University of Groningen

“Among the Believers Are Men”

Nanninga, Pieter

Published in:
Numen

DOI:
[10.1163/15685276-12341493](https://doi.org/10.1163/15685276-12341493)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2018

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Nanninga, P. (2018). “Among the Believers Are Men”: How the Islamic State Uses Early-Islamic Traditions to Shape Its Martyr Biographies. *Numen*, 65(2-3), 165-184. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685276-12341493>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the “Taverne” license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

“Among the Believers Are Men”

How the Islamic State Uses Early-Islamic Traditions to Shape Its Martyr Biographies

Pieter Nanninga

Department of Middle Eastern Studies, University of Groningen,
Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat 26, 9712 EK Groningen, The Netherlands
p.g.t.nanninga@rug.nl

Abstract

This article examines how the Islamic State has framed its extraordinary losses of manpower by analyzing the role of early-Islamic traditions in the martyr biographies included in its magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. After exploring how IS has composed these biographies, by focusing on their narrative structure and central themes, the article demonstrates that early-Islamic traditions about jihad and martyrdom form an important subtext of these articles. They contain many implicit references to stories about Muḥammad and his companions, by means of which IS attempts to define and authorize the status of its killed operatives as martyrs and therefore as potentially powerful witnesses of its cause. Yet, the article subsequently argues, the martyrs as portrayed in the magazines are also thoroughly modern characters reflecting contemporary processes such as globalization, individualization, and deculturation. IS thus invests classical Islamic traditions with new meanings by employing them in new contexts. Hence, the article concludes that understanding the dynamic role of Islamic scriptures in IS's discourse is crucial if we are to grasp the composition and appeal of IS's biographies and therefore also how IS frames its losses and motivates actions of self-sacrifice among its operatives and supporters.

Keywords

Dabiq – Islam – Islamic State – jihadism – martyrologies – *Rumiyah*

Introduction

The number of fighters of the Islamic State (IS) has been decimated in recent years. The crumbling of its territories in Iraq and Syria has been accompanied by the loss in battles or through airstrikes of thousands or even tens of thousands of its operatives. This raises the question of how IS has dealt with these extraordinary losses in its media releases. How has it framed the deaths of its operatives in its attempts to keep morale high among its fighters and supporters? And what is the role of the concept of martyrdom and, particularly, early-Islamic traditions about the battles and deaths of the first Muslims in this respect? This article addresses these questions by exploring how IS attributes meanings to the deaths of its fighters in a collection of martyr biographies published in its (online) magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*.¹ In particular, it will examine how IS uses early-Islamic traditions about jihad and martyrdom for this purpose.

IS's martyr biographies are part of an established literary genre through which jihadist groups have attributed meaning to the lives and deaths of their fighters since the 1980s. These texts are often hagiographical and serve strategic purposes, prominent among which is to provide the audience with inspiring and empowering role models. These sources are therefore not very helpful for studying the actual backgrounds, life courses, and motivations of the jihadists portrayed in them. Instead, this article will focus on how IS has *reconstructed* their lives in its biographies by using Islamic traditions about the battles of the prophet Muḥammad and his companions. By examining these understudied sources as part of the wider genre of jihadist martyrologies, the article aims to contribute to our understanding of IS's strategies to frame its losses and, particularly, its use of early-Islamic traditions in this respect.

After introducing the literary genre of martyr biographies, the article will explore how IS has composed its obituaries by analyzing their narrative structure and central themes. In the second part, I will examine the role of early-Islamic traditions in the biographies. The second section will demonstrate that these traditions form a significant subtext of the obituaries and are crucial for understanding the composition and appeal of these texts. Yet, it argues that by including these early-Islamic traditions in biographies that are distinctly modern, IS invests them with new meanings, illustrating the dynamic role of Islamic scriptures in IS's discourse.

1 The transcription used by IS in its magazines is not always consistent with the standard transcription used in this article. I have retained IS's spelling in two instances: for the titles of the magazines and in direct quotations from the magazines.

Jihadist Martyrologies

The rise of the literary genre of martyr biographies is a relatively new development in Sunni Islam. The concept of martyrdom (*istishhād*) was already developed in the formative period of Islam. In the Qur'ān, the Arabic term for martyr, *shahīd* (pl. *shuhadā'*), is primarily used in its literal meaning of "witness" (Kohlberg 2010). Yet the Qur'ān does repeatedly refer to martyrs as those who were killed "in the way of God" (*fī sabīl Allāh*), claiming that these persons are not dead, but well-provided for in Paradise (Q.3:169–170; 9:111). The Ḥadīth, and particularly the prophetic biographies (*sīra*) and the reports about Muḥammad's raids (*maḡhāzi*), provide more elaborate accounts on early-Islamic martyrs, often vividly describing the lives and deaths of Muslims who were killed on the battlefields (Kohlberg 1997: 5–19). However, in contrast to the predominantly Shi'ite *maqātil* literature on the violent deaths of Muslims (see Günther 1994), Sunni Islam lacks a consistent martyrology (Cook 2007: 52).

Martyr biographies have nevertheless become a highly popular genre among global jihadists since the 1980s. The Palestinian sheikh 'Abdullāh 'Azzām popularized the theme of martyrdom during the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan (Hatina 2014: 137; Cook 2017: 154–170). In writings and speeches 'Azzām emphasized the significance of martyrdom as "the essence of religion" and the summit of jihad. He celebrated martyrs in reports that were highly hagiographical and miraculous (e.g., 'Azzām 1986). These writings would lay the foundations of jihadist martyrologies. From Afghanistan, 'Azzām's "grand narrative of jihad through martyrdom" spread throughout the Muslim world (Kepel 2008: 78). Jihadists who were killed in the Bosnian War, for example, were celebrated as martyrs in 'Azzām-styled biographies such as the popular audio-tape collection *In the Hearts of the Green Birds* (1997). Moreover, martyrdom became the "formative ethos" of al-Qā'ida (Moghadam 2008: 78–85; Hatina 2014: 143–154), which cultivated the execution of "martyrdom operations" (commonly known as suicide attacks) and praised the lives and deaths of its martyrs in extensive video releases (Nanninga 2014). These practices were subsequently appropriated by al-Qā'ida's affiliates in the 21st century, most notable among which was IS's forerunner, al-Qā'ida in Iraq (Hafez 2007; Cook 2017: 163–167).

