

ILS

ISSUE NO.1 VOL.2

**Global Genocide
Against Muslims**

ILS DIGEST

A Quarterly Dive into Books, Publishing, and Literary Treasures

ILS DIGEST

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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TABLE OF CONTENT

DR. ABDUL WAHID

*THE TRAGEDY OF SUDAN:
A CRISIS THE UMMAH CANNOT IGNORE*

ABDUL HAI

THE GLASS OF WISDOM

BULBUL-E-BANGAL

*THE FORBIDDEN CONVERSION: AL MAHMUD'S HERESY AGAINST
BENGALI SECULAR FUNDAMENTALISM*

HAMID MAHMOOD

*A CONTEMPLATIVE REFLECTION ON PROPHETIC
ARCHERY AS LIVING TRADITION*



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The Tragedy of Sudan: A Crisis the Ummah Cannot Ignore

by Dr. Abdul Wahid

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادِّهِمْ وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالشَّهْرِ وَالْحُمَى

For more than two years, Muslims around the world have been understandably focussed on Gaza. More recently, our gaze has been diverted to Iran.

Yet for almost three years, Sudan has been engulfed in what is described as the world's largest displacement crisis and humanitarian emergency. The death toll is disputed—with estimates being between tens of thousands at the low end, to over 300,000. Over 10 million people are internally displaced, and more than 25 million—over half the population—face acute food insecurity. Starvation and rape are being systematically used as weapons of war, and nearly 70% of health facilities are non-functional.

So why has this disaster not attracted our interest in the same way?

Sudan is a Muslim country. Its people are part of the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Al-Nu'man ibn Bashir reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادِّهِمْ وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالشَّهْرِ وَالْحُمَى

"The parable of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever." (Bukhari & Muslim).

The answer is complex.

It is true that Palestine has a link to the aqeedah—being the site of Al Masjid Al Aqsa, and the land which Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) described as blessed when He (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) took His Messenger there on the miraculous Night Journey.

But it is not simply that this is the reason why Palestine has been in our sights—or why Iran is now.

Mainstream media draws our attention to various conflicts according to the priorities they have defined. Sudan, like Libya, is presented as a failed state, where people will inevitably fight and kill.

There is an occasional mention of the humanitarian crisis—but virtually none about the fact that Sudan is a strategic "prize" in the modern scramble for Africa, sitting on the Red Sea through which 12% of global trade and 40% of trade between Europe and Asia travels.

Also, it is complicated. Unlike Gaza and Palestine, where one group of people are being genocided and ethnically cleansed by an occupying force, the situation in Sudan is more complex. Both the main factions fighting are Muslim and Sudanese. Perhaps the involvement of regional players, like the UAE (also engaged in Libya), is made apparent. But beyond this, the crisis is far more than a "civil war" between two generals; it is a complex struggle with profound spiritual and geopolitical implications that the Muslim world must confront. This article is an attempt to render this complexity into a framework that allows the observer to understand the situation better



Sudan's Islamic History

The Islamic history of Sudan and Darfur is deep and precedes most regions outside of the Arabian Peninsula. The relationship between Africa and Islam began in the fifth year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission, when his companions sought refuge from persecution in Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea). Following the opening of Egypt to Islam during the Khilafah of Umar ibn al-Khattab, merchants reached the Red Sea coast of what is now Sudan. While an initial Umayyad military expedition was unsuccessful, it resulted in a peace treaty and the construction of the first mosque in the region. By the eighth and ninth centuries, Islam had spread west across the continent.

The Unique Spread into Darfur

Interestingly, Islam spread into Darfur faster from West Africa (Mali and Niger) moving eastwards through Chad than it did from the north. This was partly due to the strong presence of Coptic Christians in northern Sudan, who acted as a barrier for a time. Eventually, these Christian states collapsed, and Islam became the primary identity of the region, superseding ethnic or tribal identifiers.

The Great Sultanates

Prior to the 19th century, Sudan was not a single nation-state but a collection of powerful Islamic sultanates. These included:

- The Funj Sultanate (Al Sultanah al Zarqa): This sultanate ruled the Nile Valley region, encompassing parts of modern-day Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, beginning in the 16th century.
- The Darfur Sultanate: Islam became the official religion of Darfur under Sulayman Solong, the leader of the Keira clan, with the capital at Al Fashir.

ILS DIGEST

Prior to the 20th century, Darfur was a centre of Islamic craftsmanship; notably, the kiswa of the Kaaba was traditionally manufactured in Darfur until the early 1900s.

In the early 19th century, Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt launched a conquest of Sudan to enhance his own power as he sought autonomy from the Ottoman Khilafah. During this era, northern Sudan was largely under Ottoman-Egyptian control, though the nature of governance in non-urban areas was relatively light and did not attempt to control every aspect of daily life.

