The modern Yemeni historian Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Yahyā Zabāra (d. 1380/1960) wrote a short history of the Zaydi imams, beginning with Zayd b. ʿAlī and ending with his own contemporary al-Mutawakkil ʿalā Allāh, who was recognized as imam in 1322/1904. The book consists of a poem (urjūza) and a commentary upon it and is entitled A Gift Presented to the Rightly Guided: Concerning the Imams-Restorers and the Rulers of the Yemen from among the Descendants of the Prophet, Adherents of the Qurān (Iḥāf al-muḥtadīn bi-dhikr al-a'imma al-mujaddidīn wa- man qāma li-l-yaman al-maymūn min qurānī al-kitāb al-mubīn wa-ābīn sayyid al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-mursalīn [Ṣanʿāʾ, 1343]). The term “restorers,” mujaddidīn, which appears in the title, recalls the hadith “God will send to this community at the turn of each century someone (or ‘people’) who will restore the religion” (inna allāh yabʿath li-hadhihi al-umma ʿalā raʾs kull miʿa sana man yujaddid lahd amr dīnīhā). I have dealt with this hadīth extensively in a separate article, but the main points are summarized below for the purpose of the present article.¹

The earliest occurrence of this hadīth is in the third century in the Sunan of Abu Daʿud. Several medieval authors quote it from Abū Daʿūd, invariably attaching to it lists of people designated as mujaddidūn. Whatever the original meaning was, at some point tajdid came to be explained as, or identified with, iḥyāʾ al-sunna. This in turn may mean the revival of past forgotten practices and ideas of the Prophet or the defending of the orthodoxy from unwelcome innovations. Generally speaking, however, it was not the concept of revival-restoration which interested medieval writers, in that they were not concerned about devising a mechanism which would make revival possible; nor did they formulate criteria for the identification and designation of mujaddidūn, except the general stipulations that they should be great scholars and/or champions of the Sunna against bidʿa. Medieval authors were interested in the identity of those designated as mujaddidūn, often enhancing the prestige of a scholar (or scholars) whom they favored. They usually abided by the criterion supplied by the

hadīth itself, i.e., the time limitation. Thus the mujaddidūn are, as a rule, scholars of the religious sciences who happened to die shortly after the turn of a given century. Usually, several restorers are mentioned for each century, which is probably the result of harmonizing and standardizing various previous lists. An examination of the lists shows that, starting with al-Shāfīī (d. 204/819) and until the sixth century A.H., the Sunnī mujaddidūn were jurists and theologians who strove to make the Prophetic tradition (hadīth) predominate over personal judgment (ra'y) and who defended Orthodoxy, even while it was still in the process of crystallizing, against groups which they considered non-orthodox. In other words, the Sunnī mujaddidūn of the third to the sixth centuries were scholars who were engaged in polemics against non-Sunnī Muslims. All of these mujaddidūn were active in the eastern centers of learning, in Iraq and Iran. Between the seventh and the tenth centuries A.H. we find a number of restorers in Cairo. Unlike their eastern predecessors, these mujaddidūn were not famous for their polemical activity in particular but acquired their title because of their remarkable knowledge and scholarly activity.

Most of the mujaddidūn mentioned in the standard lists are Shafīīs, as are the transmitters of the mujaddid hadīth mentioned above. Yet there is evidence suggesting that the use of the title mujaddid was not confined to the Shafīī madhhab. Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Kathīr state that every school applied the title to its own masters. The list compiled by Ibn al-Athīr, however, is not merely a collection of the names of such masters because it is very systematic. Rather, it appears that Ibn al-Athīr himself, acting against the fanaticism of any particular school or faction, compiled a comprehensive list which includes scholars from many schools, places, and religious sciences, as well as caliphs and even Imāmī Shiīs.2

Ibn al-Athīr's list is comprehensive, but it does not include Zaydī imams; yet, as mentioned above, the Yemenī historian Zabāra applies the title mujaddid systematically to Zaydī imams. This paper is the result of an attempt to investigate the use and significance of this title in Zaydī tradition as compared with its Sunnī counterpart. Such an investigation may provide a new view concerning the nature of Zaydī leadership, as well as insight into the Zaydī use of a Sunni hadīth.

It should first be noted that Zabāra singles out as mujaddidūn twenty-three of the one hundred and twenty imams he mentions. These are distributed more or less evenly over the thirteen centuries of Islamic history, thus forming a complete Zaydī list of restorers independent of the Sunnī one. As we shall see below, this is not the only Zaydī list, and it is noticeable that Zabāra himself is inconsistent in at least one case, that of al-Hadī ila al-Haqq (d. 290/903), whom he sometimes calls mujaddid yet whom he does not include in his list.3 Zabāra’s application of the title calls for several

2 Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, al-Ṭanbi‘a bi-man yah‘athu allāh ʿallā ra‘is kull mi‘a, MS Leiden Or. 474, fols. 79b–80a.
3 The list is in M. b. M. Zabāra al-Ḥasanī, Ithāf al-a‘immā al-mujaddidūn wa-muhtadīn bi-dhikr al-a‘immā al-mujaddidūn wa-man qamna bi-r-yamān al-maymūn min qurānī al-kirāb al-muḥi‘in wa-abnā‘ sayyid al-anbiyā‘ wa-l-mursalin (Ṣan‘ā‘, 1343), pp. 4–6; cf. idem, Abnā‘ al-yaman wa-nubalā‘īhi bi-l-islām (Cairo, n.d.), p. 39; idem, Khulasat sārat al-haḍīth, appended to idem, al-Inbā‘ ʿan dawlat bilqīs wa-saba‘ (Cairo, 1376), p. 3, where he refers to al-Haḍī as mujaddid. This Khulasā is taken from a work entitled Urjūzat al-a‘immā. It may well be that the latter is identical with the Ithāf (which is also an urjūza), as the refrain is identical. I was unable to check it because I could not find the Urjūzat al-a‘immā, and the biography of al-Haḍī which is the Khulasā is missing in the printed edition of the Ithāf. As for al-Haḍī himself, he was not unanimously recognized
comments, which are listed in what follows under four headings. These comments indicate the differences between the Zaydi and Sunni restorers.