Led by the Jordanian Abū Muṣ'ab al-Zarqāwī between 2004 and 2006, al-Qā'ida in Iraq would further popularize the genre of jihadist martyrologies, among other things by starting an influential series entitled *From the Biographies of Eminent Martyrs*. In more than fifty issues, al-Qā'ida in Iraq and its successors (the Mujāhidīn Shūrā Council in 2006 and the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006–2013) portrayed the backgrounds, activities, and deaths of the

group's fighters from Iraq and abroad (*Min sīr a'lām al-shuhadā'* 2005–2012). This series, in turn, constituted an important example for martyrologies by jihadist groups in other conflict areas (e.g., Sharq Ifrīqiya 2013; Shamūkh al-Islām Forum 2013; Ḥarakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn 2015–2016).

At the time when the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria announced the establishment of a caliphate — that is, on 29 June 2014 — the genre of martyr biographies was well established among jihadists. The biographies typically had a popularizing rather than a scholarly character, largely lacking extensive quotations from Islamic scriptures and wide-ranging elaborations on Islamic concepts and doctrines. Instead, they were primarily aimed at providing inspiring role models for jihadists and their sympathizers all over the world. IS would build upon and further develop this tradition. Over the last few years, in hundreds of written eulogies, photo sets, and videos it has celebrated the lives and deaths of men killed through airstrikes, in battles, and in suicide attacks. Most notable among these eulogies is a series entitled “Among the Believers Are Men,” which is included in the group's magazines *Dabiq* (issues 7–15) and *Rumiyah* (issues 1, 3, 8, and 10).² These biographies, which range in length from between one and six pages, provide an interesting view on how IS gives meaning to the deaths of its fighters and how it uses classical Islamic traditions for this purpose. The next section will examine how IS has composed these texts in order to represent these individuals and, indirectly, itself to its audience.

“Among the Believers Are Men”

In the first three years of IS's caliphate, it published fifteen biographies as part of the series “Among the Believers Are Men,” featuring a total number of sixteen martyrs who were all killed in battles or through airstrikes.³ Most of them were foreign fighters, having migrated to Iraq, Syria, and (in one case) the Philippines from the United Kingdom (3), Canada (2), Germany (2), the United States, Tunisia, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and

2 IS published the magazines *Dabiq* (English), *Dār al-Islām* (French), *Istok* (Russian), and *Konstantiniyye* (Turkish) until the late summer of 2016, when they were replaced by the new monthly, multiple-language magazine *Rumiyah* (“Rome”). The three articles in *Dār al-Islām* entitled “Il est parmi les croyants des hommes ...” have been excluded from this analysis, as they do not consist of biographies per se, but of pieces attributed to the wives and companions of the killed fighters.

3 The biography included in *Dabiq* 2016c focuses on two Canadian brothers.

Malaysia. These men include several high-profile figures, such as the Saudi Arabian-born ideologue Abū Mālik al-Tamīmī (a.k.a. Abū Mālik Anas al-Nashwān), the leading American media operative Abū Sulaymān al-Shāmī (a.k.a. Ahmad Abousamra), and the Kuwaiti-born British executioner "Jihadi John" (a.k.a. Abū Muḥārib al-Muhājir and Mohammed Emwazi).⁴ In addition to these foreign fighters, the biographies feature two high-profile figures from Iraq and Afghanistan who joined IS (or its forerunners) in their countries of birth: Shaykh Abū Ṭalḥa 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Khādim al-Khurāsānī, a former IS leader in Afghanistan, and Ḥudhayfa al-Baṭāwī, a well-known commander of the Islamic State of Iraq until his death in 2011. The series thus typically features experienced and authoritative figures from different regions of the world, who are obviously selected as (potentially) inspiring role models for the international, English-speaking target audiences of the magazines.

Despite the rather diverse backgrounds and life courses of these men, the narrative structure, themes, and motifs of their biographies in IS's magazines show remarkable similarities. They are typically divided into four narrative segments, a structure IS has largely adopted from previous jihadist martyr biographies (cf. *In the Hearts* 1997; *Min sīr a'lām al-shuhadā'* 2005–2012).

1 *Embracing Jihad*

In the first part, the biographies in *Dabiq* and *Rumīyah* depict the background of the martyrs and their life-courses before joining IS. They typically emphasize their well-off families (e.g. *Dabiq* 2015d: 40; *Dabiq* 2016b: 50), prestigious education (e.g. *Rumīyah* 2017b: 41), and notable jobs (e.g. *Dabiq* 2015c: 40). This can be explained as an attempt to counter the view that IS mainly attracts social failures without opportunities in their respective societies. In addition, the descriptions of the prominent backgrounds of the men indicates that they gave up comfortable lives to devote themselves to the right cause.

Subsequently, the biographies typically emphasize the piousness of the men, despite being surrounded by unbelief (*kufṛ*). Those from the West grew up in an environment "rampant with crime and corruption" (*Dabiq* 2015f: 38) "where the ills of society are widespread" (*Rumīyah* 2016b: 14), and their families are criticized for not following the true path of Islam, or even for being apostates (*murtaddīn*; e.g., *Dabiq* 2016b: 50). At a certain point in their lives, however, the men started to follow the pure creed (*'aqīda*) and method

4 As this article is primarily interested in IS's representation of the men rather than their factual life-courses, it uses their names as provided in the biographies — which are usually their *kunya*s (*noms-de-guerre*) — rather than their names of birth.

(*manhaj*), becoming shining examples of true Muslims in a context of darkness. Most of them are said to have studied the classical sources and the *shari'a* extensively, as well as authors such as Ibn Taymiyya and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (e.g., *Dabiq* 2015b: 30; *Dabiq* 2015d: 40; *Dabiq* 2016b: 50; *Rumiyah* 2017b: 40). Moreover, the men acted according to their faith, for example by practicing *da'wa* ("invitation," proselytizing), but also by performing additional fasting and prayers. Half of the articles describe how the martyrs loved to perform (voluntary) night prayers (*qiyām al-layl*) and most of them are said to regularly recite the Qur'ān, some having memorized it entirely. The men are thus portrayed as exemplary Muslims. In this way, IS addresses the criticism that it represents a corrupted form of Islam and has "brainwashed" its recruits.

