

Salafi

A **Salafi** (Arabic: سلفي) is a [Muslim](#) who emphasises the *Salaf* ("predecessors" or "ancestors"), the earliest Muslims, as model examples of Islamic practice.^[1] The term has been in use since the middle ages but today refers especially to a follower of a modern [Sunni Islamic](#) movement known as the **Salafiyah**, which is related to or includes [Wahhabism](#), so that the two terms are sometimes erroneously viewed as synonymous.^[2] Salafism has become associated with [literalist](#), [strict](#) and [puritanical](#) approaches to Islamic theology and, in the [West](#), with the [Salafi Jihadis](#) who espouse violent [jihad](#) against civilians as a legitimate expression of Islam.^[3] Academics and historians use the term to denote "a school of thought which surfaced in the second half of the 19th century as a reaction to the spread of European ideas," and "sought to expose the roots of modernity within Muslim civilization."^[4]

Just who, or what groups and movements, qualify as *Salafi* remains in dispute. In the [Arab World](#), and possibly even more so now by Muslims in the West, it is usually secondary to the more common term *Ahl-as-Sunnah* (i.e., "People of the *Sunnah*") while *Ahl al-Hadith* (The People of the Tradition) is more often used in the [Indian subcontinent](#) to identify adherents of Salafi orthodoxy, a term used more in Arabic academia to indicate scholars and students of [Hadith](#). All are considered to bear the same or similar connotation and have been used interchangeably by Muslim scholars throughout the ages, *Ahl al-Hadeeth* possibly being the oldest recorded term used to describe the earliest adherents^[5] while *Ahl as-Sunnah* is overwhelmingly used by Muslim scholars, including Salafis as well as others, such as the [Ash'ari](#) sect, leading to a narrower use of the term "Salafi".^[6] The [Muslim Brotherhood](#) includes the term in the "About Us" section of its website^[7] while others exclude that organisation^[8] in the belief that the group commits religious innovations. Other self-described contemporary salafis may define themselves as Muslims who follow "literal, traditional ... injunctions of the sacred texts" rather than the "somewhat freewheeling interpretation" of earlier salafis. These look to [Ibn Taymiyyah](#), not the 19th century figures of Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and Rashid Rida.^[4]

Contents

[\[hide\]](#)

1 The Salaf

2 Tenets

3 History

- 3.1 Early examples of usage
- 3.2 Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab
- 3.3 Contemporary Salafism
- 3.4 Salafism in China
- 3.5 Comparison with Islamism

4 Criticism

5 Salafi scholars

- 5.1 Older authorities accepted by modern Salafis as Salafi
 - 5.1.1 Arabian Peninsula
 - 5.1.2 Egypt
 - 5.1.3 India
 - 5.1.4 Mesopotamia and Greater Khorasan
 - 5.1.5 Greater Syria
 - 5.1.6 Al-Andalus
 - 5.1.7 Yemen
- 5.2 Contemporary Salafi scholars
 - 5.2.1 Afghanistan
 - 5.2.2 Albania
 - 5.2.3 Mauritania
 - 5.2.4 Morocco
 - 5.2.5 Pakistan
 - 5.2.6 Saudi Arabia
 - 5.2.7 Somalia
 - 5.2.8 Syria
 - 5.2.9 Yemen

6 References

7 External links

[\[edit\]](#) The Salaf

The first generations of Muslims are collectively referred to as the "Pious Predecessors" (*as-Salaf as-Saleh*),^[9] and include the "Companions" (*Sahabah*), the "Followers" (*Tabi'un*) and the "Followers of the Followers" (*Tabi' al-Tabi'in*). These are revered in Sunni Islamic [orthodoxy](#) and their example used in understanding the texts and tenets of Islam by [Sunni](#) theologians since the fifth Muslim generation or earlier, sometimes to differentiate the creed of the first Muslims from subsequent variations in creed and methodology (see [Madhab](#)),^{[10][11]} to oppose religious innovation (*bid'ah*) and, conversely, to defend particular views and practices.^{[12] [13]}

This veneration is based on a number of records of the sayings of Muhammad who said, "I am the best *Salaf* for you"^[14] and, as narrated in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* of [`Abd Allah ibn `Umar](#), a companion of Muhammad; "The best people are those of my generation, and then those who will come after them and then those who will come after them..."|*Sahih al-Bukhari* collected by [Muhammad al-Bukhari](#)^[15] Other narrations indicate that there will follow people who will bear false witness of Islam,^[16].