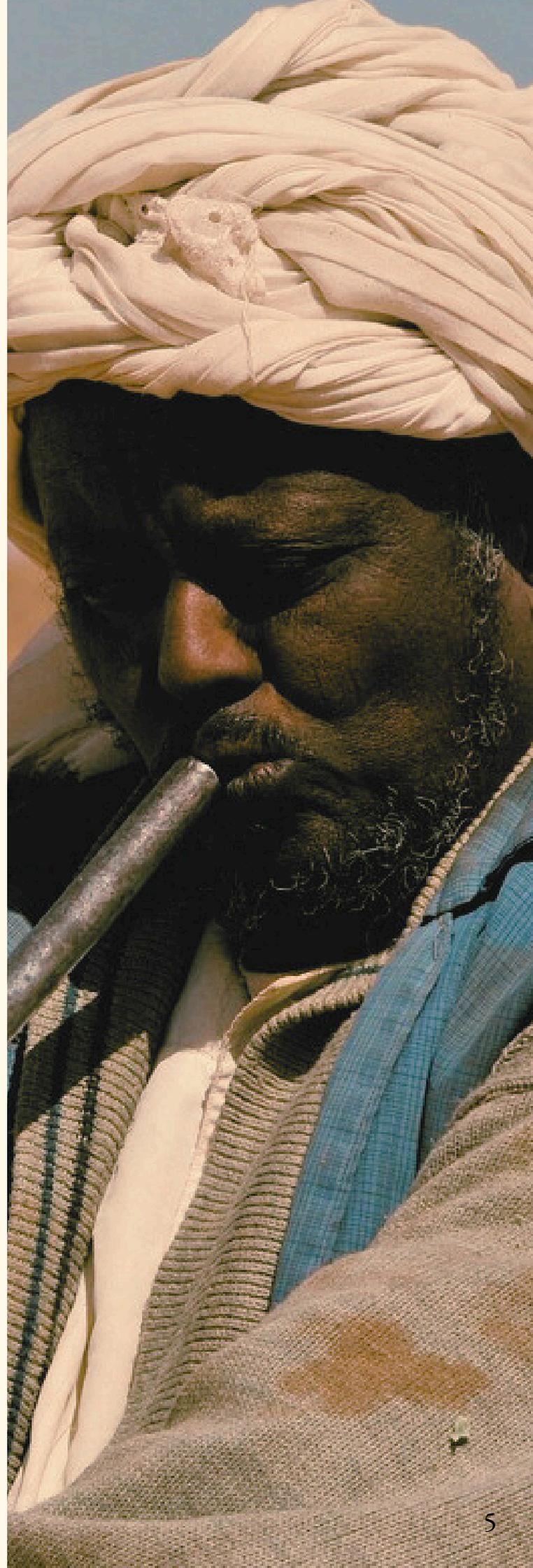
During the era prior to the formation of nation states in Africa, many tribes were nomadic, traversing huge areas which are now bordered within Chad, Sudan and Libya, despite being bonded by lineage and belief.

The End of the Sultanates

The independent Islamic character of Darfur remained intact until the early 20th century. The British occupied the capital, Al Fashir, in 1916. This was done primarily because the last Sultan of Darfur, Ali Dinar, was perceived as being too pro-Ottoman during the First World War. From that point forward, Darfur was officially annexed to Sudan under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium.

Background: From Colonial Legacy to Hijacked Revolution

Sudan gained independence from its British colonial legacy seventy years ago in January 1956. Prior to this, it was under the nominal rule of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, whilst the de facto rule was by the British Governor-General in Khartoum for over 150 years. As was the case under British rule elsewhere, deep roots were formed that would last beyond the era of direct colonisation, and borders were drawn to maintain divisions between people in order to prevent the rise of a powerful state.



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In 1989, a military coup brought in the 30-year rule of Omar al-Bashir, who maintained power by continuing the "divide and rule" tactics and the exploitation of tribal rivalries, particularly in Darfur—where he responded to complaints from the region of being forgotten by the central government by unleashing murderous militias—the Janjaweed—on the people.

In 2011, a breakaway state of South Sudan was formed, after a conflict between the central government and a rebel movement called the SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army) since the 1990s. There is plenty of evidence for an American hand fuelling this war, and sponsoring the 'peace' that followed, leading to a schism.

The loss of the south meant Sudan lost most of the country's oil wealth. By 2019, there had been an economic collapse that fuelled popular discontent, leading to the public protests, sparked by bread prices tripling overnight.

“in October 2021, the military leadership—General Abdel Fattah Burhan and his deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, more commonly known as "Hemedti"—staged a coup to remove the interim leadership”

Bashir was toppled but the system did not change. Such a vacuum in such an important region meant it had the potential to start on a genuinely independent state. But a hybrid transitional government was formed mediated by foreign powers known as the "Quartet" (at that time USA, UK, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE). This was initially backed by the military with promises of future elections. But in October 2021, the military leadership—General Abdel Fattah Burhan and his deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, more commonly known as "Hemedti"—staged a coup to remove the interim leadership.

Hemedti had been a leader of the Janjaweed militia, which Bashir had used to murderous effect in Darfur. The Janjaweed were renamed the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and had been used in operations in Yemen—but were under the nominal command of the rulers in Sudan.

However, their partnership dissolved over the proposed integration of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) into the national Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Burhan demanded integration within two years, while Hemedti wanted ten, leading to the outbreak of open warfare on April 15, 2023

Who are the Main Internal Players?

At its most basic level, the war is a power struggle between two formerly allied military factions:

- Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF): Led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. As the official state military, the SAF has a larger armed force as well as complete air superiority.
- Rapid Support Forces (RSF): Led by Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo, it is a paramilitary force that evolved from the Janjaweed militias and has tripled its personnel between 2019 and 2023.

They are the insurgents, trying to take over regions which have hitherto been under the control of the government in Khartoum.

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They have been responsible for systematic atrocities. The RSF is largely funded through gold mining, and selling that gold to the UAE—and has relied on foreign mercenaries from the region and beyond. Whilst the dominant public opinion is that the soldiers in the SAF are fighting for a justified cause—i.e. trying to repel a usurping armed force, as well as defending them against the brutal aggression of the RSF—critics would say that the SAF leadership is not beyond criticism.

Aside from the fact that Burhan was very much part of the old regime that people rose up against, the leadership has made decisions that do not accord with their stated aim of defeating the RSF. Most notably, they have engaged in "deliberate tactical withdrawals", surrendering territory seemingly unnecessarily, and often after attending negotiations brokered by the US.

This seems to have prolonged the conflict in a manner that strengthens the RSF, and appears to be in line with a foreign-inspired agenda to divide the country in a replay of events that preceded the breaking away of South Sudan—or that mirror the divisions in Libya.

Burhan has continued normalisation with "Israel" (via the Abraham Accords), proving his loyalty to US interests. Simultaneously, the RSF has been supplied with Intellexa surveillance technology of "Israeli" origin to enhance its intelligence capacity.

Who are the Main External Players?

Whilst on the superficial level the power struggle continues between Burhan and Hemedti, Sudan has become an arena for regional and global power struggles.

Whilst the US would present itself as a fireman working to put out the fires in Sudan, in truth it plays the role of arsonist simultaneously.

In the war in South Sudan, the US channelled arms to rebel groups via Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda. In this war, the RSF finds its supply routes from the UAE, via Libya and Chad—and there has been not a peep out of the US to reprimand them for this. The UAE is the main arms supplier to the RSF, and the US is the main arms supplier to the UAE.



