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The Conceptual Evolution of the Term “Religiosity” in Islamic Thought

Evolusi Konseptual Istilah Keberagamaan (*Religiosity*) dalam Pemikiran Islam

Sekou Marafa Toure*

Abstract

Discrepancies in the interpretation of revelation, its application and the adherence to it can be observed among the ranks of Muslim scholars. These differences are a result of the often-obscure gaps between theory and practice, between religious texts and the jurisprudential discretion of the scholars, between actions and those who carry them out, and between one’s understanding and his behaviour. However, questions arise as to whether or not each manifestation of religiosity can be representative of religion, and if every understanding of religion can be portrayed as a form of religiosity. This study aims to explain the difference between religion and religiosity lexically, from the perspective of the connotations of their definitions and the stages the latter has undergone. The researcher will adopt an inductive approach in the study of the interest taken in religiosity throughout history. He will also adopt the analytical approach in the study of whether or not religion and religiosity are the same and in the clarification of the reasons behind the emphasis on religiosity. From among the most important findings of this research is that the concept of religiosity has undergone several temporal phases in Islamic thought and that the current events impacted the focus of the scholars on a particular aspect and perspective of the word.

Keywords: Concept of religiosity, exigencies of faith, Islamic thought.

Abstrak

Perbezaan dalam mentafsir, mengamal dan mematuhi wahyu dapat diperhatikan dalam kalangan pelbagai lapisan ulama Islam. Perbezaan ini muncul disebabkan oleh jurang yang sering tidak jelas antara teori dan amal, antara teks agama dan kebijaksanaan fiqh para ulama, antara tindakan dan mereka yang melaksanakannya, serta antara kefahaman seseorang individu dengan perlakuannya. Namun, timbul persoalan; adakah setiap manifestasi keberagamaan (kewarakan, ketakwaan, kesalihan) berupaya

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memanifestasikan agama, dan adakah setiap kefahaman tentang agama dapat dimanifestasikan sebagai suatu bentuk keberagamaan? Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan perbezaan antara agama dan keberagamaan secara leksikal, dari perspektif konotasi definisinya dan peringkat-peringkat yang telah dilalui oleh istilah keberagamaan ini. Pengkaji akan menggunakan pendekatan induktif dalam kajiannya mengenai keberagamaan merentasi sejarah. Pengkaji juga akan mengambil pendekatan analitikal dalam mengkaji sama ada agama dan keberagamaan adalah sama, dan dalam menjelaskan sebab sebalik penekanan yang lebih diberikan kepada keberagamaan. Antara dapatan utama kajian ini adalah bahawa konsep keberagamaan telah melalui beberapa fasa temporal dalam pemikiran Islam, dan peristiwa semasa pada satu-satu masa mempengaruhi fokus para ulama terhadap aspek tertentu dan perspektif perkataan beragama.

Kata Kunci: konsep keberagamaan, tuntutan kepercayaan, pemikiran Islam.

Introduction

All praise is due to Allah alone, blessings and salutations upon the final Prophet, his family, his companions, and whoever follows them on the path of righteousness up until the Day of Judgement. O Allah, my Master, open for me my chest, make my task easy for me and untie the knot from my tongue so that they may understand my speech. O Allah, teach us that which benefits us, benefit us with that which you have taught us, and increase us in knowledge. As to what follows;

It is important to note that the fundamental understanding of any religion necessitates the consideration of several matters. For example, some aspects of religion are characterised by definitiveness whereby there is no room for change or discretion, while other aspects are hypothetical and flexible in nature due to time, place or jurisprudential discretion.

The term “religiosity” is observed to carry many meanings and there are many opinions among the classical scholars regarding its concept. Some scholars did not set out to clarify the meaning of religiosity, while those who did, had done so from within the parameters of religion and thus equated religion with religiosity. On the other hand, there were scholars who differentiated between religion and religiosity, however they expounded on the concept of religion without explaining that of religiosity, or vice versa. This could be due to the fact that many studies on the concept of religion have already been carried out, so the scholars relied on that which was concluded from these studies regarding the latter.

Contemporary Islamic thought also shows a significant interest in the concept of religiosity, so much so that some contemporary scholars, like Abdullah Darraaz and Muhammad Adh-Dhahabi as we shall see shortly, have focused on it throughout their definitions of the term “reli-

gion”. Some scholars, such as Muhammad al-Ghazali have also differentiated between authentic and alleged religiosity, or in other words required and deluded religiosity, and between genuine and false religiosity. Some assert that human jurisprudential discretion plays a part in the portrayal of the concept of religiosity and its reality, which may result in rigidity, excessiveness, extremism or moderation.

It is thus evident that contemporary Islamic thought deems the term “religiosity” independent of that of religion that has its own reality, qualities and characteristics. So, what is the relationship between religion and religiosity, and what are the principles that enable the identification and distinction of each aspect from the other? This paper endeavours to study the concept of religiosity and the history of its evolution in Islamic thought since the time it was deemed to be synonymous with religion, up until this day and age in which the term has become independent of religion.

Research Statement

The problem statement of this paper stands on the considerable overlap of the terms “religion” and “religiosity”, and on the ideological stages that integrated “religiosity” into “religion” such that it was impossible to distinguish one from the other. So, what is the concept of religiosity and what are the phases, in the history of Islamic thought that interaction with it as a term had undergone?

This paper will answer the following questions:

1. During which phase was the term “religiosity” considered one of the linguistic root words of the term “religion” in the history of Islamic thought?
2. During which phase was “religiosity” considered synonymous with the term “religion” in the history of Islamic thought?
3. During which phase was there an indication of the distinction between religion and religiosity in the history of Islamic thought?
4. During which phase in the history of Islamic thought was there a call to distinguish between religion and religiosity and what were the factors that influenced this?

