below).
9. Al-Fawzan is listed as one of the most influential Muslims in 2016 by 'The Muslim 500', where he is described as follows:

He is considered to be the most senior scholar of the Salafi movement in Saudi Arabia. Sheikh Saleh is a member of the council of senior scholars and committee for fatwa and research. He has authored over 35 books and is one of the major muftis on the program *Noor 'Ala Al Darb*, one of the oldest and most famous programs broadcasted on the Qur'an radio channel, where a number of major scholars answer questions and deliver fatwas. (<http://themuslim500.com/profile/al-fawzan-sheikh-saleh-bin-fawzan-new>; accessed April 22, 2016)

10. Al-Madkhali is described by 'The Muslim 500' as follows:

Sheikh Rabee Ibn Haadi 'Umayr al-Madkhali is one of the most radical thinkers in the Salafi movement. He is an influential writer and speaker whose influence has led to an independent faction within Salafism. Al-Madkhali's adherents are known as Madkhali Salafis and make up one of the most significant and influential branches inside the Salafi movement. (<http://themuslim500.com/profile/sheikh-rabi-ibn-haadi-umayr-al-madkhali>; accessed April 22, 2016)

11. There are various views among Salafis concerning the authority of specific traditions in the Sunna, but these will not be elaborated upon here.
12. The question of faith, *imân*, was a controversial one very early on. The Hanbali view, presented by Ibn Hanbal, held that true faith is expressed in words and deeds. In addition, having the right intention was stressed, as well as attachment to the Sunna. Hence, both

visible and audible witness was required of a true believer, and faith had to be rooted in the heart. See Gardet 2012 for an overview of various stances on faith.

13. The partisans of ‘Ali, the Shiites, developed a doctrine of the infallible imam, who has divinely inspired knowledge and divinely granted authority, and thus challenged the Sunni view of the caliphate as the rightful line of succession to the Prophet. Several ritual practices and dogmatic teachings unique to the Shia developed, based on this understanding of the imams (see Madelung 2012a).
14. See <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/al-fawzan-om-al-musawis-bok-lillah-thumma-lit-tarikh/>. This book is also recommended in <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/den-mest-omfattande-boken-mot-rafidhah/>, by al-Fawzan. See also al-Jamil 2010 on Ibn Taymiyya’s Shia polemics.
15. See, for example, <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/villkoret-for-att-fora-offentlig-debatt-med-rafidhah/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/villkoret-for-att-fora-offentlig-debatt-med-rafidhah-2/>. All ‘Maktabah Dār-ul-Hadīth’ web pages last accessed on February 19, 2016.
16. See <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/varning-for-irans-zoroastriska-film-om-allahs-sandebud/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/shiahs-tva-kallor-judendomen-och-elddyrkan/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/shiahs-forvrangning-ar-varre-an-judarnas-och-de-kristnas/>.
17. See <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/shiahs-tva-kallor-judendomen-och-elddyrkan/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/24-al-qummis-fjarde-forvrangning-av-al-baqarah/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/endast- dessa-fornekar-ibn-sabas-existens/>.
18. <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/att-kalla-shiah-for-rafidhah/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/fatimiyyah-ar-kanda-hycklare/>; <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/varfor-var-inte-fatimiyyahs-kalifat-giltigt/>. Rafida, Imamiyya, Ja‘fariyya, Batiniyya, Zaydiyya, Qaramita and Fatimids are mentioned. The Ja‘fariyya refers to the legal school followed by Twelver Shiites, also called Imamiyya, while the Zaydiyya is another legal branch (Nasr 2012; Madelung 2012a). The Zaydiyya is strong in Yemen, where it is followed by around 35% of the Shiite population (Day 2012). The term Batiniyya refers to an allegorical reading of scripture that stresses the inner (*bāṭin*) meaning of the text (Hodgson 2012). The Qaramita is a branch of Isma‘ili Shia (Madelung 2012b).
19. See also Friedman 2005 for an analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa on the Nusayri ‘Alawis, where he states that they committed apostasy (*ridda*). The same article shows how the fatwa has an impact today, partly due to the Syrian ‘Alawi leaders and community, which appears in a large number of apologetic texts.