The Disregard for the Hundred-Year Motif

According to the mujaddid ḥadīth, a restorer is due every hundred years at the turn of each century. Accordingly, it was stipulated for the Sunni mujaddidūn that they be dead shortly after the turn of the century, and only rarely was this rule broken. Zabāra, on the other hand, disregards this rule. In the introduction to his Ithāf, he quotes the mujaddid ḥadīth verbatim and appends to it commentary from his predecessors which stresses and explains the hundred-year motif; he also assigns his mujaddidūn to their respective centuries. Yet the long list which he adduces immediately afterwards includes many imams whose death dates do not coincide with the turn of the century. Had he considered dates of major events in their lives instead of their deaths, one would have expected an explanation, as given by the Sunnis when they designated as mujaddid al-Ashʿarī, who died in 323/934 (too late for the “turn of the century”). Even so, there are imams who do not fit in the hundred-year motif in any way. This may indicate that the Zaydi way of designating mujaddidūn was less mechanical than the Sunni one because they disregarded the hundred-year rule, which after all, is gratuitous: people qualified to bear the title mujaddid might be active, or die, at any time during the century.

The Regal Aspect of the Title

The Sunni restorers are almost always scholars (supposedly the finest ones of their time) with the following exceptions: (1) ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. It was, however, not his caliphal status which earned him the title but his (alleged?) activities in the field of ḥadīth. (2) The fifth mujaddid in the standard Sunni lists is al-Ghazālī, but in the list recorded by Ibn ʿAsākir (on the authority of a Damascene muftī), the caliph al-Mustarshid bi-Allāh is substituted for al-Ghazālī. Ibn ʿAsākir himself raises objections to this substitution on the ground that al-Ghazālī is more deserving of the title, since he was such an outstanding religious scholar. (3) In the comprehensive list of mujaddidūn compiled by Ibn al-Athīr, a caliph is included for each century, alongside jurists, Qurʾān readers, muḥaddithūn, etc.

Unlike the Sunni list, Zabāra’s list of Zaydi restorers consists mainly of political leaders who were proclaimed heads of the community, i.e., imams. This is not to say that they were not scholars as well; on the contrary, they were supposed to be the finest scholars, since the Zaydi head of the community is invariably an imam of the
family of the Prophet and, as such, should constitute the highest religious authority and the source of knowledge (macdan al-‘ilm). He stands at the top of the hierarchy of excellence and is greatly admired and held in the highest esteem. It does not therefore seem conceivable that the title “restorer of religion” should apply to anyone but an imam. On the other hand, when applied to the Zaydi imams, the title mujaddid must denote more than mere recognition of scholarly excellence; that in fact it does, will, I hope, be shown below. It is also clear why the Sunni list of mujaddidin can vary and include caliphs alongside scholars, whereas the Zaydi list does not. In Sunni Islam, the caliphs share with the scholars the task of defending the true faith. By analogy, they may also share with the scholars the task of restoring and reviving the faith. In fact, caliphs and scholars strive for the same end through different means—the caliphs using power (enforcing the shari’a and performing jihād) and the scholars disseminating knowledge. For the Zaydis, the bearer of these responsibilities is the imam, who uses both methods, being himself the embodiment of power and knowledge alike; hence, there is no place for mujaddidun beside the imam. Thus there is in the Zaydi use of the title mujaddid a regal aspect which is almost entirely lacking in the Sunni notion of tajdid.

Types of Mujaddidun

Zabara makes a distinction between three types of mujaddidun: (1) mujaddid bi-sayfihi, the imams who restore religion by waging war on those who distort it; (2) mujaddid bi-‘ilmihhi, the imams who perform the same task by disseminating knowledge; and (3) mujaddid bi-sayfihi wa-‘ilmihhi, the imams who use both methods. Most of the mujaddidun belong to the third type and are both leaders of jihād and authors of religious books, as indeed they should be according to the idea of the Zaydi imam described above. Jihād against whoever opposes his legitimate rule is incumbent upon the imam, and knowledge is both a prerogative inherent in his office and a means of legitimizing his claim to this office. There were imams, however, who did not meet

all the requirements yet who were recognized as legitimate. Thus the political failure of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 246/860) did not prevent him from being recognized as one of the most important imams because of his pivotal role in systematizing Zaydī theology. The Zaydīs learned to make concessions to reality, first of all, for example, by ignoring success and failure. The legitimacy of the imams does not depend on their actual victory but on their attempts to achieve it. Secondly, as pointed out by R. Strothmann, the Zaydīs resorted to a distinction between two types of imams, both legitimate, imams of war and imams of learning. Apparently, this was done precisely because many imams did not live up to the ideal with both the sword and the pen. Zābārā copied this distinction between types of imams and applied it to the mujaddidūn. There is, of course, no such distinction as regards the Sunnī restorers, nor is there any other attempt at dividing them into types.

Zābārā makes an effort to distribute evenly his twenty-three restorers in terms of both geography and typology. In most cases, he mentions contemporaneous mujaddidūn in the Yemenī and Caspian Zaydī states, and when designating a “restorer-by-the-sword,” he attaches to him as a counterpart a “restorer-by-knowledge.” One example of the former is Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm, who led a Shi‘ī revolt in Kūfah in 199/815. His counterpart (“restorer-by-knowledge”) is his brother, the above-mentioned al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, who in fact was the first to systematize Zaydī theology and jurisprudence. The importance of al-Qāsim is reflected in the application to him of the saying of the Prophet “if there was to be a prophet after me it would have been he.” (This hadīth was also applied to great figures such as ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Ibn Ḥanbal, and al-Ghazālī.) Another mujaddid bi-sayfihi is al-Ma‘ṣūr bi-Allāh ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 840/1436), and his counterpart is Ahmad b. Yahyā b. al-Murtaḍā (also d. 840/1436). The latter was a prolific writer of paramount importance who wrote fundamental works in the fields of theology and fiqh. The former, al-Ma‘ṣūr bi-Allāh, was continuously engaged in war, thus conforming to the ideal of jiḥād. That his enemies were often Zaydīs themselves whose only fault was that they did not recognize his rule does not make al-Ma‘ṣūr’s wars less holy as far as he was concerned. Yet placing him and Ibn al-Murtaḍā as complementary mujaddidūn seems somewhat absurd because the mujaddid is supposed to fight the enemies of religion, and these two fought one another over power and rule. In 794/1392, the mujaddid bi-sayfihi al-Ma‘ṣūr bi-Allāh ʿAlī took prisoner the mujaddid bi-ʿilmīhi Ahmad b. Yahyā b. al-Murtaḍā. To sum up, the Zaydīs drew the distinction between types of imams in order to solve two concrete problems: the existence of imams who were lacking in one of the two qualifying aspects (military ability and knowledge) and the
simultaneous existence of two imams or more. Since the mujaddidūn are always imams, this typological distinction automatically applies to them. However, while solving the above-mentioned problems, this distinction creates a new problem because it brings out the unfortunate reality of discord and war among members of the venerated House of the Prophet.