Research Goals

The goals of this study can be expressed in the following points:

1. To study the phase during which the term “religiosity” was considered one of the linguistic root words of the term “religion” in the history of Islamic thought.
2. To examine the phase during which “religiosity” was deemed synonymous with “religion” in the history of Islamic thought.
3. To analyse the phase during which there was an indication of the distinction between religion and religiosity in the history of Islamic thought.
4. To bring to light the phase in the history of Islamic thought during which there was a call to distinguish between religion and religiosity, as well as the contributing factors towards this differentiation.

Literature Review

From among the most important previous studies related to this paper in terms of defining the true nature of religiosity or determining its concept are:

1. The book *Fi Fiqh at-Tadayyun Fahman wa Tanzīlan*¹ (Religiosity: Understanding, Interpretation and Implementation) by Abdul-Majīd An-Najjār. The author discusses the understanding of reality, the origin and understanding of religion, and the problems regarding some of the concepts that revolve around religion and religiosity.

The book’s importance lies in its presentation of a contemporary understanding of religion and its role in society, as well as the role of understanding the status quo of religion and religiosity. However, there are essential differences between the book and this paper in terms of the clear distinction between religion and religiosity and the clarification of the relationship between the two.

2. The university dissertation *Mushkilatul-Ghuluw Fid-Dīn Fil-‘Asr Al-Hādir: Al-Asbāb – Al-Āthār – Al-‘Ilāj*² (The Problem of Extremism in Religion in the Current Era – Reasons, Effects and Solution) by Abdurrahman Al-Luwaihiq. This thesis

¹ Abdul-Majīd An-Najjār, *Fi Fiqh At-Tadayyun Fahman wa Tanzīlan* (Doha: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1st Edition, 1401AH).

² Abdurrahman Al-Luwaihiq, *The Problem of Extremism in Religion in the Current Era – Reasons, Effects and Solution* (Riyadh: this is a research paper presented to Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University for the fulfilment of a doctorate, it is likely to not have been published, therefore it has no printed edition or publisher, 1417AH).

is an academic research paper that was presented to Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. The author studied the reasons behind immoderation in religion, the impacts of this problem, as well as its solution in the current era.

This thesis is important in its study of the intrinsic nature of religion through the explanation of what religion is, how immoderation can manifest and how it can be solved from the perspective of religion itself. This helps to establish the essence of religion and to comprehend its reality from the perspective of that which opposes it. However, this book lacks structure and definition in its research, and it certainly does not examine the difference between religion and religiosity, or the relationship between them.

3. The book *Tahawulāt At-Tadayyun Fil-Mujtama' As-Su'ūdiyy*³ (The Transitions of Religiosity in Saudi Society) by Abdul-Azīz bin Zayd Āl Dāwud. The author discussed the concept of religiosity and its implications and devoted his attention to the discourse on the metamorphosis of nations with regards to religiosity. He focused on religiosity in Saudi society and the religiosity of the Saudi woman. This book is important in explaining the difference between religion and religiosity. However, it did not study the issues from the perspective of other schools of thought, nor did it point out the different conceptual evolutions of the term religiosity.
4. The book *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*⁴ by Muhammad Iqbal. This book is a collection of lectures that were delivered at different times and places, which deals with the basis of the issue of the possibility of reforming religion and the likes.
5. The book *Wazīfa Ad-Dīn Fil-Ḥayā Wa Ḥājat An-Nās Ilayhi*⁵ (The Role of Religion in Life and Mankind's Need for It) by Muhammad Az-Zuhayli. This book discusses the concept of religion, the motives of innate religiosity and the role of religion in the life of an individual and in society at large. It is

³ Abdul-Azīz bin Zayd Āl Dāwud, *Tahawulāt At-Tadayyun Fil-Mujtama' As-Su'ūdiyy*, (Riyadh: Ghainaa, 2009).

⁴ Muhammad Iqbal, *the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan; Institute of Islamic Culture, 1986).

⁵ Muhammad Mustafa Az-Zuhayli, *The Role of Religion in Life and Mankind's Need for It* (Tripoli: World Islamic Call Society, 1976).

also a discourse on the subject matter of religion and science. It is an excellent book that research has benefitted from and will continue to benefit from the depths of its pages. However, the author did not point out the different conceptual evolutions of the term religiosity.

6. Az-Zuhayli has another book related to the topic of this paper entitled *Al-‘Itidāl Fit-Tadayyun Fikran wa Sulūkan wa Manhajan*⁶ (Ideological, Behavioural and Methodological Moderation in Religiosity). He penned this book when he noticed that the people stood divided on their opinions regarding religiosity. He thus studied the positive and negative influences that could result in religious aspects to be favoured over others which is what leads to immoderation or extremism.
7. The book *Muṭāla‘āt Fid-Dīn wat-Tadayyun wal-‘Asr*⁷ (Studies in Religion, Religiosity and Modernity) by Muhammad Khātimī. The book is a collection of the author’s independent articles that he had published in different places; there then arose a need to collect and compile them into a book. He discusses the issue of religion and religiosity in the context of the current era - on individual and societal levels - as well as the advancement of civilisation.

This book gains its esteem from its melting pot of political ideologies. Nevertheless, the difference between it and this paper is that unlike the former, the latter calls towards the discernment between religion and religiosity by assigning each of them an independent concept and clarifies the difference between the two as well as the fruit of such differentiation.