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It has various motivations for being involved, which we will consider later. But it has long sought to replace the historic colonial powers in Africa (Britain and France), as well as catch up with China's economic interests.

Similarly, regional powers like Saudi Arabia and the UAE both have aspirations to be the dominant powers in the Middle East—the former backing the Sudan government and armed forces and generally opposed to separatist movements spreading in the region. Egypt, being a direct neighbour of Sudan, has a direct interest—particularly since they have received so many refugees.

What Interests Lie in Sudan?

There are many perceived 'prizes' in Sudan.

- **Natural Resources:** Sudan is rich in many natural resources, including rare-earth minerals. It is Africa's third-largest gold producer. The RSF currently controls gold mines in the Darfur region from which the UAE reportedly exports \$16 billion worth of gold annually.
- **Strategic Location:** Sudan sits at a "Transition Zone" and controls Red Sea waterways vital to the Suez Canal, through which 40% of trade between Europe and Asia passes.
- **Global Competition:** China—via its \$1 trillion Belt and Road Initiative—has established trade and development contracts across Africa.

What Future is There for Sudan?

If the current trajectory continues, it will lead to a de facto partition—just as South Sudan was lost. A protracted stalemate will strengthen the RSF to maintain a separate state in Darfur while the SAF controls the east, repeating the division of South Sudan in 2011 and mirroring what is happening in Libya. It is possible that there could be even greater regional fragmentation. The proliferation of militias in the east and north, potentially under American direction, leading to state collapse.

The Islamic Alternative would be the establishment of a genuine Islamic system in Sudan—the like of which existed in the Middle East for centuries. It is a radical solution—which would start from a recognition that foreign mediation should be rejected because it is inherently malevolent.

An Islamic order would treat natural resources like gold and water as public property rather than private spoils. Moreover, it would provide a framework to unite Sudan's hundreds of ethnic groups under a single identity of faith, finally curing the "filthy practice" of tribalism.

Whilst it might seem like an unlikely prospect given the damage of this terrible and bitter civil war, it was only an Islamic order that overcame similar divisions in pre-Islamic Yathrib, which later became Al Madinah. And it is only by thinking and proposing such radical solutions can we hope that powerbrokers in the region will see that they are being used in a way that harms the good people of Sudan, whilst fulfilling the interests of those who seek to control Sudan's many resources.



About the Author

Abdul Wahid has been active in Muslim affairs in the UK for over 25 years. He has been published on the websites of Foreign Policy, Open Democracy, the Times Higher Educational Supplement, and Prospect Magazine. You can follow him on X/Twitter @AbdulWahid_X and on Substack at <https://abdulwahid101010.substack.com/>

THE GLASS OF WISDOM

By Abdul Hai



Sometimes the desire to have more of this world is so strong that one feels frozen, unable to make sense of how some possess so much while others barely survive. In those moments, that longing almost makes us forget death and what awaits after it. Regaining a sense of the true nature of this world allows us, perhaps, to live another day with clarity. But the reality remains: one day we will die. Our belongings will either be given to charity or thrown away.

Our loved ones will eventually move on, and our children, who are the sunshine of our life, will one day forget us. So what is this world except a fleeting moment? Despite the body being weak, every day brings a new ambition to conquer the world, making us forget the final destination. We struggle to triumph over this life, and yet this world is worth nothing. Some of the great men of history taught us lessons that meant to awaken us. I once read the following story, and it taught me much.

It was a very hot day. The fifth great Abbasid khalifa, Hārūn al-Rashīd ibn al-Mahdī, grasped a royal glass of exquisite craftsmanship, made by the finest artisans the world had to offer. It was filled with ice-cold water. He lifted it with urgency, as though it were the last glass of water he would ever drink. But just as the glass touched his royal lips, a rough voice from elsewhere in the room interrupted him, halting the khalifa from quenching his thirst.

“Who is this?” shouted the khalifa, his booming voice silencing everyone in the room.
“It is I,” came the reply.

The khalifa turned toward the direction of the voice. Suddenly, his anger melted away, replaced by excitement and joy. With a tone full of warmth and happiness, he exclaimed:

“It is you, the honorable Abū al-Abbās Muḥammad Ibn Sabīh ibn Sammāk! Welcome, welcome! What brings you here, O Ibn Sammāk?”

“O Amir al-Mu’minin, I see you are thirsty. May I ask you a question?”

The khalifa, confused and slightly irritated but, respectful of Ibn Sammāk, replied, “Go ahead, O Shaykh, with your question.”

“O Amir al-Mu’minin, if this were the only glass left to drink, what would you pay for it?” asked Ibn Sammāk.

It was a strange question. Without thinking much about the answer, the khalifa replied, “Half of my kingdom.”

Looking directly at the khalifa, Ibn Sammāk said, “Then drink and quench your thirst, O Amir al-Mu’minin.”

The khalifa wanted to understand the meaning behind the question, for it was Ibn Sammāk, the wisest man of his kingdom. But the taste of the ice-cold water made him forget everything.

“O Amir al-Mu’minin, may Allah lengthen your life, may I ask you another question?”

Now, deeply interested in the strange line of questioning, the khalifa enthusiastically said, “Yes, Shaykh, what is it?”

“O Amir al-Mu’minin, if this water remains inside and does not pass from your body, what would you pay for it?”

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The khalifa paused for a moment, took a deep breath, and replied, "The other half of my kingdom?"

The old, rough-looking Ibn Sammāk looked at the great Khalifa and said:

"A kingdom that is worth no more than a single drink of water or the passing of urine is not something worth struggling over. So, O Amir al-Mu'minin, do not take pride in it."

Ibn Sammāk then left as quietly as he had come. Hārūn al-Rashīd let go of the royal cup, burst into tears, and wept for a long time, as if his entire kingdom had been set aflame.

There is so much to learn from this story. It helps us question ourselves: *Where do we truly stand?* It reminds us how fleeting this life is and how weak human beings are.