The first part of the biographies typically ends by narrating how the men turned from pious Muslims to jihad fighters (*mujāhidūn*). According to the biographies, "the crimes committed against Ahlus-Sunnah [Sunnis]" across the world, and particularly in Syria, were an important motivation for them to embrace the jihad (*Dabiq* 2015f: 38; *Dabiq* 2015g: 55; *Rumiyah* 2016a: 14). After watching jihadist media releases, the men started to acknowledge IS's role as the defender of (Sunni) Muslims, the biographies indicate, whereupon they decided to join the jihad (e.g., *Dabiq* 2015a: 47; *Dabiq* 2015f: 38; *Dabiq* 2016c: 70). The first part of the biographies thus narrates how these men, as exemplary Muslims, came to recognize IS as the true and authentically Islamic vanguard of Muslims, by means of which IS attempts to provide credibility for its cause.

2 *Hijra*

The second part of the biographies describes how the men joined IS. Some of them are framed as having a longer history in jihad already, either in regions such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen (*Dabiq* 2015d: 40; *Rumiyah* 2017b: 41), or as members of IS's forerunners in Iraq (*Dabiq* 2015c: 40–42; *Dabiq* 2015d: 40). These men are portrayed as experienced fighters who had gone through many hardships, often including imprisonment, yet had persevered in their faith (e.g., *Dabiq* 2015b: 30; *Rumiyah* 2016a: 29). In other cases, the men featured in the magazines migrated directly to Syria in the period after 2011. The biographies emphasize that these men left their jobs, belongings, and families to join the group. Abū Maṣṣūr al-Muhājir, for example, migrated from Australia at the age of 22, thus missing the birth of his first son and the childhood of his three daughters "in order to bring triumph to the religion" (*Rumiyah* 2016a: 15). The biographies highlight that all these men did not care about this world (*dunya*), but eagerly sacrificed their earthly positions and possessions for their cause.

The "migration" (*hijra*) to the caliphate itself is often described briefly, but sometimes more details are provided. The biography of "Jihadi John," for example, narrates how he was able to mislead the British secret services and travelled through Europe for two months before arriving in Syria (*Dabiq* 2016a: 22–23; see also *Dār al-Islām* 2016). This too, shows that the men had to overcome severe hardships for their cause. Moreover, the biographies indicate that several of them first ended up in "deviant" groups such as the Free Syrian Army or Jabhat al-Nuṣra (*Dabiq* 2015f: 38; *Dabiq* 2015g: 55–56; *Dabiq* 2016a: 23; *Rumīyah* 2016a: 15–16; *Rumīyah* 2016b: 15; *Rumīyah* 2017b: 41–42). Yet, as the texts explain, the men gradually discovered that these groups represent corrupted versions of Islam, after which they defected to the truly Islamic defender of Muslims, IS. Their oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) to Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī usually concludes this part of the biographies, and thus the men's long search for the true path.

3 *Caliphate Soldiers*

The third part of the biographies narrates the men's activities inside the caliphate. This part emphasizes the brotherhood between the fighters, as is illustrated by men giving away their gun or even their concubine to fellow fighters (*Dabiq* 2016a: 23; *Dabiq* 2016c: 72). It also includes lengthy descriptions of their piousness and noble characters, often highlighting the men's courage in particular. Their participation in battles is detailed at length, typically including examples of their bravery, such as helping wounded brothers in dangerous situations (*Dabiq* 2015f: 38) or volunteering for risky operations (*Dabiq* 2016c: 71–72; *Rumīyah* 2016a: 16). It is striking to note that ten out of the sixteen men featured in the biographies reportedly got wounded in battles or by airstrikes, with injuries varying from bullet wounds (*Dabiq* 2016a: 23; *Dabiq* 2016c: 72) to losing a leg (*Dabiq* 2015b: 30; *Dabiq* 2015e: 41). Despite their wounds and handicaps, however, the men insisted on returning to the battlefields, where they continued their struggles (e.g. *Dabiq* 2015f: 38; *Dabiq* 2016c: 71–72; *Rumīyah* 2016b: 15). This again illustrates the biographies' emphasis on the men's sacrifices and their dedication to their cause. In most biographies, the men even explicitly indicate that they hoped to be killed, and thus to gain martyrdom. Media operative Abū Sulaymān al-Shāmī, for instance, repeatedly requested permission to carry out a "martyrdom operation." He was eventually killed by a missile striking his house and thus, his biography relates, "he achieved what he desired most, and the story of his jihad ended just as he had wanted at its beginning: with martyrdom for the cause of Allah" (*Rumīyah* 2017b: 45). The third part of the biographies thus continues to emphasize the willingness of IS's operatives to make sacrifices by suffering and even dying for the group's cause.

4 *Martyrdom*

The fourth part describes the martyrdom of the men, often highlighting the honorable occasion of their deaths. Some are killed during Ramaḍān or the first ten days of Dhū al-Hijja (*Dabiq* 2015h: 57; *Rumiyah* 2016b: 15), one is killed just after leaving a mosque (*Dabiq* 2015h: 57), and others performed prayers or uttered the *shahāda* (testimony of faith) or *takbīr* (the phrase “God is the greatest”) just before their deaths (*Dabiq* 2015a: 49; *Dabiq* 2016b: 51; *Rumiyah* 2017d: 30). An illustrative example is provided by the biography of the British fighter Abū Qudāma al-Miṣrī, who is said to have been participating in a battle against the Syrian regime when one of his brothers was shot by a sniper. While none of the other fighters dared to rescue the injured man who was lying screaming on the street, “Abu Qudama found time to pray, raised himself up from sujūd [prostration] dusted his hair out and said ‘Are we ready? Then let’s go!’” He then rushed towards his wounded brother, yet the sniper struck again and shot him in the head. Although his skull was totally shattered, his obituary reads, he repeatedly uttered the *shahāda* while being driven to the hospital, after which he died (*Dabiq* 2015a: 48–49). Episodes like these again testify of the men’s pioussness, courage, and noble characters.