8. The book *At-Tafsīr Al-Mārksī Lid-Dīn*⁸ (The Marxist Interpretation of Religion) by Muhammad Imara, which is among the numerous books that he has written in relation to this subject. This book was written to study the opinions of Nasr Abu

⁶ Muhammad Mustafa Az-Zuhayli, *Al-‘Itidāl Fit-Tadayyun Fikran wa Sulūkan wa Manhajan* (Tripoli: Faculty of Islamic Call, 1428 after the birth of the Messenger) – The calendar used in Libya begins after the birth of the Messenger. To convert that into the Hijri Calendar, 53 years have to be subtracted because his Prophethood began at his noble age of 40 and he stayed in Mecca for 13 years.

⁷ Muhammad Khātimī, *Muṭāla‘āt Fid-Dīn wat-Tadayyun wal-‘Asr* (Beirut: Dar Al-Jadīd, 1st Edition 1998).

⁸ Muhammad Imara, *The Marxist Interpretation of Religion* (Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk, 1st Edition, 1996).

Zayd, his interpretation of religion, and to refute such opinions given that they are Marxist in nature and are thus contrary to the ordained methodology. This book is of a good standing; however, it differs from the subject of this paper in two ways: on one hand, this paper is more general and comprehensive, and on the other, it is not a refutation of an author or a particular ideology as it is an effort focused on establishing principles and rooting the origins of issues.

9. The book *Naqd Al-Khitāb Ad-Dīnī* (Critique of Religious Discourse)⁹ by Nasr Abu Zayd, in which the author presents a new expression for religion that he believes goes hand in hand with the developments of the modern era and traverses that which is set in heritage. The book starts out analysing the phenomenon known as the religious awakening, commenting that there are three approaches to the explanation of this phenomenon, and then sets out studying each of these approaches. It goes beyond the understanding of ideological literature found in Islamic heritage and presents problems related to the reading of the religious texts themselves.

Thus far, the difference between the mentioned previous studies and this paper is that none of the previous studies were concerned with defining, differentiating between and establishing the root of the terms “religion” and “religiosity”. This paper is also distinguished by its analysis of the conflicting relationship between the two.

10. The doctoral dissertation entitled *Ad-Dīn wat-Tadayyun Fil-Khitāb Al-Islāmi Al-Mu‘āsir Fi Misr* (Religion and Religiosity in Contemporary Islamic Discourse in Egypt). The researcher focused on the importance of distinguishing between religion and religiosity, attempted to define each of the terms and endeavoured to consolidate the matter. The difference between the dissertation and this paper is that the dissertation is merely a presentation of raw data related to the subject matter, whereas this paper has striven to analyse the subject matter, categorise it into phases and establish the maxim of each of these phases.¹⁰

⁹ Nasr Abu Zayd, *Critique of Religious Discourse* (Cairo: Siena, 2nd edition, 1994).

¹⁰ Toure, Sekou. 2013. “Religion and Religiosity in Contemporary Islamic Discourse in Egypt.” thesis.

Doctorate thesis presented to the Faculty of Usul al-Din & Comparative Religion.

11. The book *Ad-Dīn wa-Tadāyyun: At-Tashrī' wan-Nas wal-Ijtima'*¹¹ (Religion and Religiosity: Legislation, Text and Society) by Abdul Jawwād Yāsīn. The author strove to differentiate between religion and religiosity based on philosophical foundations and logical frameworks. The difference between this book and the previous study in point 10 is that the consolidation of religion and religiosity in this book integrates both religious texts and rationalism, thus it is not purely logical or philosophical. The difference between Abdul Jawwād Yāsīn's research and this paper is that this researcher examined more than one definition; perhaps the collection of the concepts in this study is due to the thorough examination of the subject matter, in addition to the fact that Yāsīn's methodology is that of a philosophical one.
12. The dissertation *Mafhūm Ad-Dīn wa Maḏāhir At-Tadāyyun Fil-Qur'ān Al-Karīm: Dirāsah Mawḏu'iyah Taḥlīliyyah*¹² (The Concept of Religion and the Manifestations of Religiosity in the Noble Qur'an: A Topical and Analytical Study). This is a doctorate thesis that was presented to the International Islamic University Malaysia. He focused on the concept of religion in the Qur'an but did not carry out an inductive study of the term religion in it, whereas this researcher discussed the concept of religion in the Qur'an and established the origin of the theory.

Research Methodology

This researcher will adopt an inductive approach while following up the most important concepts regarding religiosity. Similarly, he will adopt an analytical approach in order to identify the factors leading to the variance in definitions, as well as to analyse the phases that led to the focus on particular aspects in such definitions.

¹¹ Yāsīn, Abdul Jawwād. 2014. *Ad-Dīn Wa-Tadāyyun: At-Tashrī' Wan-Naṣ Wal-Ijtima'*. 2nd ed. Beirut: Al-Markaz Ath-Thaqāfī Al-'Arabī.

¹² Khān, Musaddīq Majīd. 2014. “Mafhūm Ad-Dīn Wa Maḏāhir At-Tadāyyun Fil-Qur'ān Al-Karīm: Dirāsah Mawḏu'iyah Taḥlīliyyah.” Thesis. International Islamic University Malaysia.

Research Structure

This research can be structured, according to its objectives, to the following axes:

1. Phase One: when the term “religiosity” was considered one of the linguistical root words of the term “religion” in the history of Islamic thought.
2. Phase Two: when “religiosity” was deemed synonymous with “religion” in the history of Islamic thought.
3. Phase Three: during which there was an indication of the distinction between religion and religiosity in the history of Islamic thought.
4. Phase Four: during which there was a call to distinguish between religion and religiosity, as well as the contributing factors towards this differentiation.

Phase One: When the Term “Religiosity” was Considered One of the Linguistical Root Words of the Term “Religion” in the History of Islamic Thought.