Lack of Evidence for Earlier Occurrences of the Title

Zabāra composed his urjūza on the basis of material found in the history books of his predecessors. His commentary on the urjūza necessarily draws upon the same sources for the simple reason that he did not invent the history which he wrote. He cites several sources, usually ascribing to each of them the specific material which he drew from it. Not once does he ascribe to an earlier source the designation of an imam as a mujaddid. But, as we shall see, Zabāra was no innovator in this matter. Some of the notions associated with the mujaddid have deep roots in the Zaydi tradition, and the term mujaddid itself was eventually applied to Zaydi imams, although sparingly. The relation between these notions, the title mujaddid, and the mujaddid ḥadīth will be examined in the following pages.

On the surface, it appears that the idea of restoration is incompatible with Zaydi doctrines because it presupposes a period of deterioration. Restoration is needed at the end of each century because, as Suyūṭī puts it, by that time the scholars of the century have died, the ways of the Prophet have been forgotten and innovations introduced. Theoretically, such a state of deterioration cannot occur according to the Zaydis because of the principle of the continuity of guidance. One frequently finds in Zaydi literature the following ḥadīth: “the people of my House are like the stars, whenever one of them sets another one rises,” that is, by God’s decree there is always an imam of the ahl al-bayt to guide the community. The idea of continuity assumes other forms as well: the chain of prophets culminated in Muhammad, then God gave his Prophet the progeny of his daughter and his cousin to be the people’s guide after him. The people cannot at any time be without a ruler who rules according to God’s book; at all times, there must be among the ahl al-bayt people qualified to be imams, “knowledge always has guardians, as long as the nights follow the days”;

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13 See n. 8 above.
14 Suyūṭī, Tanbi‘a, fol. 80b.
17 Humaydān (quoting al-Murtadā li-Dīn Allāh Muhammad b. Yaḥyā), Taṣrīḥ, fol. 121b.
18 Humaydān (quoting al-Mansūr bi-Allāh ʻAbd-allāh b. Ḥamza), Faqīh, fol. 50a. Of course there was a discrepancy between the ideal and reality; see, for example, Gochenour, “Zaydi Islam,” p. 200.
there is no way by which the *sharīʿa* can be changed or falsified says al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh because the whole community knows it and will not permit it. Nevertheless, the same author quotes a *ḥadīth* concerning innovations: it says that for every innovation introduced in Islam there is assigned someone of the *ahl al-bayt* to rectify its damages and show the people the truth. Zayd b. ʿAlī is quoted as saying that God sends to every generation someone from the *ahl al-bayt* as “Proof of the Truth” (*hujja*). All these expressions of the idea of continuity mean the same thing: there is always just rule by rightly-guided imams from among the *ahl al-bayt*: hence, there is no place for *fatra*, an “interval”; no deterioration may occur, and there is no need for *tajdid*, “restoration.” Nevertheless, the ideas of *fatra*, deterioration, and *tajdid* do figure in Zaydī tradition.

At the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century, al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh states that Zaydīs, Imāmīs, Muʿtazīlīs, and most Sunnīs all share the doctrine of continuity. But the founder of Zaydī theology, al-Qāsim b. ʿIbrāhīm, considered the Imāmīs comparable with the Brahmin atheists because of this very doctrine. Basing his ideas on al-Qāsim, Strothmann assumed that the Zaydīs as a rule maintained the *fatra* doctrine, which is opposed to the idea of continuity. A confirmation of Strothmann’s assumption seems to be found in the fact that al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh al-Qāsim b. Muhammad (d. 1029/1620) wrote a book entitled *Guidance for the Servants of God in the Absence of a Director.* W. Madelung, however, has pointed out that al-Qāsim b. ʿIbrāhīm was inconsistent regarding the *fatra* doctrine; he used it to refute the Imāmī doctrine of *wasiyya* (a form of the continuity idea). Yet, on the other hand, al-Qāsim also argued that an imam was always necessary on the grounds that Allah cannot leave the people without guidance. It seems to me that although there is evidence in Zaydī literature of both *fatra* and continuity doctrines, the latter is the more typically Zaydī. This also makes sense historically, given the uninterrupted political existence of Zaydīs in the Yemen. But the doctrine of *fatra* serves Zaydī purposes, too. In