Every sip of water we drink is something we take for granted. We rarely consider what would happen if we were unable to pass that water from our bodies, the pain, the anxiety, and the suffering that would follow. This story teaches us a big lesson, that no matter how much wealth or power we claim to possess in this world, we remain fragile and dependent. Recognising our weakness should humble us. No matter what we own or achieve, our true strength lies in turning to Allah (May He be exalted).

Allah (may He be exalted) describes this world:

أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ
وَلَهُمْ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ
فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ
غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ
يَهْبِجُ فَتَرَينَهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ
حُطَمًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ
شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ
وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ
الْغُرُورِ

Know that this worldly life is no more than play, amusement, luxury, mutual boasting, and competition in wealth and children. This is like rain that causes plants to grow, to the delight of the planters. But later the plants dry up and you see them wither, then they are reduced to chaff. And in the Hereafter there will be either severe punishment or forgiveness and pleasure of Allah, whereas the life of this world is no more than the delusion of enjoyment.



About the Author

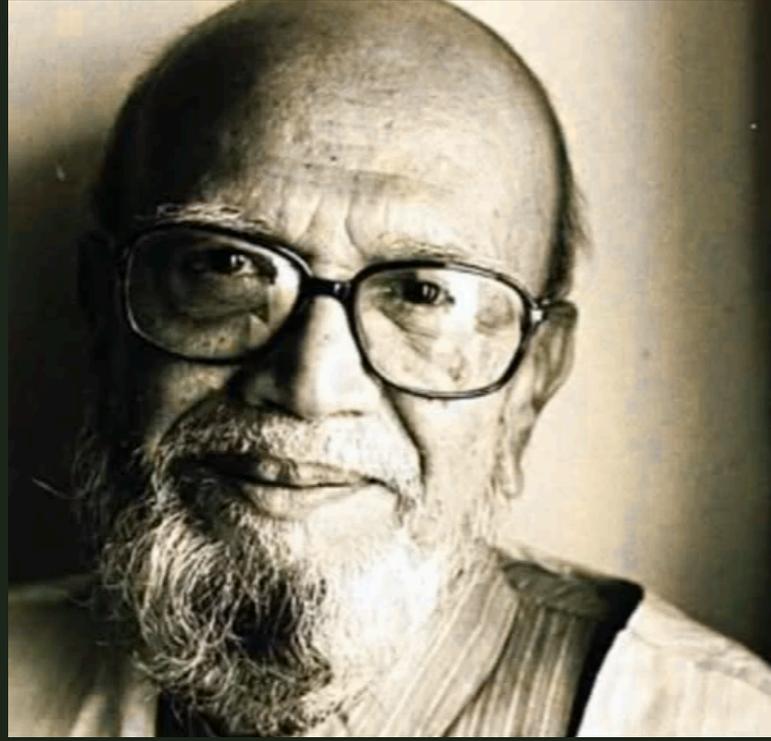
Abdul Hai is a book lover, bookbinder, book restorer, and leisure writer. His other interests include book collecting, woodwork, gardening, and fishing. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Science and a Certificate of Higher Education, both from Birkbeck, University of London. He also holds a Master's degree from the University of Wolverhampton. He is very passionate about sharing his reading experiences, especially on topics related to Islam.

The Forbidden Conversion: Al Mahmud's Heresy Against Bengali Secular Fundamentalism

by Bulbul-e-Bangal

Mir Abdus Shukur Al Mahmud, better known as Al Mahmud (1936-2019) stands as one of the most compelling and contradictory figures in modern Bengali literature, a poet whose extraordinary linguistic gifts were matched only by the dramatic arc of his ideological transformation. Born into a conservative Muslim family yet emerging in the 1960s as a fiercely secular voice who captured the revolutionary spirit of the Bengali Language Movement, Al Mahmud's early masterpieces like *Sonali Kabin* (1973) established him as a virtuoso of regional dialects and contemporary social critique.

His work initially embodied the secular modernist ethos that defined post-independence Bangladeshi literature, earning him widespread acclaim from the country's progressive literary establishment. Yet this celebrated poet of atheistic convictions would later undergo one of the most polarising ideological conversions in South Asian literary history, abandoning his Marxist worldview for Islamic orthodoxy in a transformation that would see him cast out from the very circles that once lionised him. The catalyst for this extraordinary metamorphosis came during a period of political imprisonment that would forever alter the trajectory of Al Mahmud's life and work. In the poet's own words



“আমি এক বছর জেলে ছিলাম। আমার স্ত্রী কোরআনের একটি কপি এনে দিলেন। আমি অনুবাদসহ শুরু থেকে শেষ পর্যন্ত পড়লাম। প্রথমবার পড়েই আমার শরীর কেঁপে উঠল... এমন কোনো বই আগে পড়িনি যা আমাকে এভাবে নাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে। যেন এক অলৌকিক নির্দেশে আমার মাথা সেজদায় নত হয়ে গেল।”

“When I was imprisoned for a year, my wife brought me a copy of the Quran to the jail. I began reading it from beginning to end with its translation. And upon my first reading, my body trembled. Never before had reading any book created such a stir within me. As if by some supernatural command, my head bowed down to the ground.”

This profound spiritual awakening marked the decisive rupture with his Marxist past, as decades of leftist conviction gave way to an equally fervent embrace of Islamic philosophy. The transformation was as complete as it was shocking: the erstwhile champion of secular humanism had become thoroughly orthodox in his religious outlook.

However, Bangladesh's predominantly secular literary establishment proved utterly unforgiving of this ideological apostasy. The final rupture came with poems like "Bokhtiyarer Ghora", where Al Mahmud's voice transformed from secular revolutionary to spiritual warrior. The poem's haunting refrain—"Sometimes the heart cries out for war... In dreams I rise chanting jihad, jihad"—captured the essence of his metamorphosis whilst simultaneously sealing his fate within the literary establishment. Here was no longer the poet of secular nationalism but a voice channelling the 13th-century Afghan general Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī, celebrating him as "Allah's soldier, king of the wretched" who appears "where the faithful fear to call the azan, where men worship other men." The poem's fusion of childhood innocence with martial spirituality, its transformation of a mother's lullaby into a call for holy struggle, marked Al Mahmud's complete ideological transformation and his final break with progressive sensibilities.