It is found that the scholars have been more concerned with the concept of religion and its explanation compared to that of religiosity. However, the term “religiosity” was still a subject of interest as it was considered to be within the framework of the term “religion” as the latter takes on various forms and structures according to its linguistical morphology. From among them are:

1. *Tadīn*. This form is used in the Arabic expressions like “*kamā tadīn tudān*”¹³ It is enunciated with the vowel *fat-ha* on the first letter *ta* as found in *Lisān Al-‘Arab*.¹⁴ On the other hand, it is read with the vowel *ḍomma* as found in *Mukhtār As-Ṣiḥāḥ*, i.e. “*kamā tudīn tudān*”¹⁵. These forms of the term carry the meaning of recompense, which is not the intended meaning in this paper which is about the evolution of the term religiosity in Islamic thought. Al-Farahidi as-

¹³ Abul-Qāsim Mahmūd bin Amr bin Ahmad, *Az-Zarkashī, Asās Al-Balāgha* (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 1979), Vol. 1, p. 200.

¹⁴ Muhammad bin Mukarram Ibn Manẓur, *Lisān Al-‘Arab* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1st Edition, n.d.), Vol. 13, p. 164.

¹⁵ Muhammad bin Abi Bakr Ar-Razi, *Mukhtār As- Ṣiḥāḥ* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, new edition, 1995), Vol. 1, p. 218.

serts that the term “religion” has several meanings like obedience. He explains that the word religion in Arabic, i.e. *dīn*, is singular and its plural form is *adyān*. However, if the word is used to mean recompense, it does not have a plural form as it is a gerund. Based on this, the meaning of recompense shall be overlooked as the *dīn* that we are concerned with is that which is singular in nature and has the plural form of *adyān*.¹⁶

2. *Tadayyana*. Notice the difference between this form and the previous one; the first form had the vowel *fat-ha* on the letter *dāl*, whereas this one has the vowel *kasra* on it. *Tadayyana* is a past tense verb, whose present or future tense is *yatadayyanu*, and predominantly requires the preposition *ba*. It is said in the book *Al-Miṣbah* that this verbal form carries a meaning similar to worshipping with one’s faith in something.¹⁷ In *Lisān Al-‘Arab* it is said that it means to be a believer in something that one has taken as a religion¹⁸, whereas in *Mukhtār As-Siḥāḥ* it says that this verb is simply used to show that one is a believer in something.¹⁹ Thus, from these meanings it can be seen that the term religiosity (*tadayyun*) goes back to the root word religion (*dīn*), from which it obtains its meaning.

The point here is that during this phase there was no distinction between the terms “religion” and “religiosity”; religion was equated with religiosity and vice versa. This assertion is correct and sound on the basis of the linguistic commonality between the two.

3. *Tadayyun*. This form is a gerund, which takes on the intended meaning in our comparison between the religion and religiosity. It says in *Sharḥ Ibn ‘Aqīl*: “If the verb form is *taf‘a-ala* then its gerund’s form will be that of *taf‘a-ul* like (the verbs) *tajammala-tajammul*,

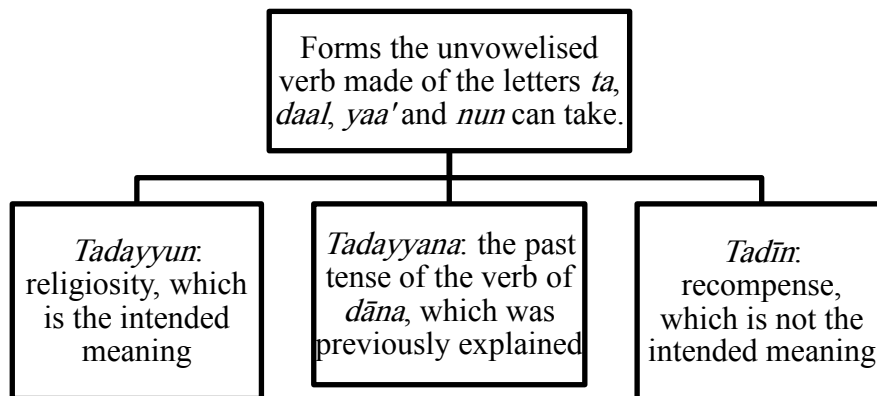
¹⁶ Abu Abdurrahman Al-Khalīl bin Ahmad al-Farahīdī, *Kitab Al-‘Ayn*, edited by Mahdī Al-Makhzūmī and Ibrahim As-Sāmarāī (Beirut: Dar El-Hilal, n.d.), Vol. 8, p. 78.

¹⁷ Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Ali Al-Muqri Al-Fayyūmī, *Al-Miṣbah Al-Munīr* (Cairo: Amiri Press, 5th Edition, 1992), Vol. 1, p. 205.

¹⁸ Ar-Rāzī, *Mukhtār As-Siḥāḥ*, Vol. 1, Pg. 218.

¹⁹ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-‘Arab*, Vol. 13, Pg. 164.

ta'allama-ta'allum and *takarrama-takarrum*.²⁰
 Words like *At-Taṣawwuf*, *At-Ta'arruf*, *At-Ta'arruq*
 and *At-Tadayyun* follow the same form. Al-Harīrī said:
 "Everything that follows the verb form *tafa'ala* or
tafā'ala (whereby the last letter is a *hamza*) its gerund
 will have the form of *at-tafa'ul*."²¹



Based on this, the interaction with the term religiosity in phase one revolved around the linguistic root that carried its intended meaning. As for the gerund which carries a different meaning, it was not paid attention to, studied, or explained. This paper, however, aims to focus on these aspects and explain them because even though the word religion and religiosity share a linguistic root in the Arabic language, their meanings may differ according to the context and usage.