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20 Idem, al-ʿīqd al-thamin, fols. 80a, 128b–129a, 131b.
22 Al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh, al-ʿīqd al-thamin, fol. 56a. Cf. Goenou, “Zaydī Islam,” pp. 46, 79: “Zaydīs repudiated the idea of a hidden imam or one who was for the moment removed from material existence,” and they “put particular stress on the present existence of the imam.” Of course ghayba and *fatra* are different theological issues, but in the present context it is the idea of the continuous guidance which is stressed.
25 A. S. Tritton, *The Rise of the Imams of Sanʿāʾ* (London, 1925), p. 128. This is not the same al-Manṣūr mentioned in the previous notes. Tritton does not give any detail on this book, and I was unable to trace it.
26 Madelung, *Der Imam*, p. 146. For a critique of Madelung’s view, see B. Abrahamov, “The Theological Epistle of al-Kāsim b. ʿIbrāhīm” (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1981) (in Hebrew), vol. 1, p. 126. Al-Qāsim’s epistle in which he uses the doctrine of *fatra* is *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-radhīda*. The epistle in which he bases himself on the continuity doctrine is *Kitāb tadhrib al-imāma*, both edited by Abrahamov, vol. 2, pp. 310–21 and 204–23 respectively.
27 This holds true even though there were periods in which the Zaydīs had hardly any control in the Yemen, since, ideally, the Zaydi communities do not cease to constitute political entities even when (temporarily) overcome by other powers. Thus it is possible for Zabāra to say that the Zaydīs “ruled the Yemen for more than 1000 years.” M. b. M. Zabāra, *Yemen—Traditionalism versus Modernity* (New York, 1982), p. 5; and in the same vein, M. A. Mādī, “Dawlat al-yaman al-zaydiyya, nashʿātuhā, tatawwuruhā, ʿalāqātuhā,” *al-Majalla al-taʾrikhiyya*
addition to refuting the Imāmī wasīyya-doctrine, it also provides the background for the appearance of prophets and helps to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal, i.e., between the fact that morals and religion are always in an undesirable state and the notion that God constantly provides guidance. The idea of fatra reconciles these two facts by showing that the periods during which ignorance prevails and deterioration occurs are regularly halted by God’s successive agents: prophets, imams, mujaddidīn. Of course, the contradiction may be resolved without the device of the fatra, by the argument that guidance is always present, but that people sin and fail to follow it. At any rate, it appears that the contradictory ideas of continuity and deterioration coexist in Zaydī thought, both being organic elements of it. The Zaydī concept of the ahl al-bayt, their status, and their qualities, coupled with the fact that ahl al-bayt is a genealogical entity, entails the idea of continuity. On the other hand, the concept of deterioration fits into Zaydī thought not only because of its connection with the doctrine of fatra, but also because of the similarity between the figures of the imam and the ultimate Mahdi. As a result of this similarity, the period of the “Portents of the Hour” (ashrāt al-sā‘a), which precedes the appearance of the Mahdi, was transferred and became a period of deterioration which precedes the advent of an imam or a mujaddid.

The similarity between the head of the community and the eschatological Mahdi cuts across sectarian lines and is common to all groups of Sunnis and Shi‘īs. It is expressed in various forms, first and foremost by the application of the title Mahdi to caliphs and imams.28 In addition, the imams and the Mahdi are sometimes referred to by the same terms. For instance, according to the messianic ideal put in the form of a ḥadīth, the Mahdi “will fill the world with justice as it is filled with evil/injustice.”29 The same words are applied to many Zaydī imams either as prophecies of their advent or as epithets.30 The advent of the imam al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqiq is prophesied in ḥadīths phrased in an eschatological style and using apocalyptic terms, as, for example, “when the Egyptians have killed their governor and the Yemeni will arise, he will fill the earth with justice . . . .”31

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Terms are transferable not only from the Mahdi to the imam but also vice versa. Just as caliphs and imams are referred to as mahdis, so the Mahdi is called khalifat allāh. One of the tasks of the Zaydi imam is “to enjoin good and prohibit evil” (al-amr bi-l-ma’rūf wa-l-nahy ‘an al-munkar). Conversely, the application of this precept is a token by which the Zaydi imams are recognized. The Qur'ānic verse upon which this precept is based is even used to try to prove that the Zaydi doctrine of the Imamate is the only right one. Evidently, al-amr bi-l-ma’rūf is transferred from the imam to the Mahdi. Interestingly, it is precisely this injunction which is used in an attempt at differentiating between the Mahdi and the imam: Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abdallah was asked whether his brother, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, had been the Mahdi. He replied that the Mahdi was a Divine Promise which was never specified by name or time; even if al-Nafs al-Zakiyya was not the Mahdi, he nevertheless fulfilled the task assigned to him by God, which was to enjoin good and prohibit evil. Such attempts, however, are overshadowed by the tendency of the figures of the Mahdi and the imam to intermingle. A passage may even be ambiguous, leaving it to the reader to decide whether the Mahdi or an imam is meant. A prophecy ascribed to ‘Alī describes a future time in which innovations will multiply and the ways of the Prophet be wiped out, so that the world will be filled with injustice; God will then remedy the situation by sending a man of the ahl al-bayt to fill the world with justice. Since both the imam and the Mahdi are members of the ahl al-bayt, the prophecy may in a similar manner refer to the advent of any given imam and the ultimate Mahdi. From the last passages it is evident that the parallelism between the imam and the Mahdi extends to the period preceding the advent of either. The deterioration theme is a pale reflection of the horrendous “Portents of the Hour” (ashrār al-sā‘a’), just as the imam reflects the Mahdi. Connected in this way with the concept of Mahdi/imam, the deterioration theme thus belongs to Zaydi thought, even though it clashes with the basic doctrine of continuity.

In addition to being a reflection of an apocalyptic idea, the deterioration theme may be seen on a pragmatic level as a tool used in propaganda. A deteriorated state of affairs justifies the rise of an imam and his claim to establish and lead a new order.

32 Crone and Hinds, God's Caliph, p. 16.
33 Ibid., p. 18, n. 63.
34 Sirat al-hādī, pp. 28, 298, and passim; al-Hādī ilā al-Haqq, Uṣūl al-dīn, MS Brit. Lib. Or. 3798, fols. 68a–69b; al-Ḥājūrī, Rawdat al-akhbār, fols. 182b, 188a, 196b; al-Mansūr bi-Allāh, al-Ḥādī ilā al-thāmīn, fols. 47a, 68a, 80a, 140a; idem, al-Durra al-yatīmā, fols. 170b, 180a; idem, Ajwībat masā‘il, fol. 280a; al-Hadawi, Anwār al-yaqīn (Brit. Lib.), fols. 74b, 150a, 176a; al-Nāṭiq bi-l-Haqq Yahyā b. al-Husayn, al-Ifāda fī ‘a‘rākh al-‘a‘imma al-sā‘a, MS Leiden Or. 2616, fols. 49b, 45b; Van Arendonk, Les Débuts, pp. 51, 56, n. 1, 135, 137, 164, 288; Strothmann, Staatsrecht, pp. 42–43, 105.
35 Al-Hādī, Durar al-ahādith, p. 48 (quoted also by Strothmann, Staatsrecht, and by Crone and Hinds, God’s Caliph, p. 98, n. 12).
36 Al-Hadawi, Anwār al-yaqīn (Brit. Lib.), fol. 102a–b. The verse is sūra 3:104.
37 Al-Mansūr bi-Allāh, al-‘Iqd al-thāmīn, fol. 60b.
39 Al-Hadawi, Anwār al-yaqīn, MS Leiden, Or. 14.266, fol. 63b.
This is clearly illustrated by the imam al-Mu'ayyad bi-Allāh (end of the fourth century, eastern Zaydi state). In a propaganda speech, he describes the cycles of evil and redemption through Islamic history from al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī down to his own period: time and again evil prevailed and the righteous (i.e., Zaydi) imams rose against it, each in his turn. Al-Mu'ayyad presents himself as the new link in that chain and urges his listeners to support him in order to overcome the current evil.40 The same idea figures in the words attributed to Zayd b. ʿAll: "... it is a long time since the Prophet died and nothing remained of Islam but the name ..."41 The implication is that the time has come to restore things to the way they were at the time of the Prophet. The idea of restoration or revival in fact depends on the theme of deterioration, without which it has no raison d'être.