The closing remarks of the biographies usually consist of a supplication to God to accept the deceased as a martyr, sometimes followed by a statement that he is an example to be followed. Blood is a recurring theme in this respect; for example, in phrases such as “May your blood be a light that enlightens the way for us so that we may tread in your footsteps” (*Dabiq* 2015d: 40). As in many other martyrologies (Cook 2007: 117–118), the biographies often relate the theme of blood to purification and fertility, expressing the idea that the blood of the martyrs purifies and nourishes the caliphate, and enlightens the true path for others (cf. *Dabiq* 2015g: 56; *Rumiyah* 2016a: 14; *Rumiyah* 2017b: 46). The descriptions of the deaths of the martyrs thus underline their extraordinary nature, and therefore also the cause for which they died.

The Process of Martyrdom

Taking the four parts together, it becomes clear that the *process of martyrdom* is central to the narrative structure of the biographies. The texts are composed in such a way that the martyrs gradually distance themselves from earthly life and embrace martyrdom. Through their dedication to Islam, they distinguish themselves from their environment from their youth onward. They demonstrate their disregard of worldly affairs and their willingness to make sacrifices for their cause by abandoning their luxurious lives and families, embracing a

life of hardship and sacrifice, persevering through imprisonment and injuries, and pursuing martyrdom. In the plots of these stories, the martyrdom of the men forms the logical conclusion to their life courses as represented in the biographies.

By reconstructing the lives of its killed operatives in such a way that they are characterized by a process of martyrdom, IS highlights their status as martyrs after their deaths. Martyrdom is not a status automatically gained after dying in battle. Instead, it is a status attributed to someone by others, and therefore often subject to debate and negotiation, especially in the case of contested groups such as IS. By means of these biographies, IS participates in these negotiations, attempting to convey the view that these men are genuine martyrs in the way of God. Hence, the biographies imply that the cause they died for is the right cause. Along these lines, the martyrs become witnesses for IS's cause, testifying to the group's message and increasing its credibility by showing that it is worth dying for.

The Islamic State and Early-Islamic Martyrdom Traditions

When exploring the use of early-Islamic traditions in the biographies, it is striking to notice that IS only barely refers to classical sources to further provide authority to its accounts. The biographies contain relatively few quotations from Islamic scriptures, do not elaborate on Islamic concepts and doctrines, and do not even explicitly justify the men's status as martyrs by means of classical traditions and theological explanations. This is remarkable, because, as a Salafi-jihadist group (see Maher 2016), the classical sources about the first three generations of Muslims (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*; "the pious predecessors") are usually central to IS's discourse. This is illustrated by several magazine articles that explicitly elaborate on martyrs from these first generations (e.g., *Dabiq* 2014; *Rumiyah* 2017a). That these references are largely lacking in the series "Among the Believers Are Men" illustrates that martyr biographies constitute a popular genre rather than a scholarly one, which primarily aim to offer powerful, exciting portraits of the martyrs in order to incite the audience to follow their example.

However, whereas a superficial reading of the biographies might suggest that Islamic scriptures, doctrines, and concepts are hardly relevant, a more in-depth analysis demonstrates that Islamic traditions form a crucial subtext. Important themes and motifs show striking, though implicit, parallels with early-Islamic traditions about the "pious predecessors" in general and their battles and the martyrs among them in particular. One of the most explicit

examples is provided by the title of the series, “Among the Believers Are Men.” Although nowhere explicitly indicated, informed readers will recognize these words as a part of *sūra* 33:23, which praises the believers for not running away from battle, but fulfilling their promise to God until death. This is often interpreted as referring to death by martyrdom, and thus the title of the series (implicitly) refers to the classical martyrdom tradition, framing the portrayed men as believers who remained loyal to God.

Yet, there are many more themes and motifs that are based on classical Islamic traditions. I will provide three examples that illustrate the early-Islamic subtext of IS’s biographies.

1 *God’s Assistance in Making hijra*

A noteworthy theme in the biographies is God’s help in the fighters’ “migration” to the caliphate. A telling example is provided by the case of Abū Jandāl al-Banghālī from Dhaka, Bangladesh, who, according to his biography, “faced many obstacles” on his *hijra* to Syria. Abū Jandāl planned to leave Bangladesh by pretending to visit an engineering conference in the Middle East, yet he could not obtain the required reference letter from his college. However, his biography states that “Allah facilitated for him solutions from places he hadn’t expected.” Abū Jandāl forged a reference letter from his college “and Allah blinded the eyes of the murtaddīn [apostates], who didn’t notice the obvious signs of forgery ... Thus, with the help of Allah, Abū Jandal was able to proceed on his *hijrah* to Shām,” the biography concludes (*Dabiq* 2016b: 50–51).

This scene is strongly reminiscent of the biography of the prophet Muḥammad. The term *hijra* is traditionally used for Muḥammad’s “migration” from his birthplace Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. The (related) term *muhājirūn*, as jihadist migrants often call themselves, refers to Muḥammad’s first followers who accompanied him on his travel. The biographies appropriate these classical terms. Yet they do more, as a closer look at Muḥammad’s *hijra* illustrates. According to Ibn Ishāq’s authoritative biography *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (“Life of the Messenger of God”), Muḥammad’s *hijra* too, was not without challenges. Ibn Ishāq narrates that Muḥammad’s house was surrounded by his Meccan opponents during the night before his departure to Medina. Yet, before they could kill him according to their plans, Muḥammad was warned by the angel Jibril and left his house. The prophet then sprinkled a handful of dust on his opponents’ heads, whereupon “God took away their sight so that they could not see him.” Muḥammad subsequently “went wherever he wanted” (Ibn Ishāq 1982: 222–223).