After centuries of being marginalized, Ibn Taymiyya’s Hanbali School regained its prominent position in the modern period in the form of the Wahhabi movement and the Saudi state. Today his ideology gives inspiration to many Muslim circles. Since the 1970s, the weak and oppressed Nusayris, today called Alawis, dominate the ruling Baath party in Syria, Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwas seem to have gained new dimensions and have greater political significance than they originally had. (Friedman 2005, 362)

Friedman concludes his article with a comment on the impact of Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwas, showing how texts from the medieval period are used and impact on today’s world.

The case of Ibn Taymiyya’s attack against the sect clearly shows the difference between theory and practice in Islam. It is also an example of the direct influence of events of the Middle Ages on modern history in the Muslim world. It is possible to prove on an academic basis that Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwas against the Nusayriyya were originally dealing with narrow and local cases and had influence on a short-term basis. Also we have suggested that it was based on an incorrect assumption and on oral and partial information. However, one cannot doubt the potential effect of these fatwas on modern Muslim society. (363)

See also al-Jamil 2010. We may also note that European Salafis often use medieval sources and interpret them in a way suitable for their own context. Examples show that texts stressing

- active othering are reinterpreted and understood to recommend passive othering in the form of segregation and avoiding others. See Olsson forthcoming.
20. The Shiites constitute about 15% of Muslims (12% Twelver Shia and 3% Zaydis and Isma‘ilis). Most live in the Mashriq region, which may explain the increasing tensions between Shiites and Sunnis there. A fear of a growing Shia Crescent threatening the Sunni dominance has been voiced and there has been an increase in sectarian violence (Bengio and Litvak 2011, 1–2).
 21. It is not permitted to register religious affiliation in a Swedish census, and there is no method of reliably assessing the number of Sunnis and Shiites in Sweden. Arguably, more Shiites arrived with the waves of immigration caused by the conflicts in the Levant, which may of course affect notions of the balance of power between the Sunnis and Shiites in Sweden. However, the polemic against Shiites was part and parcel of Salafi othering long before the present situation, and is thus clearly not caused by present demographics. Nevertheless, demographic changes may of course cause an accentuation of the othering of Shiites. But let us not forget that there are several other groups that are being othered on this website, where the othering of groups and individuals seems to follow a rather standard model of Salafi othering. This is in line with Haykel’s (2010, 209) argument, cited above, that scholars from the Arabian Peninsula influence those who wish to identify with an Arab-style Salafism, in order to acquire global authority, and a strong anti-Shia polemic is present in their rhetoric.
 22. <http://www.darulhadith.com/v2/ett-stort-tack-till-saudiarabien-for-att-ha-avrattat-terrorister-och-upprorsmakare/>. The original text is found at al-Madkhali’s website (<http://rabee.net/ar/articles.php?cat=8&id=306>. Accessed April 20, 2016, published 22/3/1437 [January 2, 2016]). The letter is therefore probably related to the Saudi execution on January 2, 2016, of the Shiite scholar Nimr al-Nimr, who openly criticized the Saudi government.
 23. Ibn Hanbal stresses in his *Kitāb al-sunna* that the leader (*imām*) must be obeyed, without considering his moral quality. Even jihad should be performed, regardless of whether the leader is an evildoer or a just man. Moreover, it is stressed that one has the right to refuse to obey if the leader attempts to impose disobedience to God (*ma’shiyya*), but it is not permitted to call for a revolt (see Laoust 2012). This rule of obedience has always dominated Hanbali discourse and is the stance of present-day Wahhabi scholars. In Salafi Jihadi interpretations, this rule is acknowledged, but may be circumvented by defining of current leaders as illegitimate.
 24. This context may be illustrated by a specific case in Sweden. A Green Party (Miljöpartiet) politician (Yasri Khan) resigned in 2016. The background was an interview he gave commenting on the earlier resignation of another Green Party politician (Mehmet Kaplan), who had been criticized for eating dinner with right-wing Turkish activists. The interview with Khan attracted major media attention, since he refused to shake hands with the reporter, who was a woman. This caused a debate about whether it is possible for (practising) Muslims to be active in Swedish politics, and also discussions on how much religion (Islam) in public space can be tolerated.
 25. Pueling is referring to CUTA (Belgian Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis), *De Nieuwe soenni-sjia Polemieek: Impact op Moslimgemeenschappen in België?* (The new Sunni-Shiiah Controversy: Impact on Muslim communities in Belgium), September 2, 2009, 3 (report requested by EGMONT).

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