In the context of propaganda and the advent of new imams, the idea of restoration is sometimes not only implied but explicitly stated. The founder of the Zaydi state in the Yemen, al-Hādī ila al-Haqq (d. 298/911), describes his own time as evil to such a degree as to necessitate the appearance of the Mahdi.42 The parallel between the Mahdi and the imam stands out here very clearly because al-Hādī's actions reveal that he put himself in the place of the Mahdi. In response to an appeal from the Yemenis, he left his dwelling place in the Ḥijāz and entered the Yemen in order to "revive the religion of God and the Sunna of the Prophet and to fight the enemies of God ...."43 Al-Hādī's son, al-Murtada, faced the same situation as his father. People came to him and beseeched him to become their leader and accept the oath of allegiance in order to establish a rule according to the Qur'ān and the Sunna and to "revive the religious precepts which the sinners have killed."44 Since al-Murtada refused to take this task upon himself, the situation worsened until his brother al-ʿNāṣir accepted the bay'ā. In a panegyric composed by one of his followers, al-ʿNāṣir is described as the one who strengthened Islam after it had become weak.45

Al-Hādī ila al-Haqq describes himself, and the ahl al-bayt in general, as restorers of the Qur'ān and the Sunna which had been abandoned by the community. He uses the strongest possible expression, such as "Islam was dead and revived through the ahl al-bayt" (bihim nu'isha al-islam ba'da mawtihi),46 or "I revived the book of God after it had perished" (na'ashtu kitab allah ba'da haldkihi),47 or "I revive the Book and the Sunna which have been rejected (by others)" (uhyī al-kitāb wa- uhyī sunna rufi.dat).48

40 Al-Haṭīrī, Rawdat al-akhbār, fols. 235b–237b. Cf. a similar idea in the propaganda of Yāzīd III, Crone and Hinds, God's Caliph, p. 63. It should be noted that naturally every claimant to the throne appealed to the Qur'ān and the Sunna, arguing that their adversaries went astray, but not every such claimant used the idea and terminology of restoration.
41 Ibid., fol. 77b; cf. 82b.
43 Sirat al-hādī as quoted by al-Haṭīrī, Rawdat al-akhbār, fol. 182b, similarly 188a, and see also 187b. The Yemenis, however, had another purpose in mind: they invited al-Hādī as a mediator to settle their internal feuds impartially; see Gochenour, "Zaydi Islam," p. 130.
45 Muslim b. Muhammad al-Lahjī, Kitāb fīhi Shay min akhbār al-zaydiyya bi-l-yaman, MS Berlin Ahlw. 9664, fols. 39b–41a.
46 Sirat al-Hādī, p. 313.
47 Ibid., pp. 302–3. Read na'ashtu kitāb allāh, for the editor's ba'athu kitāb allāh; see the manuscript of Sirat al-hādī, MS Leiden Or. 8943, fol. 66b.
48 Ibid. (Leiden), fol. 69b = MS Brit. Lib. Or. 3901, fol. 128b. This particular verse is missing from Zakkar's edition of Sirat al-hādī.
More specific is the verse attributed to a descendant of al-Hādi: “they did not perform religious duties, even the ḥajj, fasting, and zakāh, until the imams of the ahl al-bayt led them back to the right path” (in other words, restored religion for them).⁴⁹ In the same vein, al-Hādi is called muḥyī al-farā’īd, “restorer of the religious duties.”⁵⁰ Al-Hādi’s biographer (who was also one of his companions) wrote the following verse playing on al-Hādi’s first name, Yahyā: “Yahyā who revived (aḥyā) the true religion for his community after the infidels had done away with it; they rejected the Book and changed its precepts, but God Almighty has given him (i.e., Yahyā) to us.”⁵¹ This play on words occurs later in the form of a ḥadīth. It is reported that the Prophet said “a descendant of mine will rise in that area—and he pointed to the Yemen—his name will be Yahyā who guides (al-ḥādi), and God will revive religion through him.”⁵²

The above examples show that the idea of revival/restoration is already present in Sirat al-ḥādi, which is quite an early example of Zaydi literature. The parallelism between the Zaydi idea and the mujaddid hadīth is obvious: both presuppose a period of deterioration (in religious terms) after which God sends someone to restore the religion. Perhaps the most obvious parallel is the one obtaining between a marginal version of the mujaddid hadīth and a verse written by al-Hādi’s biographer. The verse is “by him God elucidated (abāna) the religion after it had become obscure, and through him God will illuminate darkness.”⁵³ This verse corresponds to the following version of the mujaddid hadīth: “God will mercifully send to His community, at the turn of every century, a man from the ahl al-bayt, who will elucidate (yabayyīn) their religion for them.”⁵⁴ In view of this parallelism, one would expect to find the mujaddid hadīth in early Zaydi literature. But there is not even one reference to it in Sirat al-Ḥādi, nor is the root j-d-d used to denote the idea of restoration. The locutions used for this purpose are aḥyā, naʿasha, azhara baʿda al-khumūl. The same applies to works later than the Sirat al-Ḥādi. More often than not they do not quote the mujaddid hadīth when they bring up the notion of restoration. For instance, al-Ḥasan b. Badr al-Dīn (d. 670/1272) writes about al-Hādi that he “propagated the religion after the darkness of atheism had prevailed” (nashara al-milla baʿda zuhūr zulmat al-ilhām).⁵⁵ In the introduction to his compilation, al-Ifāda, al-Nāṭiq bi-l-Ḥaqq (d. 424/1033) records the features characteristic of all Zaydi imams. Among other things, they are described as striving to revive the ways of justice (al-ijtihād fī iḥyā’