The parallels between Muḥammad and Abū Jandāl’s *hijra* are evident: in both cases, God directly enabled their escape by blinding the eyes of their

enemies. By almost literally repeating the words from the Muḥammad's biography, IS lends authority to the figure of Abū Jandāl, showing that he followed in the footsteps of the Prophet, and thus that God is on his side.

2 *Longing for Battle Despite Injuries*

A second example concerns the recurring theme of sustaining wounds while waging jihad, which is generally considered laudable in Islamic tradition (e.g. al-Bukhārī 1997: 1.4.67, no.237: 180–181). Many of the men portrayed in IS biographies did not, however, merely sustain wounds; what characterizes them in particular is that they insisted on returning to the frontlines in spite of their injuries. An illustrative example is provided by Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Britānī, a “courageous mujahid” from the UK who lost his hearing in one ear due to a gunshot wound and, whilst recovering, sustained severe burning injuries all over his body as the result of an explosion at a bomb manufacturing site where he worked. Despite his continuous relentless pain, his biography relates, “his heart maintained a strong yearning to return to the battlefield,” for which he eventually received permission. The article celebrates his steadfastness and patience during this “test and a means of purification from Allah” (*Rumiyah* 2016b: 15).

Classical Islamic sources also repeatedly narrate stories about men who yearned for battle despite handicaps and wounds. ‘Amr ibn al-Jamūḥ, for example, was said to be lame, but nevertheless requested Muḥammad that he be allowed to participate in the battle of Uḥud (625 CE). Muḥammad told him that he was excused because of his handicap, but meanwhile instructed his sons that they should cease preventing their father from joining the battle. No longer being withheld by his sons, ‘Amr ibn al-Jamūḥ “went along with him [Muḥammad] and was killed at Uḥud” (Ibn Ishāq 1982: 385). There are several examples like ‘Amr ibn al-Jamūḥ in the early-Islamic sources, as IS also indicates in an article in *Rumiyah* entitled “Examples of the Sahabah’s Eagerness to Attain Shahadah” (*Rumiyah* 2017a). Like the case of God’s help during the men’s *hijra*, the theme of longing for battle despite injuries thus evidently parallels stories in the classical sources about Muḥammad’s companions. Although IS does not explicitly refer to these stories in the biographies, those acquainted with Islamic scriptures will easily recognize the resemblances between these early-Islamic martyrs and the accounts about men such as Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Britānī. By providing vivid accounts of injured fighters participating in battles, IS thus emphasizes that perseverance and self-sacrifice are noble values that will result in victory, as it had done during the time of the Prophet and his companions.

3 *World Renunciation*

A third example is provided by a major thread in the biographies in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*: the fighters' disregard for worldly life. All biographies emphasize that the men were not saddened by leaving their families, jobs, and belongings behind, and that they were eager to sacrifice their earthly pleasures for God's sake. Moreover, they denied themselves any comfort and luxury while waging jihad, living sober lives fully dedicated to their cause. In the case of the leading media operative, Abū Sulaymān al-Shāmī, for example, it is written that earthly life and its adornments could not tempt him, "neither a spouse, nor wealth, nor children could entice him away from his religion." The former computer science student from Boston, Massachusetts, is said to have been working in the media department from the early morning to the late hours of the night. "Having been fatigued by long hours of work and hunger, often not eating more than a few morsels, he would come to his family exhausted for the sake of Allah" (*Rumiyah* 2017b: 41–45).

These episodes recall the Islamic virtue of *zuhd*, which refers to material and spiritual asceticism and, particularly, world renunciation.⁵ *Zuhd* involves indifference towards this world (*dunya*), discarding a life of luxury, and embracing a simple, pious life dedicated to Islam (Gobillot 2012). *Zuhd* is typically associated with Sufism (which is usually fiercely denounced by jihadists) and IS martyr biographies are strongly reminiscent of the lives of (proto-) Sufis such as Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 788). From eastern Persia, Ibrāhīm ibn Adham was a man of noble descent who migrated to Syria, embraced poverty, devoted his life to God and the struggle against the Byzantines, and eventually gained martyrdom (Cook 2007: 64–65). Yet there are also traditions about Muḥammad and his companions renouncing worldly life. Several *aḥādīth* recount that Muḥammad instructed his audience to "be indifferent towards this world, and Allah will love you" (Ibn Mājah 2007: 5.37.1, no.4102:286). Moreover, Muḥammad is said to have lived according to this principle. A tradition attributed to his wife, 'Ā'isha, narrates that there was sometimes no fire lit in their house on which to cook for an entire month, so that "we had only dates and water" to eat (Ibn Mājah 2007: 5.37.10, no.4144:311). Another *ḥadīth* reports that Muḥammad and his family did not even have enough barley bread to eat their fill for two consecutive days until Muḥammad passed away (al-Tirmidhī 2007: 4.34.38, no.2357–2358:381–382).

It is particularly these traditions about Muḥammad and his companions that IS conceives as an example for its own fighters, as explicated in an article

5 IS occasionally explicates this observation, for example by describing the Tunisian fighter Abū 'Umar as "known for practicing *zuhd* with respect to his clothes and his food" (*Dabiq* 2015e: 41).

in *Rumiyah* entitled "Zuhd in the Dunya Is the Way of the Salaf" (*Rumiyah* 2017a). In this piece, Muḥammad is portrayed as "the leader of the devout worshippers and zuhhd (ascetics)." He reportedly warned his followers about the temptations of worldly life and demonstrated "the virtues of zuhd in regards to the Dunya" in his own life (*Rumiyah* 2017c: 17–18). Through the theme of world renunciation, IS thus again portrays its martyrs as the true followers of Muḥammad, who, in contrast to many of their fellow believers, are willing to sacrifice their comfortable lives for the sake of God.