The very progressives who had once celebrated Al Mahmud's revolutionary verse now systematically ostracised him, wielding their considerable influence over newspapers, television channels, and educational institutions to effectively erase him from public consciousness. His poems vanished from textbooks, ensuring that new generations would remain ignorant of his literary contributions, whilst the media maintained a deliberate silence around his later works. In this response, Bengal's leftist intelligentsia revealed the exquisite irony of their position as self-proclaimed champions of diversity and inclusion who would demonstrate their commitment to pluralism by systematically excluding anyone who dared question the secular consensus. These paragons of free thought and the herd of freethinkers,

who spent decades condemning religious orthodoxy, exhibited an orthodoxy so rigid that the mullahs of Al Mahmud's childhood would have blushed with admiration.



“Bokhtiyarer Ghora”

What emerges from Al Mahmud's treatment is a delicious contradiction that exposes the intellectual bankruptcy of contemporary Bengali leftism. These intellectual descendants of the Renaissance, who mock religious fundamentalism, demonstrated a fundamentalism so pure in its secular devotion that it would have made Robespierre proud. They invoked the sacred texts of modernism with the same unquestioning reverence they once accused believers of showing towards scripture. The champions of scientific temper refused to examine the possibility that a rational mind might genuinely find truth in religious experience, dismissing his transformation as either mental breakdown or cynical opportunism.

The literary establishment that claimed to celebrate the "subaltern voice" silenced him the moment it became inconvenient to their narrative. The media that championed press freedom practised selective journalism, covering his earlier secular works whilst pretending his later religious poetry did not exist. The academics who theorised about "multiple modernities" refused to countenance the possibility that his modernity might legitimately include Islamic elements. This hypocrisy revealed more about the intellectual poverty of contemporary Bengali leftism than any critique Al Mahmud himself might have written.

Whether celebrated or reviled, Al Mahmud's journey reflects the complex tensions between faith, politics, and artistic expression that continue to shape Bengali intellectual discourse. His case demonstrates that in Bangladesh, it seems, you can question everything except the questioning itself. And God help you if you find actual answers that challenge the secular orthodoxy. The poet's legacy serves as a powerful reminder that true intellectual freedom requires the courage to follow truth wherever it leads, even when it leads away from the comfortable certainties of progressive conformity.



About the Author

Bulbul-e-Bangal, originally from Bangladesh, completed his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Cambridge before beginning doctoral research at Edinburgh. His academic pursuits are complemented by a strong interest in South Asian literary traditions, particularly the Indo-Persian cultural heritage that has shaped the region's intellectual landscape.

He maintains an active engagement with classical poetry from the subcontinent, drawing inspiration from major literary figures across Bengali and Urdu traditions. As an avocation, he works on literary translations between regional languages, exploring the rich linguistic tapestry of South Asian literature.

A CONTEMPLATIVE REFLECTION ON PROPHETIC ARCHERY AS LIVING TRADITION

by Hamid Mahmood

As humankind reflects upon its mabda’—its origin and first beginning—across both the natural and unseen realms, the history of the bow emerges as a point of convergence: a moment in which what lies beyond creation touches the world of form. In this tradition, the bow is described as symbolising the power of Allah (quwwat Allah), its string His might and intensity (shiddat Allah), and its arrows the decisive effect of His decree (nikayat Allah). These words, reported as spoken by Jibril to Prophet Adam, illuminate an early bridge between the world we inhabit and the realities that surpass it. Jibril then teaches Adam the art of archery in the earthly realm, a discipline subsequently transmitted to Prophets Ibrahim and Isma‘il. It is said of the biblical Ishmael: “He grew up and settled in the wilderness, and became a skilled archer.”

To develop this motif further, the Qur’an depicts the Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ first and most intimate encounter with Jibril. At the height of this vision, nearness itself is expressed through the language of archery: “until he was two bow-lengths away, or even nearer.” The bow here is not presented as a mere tool of combat or craft, but as a sacred measure—an image through which the unseen is given form, and divine proximity is translated into human comprehension. In this climactic moment of revelation, the bow stands at the centre of the scene: not simply as an object, but as a symbol of the bridge between heaven and earth, where distance collapses and meaning is delivered with precision.



It is within this same sacred imagery that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ restores his community to its Abrahamic inheritance, rooting archery not merely in technical skill, but in lineage, remembrance, and prophetic continuity. Addressing the young archers, he revives a legacy borne in both blood and belief, and calls them back to the craft of their forefather as a living tradition.

اِزْمُوا بَنِي إِسْمَاعِيلَ، فَإِنَّ
أَبَاكُمْ كَانَ رَامِيًا

"O children of Isma'il!
shoot, for your father
was an archer"

Archery in the blessed era of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not a single shot followed by stillness; it was a discipline shaped by spirituality, rhythm, and return. Training unfolded through repetition: shooting between two targets, walking the length of the range, retrieving arrows, turning, and shooting again at the target behind them. The range itself was designed for motion—shoot, walk, shoot, walk.

Return, repeat—so that formation occurred not only at the moment of release, but in the measured movement between shots.

This lived practice is reflected directly in Prophetic language, where reward is attached not merely to striking the mark but to the striving that lies between targets. The Prophet ﷺ said:

تَعَلَّمُوا الرَّمِيَّ، فَإِنَّ مَا
بَيْنَ الْهَدَفَيْنِ رَوْضَةٌ مِنْ
رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ

Learn archery, for
indeed the space
between the two
targets is a meadow
from the meadows of
Paradise



He ﷺ also said:

وَجِبَتْ مَحَبَّتِي عَلَى مَنْ سَعَى بَيْنَ الْغَرَضَيْنِ

“My love becomes assured for the one who strives between the two targets.”

And he ﷺ said:

مَنْ مَشَى بَيْنَ الْغَرَضَيْنِ كَانَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ خُطْوَةٍ حَسَنَةٌ

“Whoever walks between the two targets is granted a good deed for every step he takes.”

These words come fully into focus when we understand how archery was actually practiced in prophetic terms: targets on both sides of a range and constant motion between the target butts[3]. Strikingly, centuries later in fifteenth century England, the same training logic appears in manuscript paintings and butts' culture—targets set at both ends so archers could shoot back and forth without interruption.