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⁴⁹ Sirat al-ḥādi, p. 330. Cf. Sirat al-mansūr, fol. 14b: “Were it not for (al-Mansūr’s) ancestor, the messenger of God, we would not have known about the paying of zakāh nor prayer.” Cf. Gochenour, “Zaydī Islam,” pp. 83, 176, 207–8, on the ignorance of the Yemenīs in basic Islamic matters. According to Gochenour, it was in fact the Zaydis who seriously introduced Islam into the Yemen; ibid., p. 35.

⁵⁰ Sirat al-ḥādi, p. 23. Cf. al-Ḥadawi, Anwār al-yaqīn (Brit. Lib.), fol. 112a, where Ibrāhīm, father of al-Qāsim al-Rāsī, is called muḥyī al-sunan.

⁵¹ Sirat al-ḥādi, p. 334.


⁵³ Sirat al-ḥāfu, p. 342.

⁵⁴ Suyūṭī, Tanbīrāʾ, fol. 74b, and see my article “Cyclical Reform,” n. 129.

⁵⁵ Al-Ḥadawi, Anwār al-yaqīn (Brit. Lib.), fol. 149b. He uses a similar expression when referring to the imām al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān: “reviver of the dead sunan” (al-munshir mayyīt al-sunan), ibid. fol. 177b. Al-Muʿayyad is credited with having revived the religious duties (hayyat bihi al-farāʾīd); ibid. fol. 178a.
sunan al-‘adl); 56 no reference is made to the mujaddid hadīth or to the root j-d-d. In al-Ḥadā‘iq al-wardiyya, compiled by al-Mahallī (d. 652/1254), we find the imam al-Mutawakkil Aḥmad b. Sulaymān (d. 566/1171) referred to as the one who revived (ḥayya) the religion of Muhammad. 57 The idea of revival/restoration is thus amply attested to but not the terms tajdīd and mujaddid. Sometimes both the mujaddid ḥadīth and the idea of restoration are altogether missing in places where one would expect them to occur. Such places are standard descriptions of the qualities, qualifications, and tasks of the imams; clusters of ḥadīths adduced to legitimize the rule of the ahl al-bayt; or individual biographies of Zaydis. 58

In what follows, I have recorded the references to the root j-d-d (translated as “restore”) and to the mujaddid hadīth which I have found in Zaydi literature. Perhaps after examining additional material from the vast store of Zaydi literature, many more references can be added, but the fact remains that the mujaddid ḥadīth and the root j-d-d do not occur in many places where they would have been most appropriate.

The root j-d-d is applied to the imam al-Mansūr bi-Allāh al-Qāsim b. ‘Alī (d. 393/1003). The context is bellicose: preparing to take action against disidents, al-Mansūr called up certain tribes for military service. Concerning this matter, one of his followers composed a poem in which he described the eager response of the tribes and encouraged the imam to proceed with his plans. Among other things, he addressed al-Mansūr with the following words: “rise and lead the people, and send them with justice; remove ignorance and darkness from them. Restore the religion of your ancestor after it has disappeared, and inflict death upon your opponents.” 59

About two hundred years later, the imam al-Mansūr bi-Allāh ʿAbdallah b. Ḥamza (d. 614/1217) fought ruthlessly against the Mutarrifiyya, a group which had broken away from the Zaydiyya. In a treatise intended to justify his harsh treatment of them, al-Mansūr applies to himself the root j-d-d: “if we do not restore the precepts of Muhammad’s law, who will?” he says. 60 It is noticeable that the context is again bellicose.

Al-Mansūr did not use the root j-d-d off-handedly, for he was acquainted with the mujaddid hadīth. In another treatise, he wrote the following passage: “‘Alī said: ‘Oh

56 Al-Nāṭiq bi-l-Haqq, Iffāda, fol. 2b.
58 See, for example, ibid., fols. 208 ff. and in the Leiden MS, fols. 40 ff.; al-Ṣāhibīn b. ‘Abbād, Nusrat madḥahib al-zaydiyya (Baghdad, 1977), passim; al-Mihrābī, Jawābāt, fols. 76a ff.; Ḥumaydān, Taṣrīḥ, fols. 108b ff.; al-Hajjūrī, Rawdat al-akhbār, fols. 84a–85b; al-Hadawī, Anwār al-yaqīn (Brit. Lib.), fols. 84a–b, 149b; Sirat al-mansūr, fol. 11a; Sirat al-hādī, pp. 23 and passim; al-Hādtī ila al-Haqq, Ḍiyya, MS Mun. Cod. Ar. 43, fol. 78a–b; Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ʿĀyīs al-Zuḥayf, Maʿāthir al-abrār fī taṣfīl mujaddidāt jawāhīr al-akhbār, MS Leiden Or. 6327, passim; al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh, al-ʿIṣlāl al-thamlīn, fols. 2a, 46b, 68a, 80a, but cf. 77b, where two readings are possible: mujaddidān li-l-sharīʻa or muḥaddidān li-l-sharīʻa; at any rate, the
text deals with the Imāmīyya, not the Zaydiyya.
Zaydi Imams as Restorers of Religion

God, do not let the world be devoid of a proof . . . ’ (i.e., an imam who is a divine proof of the truth), and there is a tradition . . . that at the turn of each century there will be a proof . . . , and there is a tradition on the authority of Abü Hurayra who quoted the Prophet saying that God will send to this community at the turn of each century someone/people who will restore religion. And it was proven by the ijmā’ of the scholars that the tax (sadaqa) on grain, dates, and raisins must be handed to the imam . . . .”61 Many sayings expressing the idea of continuity may be quoted from al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh, but in this passage he brings together the two opposing ideas of continuity and periodicity. The first is expressed by the sentence “Oh God, do not let the world be devoid of a proof.” The second figures in the form of the mujaddid ḥadīth “. . . at the turn of each century . . ..” By ignoring the theme of deterioration, which is usually connected with the idea of periodicity, al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh succeeds in making periodicity appear as continuity. This is most clearly expressed in the sentence “at the turn of each century there will be a proof.” This sentence is a combination in which the idea of continuity (i.e., that there is proof at all times) appears in the form of the periodic law (i.e., the mujaddid hadīth from which was borrowed the timing “at the turn of each century”). By the end of the passage (“the sadaqa . . . must be handed to the imam”), it becomes evident that al-Manṣūr’s aim was to provide legitimation for his own rule. For this purpose, he reconciled the two ends (of continuity and periodicity) implying that he was both the proof and the promised restorer of religion.