The intended context or usage of the term religiosity here is exemplified in the following quote by Ibn Hajar: "Most of the people of

²⁰ Bahā-uddin Abdullah bin 'Aqīl Al-'Aqīlī Al-Misri Al-Hamdhāni, *Sharh Ibn 'Aqeel*, edited by Muhammad Muhyiyud-Dīn Abdul Hamīd (Damascus: Dar Al-Fikr, 2nd Edition, 1985) Vol. 3, Pg. 130.

²¹ Al-Qāsim bin 'Alī Al-Harīrī (516 AH), *Durrat Al-Ghawwāṣ Fi Awhām Al-Khawāṣ*, edited by Arafāt Matrajī (Beirut: Muassasah Al-Kutub Ath-Thaqāfiyyah, 1998), Vol. 1, Pg. 115.

Iraq were from the reciters of the Qur’an who exceeded in religiosity, after which some of them emerged as the Khawaarij.”²² It is also like that which Muhammad Az-Zuhayli meant in his book which he entitled *Al-‘Itidāl Fit-Tadayyun Fikran wa Sulūkan wa Manhajan* (Ideological, Behavioural and Methodological Moderation in Religiosity) and in his doctorate thesis entitled *Ad-Dīn wat-Tadayyun Fil-Khiṭāb Al-Islāmiy Al-Mu‘āsir* (Religion and Religiosity in Contemporary Islamic Discourse). There is no harm in saying that the meaning of religiosity as a gerund in these contexts and usages differs from that when it is used in the verbal form for the verb *dāna*, whereby it would be unsuitable to be defined as belief or faith, whether it be exaggerated like how Ibn Hajar mentioned, or moderate like how Az-Zuhayli described. Rather, it is a firm conviction from the heart. However, excessiveness and moderation in religiosity also stem from the same, so what does religiosity truly mean?

Phase Two: When “Religiosity” was Deemed Synonymous with “Religion”

During this phase, the term “religiosity” was sometimes considered linguistically synonymous with “religion”, while other times its concept was considered technically synonymous with it.

Several phases that were concerned with the concept of religion had already passed, one of which was the phase before the technical definition of religion had been established. Classical and contemporary Arabic dictionaries and lexicons have defined religion using many terminologies; some of them were interrelated, some were close to being synonymous, some were the result of using the term to imply a specific meaning embodied within the generic term itself, some were the result of using the term to imply a generic meaning while suggesting that the term itself is encompassed within the latter, and some were the result of the consideration of that which stems from one of the term’s meanings. The reason for this is evident: they were not aiming to establish a technical definition for religion. Thus, the meanings that the term religion carried during this particular phase included: recompense, remuneration, reckoning, obedience, submissiveness, submission, habit, concern, worshipping,

²² See: Ibn Hajar, Abul-Fadhl Ahmad bin Ali Al-‘Asqalāni, *Fath Al-Bāri Sharḥ Saḥih Al-Bukhāri*, study and commentary by Muhammad Fuād Abdul Bāqi (Beirut: Dar Al-Ma’rifah, extended and revised edition, 1379AH), Vol. 13, Pg. 289.

system and law- according to what Ibn Manẓur has mentioned.²³ Similarly, al-Firūz Ābādī explained that the term had the following meanings: Islam, custom, worship, submission, humility, ailment, reckoning, coercion, predominance, superiority, sovereign, possession, judgement, conduct, disposition, monotheism, all that which is devoted to the worship of Allah the Mighty and the Majestic, way of life, piety, compulsion, condition and Divine Will. He also clarified that the verbal form of the word religion, i.e. *dintuhu* and *adīnuhu*, which are the past and the present/future tense verbs morphed to the first-person pronoun respectively, carry the meaning of being of service to someone/something, doing a favour for someone and to have authority over something.²⁴ Ibn Fāris stated that religion is a type of compliance and humility, so it denotes obedience and that which falls in its meaning. He said in relation to this, “the root letters of the word *dīn* are *dal*, *yā*’ and *nūn*, and all of its derivatives go back to them. It is a type of compliance and humility, therefore *dīn* is obedience, so it is said²⁵: *dāna lahu yadīnu dīnan*, i.e. if he complies and obeys, and *qawmun dīnun*, i.e. religious people.”²⁶

The point here is that religiosity had been incorporated in the term religion as it was deemed to be that which the latter necessitates in it of itself. Thus, the two terms were synonymous such that either of them would suffice without the other. We shall see shortly how religion has been expressed as religiosity to exemplify obedience, worship and devoutness.

Although the two terms were generally considered synonymous during this phase, some scholars who were interested in the technical concept of religion were aware that the terms differed from one another. However, they did not distinguish between the two conceptually. Perhaps the first group of scholars were elucidating the term from the perspective of the verb – i.e. *tafa’ala*, the 2nd form that was previously explained – and did not consider it a gerund as they should have.

²³ See: Muhammad bin Mukrim Ibn Manẓur, *Lisān Al-‘Arab* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1st edition, n.d.) Vol. 13, Pg. 164.

²⁴ al-Firūz Ābādī, Muhammad Ya’qub, *al-Qāmus al-Muḥīṭ* (Cairo: al-Haiy’ah al-Misriyyah al-‘Āmmah lil Kutub, 3rd edition, 1302AH) Vol. 4, Pg. 221.

²⁵ i.e. in Arabic. Ibn Fāris is trying to exemplify the use of the verbal forms of the word religion, as well as the gerund.

²⁶ Abu al-Husayn Ahmad bin Faris bin Zakariyya, *Mu’jam Maqāyīs Al-Lughat*, edited by Abdussalām Muhammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 1979) Vol. 2, Pg. 319.