Rooted in the same sacred tapestry, the Islamic worldview presents the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the most complete of men to walk the earth: one who nurtured the human being in every dimension—spirit and body, heart and mind, inward state and outward conduct. Within this holistic vision, archery is not treated as mere recreation or martial skill, but as a discipline of composure and renewal. Thus he ﷺ counselled that when anxiety presses upon a person, he should take up his bow and let the act of shooting become a means by which worry is driven away:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا قَالَتْ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: مَا عَلَى أَحَدِكُمْ إِذَا أَلْحَ بِهِ هَمُّهُ أَنْ يَتَّقَلَ قَوْسَهُ فَيُنْفِي بِهَا هَمَّهُ

From Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), who said: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“When anxiety presses upon any one of you, let him take up his bow and bear it—so that, by it, his sorrow may be lifted away.”

The Prophetic narrative then reaches a defining moment on the morning of Yarmuk—the battle against the Byzantines. Whilst practising archery before the battle, Khalid ibn al-Walid (رضي الله عنه) reflects upon the Prophet's ﷺ instruction—an instruction not merely received as counsel but understood as a formative programme and realised through lived practice within the early community:

أَمَرْنَا أَنْ نُعَلِّمَ أَوْلَادَنَا الرَّمْيَ وَالْقُرْآنَ

“We were instructed to teach our children archery and the Qur'an.”

Khalid ibn al-Walid's (رضي الله عنه) reflection firmly embeds, within the Muslim worldview, that the physical, mental, and spiritual realms are at the epicentre in the prophetic weltanschauung. The Prophetic framing of archery is further clarified by a compelling testimony attributed to a Sasanian Zoroastrian warrior who confronted the Sahabah at al-Qadisiyyah. He describes—almost with disbelief—that arrows released from the Persians' technically superior composite bows seemed scarcely to do more than graze the garments of the Muslims, whereas the arrows of the Sahabah, despite their apparent material simplicity, penetrated armour that ought, by conventional assessment, to have been impenetrable.

Whether read as literal reportage or as a rhetorical crystallisation of experience, the significance of the statement lies in the principle it conveys: that efficacy is not reducible to technological refinement. Within the Prophetic paradigm, skill is inseparable from inward formation, and the force of the shot is bound to the state that governs the shooter—discipline, certainty, and a consciousness oriented towards Allah. Thus, archery is not pursued as an exercise in material superiority, but as a practice in which spirit precedes instrument, and meaning directs method.

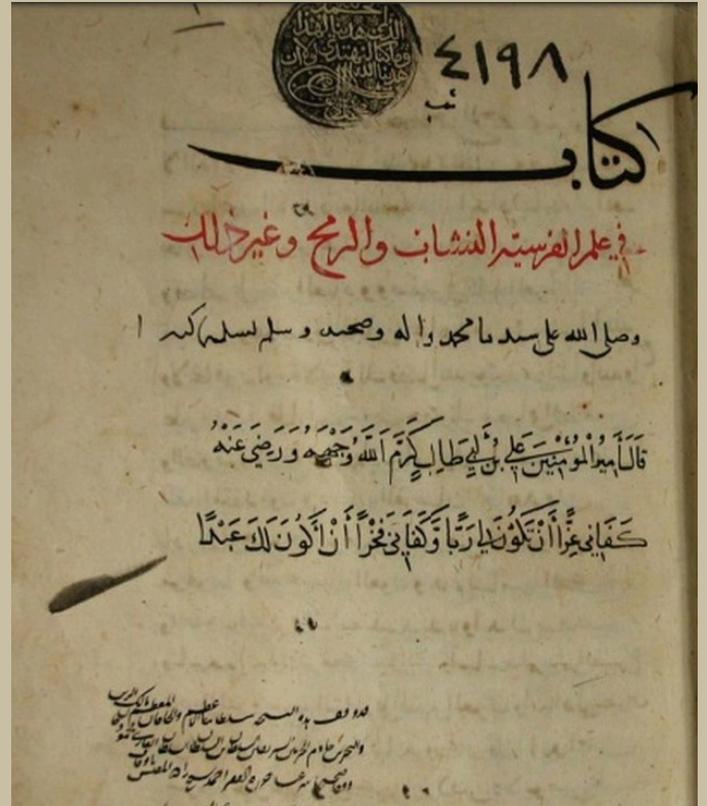
Archery, therefore, in the Prophetic Consciousness, is no longer a ‘sport’ in the modern sense. When the craft becomes a race of equipment and refinement, it turns into an emblem of our age—efficient, engineered, and endlessly optimised. However, archery is spiritual: a culture, a heritage, and one of the few living arts that still lets us touch something raw in the human past. In our tradition, it belongs to both realms—the physical and the unseen—training the body in discipline, and the heart in presence, much like *salāh*. The Mughal archers taught: let the eyes rest upon the target, let the heart gather upon it, and let the soul arrive there before the arrow. From this moment, archery is revealed not as a peripheral skill but as part of a civilisational pedagogy: the cultivation of bodies trained for responsibility and hearts trained for revelation.

In Taybugha al-Ashrafi al-Baklimishi al-Yunani’s 1368 masterpiece archery manual *Ghunyat al-Tullāb fī Ma’rifat al-Ramy bi-al-Nushshāb*, we seek to revive a practice in which archery is approached not merely as sport, but as *adab* in motion: a discipline that joins technique to presence and skill to remembrance. In this tradition, the archer does not train the body alone. He trains the gaze, the breath, and the inner state—so that each shot becomes an exercise in composure, intention, and return to Allah. Early Muslims were known to weave *dhikr* into the very rhythm of shooting.

It is related that the Prophet’s ﷺ grandson, al-Hasan (رضي الله عنه), would say *bismillah* when nocking the arrow and *Allahu akbar* at the moment of release—beginning in the Name of Allah, and ending in surrender to His greatness. Likewise, al-Saffah (Abu al-‘Abbas) instructed Idris ibn Yahya to recite: ‘*ma sha Allah, la ilaha illallah, wa la quwwata illaa billah*’: *ما شاء الله • لا إله إلا الله • ولا قوة إلا بالله* during the draw and release—so that steadiness of the hand is accompanied by steadiness of the heart and precision is sought through reliance upon Allah.