Modern Interpretations of Classical Traditions

These examples illustrate that early-Islamic traditions form an important sub-text of the biographies. IS not only appropriates classical concepts such as *hijra* and *zuhd*, but the biographies in their entirety also mirror stories about the first generations of Muslims. Many more examples could be given, such as the frequent occurrence of night prayers, which are traditionally considered a symbol of piety (see Q. 17:79, 25:63–64) and were also performed by Muḥammad, especially in the nights before battles (e.g., Ibn Ishāq 1982: 295). The longing for or even seeking of martyrdom provides another example, as this theme, too, can be repeatedly found in reports about Muḥammad's companions (Muslim 2007: 5.33.41, no.1901:233–234; Ibn Ishāq 1982: 300; see also *Rumiyah* 2017a) and even Muḥammad himself (e.g., Muslim 2007: 5.33.28, no.1876:209–210). Whereas all these parallels remain implicit in the biographies, they demonstrate that acknowledging the role of Islamic traditions is crucial for grasping the meanings of these texts for IS members and supporters.

However, it is also crucial to notice that there are striking differences between IS biographies and early-Islamic traditions about jihad and martyrdom. For example, the classical reports about martyrdom are interspersed with miraculous events, such as bodies of martyrs emanating the scent of musk after their deaths, or the occurrence of dreams that either foresee or confirm the martyrdom of Muslim fighters (see Cook 2007: 116–121). Whereas miraculous events like these had also been prominent in earlier jihadist martyrologies (e.g., 'Azzām 1986), they are absent from IS biographies. In this sense, the martyr reports in *Dabiq* and *Rimiyah* could be seen as disenchanting versions (in the Weberian sense) of their classical and jihadist predecessors. This points to the modern nature of IS's writings. Although IS embeds the life stories in centuries-old traditions, the ways in which it uses these traditions are distinctly modern.

The men as portrayed in the biographies might resemble their early-Islamic predecessors in several respects, yet they are also representations of today's

world. The biographies are the product of contemporary popular culture, as becomes apparent not only from their popularizing style and glossy layout, but also from the ways in which the men are portrayed. The pictures included in the magazines show the men wearing regular streetwear, typically smiling while standing in a relaxed posture, holding a weapon almost indifferently (e.g., *Dabiq* 2015a: 48; *Dabiq* 2015f: 38; *Dabiq* 2015g: 55). The appearance of these “poster boys” is far removed from classical martyr iconography. It rather resembles present-day youth culture, which is also supported by, for example, reports on them practicing martial arts (*Dabiq* 2015h: 57). Moreover, the demographic profiles of the men are modern ones, typically characterized by (often recently married) couples with only a few children. The extended family does not play a role in the biographies and, moreover, the parents of the men are either uninvolved in the men’s activities or severely criticized. The generational dimension of present-day jihadism (see Roy 2017: 24–32) also becomes apparent from the biographies.

This relates to another aspect demonstrating the modern nature of the biographies: the emphasis on personal faith and the “culture of the self” that characterizes modern religiosity (cf. Roy 2004: 148–200). The men are portrayed as autonomous individuals, who did not merely follow the traditions of their families and surroundings, but instead distanced themselves from their social environment. They reportedly criticized traditional authorities such as their parents, teachers, and imams for not following the right path (e.g., *Dabiq* 2016b: 50; *Rumiyah* 2016a: 15), while pursuing their own goals and desires. They undertook a personal quest for truth and eventually made a personal choice for their faith. During their search as represented by IS, the men did not rely on established religious authorities, but instead accessed the Islamic sources themselves, often on the internet. Here, they also got inspired by new types of authorities, such as charismatic, English-speaking (jihadist) preachers who lack the traditional educational credentials, but are esteemed for their charismatic appearance and perceived “authenticity” (e.g., *Dabiq* 2016b: 50; *Dabiq* 2016c: 70). This eventually led the men to embrace “true Islam” according to the biographies, often as born-again believers: men who grew up in Muslim families, but, in their late teens or early twenties, discovered “the true path” and thereafter became serious practitioners of their faith (e.g., *Dabiq* 2015g: 55; *Rumiyah* 2016a: 14). The emphasis is on their personal spiritual development, and their religious practices are not presented as socially established norms, but rather as testimonies of their newly found identity. Taken together, their search for meaning as represented in the biographies reads like a modern-day quest for self-realization that is eventually achieved by waging jihad under the banner of the caliphate and, finally, gaining martyrdom.

Whereas the classical martyr accounts also often focus on individuals who decided to follow the prophet Muḥammad, the emphasis placed, in IS biographies, on personal religiosity and self-development in ways largely disembedded from traditional, social surroundings is typical of modern religiosity, fueled by processes such as individualization, the fragmentation of traditional authority, and the increasing availability and personal use of religious sources, i.e., the "democratization" of religion (see Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 131–135; Roy 2004: 148–200, 2017; Khosrokhavar 2005: 48–52). Moreover, the form of Islam eventually embraced by these men is distinctly modern. Their Islam is repeatedly described as "pure" (e.g., *Dabiq* 2015b: 30; *Dabiq* 2015d: 40), meaning that it is not corrupted by local cultures or Western influences as the religion of their (initial) social surroundings (e.g., *Rumiyah* 2016a: 15). Instead, it is a deculturized Islam, which lacks social and cultural grounding that can be seen as a typical product of globalization and secularization (Roy 2017: 63–67). This alleged "authentic" Islam is applicable everywhere and is not confined to particular nations, ethnicities, tribal affiliations, or territories. In the biographies, the national, ethnic, and tribal backgrounds of the men are hardly relevant anymore after their "conversion." Moreover, the men typically had no special relationship with the territories they migrated to, as is illustrated by their "nomadic jihad" (cf. Wiktorowitz 2001: 24–26), referring to the multiple, different battlefields throughout the Muslim world on which several of them had fought before entering IS. Whereas Syria and (to a lesser extent) Iraq are definitely central to the biographies, these territories themselves are not important, but rather the (imaginary) *umma* for which the men allegedly sacrificed themselves (e.g., *Dabiq* 2015d: 41; *Rumiyah* 2017b: 41). In addition to the disenchanting nature of IS's reports, their embeddedness in popular culture, and their emphasis on personal religiosity and spiritual development, the modern nature of IS biographies is further demonstrated by the globalized, deculturized, and deterritorialized form of Islam the men reportedly embraced (cf. Devji 2005: 61–86; Roy 2004: 272–275). Whereas the biographies do not allow any claims on the actual lives of men themselves, these observations do demonstrate that the biographies portray the men as individuals who continue the struggles of their authoritative, early-Islamic forerunners in a thoroughly modern way.