The use of the mujaddid hadīth for legitimation is already attested in the fifth century, but the evidence is secondary. In Rawdat al-ḥabāb, written in the eleventh/seventeenth century, Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad writes that the jurist ʿAbdallāh al-Khayyātī al-Shāfiʿi cited the mujaddid hadīth as evidence of the legitimacy of the imam al-Mu‘ayyad bi-Allāh Ahmad b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 411/1020). I was unable to trace Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad’s source for this information.62

Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad deals with the mujaddid hadīth in some detail, and a few of the sources upon which he drew follow.

1. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Daylami (d. 711/1311) is the first source. Since the time gap between al-Daylami and Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad is more than three centuries, it is evident that the latter used a written source; he does not, however, mention which one. He simply quotes on the authority of al-Daylami the following passage, which originally was most probably preceded by the mujaddid hadīth: “we looked into the matter in order to find out who fits this description at the turn of each century, and we thought that at the first were Zayd b. ʿAlī and his brother al-Bāqir, at the second Muhammad and al-Qāsim sons of Ibrāhīm . . . .” etc. Al-Daylami’s list reaches as far as the seventh century A.H. It is then brought up to the eleventh century, apparently by Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad himself, who includes his own contemporary the imam al-Mutawakkil as the restorer at the turn of the millennium.63 The break in the list (at the

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61 Al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh, al-Durra al-yatīma, fol. 203a-b.
eighth century) tallies with the death date of al-Daylamī, which may indicate that the list is genuine in that its first part goes back to al-Daylamī and its second was compiled by Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad. It may further be noted that the list is not identical with Zabāra’s and that Zabāra did not quote the above-mentioned passage, although he quoted other passages from al-Daylamī.64

2. The second source used by Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad is Shams al-Dīn Ahmad b. Dā‘ūd b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (d. after 795/1393) on the authority of the amīr al-Ḥasan b. Badr al-Dīn (d. 670/1272). This is evidently a very deficient isnād consisting as it does of only two parts. Judging from the time gap, Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad must have drawn upon a written source which is unmentioned. The quoted passage consists of the mujaddid hadīth and a list of Zaydī mujaddidūn. It does not seem likely that Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad compiled the list himself and attached the isnād to it, first because of the very deficiency of the latter and secondly because the break in the list again tallies with the death dates of the transmitters Aḥmad b. Dā‘ūd and al-Ḥasan b. Badr al-Dīn. The passage is as follows: “Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Dā‘ūd b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn said: the amīr al-Ḥasan b. Badr al-Dīn said: we were told that the Prophet said: ‘God will send to this community at the turn of each century someone/people to restore the religion’. Shams al-Dīn said: the amīr al-Ḥasan said: ‘we looked into the matter, who from among the ahl al-bayt was qualified . . .’.” A list of mujaddidūn up to the turn of the sixth (into the seventh) century follows, continued by Shams al-Dīn up to the eighth, for which he designates the imām al-Hādı ‘Alī b. al-Mu‘ayyad.65 That Shams al-Dīn was indeed a follower of al-Hādı ‘Alī b. al-Mu‘ayyad in 794/1392 or 796/1394 is confirmed by a historical source which is completely independent of the material with which we are dealing here.66 This al-Hādı is not included in Zabāra’s list and is only one of three mujaddidūn in the list of al-Daylamī-Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad mentioned above. Since al-Hādı’s advent was connected with military struggle against other imams, his designation as mujaddid by one of his followers may be regarded as part of his legitimation.


64 For example, Ithāf, p. 20.
Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad not only dwelled upon the mujaddid ḥadīth in his Rawdat al-
albāb, but also wrote a special work about the Zaydi restorers entitled The Ambergris-
perfumed Breeze: Concerning the Restorers, Descendants of the Best of the Creation
(i.e., the Prophet) (al-Nafha al-‘anbariya fī al-mujaddidīn min abnā‘ khayr al-
bariyya). This work is mentioned in the bibliography of al-Ḥibshi’s Mu‘allafat
ḥukkām al-yaman. Al-Ḥibshi relates that a manuscript of it was in the possession of
the mujīt of San‘ā‘ in 1979 or somewhat earlier. Unfortunately, I could not trace this
book in bio-bibliographical works. Ayman Fu‘ad Sayyid cites a book by an anonym-
ous writer with a very similar title, al-Nafha (or al-Tuhfa) al-‘anbariya fī ma‘rifat
al-a‘īmma min al-‘itra al-nabawiyya. But this is an account of the wars between
the Zaydiūs and the Turks during the years 1029–39/1620–30. Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad’s Nafha,
even though it belongs to precisely the same period, is a different sort of work. It is a
poem which enumerates the mujaddidīn at the turn of the centuries to which a
commentary was added: this description of the Nafha is recorded by Ismā‘īl b.
Muhammad (d. 1079/1668) in his biography of Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad. Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad
may thus have been the forerunner of Zabāra, who used exactly the same pattern in
his Ithāf. Oddly enough, Zabāra does not quote Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad at all. Another
strange feature is the fact that the above-mentioned Ismā‘īl b. Muhammad, compiler
of the anthology Simṭ al-la‘āl (which contains ‘Alid poetry and biographies of the
poets) knew the Nafha and quoted from it. Yet he applies the title mujaddid to only
two imams. This may indicate that the use of the title (and of the ḥadīth) was not
current even at such a late date (eleventh/seventeenth century), in spite of the fact that
the idea of revival/restoration is present in Zaydi literature since the earliest times. On
the other hand, it may be that the imams designated as mujaddidīn in the Nafha (the
identity of whom I do not know) simply did not write poetry or were not included in
the Simṭ al-la‘āl for some reason or other.