[\[edit\]](#) Tenets

Salafis view the *Salaf* as an eternal model for all succeeding Muslim generations in their beliefs, exegesis, method of worship, mannerisms, [morality](#), [piety](#) and conduct: the Islam they practised was pure, unadulterated and, therefore, the ultimate authority for the interpretation of the [Sunnah](#).^[17] This is not interpreted as an imitation of cultural norms or trends that are not part of the legislated worship of Islam but rather as an adherence to [Islamic theology](#).^[18] Salafis reject [speculative theology](#) (*kalam*) that involves discourse and debate in the development of the Islamic creed. They consider this process a foreign import from [Greek philosophy](#) alien to the original practice of Islam. The [Imam](#), Al-Dhahabi (d. 748H / 1348) said:

It is authentically related from ad-Daaraqutnee that he said: There is nothing more despised by me than *kalam*. I say: He never entered into *kalam* nor argumentation. Rather, he was a Salafi.^[19]

Salafism holds that the [Qur'an](#), the [Hadith](#) and the consensus (*ijma*) of approved scholarship (*ulama*) are sufficient guidance for the Muslim. As the Salafi *da'wa* is a methodology and not a *madh'hab*, Salafis can come from the [Maliki](#), [Shafi'i](#), [Hanbali](#) or the [Hanafi](#) schools of [Sunni jurisprudence](#)^[20] and accept teaching of all four if supported by clear and authenticated evidence from the Sunnah. Their interpretation is based on a strict form of [Athari](#) theology and they are generally opposed to imitation (*taqlid*) of a religious authority's rulings in matters of law.

Salafism condemns many common Muslim practices as [polytheism](#) (*shirk*) and [impermissible intercession](#) of religious figures, such as venerating the graves of Islamic prophets and [saints](#). They maintain that many other practices are *bid'ah* or innovation, beliefs or actions of worship are totally without sanction. Salafis believe that Islam's decline after the early generations results from religious innovations and from an abandoning of pure Islamic teachings; that an Islamic revival will only result through emulation of early generations of Muslims and purging of foreign influences.

Salafis, similar to adherents of most other Islamic denominations, place great emphasis on ritual - not only in prayer but in every activity in daily life. Many are careful to always use three fingers when eating, drink water in three pauses with the right hand while sitting^[21] and make sure their [jellabiya](#) or other garment worn by them does not extend below the ankle so as to follow the example of Muhammad and his companions.

[\[edit\]](#)History

From the perspective of Salafis the history of the Salafi [dawah](#) starts with Muhammad himself. They consider themselves direct followers of his teachings as outlined in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (prophetic traditions), and wish to emulate the piety of the first three generations of Islam (the Salaf). All later scholars are merely reviver's (not 'founders') of the original practices. Modern scholars may only come to teach (or remind) Muslims of the instructions of the original followers of Islam, who based their beliefs and actions on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Landmarks claimed in the history of Salafi *da'wah* are [Ahmad ibn Hanbal](#) (d.240 AH / 855 AD) who is known among Salafis as *Imam Ahl al-Sunnah*, and one of the three scholars commonly titled with the

honorific [Sheikh ul-Islam](#), namely, Taqi ad-Deen [Ibn Taymiyyah](#) (d.728 AH / 1328 AD) and [Ibn al-Qayyim](#) (d.751 AH / 1350).^{[22][23][24]}