For the archer today, this can be practised as a simple sequence—an inward cadence that follows the outward form of the shot, which we implement at our range, at the Fatima Elizabeth Archery Club:

- Nock — بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ (bismillah)
- Grip — مَا شَاءَ اللّٰهُ (ma sha’ Allah)
- Position — لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ (la ilaha illallah)
- Draw — وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ (wa la quwwata illa billah)
- Release — اللّٰهُ أَكْبَرُ (Allahu akbar)



Taybugha’s counsel remains as relevant now as it was then: “The archer should reflect over this, for it will be of great benefit.” Reviving tradition. Refining skill. Remembering Allah with every shot. And when worry tightens its grip, go out and shoot—until the chest opens, the mind quietens, and the spirit remembers its steadiness.

We have traced the *mabda’* and seen how, within the Prophetic inheritance, archery is elevated beyond mere technique: a discipline in which the refinement of the hand is bound to the refinement of the heart. We now turn, briefly, to the *ma’ād*—the soul’s return to its Lord—and to the place of archery at that final threshold, where the archer is no longer measured by distance or accuracy alone, but by steadiness in the face of mortality and by the serenity with which one meets the decree. Among the most striking episodes in the early *sīrah* is the martyrdom of the renowned archer and battle strategist ‘Āsim ibn Thābit (رضي الله عنه), known by his kunyah *Abū Sulaymān*.

In the third year of Hijrah, he was dispatched to teach the Qurʾān and the foundations of Islam. Yet his party was treacherously ambushed at al-Rajīʿ by hostile tribesmen who sought to sell them to those still consumed by vengeance for the slain of the Battle of Uhud. Refusing the protection offered by the polytheists, Ibn Thābit and his companions chose steadfastness, meeting treachery with principle and encirclement with resolve.

In his final moments, he found himself surrounded by a large war-band, with only seven arrows remaining in his quiver. He loosed them one after another, each shot striking down a man, until his quiver was empty. He then fought with his spear until it broke, and thereafter with his sword until it too was shattered. Yet what is most remarkable is not merely the sequence of his resistance, but the quality of his presence within it: the archer’s composure at the edge of annihilation, a calm shaped by Prophetic teaching—where fear is not denied, but mastered; and where certainty steadies the hand.

It was in this state—surrounded, with no path remaining but surrender or martyrdom—that Ibn Thābit began to recite verses affirming divine decree and unwavering faith in what the Prophet ﷺ had taught.

For the early heroes of Islam, archery was counted among the greatest of weapons not only for its efficacy, but for the lucidity, restraint, and inward order it demanded. In Ibn Thābit’s measured speech at the moment of extremity, we witness what may be called “the way of the archer”: to confront every adversary, even death itself, with clarity, serenity, and resolve.

What follows is the poem he recited as death stood before him, for the true archer, the true toxophilite, confronts every adversary, even death itself, with calm, clarity, and resolve:

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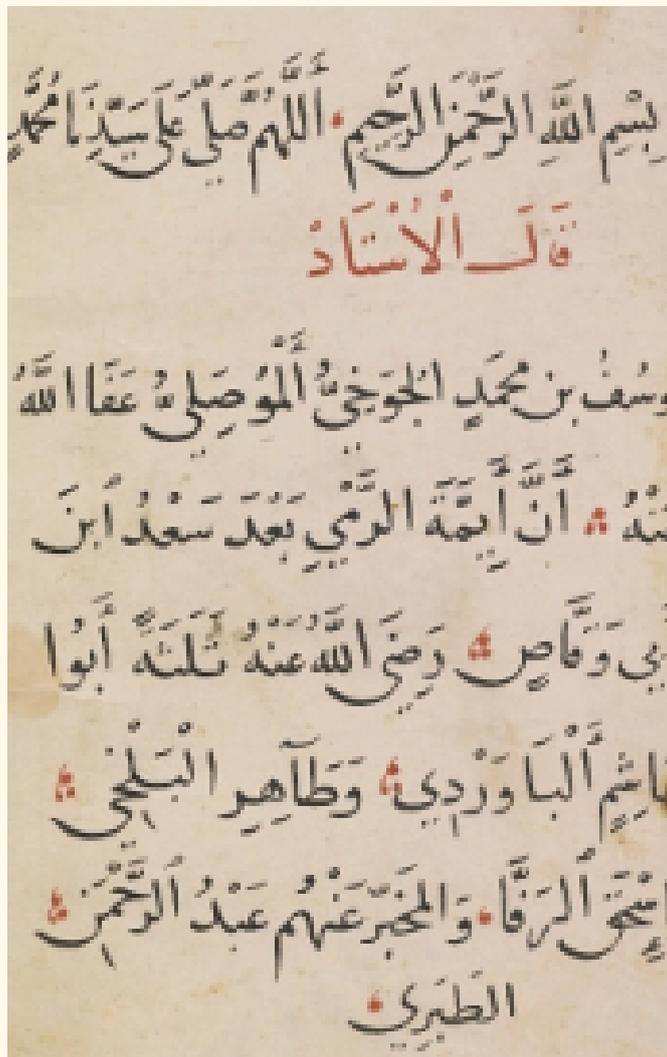
*‘No weakling I, an archer bold,
My bow thick-stringed with trusty
hold
Broad arrows can life’s coil unfold.
Death’s certain—life a mere tale told.
What God decrees men shall behold,
Life must return to Him its mould.
I fight though I leave a mother, cold.*

*I’m Abū Sulaymān with al-
Muq‘ad’s shafts.
Like Gehenna they burn my
feathered shafts.
When battle’s abroad I am not
afraid,
With shield of smooth ox-hide I’m
safely arrayed
And I firmly believe in what
Muhammad has said.*

*I’m Abu Sulaymān, an archer fine,
And come of a people of noble line’*



As the sahabah—the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ—expanded northwards, the early Muslim world entered sustained contact not only with the Persian (Sasanian) military tradition, famed for its composite bows and disciplined infantry, but also with the Turkic peoples of the Eurasian steppe, whose martial culture was inseparable from the bow and the horse. In this widening arena of encounter and exchange, archery underwent a marked transformation in both form and method. The archer increasingly became a rider; the bow assumed the distinctive profile of the Asiatic composite; and the release was refined through the thumb-draw, a technique suited to speed, mobility, dexterity, and the demands of mounted warfare. Across the Seljuks, Timurids, Ayyubids, Mamluks, Ottomans—and later the Mughals—archery matured into a sophisticated martial science: honed through practice, articulated through theory, and transmitted with disciplined rigour.