Conclusion

In the series "Among the Believers Are Men," IS gives meaning to the deaths of its killed operatives by appropriating classical Islamic traditions about jihad and martyrdom and by further developing the jihadist genre of martyr

biographies. As we have noticed, IS biographies do not legitimize the men's status as martyrs by means of extensive quotations from Islamic scriptures and lengthy elaborations on Islamic concepts and doctrines. Yet IS composes the biographies in such a way that the narrative structure is characterized by the process of martyrdom — by lives of hardship and self-sacrifice that culminate in the men's deaths. Moreover, IS includes numerous implicit references to traditions about the lives and deaths of the first generations of Muslims in its biographies. Early-Islamic traditions about jihad and martyrdom form a significant subtext throughout the biographies, by means of which IS further underlines the status of its killed operatives.

By evoking symbols from an authoritative past, IS attempts to define and authorize the men as martyrs and therefore as powerful “witnesses” of the group's cause. Throughout their lives and deaths (as presented by IS), the men testify to some of the central themes of IS's message, such as piousness, perseverance, courage, and self-sacrifice. Furthermore, they distinguish IS from outsiders, such as the “passive” Muslim majority, as well as its jihadist competitors who they reportedly consider “corrupt,” “misleading,” and “deviant from the truth” (e.g., *Dabiq* 2015g: 55–56; *Rumiyah* 2016b: 15; *Rumiyah* 2017a: 42). By expressing some central elements of IS ideology and establishing boundaries between the in-group and outsiders, the martyrs become living definitions of IS itself (see also Cook 2007: 1–2). Their testimonies are particularly powerful because, by showing their willingness to die for their cause, the martyrs “prove” that the cause contains some profound truth, and therefore they add to its credibility and appeal. Accordingly, they are powerful tools for shaping and strengthening group identity, while setting the standard for honorable behavior among other group members (see also Weiner and Weiner 1990: 53–58).

By promoting these testimonies in the form of accessible texts that mirror classical martyrdom accounts, IS has created stories that can be appealing for different audiences. For people less familiar with the Islamic sources, the biographies might primarily offer exciting stories about exemplary Muslims who found a cause for which they were willing to make huge sacrifices. For youngsters more acquainted with Islamic tradition, the men portrayed in IS's magazines might additionally appear as authentically Islamic role models who wage a struggle that is larger than life; men who continue the struggles of Muḥammad and his companions in the present era and will therefore be victorious in the end. For both groups, the modern nature of the texts further increases their appeal. Because of their embeddedness in present-day popular culture, their emphasis on personal spirituality and self-achievement, and the globalized form of Islam they propagate, the martyr stories fit well into the lives of the readers of the magazines. By offering present-day biographies of its killed operatives, IS thus provides potentially appealing role models to its

young, worldwide audience, which might empower them to perceive the path from "ordinary" Muslims to martyrs of the caliphate as their way to achieve self-realization.

These observations demonstrate that acknowledging the role of Islamic traditions about jihad and martyrdom in IS's martyr biographies is crucial if we wish to grasp the appeal of these texts. However, they also illustrate that the meanings of these traditions are dynamic. IS appropriates a selection of stories, themes, and symbols from Islamic scriptures and incorporates them in biographies that are distinctly modern, thus investing the classical traditions with new meanings by employing them in a new context. Classical themes such as God's help during *hijra*, fighting despite injuries, and renouncing worldly life are being appropriated to reconstruct the lives of martyrs who expressed and practiced their faith in thoroughly modern ways. Hence, these traditions become tools to foster the perception among IS's audiences that self-sacrifice for the caliphate is the ultimate way to achieve (the modern ideal of) self-realization. This shows that, even in the case of literalist groups for which the classical sources are often thought to be fundamental, Islamic traditions are used in new ways in new contexts. This also illustrates that traditions like the ones appropriated by IS do not constitute an unchangeable "essence" of something called Islam. Islam is not a reified or fixed "thing" — a set of text-based traditions that exists independently of its practitioners. Instead, Islam is being produced, reproduced, and transformed by specific agents in their particular contexts, as IS's use of early-Islamic traditions about jihad and martyrdom demonstrates.

This has consequences for how we examine the role of Islam in jihadist discourse and practice. Instead of making general claims about Islam as an abstract category independent from concrete actors, it is more helpful to examine how practitioners appropriate particular traditions in their specific contexts to motivate, shape, and justify actions. Whereas "Islam" as an abstract category does not explain how jihadists deal with death, this exploration of IS's use of early-Islamic traditions to shape its martyr biographies has shed light on how IS frames its losses and provided us with some clues for how to grasp why some of its audiences seem to live willingly with death and are even eager to sacrifice their lives under the banner of the caliphate.

References

- 'Azzām, 'Abdullāh. 1986. *Ayāt al-rahmān fī jihād al-aqḥān* ["The Signs of the Merciful in the Afghan Jihad"]. Amman: Maktaba al-Manār. URL: <https://archive.org/details/aayat.afghan.g> (accessed 1 October 2017).