[\[edit\]](#) Early examples of usage

- Some scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, have noted: "There is no criticism for the one who proclaims the [madh'hab](#) of the Salaf, who attaches himself to it and refers to it. Rather, it is obligatory to accept that from him by unanimous agreement because the way of the Salaf is nothing but the truth."^[19]
- The term *salafi* has been used to describe the theological position of particular scholars. Abo al-Hasan Ali ibn Umar al-Daraqutuni (d. 995 C.E., 385 A.H.) was described by [al-Dhahabi](#) as: "Never having entered into [rhetoric or polemics](#), instead he was *salafi*."^[25]
- Also, al-Dhahabi described [Ibn al-Salah](#), a prominent 12th century hadith specialist, as: "Firm in his religiosity, *salafi* in his generality and correct in his denomination. [He] refrained from falling into common pitfalls, believed in [Allah](#) and in what Allah has informed us of from His names and description."^[26]
- In another of his works, *Tadhkirat al-huffaz*, al-Dhahabi said of Ibn al-Salah: "I say: He was *salafi*, of sound creed, abstaining from the interpretations of the scholars of [rhetoric](#), believing in what has been textually established, without recourse to unjustified interpretation or elaboration."^[27]
- In his book, *Tabsir al-Muntabih*, [Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani](#) mentioned the ascription *al-Salafi* and named Abd al-Rahman ibn Abdillah ibn Ahmad Al-Sarkhasi al-Salafi as an example of its usage. Ibn Hajar then said: "And, likewise, the one ascribing to the *salaf*."^[28]
- Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani also used the term, *salafi* to describe Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn Sufyan al-Misri al-Maliki (d. 966 C.E., 355 A.H.) He said that al-Malaiki was: "*Salafi al-madh'hab – salafi* in his school of thought."^[29]
- In the book *Al-Ansaab* by Abu Sa'd Abd al-Kareem as-Sama'ni, who died in the year 1166 (562 of the [Islamic calendar](#)), under the entry for the

ascription *al-Salafi* he mentions an example or more of people who were so described in his time.^[30] In commenting upon as-Sama'ni, [Ibn al-Athir](#) noted; "And a group were known by this epithet."^[31]

[\[edit\]](#) Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab

Main article: [Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab](#)

Many today consider Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab as the first figure in the modern era to push for a return to the religious practices of the *salaf as-salih*.^[32] His evangelizing in 18th century [Arabian Peninsula](#) was a call to return to the practices of the early Muslims. His works, especially *Kitab at-Tawhid*, are still widely read by Salafis around the world today, and the majority of Salafi scholars still reference his works frequently.^[33] After his death, his views flourished under his descendants, the [Al ash-Sheikh](#), and the generous financing of the [House of Saud](#) and initiated the current worldwide Salafi movement.^[citation needed]

Some Salafis reject the Wahhabi label because they consider it unfounded, an object of controversy,^[34] holding that Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not establish a new school of thought but restored the Islam practised by the earliest generations of Muslims.^[citation needed] Followers of Salafiyah consider it wrong to be called "Wahhabis" as the 16th Name of God is *al-Wahhab* ("the Bestower") and to be called a "Wahhabi" they see as being equal to Allah, which they strictly prohibit. Wahhabism has been called a "belittling" and derogatory term for Salafi,^[35] while another source defines it as "a particular orientation within Salafism,"^[20] an orientation some consider ultra-conservative,^{[36][37]} and yet another describes it as a formerly separate current of Islamic thought that appropriated "language and symbolism of Salafism" until the two became "practically indistinguishable" in the 1970s.^[38]

Trevor Stanley states that, while the origins of the terms Wahhabism and Salafism "were quite distinct" – "Wahhabism was a pared-down Islam that rejected modern influences, while Salafism sought to reconcile Islam with modernism" – they both shared a rejection of "traditional" teachings on Islam in favor of a direct, more puritan reinterpretation. Stéphane Lacroix, a postdoctoral fellow and lecturer at [Sciences Po](#) in [Paris](#), also affirmed a distinction between the two: "As opposed to Wahhabism, Salafism refers here to all the hybridations that have taken place since the 1960s between the teachings of Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab and other Islamic schools of thought. [Al-Albani's](#) discourse can therefore be a form of Salafism, while being critical of Wahhabism."^[39]

The migration of Muslim Brotherhood members from Egypt to Saudi Arabia and [Saudi King Faisal's](#) "embrace of Salafi [pan-Islamism](#) resulted in cross-pollination between Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab's teachings on *tawhid*, *shirk* and *bid'ah* and Salafi interpretations of the sayings of Muhammad.^[40]

[\[edit\]](#) Contemporary Salafism

Salafism is attractive because it underscores Islam's universality.^[41] It insists on the literal truth of Muslim scripture and what might be called a very confined and narrow brand of sharia or religious law.^[41] yet may

challenge [secularism](#) by appropriating secularism's traditional role of defending the socially and politically weak against the powerful.^[42]