From among the scholars who defined religion to be synonymous with religiosity is Muhammad Abdullah Darrāz. He defined religion to be: “The belief in the existence of an unseen being or beings that has awareness, choice and the authority to dispose of the affairs of man. It is also believed that man is urged to supplicate to that Supreme Being in hope and in fear, as well as out of humility and exaltation.” This definition of religion takes into consideration the level of faith of the *mutadayyin* (devotee), i.e. his religiosity, thus indicating the synonymy of the two terms. Darrāz had used the gerund form (*at-tadayyun*) to refer to religiosity while intending its verbal form (*tadayyana*) which cannot accept the definitive particle *alif-lām*. The gerund form (*Tafa’ul*) in Arabic carries six meanings. To understand this, we can refer to what Zamakhshari has mentioned pertaining to this matter. Firstly, he said that this verbal form gives the meaning of compliance towards the action. For example, *kassartuhu* (“I broke it”) *fatakassara* (“so it broke”). The verb *takassara* follows the verbal form *tafa’ala*, just like *tadayyana*). Secondly, it has the meaning of adhering to something, undertaking or bearing a burden, as in the verbs *tashajja’a* (plucking up courage), *taṣabbara* (bearing patience) and *tahallama* (being sensible). Thirdly, it expresses the state of an action, like *takabbara* (showing off) and *ta’azama* (exhibiting grandiosity). Fourthly, it implies that of continuity or perseverance in a particular action, like *tajarra’ahu* (to force oneself to drink something) and *ta’arrafahu* (to try to figure something out). Fifthly, it has the meaning of taking hold of something, like how it is said *tadayyartul-makān* (I took the place as a home), *tawassadtut-turāb* (I took the ground as a pillow, i.e. I rested my head on it), and *tabannāhu* (I adopted it). Lastly, it can mean avoidance, like the avoidance of sin, wrongdoing, sleep and embarrassment.²⁷ Perhaps out of these six meanings, the most suitable ones would be the second (adhering to something, undertaking or bearing a burden) and the fifth (taking hold of something). Thus, it appears that Darrāz has adopted the second meaning of religion, therefore equating religion with religiosity in his attempt to define religion.

Among the Muslims scholars who used the term “religion” synonymously with “religiosity” is Muhammad Husayn Adh-Dhahabi. He said pertaining to the definition of religiosity: “As for religiosity, it is the adherence to a particular creed; one abides by it in his demeanour, does not believe in anything other than it, is not submissive to anything other

²⁷ Abul-Qāsim Mahmūd bin Amr bin Ahmad Az-Zamakhshari (d. 538AH), *Al-Mufasssal Fi San’atil ‘Irāb*, edited by Ali Bu Mulhim (Beirut: Dar Al-Hilal, 1993) Vol. 1, Pg. 371.

than it, does not follow anything other than its teachings and does not stray from its customs or guidance. People's strength and weakness in that varies. Such weakness, even though it may not extreme, is considered a rebellious exit from the fold of the religion."²⁸ Thus, he considers religiosity to be belief and faith, in turn agreeing with Darrāz's perception of the matter as previously explained.

Muhammad Az-Zuhayli is also among those who maintain the synonymy of the two terms. He defined religiosity as the manner or the ideology one follows theoretically and practically, as well as the approach he takes in life, in his relationships with others, in his submissiveness to his Master and in worship.²⁹ We find the same in another one of his books.³⁰

Among them is also Muhammad Riḍa Muhammad Bashīr Al-Qahwajī, who described religiosity as the practising of a religion, and that religiosity is part of human nature...³¹ It is known that religion is faith and that religiosity (as a verb, and not a gerund) is believing in and practising a religion. This researcher is of the view that it is necessary to distinguish between the two terms, as many of the later scholars have also asserted. We will make mention of some of them, after which this researcher will suggest a definition that he deems suitable.

Phase Three: The Beginning of the Distinction Between Religion and Religiosity

It is worth mentioning that the term "religion" was used previously in Islamic thought to indicate faith and its implications, which included different manifestations of religiosity. Later the term was used to refer to Islam exclusively. After that, the term still referred to Islam, except with the additional concern about addressing secularism.³²

As for this stage, it had somewhat alluded to the presence of the term "religion" and that it was not the same as "religiosity". However, it settled for the definition of religion without discussing the issue of religiosity, using one to define the other. In other words, religion was used to

²⁸ Adh-Dhahabi, *Ad-Dīn wat-Tadayyun*, Pg. 2.

²⁹ Az-Zuhayli, *Al-'Itidāl Fit-Tadayyun Fikran wa Sulūkan wa Manhajjan*, Pg. 5.

³⁰ Az-Zuhayli, *Wadhīfa Ad-Dīn Fil-Ḥayā Wa Ḥājat An-Nās Ilayhi*, Pg. 18 onwards.

³¹ Muhammad Riḍa Muhammad Bashīr Al-Qahwajī, *Muqāranat Al-Adyān* (Damascus: Dar Al-Waraq, 1st edition, 2008) Pg. 18.

³² Toure, Sekou. 2013. "Religion and Religiosity in Contemporary Islamic Discourse in Egypt." thesis.

refer to religiosity at times, and vice versa. Based on the works of the time, the difference between the two was unclear.

This stage is distinguished by calls to the differentiation between religion and religiosity. From among the scholars who indicated this distinction is Abdul Majīd An-Najjār, whereby he mentioned that religion – i.e. with reference to its particular concept of Islam – is the divine teachings that man has been addressed with and commanded to abide by, whereas religiosity is that which is humanly acquired as a result of the compliance to those teachings and the adaptation of life around it in terms of thought and behaviour. He then clarified that according to this definition, the reality of religion differs from that of religiosity; religion is made up of teachings that are divine legislations, whereas religiosity is the enactment of those teachings and is thus a natural outcome. Consequentially, he is of the opinion that this difference between the realities of the two necessitates a difference between their characteristic qualities and the laws pertaining to each of them.³³

It is observed that the point of distinction between the two is not precise or practical, and that the importance of his work lies in merely alluding to the difference between the two matters.