Within this inherited continuum, the Mamluk tradition holds particular weight, not only for its technical refinement but for the seriousness with which it preserved and codified archery as an Islamic discipline. This is evident in the works associated with master-archers such as Taybugha al-Yunani, whose legacy reflects a culture in which archery was taught through recognised lineages of instruction. Indeed, the classical authors did not present archery as an improvisation of talent or temperament but as a structured craft governed by principles—schools of method and authority—much like the madhahib of fiqh. For this reason, the literature of Islamic archery repeatedly returns to what it frames as three dominant schools, grounding technique in transmission and practice in precedent.

It is in this spirit that al-Jukhi opens his treatise, al-Kitab al-Wadih fi al-Ramy wa-al-Nushshab, with a clear foundation—anchoring the art of shooting in an inherited chain, and locating its mastery within named authorities:

‘In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful. May Allah send His blessings and peace upon our master Muhammad.

Al-Ustadh Yusuf ibn Muhammad al-Juwakhiyy al-Musaliyy, may Allah pardon him, has related:

After Sad ibn Abi Waqqas, may Allah be pleased with him, the mastery of archery was upheld by three eminent authorities:

Abu Hashim al-Bawardi

Tabir al-Balkhi

Ishaq al-Raffa

The report concerning them has been conveyed by Abd al-Rahman al-Tabari’

Yet, as with many embodied arts, the continuity of archery did not pass through history without fracture. With the advent of gunpowder warfare and the gradual eclipse of the bow by the firearm, archery was displaced from its former status as a principal instrument of war. In many regions, this transformation eroded the older modes of *isnad*, the older *isnad*-based modes of transmission—chains of instruction sustained through apprenticeship, disciplined repetition, and the slow cultivation of mastery—until they were, in practical terms, greatly attenuated. What remained most readily accessible were treatises on the page, fragments of technique, and the lingering memory of form, while the living *isnad* of instruction was, in numerous contexts, disrupted.

In recent decades, however, a remarkable revival has taken shape, as practitioners and clubs seek to recover archery not merely as cultural inheritance, but as a disciplined craft grounded in classical sources. One contemporary expression of this renewal may be seen in the Fatima Elizabeth Archery Club, where instruction has been shaped through the guidance of my teacher and mentor in archery, *Hoca Alperen Ibrahim Alkan*—a practitioner whose engagement with the Mamluk tradition has been at once scholarly and embodied.

Through sustained study of Taybugha's theoretical framework, alongside decades of applying its principles in mounted practice, and through competitive distinction as a horseback archery world champion in modern-day Türkiye, Alkan represents a rare synthesis of textual fidelity and lived mastery. Moreover, this revival is not confined to a single locality: a growing number of clubs worldwide now trace their training ethos to Alkan's Mamluk Academy headquarters in Türkiye, forming a contemporary network of instruction that seeks to restore disciplined continuity through shared method and serious practice. Although the classical *isnad* cannot be claimed today in a strictly uninterrupted, hand-to-hand technical sense, the contemporary revival remains no less momentous: a return to the Prophetic philosophy of transmission—that knowledge is received through discipline, legitimised by authority, and safeguarded through living practice.

In this spirit, modern practitioners do not merely replicate the outward form of the tradition; they strive to recover its inward grammar: the union of method and meaning, the cultivation of composure, and the intentionality that renders technique an act of worship rather than mere performance. Through *Hoca Alperen Ibrahim Alkan's* sustained engagement with Taybugha's Mamluk framework—studied with scholarly fidelity and embodied through decades of mounted practice—this tradition is approached anew with seriousness. His mastery is not only textual but demonstrably lived: as a horseback archery world champion in modern-day Türkiye, he represents a rare convergence of theory and embodied excellence, where classical principles are tested under the pressures of movement, speed, and precision. In this way, the direction of transmission is re-established across the distance of centuries. Thus, even where historical interruption cannot be denied, archery is meaningfully reconnected to a classical genealogy that reaches from Taybugha back through earlier authorities to Abu Hashim al-Mawardi, and ultimately to Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (رضي الله عنه): the noble Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, and the master-archer of Islam, at whose name the tradition gathers its earliest light:

-Taybughā al-Ashrafi al-Baklimishi al-Yūnānī

-Shibāb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn Sharaf al-Dīn Ismā'īl

-Shams al-Dīn Muhammad al-Nābulusī

-Shams al-Dīn Muhammad al-Sinjābī

-al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Nāsib

-Fakhr al-Dīn 'Uthmān al-Ibatī

-'Umar and Muhammad al-Kunjī

-Abū Bakr ibn 'Alī al-Isfahānī

-'Alī ibn Ahmad al-Isfahānī

-Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Salmāsī

-Bābūl al-Marāghī

-Muhammad ibn Ishāq al-Samarqandī

-Abū Hāshim al-Māwardī

-Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās (رضي الله عنه)

Thus, when the Prophet ﷺ proclaimed,

“Shoot, O children of Isma‘il, for indeed your father was an archer,”

he was not merely offering instruction, but restoring a prophetic lineage of practice—reconnecting his community to an inheritance in which the bow becomes a discipline of composure, intention, and inward clarity. Read through the lens of transmission and revival, this inheritance remains available to the ummah today: as a means of training the body with purpose, steadying the heart, and even relieving anxiety through a practice that gathers the mind as it refines the hand.

It is in this spirit that the present contemplative reflection seeks to renew that Prophetic summons for our own age—not as nostalgia, but as a living call to embodied remembrance.

**O Ummah of
Muhammad ﷺ!
Shoot, for indeed
your Prophet ﷺ was
an archer.**

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