In the Sunni tradition, the concept of revival/restoration (iḥyā‘) and the mujaddid
ḥadīth grew separately from each other. According to Goldziher, the iḥyā‘ al-sunna
originally meant “the resuscitation of an antiquated custom that had disappeared
because of altered circumstances” (“custom” referring, of course, to customs of the
Prophet and the Companions). It started among the scholars (fuqahā‘) and the
piously minded with the purpose of imitating the Prophet and the Companions as
closely as possible. The practice of iḥyā‘ al-sunna was adopted by, or attributed to,
“rulers whose piety it was desired to acclaim.” The mujaddidīd hadīth, on the other
hand, probably developed early in the third century in connection with the Shāfi‘ī
school, as I have argued elsewhere. The term mujaddid used in the hadīth was,
perhaps even intentionally, ambiguous, denoting as it does both the concepts of

68 See n. 65 above.
69 Sayyid, Maṣādir, p. 335; and see Majallat al-Zahrā‘ 4 (1347): 97.
71 Zabāra refers only once to a work entitled nafahāt al-‘anbar in Ithāf, p. 87; but the material quoted concerns a person who died in 1130/1718;
Ibn al-Mu‘ayyad died in 1030/1621.
72 Simṭ al-la‘āl, fols. 8a, 128b. The imāms are al-
73 I. Goldziher, Muslim Studies, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern (London, 1971), pp. 32–33, 73. It is not clear at what period Goldziher places
the origin of this phenomenon. It could be at any
time between the first and third centuries.
74 See p. 247 and n. 1 above.
novelty and restoration. At a later stage, an unambiguous meaning was established for the hadīth by appending to it the concept of iḥyā’. Tajdīd was to be understood always as restoration, never as innovation. In Zaydi tradition, the process seems to have been reversed. It was not the concept of iḥyā’ which was appended to the hadīth, but the hadīth which was, at a later stage, adopted as the formal expression of the already firmly rooted concept of iḥyā’. The early presence of this concept among the Sunnī fiqhah can be explained in accordance with Goldziher’s views as stemming simply from the veneration of the Prophet. Another explanation can be offered in view of the findings of Crone and Hinds:75 the concept of iḥyā’ may be regarded as part of the scholars’ struggle to assert their role as carriers of the Prophetic sunna, as against the caliphs’ claim to religious authority. The early presence of the idea of iḥyā’ among the Zaydis is also to be explained in terms of a struggle, although one of a different nature. Of necessity, an opposition’s claim to replace an existing order is based on the premise that the latter is evil, in Islamic terms, that it deviates from the right path. The opposition purports to correct the deviation, and iḥyā’ in Zaydi tradition thus took on a meaning different from a mere imitation of the Prophet or a struggle for religious leadership. It became a political slogan used time and again by new imams. The mujaddid hadīth was later introduced to reinforce the claim to legitimation already established by the slogan of iḥyā’.76

To sum up, how and when the mujaddid hadīth entered Zaydi literature I do not know. The earliest attestation I have found dates from the turn of the fourth (into the fifth) century, when the faqīh ‘Abdallāh al-Khayyātī al-Shāfi’ī applied it to the imam al-Mu‘ayyad bi-Allāh, thereby proving the legitimacy of his rule.77 I could not find any information about this faqīh except that he was a Shāfi’ī, as indicated by his nisba. This may mean that the mujaddid hadīth came to the Zaydis from Shāfi’ī circles. There are other details which point to a Shāfi’ī connection. A Shafi’ī jurist was the first to make public the miracles (karāmāt) worked by the imam al-Qāsim b. Muhammad b. ‘Alī (d. 1029/1620), who was designated as mujaddid.78 The Shāfi’ī scholar Ibn Hajar (d. 859/1449), who had a special interest in the subject of tajdīd and may have written a book about it, was well known in the Yemen.79 The Zaydi who edited al-Sakhawi’s book, Ibn al-Wazīr, had at least one Shāfi’ī teacher.80 Although this is meager evidence, it may point to the possibility that the Zaydis actually adopted the mujaddid hadīth from the Shāfi’īs among whom it was popular. It is perhaps this very provenance of the hadīth which accounts for its rare occurrence in Zaydi literature. But in spite of this, the mujaddid hadīth is not an intrusive element alien to Zaydi ideas, nor was the modern historian Zabara the first to introduce it in Zaydi literature. The Zaydis who used this hadīth adapted it to their own purposes, however,

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75 See Crone and Hinds, God’s Caliph.
76 Cf. Y. Frenkel, “Tajdid and iθlθh as a Political Program: The Rise of the Sa’did Dynasty in Morocco in the Early 16th Century,” Hamizrah Hehadash: Special Issue on Renewal (tajdid) and Reform (θlθh) 31 (1986). See also n. 40 above. 77 See pp. 258–59 above.
78 Zabāra, Iθhfs, pp. 78–79.
79 It is not certain whether the book was ever written. Ibn Hajar, however, declared his intention to write it. See my article “Cyclical Reform,” n. 60. On Ibn Hajar’s connection with the Yemen, see Strothmann, “Literatur,” p. 71.
80 Zabāra, Muhlq al-badr al-tāli’ (Cairo, 1348), p. 36; and see pp. 260–61 above.
with the result that the significance of *mujaddid* in Zaydī literature differs from its
meaning in the Sunnī tradition. Only the Zaydī *mujaddid bi-'ilmihi* may be considered
as a parallel to the Sunnī restorer, both using and disseminating knowledge in order to
defend and consolidate their creed. Most of the Zaydī restorers, however, do not
belong to this type. As heads of their communities and leading their people to war,
they constitute a militant type of *mujaddidūn* which does not exist in the Sunnī
tradition. The *mujaddid ḥadīth* is thus an illustration of a Sunnī ḥadīth which the
Zaydīs adopted and adapted to their own ideas.