Another scholar who suggested the incongruence of the two terms is the author of the book *Taḥawwulāt At-Tadayyun Fil-Mujtama’ As-Su’ūdiy*. He explained that religion and religiosity are two different terminologies; religion refers to revelation, the message, the beginning of the prophetic mission and prophethood – there is no doubt that he has defined religion to mean Islam, as is apparent – and religiosity is a state and a phenomenon that has a beginning and can undergo changes.³⁴ He also defined religiosity to be the tendency of the society at large to practise the religion and to apply it all aspects of life, as well as to ensure that the distinctive quality of life – whether it be in political, ideological, societal, economical or media-related aspects – is that of Islam, which in turn ensures the unity of the society.³⁵

From among those who are believed to have intelligibly defined religiosity is Salah Abdul Muta’āl. He defined it as a behavioural model and way of life aimed at practising and adhering to the ideologies of a religious belief for the sake of the Creator and society. Thus, it is distin-

³³ An-Najjār, *Fi Fiqh At-Tadayyun Fahman wa Tanzīlan*, Pg. 18.

³⁴ Abdul-Aziz bin Zayd Āl Dāwud, *Taḥawwulāt At-Tadayyun Fil-Mujtama’ As-Su’ūdiy*, Pg. 14.

³⁵ Previous source, Pg. 18.

guished by the desire to adjust one's demeanour in compliance with the teachings of the religious creed.³⁶ Therefore, the reader unequivocally observes the difference between the two; religion is belief and faith, and religiosity is a manifestation and state in response to that which has been believed in. Even though he only defined religiosity, it can be understood from the context of his definition – specifically the last two words of it – that religion is the theological side of things.

Phase Four: The Call to Distinguish Between Religion and Religiosity – Factors and Approaches

In his doctorate thesis entitled *Ad-Dīn wat-Tadayyun Fil-Khitāb Al-Islāmiy Al-Mu'āṣir* (Religion and Religiosity in Contemporary Islamic Discourse)³⁷, this researcher calls to the need to distinguish between religion and religiosity, attempts to define each of the two terms, and tries to consolidate the matter. It is worth mentioning that this researcher, according to his knowledge, did not come across previous studies that invited to consider this matter at the time (2010-2013). Based on this, it is possible to consider his dissertation as the first call to differentiate between religion and religiosity, whilst acknowledging the historical and scientific contributions that resulted from the previous stages, as well as the accompanying studies and research papers.

Additionally, the perception of Islam – i.e. before this researcher's aforementioned dissertation – to be a combination of religion and religiosity was established in Islam itself, as well as in classical and contemporary Islamic thought. This is similar to the concept of the objectives of Islam, whereby the latter already existed even before the term was coined by Al-Ghazaali.

One who reads the Noble Qur'an will find that whenever the Qur'an deals with issues of theology, jurisprudence, creed, monotheism, dialectic theology or Islamic perception, it uses the word *īmān* (faith) or its derivatives. Then it follows it with the mention of doing good deeds. Hence, whenever the word *āmanū* (a derivated of *īmān*: the past tense verb meaning "believed", morphed to the third person plural pronoun) is found, there is also the word *'Amiloo* (past tense verb meaning "to do")

³⁶ Salah Abdul Muta'āl, his article entitled *At-Tadayyun Al-Jadīd Munāwarah Haḍāriyyah*, published on Islam Online, 2008, Pg. 2.

³⁷ Toure, Sekou. 2013. "Religion and Religiosity in Contemporary Islamic Discourse in Egypt." thesis.

morphed to the third person plural pronoun).³⁸ Allah the Most High said: “And give good tidings to those who believe and do righteous deeds that they will have gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow.”³⁹ He also said: “Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfil their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.”⁴⁰ Thus, belief comes before action; the internal, conceptual aspect of belief is “religion”, and the applied aspect is “religiosity”.

The Prophetic tradition also confirms this reality; in addition to Qur’anic evidence is the saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): “At the beginning of every one hundred years Allah will send to this ummah someone who will renew its *dīn* or the matter of its *dīn*.”⁴¹

The Prophetic tradition is thus a clarification from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) that there are aspects of religiosity that require reform; reform to bring about innovative ways of transactions and to establish Islamic legislations for them, as well as reform to advance understanding and explanation to a more contemporary and cultural level. All of this is embodied in religiosity, given that *īmān* (belief) is definite; there is nothing new and there is no reformation in the belief in the existence of Allah, the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), the Resurrection and what will transpire during it. However, there is reform in the representation of the diversity of the Islamic society, the freedoms, the minorities, the innovated methods of buying and selling as well as the way of life. Hence, Islam is religion, religiosity, belief and action, as mentioned in the Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition. This researcher does not see Muhammad Iqbal’s work - *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* - except as an effort to confirm this. Perhaps he wishes to say that *īmān* is true, possible and fol-

³⁸ Muhammad ‘Ayāsh Al-Kubaysi, *Al-Muhkam Fil-‘Aqīdah* (Doha: ‘Alām Lil-Fikr wath-Thaqāfah, 1st Edition, 2003) Pg. 15 onwards.

³⁹ Surah Al-Baqarah Ayah 25.

⁴⁰ Surah Al-Baqarah Ayah 177.