- al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. 1997. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam. URL: <https://archive.org/details/SahihAlBukhariVol.317732737EnglishArabic> (accessed 1 October 2017).
- Cook, David. 2007. *Martyrdom in Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, David. 2017. "Contemporary Martyrdom: Ideology and Material Culture." In Thomas Hegghammer (ed.), *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 128–150.
- Dabiq*. 2014. "Yahyā: Lessons from a Shahid." *Dabiq* 5, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 21 November, 4–9.
- Dabiq*. 2015a. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abū Qudāma al-Misrī." *Dabiq* 7, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 12 February, 46–49.
- Dabiq*. 2015b. "Among the Believers Are Men: Shaykh Abū Talhah." *Dabiq* 8, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 20 March, 30–31.
- Dabiq*. 2015c. "Among the Believers Are Men: Hudayfa al-Battāwī." *Dabiq* 9, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 21 May, 40–42.
- Dabiq*. 2015d. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abū Malik at-Tamīmī." *Dabiq* 10, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 14 June, 40.
- Dabiq*. 2015e. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abū 'Umar al-Tūnusī." *Dabiq* 10, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 14 June, 41.
- Dabiq*. 2015f. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abū Ja'far al-Almānī." *Dabiq* 11, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 9 September, 38.
- Dabiq*. 2015g. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abū Junaydah al-Almānī." *Dabiq* 12, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 18 November, 55–56.
- Dabiq*. 2015h. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abū Shurayh as-Silānī." *Dabiq* 12, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 18 November, 57.
- Dabiq*. 2016a. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abū Muhārib al-Muhājir." *Dabiq* 13, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 19 January, 22–23.
- Dabiq*. 2016b. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abū Jandal al-Bangālī." *Dabiq* 14, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 13 April, 50–51.
- Dabiq*. 2016c. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abu 'Abdillah al-Canadi and Abu Ibrahim al-Canadi." *Dabiq* 15, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 31 June, 70–72.
- Dār al-Islām*. 2016. "Il est parmi les croyants des hommes. Histoire de la hijrah de notre frère Abū Muḥārib al-Muhājir vers le Châm." *Dār al-Islām* 9, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 26 April, 25–36.
- Devji, Faisal. 2005. *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity*. London: Hurst.
- Eickelman, Dale F., and James Piscatori. 2004. *Muslim Politics*, 2nd edn. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gobillot, Geneviève. 2012. "Zuhd." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn. Leiden: Brill. URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8201 (accessed 1 October 2017).

- Günther, Sebastian. 1994. "Maqâtil Literature in Medieval Islam." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 25(3): 192–212.
- Hafez, Mohammed M. 2007. "Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq: How Jihadists Frame Suicide Terrorism in Videos and Biographies." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19(1): 95–115.
- Ḥarakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn. 2015–2016. *Min al-dhākira* ["In Remembrance"], nineteen episodes. URL: <http://jihadology.net/2016/11/15/new-video-message-from-%E1%B8%A5arakat-al-shabab-al-mujahidin-in-remembrance-19/> (accessed 1 October 2017).
- Hatina, Meir. 2014. *Martyrdom in Modern Islam: Piety, Power, and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ibn Ishāq, Muḥammad. 1982. *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* ["Life of the Messenger of God"]. *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, A. Guillaume (trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ibn Mājah, Muḥammad ibn Yazīd. 2007. *Sunan ibn Mājah*. Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam. URL: <https://archive.org/details/SunanIbnMajahVol.11802EnglishArabic> (accessed 1 October 2017).
- In the Hearts of the Green Birds: the Martyrs of Bosnia*. 1997. London: Azzam Publications. URL: https://archive.org/details/In_The_Heart_Of_Green_Birds (accessed 1 October 2017).
- Kepel, Gilles. 2008. *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Khosrokhavar, Farhad. *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*. London: Pluto Press.
- Kohlberg, E. 1997. *Medieval Muslim Views on Martyrdom*. The Hague: Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen 60(7).
- Kohlberg, E. 2010. "Shahīd." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn. Leiden: Brill. URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1025 (accessed 1 October 2017).
- Maher, Shiraz. 2016. *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*. London: Hurst.
- Moghadam, Assaf. 2008. *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. 2007. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol.5. Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam. URL: <https://futureislam.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/sahih-muslim-volume-5-ahadith-4519-5645.pdf> (accessed 1 October 2017).
- Nanninga, Pieter. 2014. "Jihadism and Suicide Attacks: al-Qaeda, al-Sahab and the Meanings of Martyrdom." PhD thesis, University of Groningen.
- Roy, Olivier. 2004. *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. London: Hurst.
- Roy, Olivier. 2017. *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of Islamic State*. London: Hurst.
- Rumiyah* (English version). 2016a. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abu Mansur al-Muhajir." *Rumiyah* 1, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 5 September, 14–17.

- Rumīyah* (English version). 2016b. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abu 'Abdillāh al-Britānī." *Rumīyah* 3, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 11 November, 14–15.
- Rumīyah* (English version). 2017a. "Examples of the Sahāba's: Eagerness to Attain Shahādah." *Rumīyah* 6, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 4 February, 40–43.
- Rumīyah* (English version). 2017b. "Among the Believers Are Men: Shaykh Abu Sulaymān ash-Shāmī." *Rumīyah* 8, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 6 April, 40–46.
- Rumīyah* (English version). 2017c. "Zuhd in the Dunya Is the Way of the Salaf." *Rumīyah* 8, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 6 April, 17–18.
- Rumīyah* (English version). 2017d. "Among the Believers Are Men: Abu Sabāh al-Muhājir." *Rumīyah* 10, Al-Ḥayāt Media Center, 7 June, 28–30.
- Min sīr a'lām al-shuhadā'* ["From the Biographies of Eminent Martyrs"]. 2005–2012. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the Mujāhidīn Shūrā Council and the Islamic State of Iraq. URL: <https://khilafatimes.wordpress.com/furqan/bpm/> (accessed 30 August 2017).
- Shamūkh al-Islām Forum. 2013. *Min sīr al-shuhadā'* ["Biographies of the Martyrs"], five episodes. URL: <http://jihadology.net/2013/07/09/new-article-from-shamukh-al-islam-forum-biographies-of-the-martyrs-5-abd-allah-a%E1%B8%A5mad-bilhadi-abu-hajr-al-jazairi> (accessed 1 October 2017).
- Sharq Ifrīqiyyā. 2013. *Sīr a'lām al-shuhadā' fī sharq ifrīqiyyā* ["Biography of the Eminent Martyrs in East Africa"], nine episodes. URL: <http://jihadology.net/2013/05/29/new-release-biography-of-the-martyred-figures-in-east-africa-9-uqbah-al-sudani/> (accessed 1 October 2017).
- al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā. 2007. *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam. URL: <https://archive.org/details/JamiAtTirmidhiVol.632913956EnglishArabic> (accessed 1 October 2017).
- Weiner, Eugene and Anita Weiner. 1990. *The Martyr's Conviction: A Sociological Analysis*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2001. "The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad." *Middle East Policy* 8(4): 18–38.