⁴¹ Classed as Sahīh by Al-Albāni. See: Abu Dāwud, Sulaymān bin Al-Ash‘āt As-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abi Dāwud*, edited by Muhammad Muhyiyuddīn Abdul Hamīd (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, n.d.) Vol. 2, Pg. 512.

lowed by religiosity. However, the latter progresses with jurisprudential discretion, which is the principle of change in Islam.⁴²

All of these matters together help us understand that the Prophets had been sent with faith, action, the keys to steadfastness in religion because it is in essence just information, the adaptations of religiosity as well as its forms.⁴³ Thus, they were sent with both religion and religiosity. They did not differ in matters of religion; God is One, He sent a Messenger and Paradise and Hell are realities. As for religiosity, it differed from one prophet to another; aspects of it were abrogated, developed and substituted. For example, the door to polygyny was sometimes part of the manifestation of religiosity, while other times it was not, and sometimes it was permissible for a man to marry his sister⁴⁴, while other times it was forbidden, and so on and so forth.

It is possible to add to the aforementioned evidence from the Qur'an and Prophet Tradition, as well as to the evidence of the philosophy of the history of the Messengers, the visions of some of the Muslim thinkers. Al-Būṭi explains that Islam, or *dīn*, is *aqīdah* (creed) and what follows it of legislation and moral character.⁴⁵ Hence, it is equivalent to religion and religiosity. Anīs Malik Ṭaha asserts that *aqīdah* is to *dīn* like the head is to the body, and that there is nothing from the *dīn* except that it comes hand-in-hand with *aqīdah*, calling the former's followers to it. After that follow other matters which are too detailed to mention at the moment.⁴⁶ This researcher considers these other matters as part of religiosity. Al-Kubaysī asserts that the Qur'an has tied *dīn* or *īmān* with all aspects of life⁴⁷, which is part and parcel of religiosity. This researcher is of the opinion that Tariq Ramadan's classification of Islam into Arab Islam, Malaysian Islam, Pakistani Islam, African Islam and European Islam, as well as his invitation to consider the European or the Francophone Muslim, is from this perspective.⁴⁸ There is no doubt that the *dīn* is one and

⁴² Mohammad Iqbal, *the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan; Institute of Islamic Culture, 1986).

⁴³ Al-Būṭi, *Kubra Al-Yaqīniyāt Al-Kawniyyah*, Pg. 72; Al-Būṭi, Muhammad Sa'īd Ramaḍan, *Fiqh As-Sīrah An-Nabawiyyah*, Pg. 51.

⁴⁴ i.e. at the time of Prophet Adam and his early offspring.

⁴⁵ See previous source.

⁴⁶ Anees Malik Taha, *At-Ta'addudiyyah Ad-Deeniyyah*, Pg. 28.

⁴⁷ Al-Kubaysi, *Al-Muhkam Fil-'Aqeedah*, Pg. 40.

⁴⁸ See: Tariq Ramadan, *To Be a European Muslim* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1999); Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Pg. 3 ff.

unchangeable. However, religiosity is exemplified in different ways of life, styles of clothing and patterns of behaviour, which is an apparent reality; religiosity is variegated, whereas Islam is one.

Lastly, after this call in 2013, this researcher has come across some studies and research papers inviting to the matter. For instance, the book *Ad-Dīn wat-Tadayyun: At-Tashrī' wan-Naṣ wal-Ijtima'* (Religion and Religiosity: Legislation, Text and Society) by Abdul Jawwād Yāsīn, first published in 2012, the dissertation *Maḥūm Ad-Dīn wa Mazāhir At-Tadayyun Fil-Qur'an al-Karīm: Dirāsāt Mawḍu'iyat Tahliyyat* (The Concept of Religion and the Manifestations of Religiosity in the Noble Qur'an: A Topical and Analytical Study).

Given that the approaches to the matter may stem from efforts to consolidate it or westernize it, evidence is used as the criterion to distinguish between the two.

This researcher believes that, linguistically, *at-tadayyun* (religiosity) is a gerund following the verbal form *tafa'ul*. Whoever carries out the verbal form of religiosity, i.e. *tadayyana*, it means that he is characterised by adhering to the teachings of a particular doctrine and faith, which differs from the faith itself.

Technically, religiosity is the state rightfully acquired by an individual as a result of his association with that which he believes in. This is not equivalent to the belief itself that he submits to, but rather it is the fruit and an interpretation of it.

Conclusion

All praise is due to Allah in the beginning and in the end, blessings and salutations upon the last of the Messengers of Allah. As to what follows; this paper was an effort to explore and investigate the ideological phases which the concept of religiosity had undergone in the history of Islamic thought, as well as to explicate associated factors and correlations. As for the results of this research, this researcher finds that the scholars have differed as to the explanation of the concept of religiosity. He has examined each of their particular perspectives and taken account of their considerations. It is thereby deemed fit to say that the concept of religiosity has undergone several ideological phases.

From among the most important findings of this research are the following:

1. Phase one from the phases of the development of the concept of religiosity was the phase during which “religiosity” was considered merely one of the linguistical roots of the word “religion” in the history of Islamic thought. The scholars at the time did not define it in any other way.
2. Phase two was when “religiosity” was considered synonymous with “religion” in the history of Islamic thought. Whatever held true for the concept of religiosity also held true for that of religion, i.e. religiosity was equated to religion and vice versa.
3. As for phase three, it was when the distinction of the two terms was first alluded to in the history of Islamic thought, whereby the need to differentiate between religion and the forms of religiosity became apparent in the field. It is also worth highlighting the disparity among the scholars during this phase with regards to their approaches in explaining the reality of religiosity. Thus, some scholars had indicated that religion and religiosity were two different things, albeit without discussing the differences between them or clarifying each of their concepts.
4. The fourth stage called to the differentiation between religion and religiosity and explained the factors that lead to that in the history of Islamic thought. During this phase, the clarification of the difference between the two terms was completed.

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