In recent years Salafis have come to be associated with the jihad of [Al-Qaeda](#) and related groups that advocate the killing of civilians, which are opposed by most other Muslim groups and governments, Such as Emir Khattab an islamist revolutionary from Saudi Arabia who died Fighting in Chechnya; who often has been quoted denouncing violence against non-combatants. Debate continues today over the appropriate methods of reform, ranging from violent "Qutubi [jihadism](#)" to lesser politicized proselytizing.^[citation needed] A majority of Salafi scholars stand firmly with the present-day manifestations of [jihad](#), particularly as it relates to terrorism and the killing of civilians and innocents. They hold their opinion against as:

No individual has the right to take the law into his own hands on any account. Even the closest of Prophet Muhammad's companions never killed a single of his opponents even when invectives were hurled at him day and night in the first thirteen years of his Da'wah at [Makkah](#). Nor did they kill anyone in retaliation when he was pelted with stones at [Ta'if](#).

The spread of Salafism has prompted political leaders in the Middle East to accommodate a greater role for jihadist in public policy.^[43]

Salafist jihadism is a school of thought of Salafi Muslims who support [jihad](#). The term was coined by scholar [Gilles Kepel](#)^{[44][45]} to describe Salafi who began developing an interest in jihad during the mid-1990s. Practitioners are often referred to as Salafi jihadis or Salafi jihadists. Journalist [Bruce Livesey](#) estimates Salafi jihadists constitute less than 1 percent of the world's 1.9 billion Muslims (c. 10 million).^[44] This misnomer, due to popular usage in Western media and opponents to Salafiyya, has been used to describe those who are not truly "Jihadists", or those who gravitate toward use of violence in manners that were not Legislated by Allaah in the Quraan or the Prophetic Sunnah whilst calling that Jihad. Each Muslim believes in the Jihad Legislated by Allaah in the Quraan and the Prophet Sunnah, its specific dynamics are very clearly stated and described in detail, circumstance by circumstance. Although many seek to obscure the clear explanations from the Prophet and his Companions as it has been preserved, their unadulterated terms are public knowledge.

See descriptions and references to jihadism in context in this [explanation on modern extremism falsely attributed to Islaam](#).

Despite some similarities, the different contemporary self-proclaimed [Qutubi](#) groups often strongly disapprove of each other and deny the others Islamic character.^{[35][35][46]}

[\[edit\]](#) **Salafism in China**

Salafism is intensely opposed by the [Hui Muslims in China](#), by the Hanafi Sunni [Gedimu](#) and Sufi [Khafiya](#) and [Jahriyya](#). So much so that even the [Yihewani](#) (Ikhwan) Chinese sect, which is fundamentalist and was founded by [Ma Wanfu](#) who was originally inspired by the Salafis, condemned Ma Debao and Ma Zhengqing as heretics when they attempted to introduce Salafism as the main form of Islam. Ma Debao established a Salafi school, called the Sailaifengye

(Salafi) [menhuan](#) in [Lanzhou](#) and [Linxia](#), and it is a completely separate group than other [Muslim sects in China](#).^[47]

Salafis have a reputation for radicalism among the Chinese Gedimu and Yihewani groups. The Sunni Muslim Hui avoid Salafis, even if they are family members, and they constantly disagree.^[48]

The amount of Salafis in China is so insignificant that they are not included on percentage lists of Muslim sects in China.^[49]

The [Kuomintang](#) Sufi Muslim General [Ma Bufang](#), who backed the Yihewani (Ikhwan) Muslims, persecuted the Salafis, forcing them into hiding. They were not allowed to move or worship openly. The Yihewani had become secular and Chinese nationalists, and they considered the Salafiyya to be "heterodox" (xie jiao), and people who followed foreigners' teachings (waidao). Only after the [Communists](#) took over were the Salafis allowed to come out and worship openly again.^[50]

In contrast to his treatment of Salafis, General Ma allowed polytheists to openly worship, and [Christian](#) missionaries to station themselves in [Qinghai](#). General Ma and other high ranking Generals even attended the [Kokonuur Lake](#) Ceremony where the Chinese "God of the Lake" was worshipped, and during the ritual, the [Chinese national anthem](#) was sung, all participants bowed to a portrait of Kuomintang party founder Dr. [Sun Yat-sen](#), and the God of the Lake was also bowed to, and offerings were given to him by the participants.^[51] Ma Bufang invited some [Kazakh](#) Muslims to attend the ceremony honoring her god.^[52] Ma Bufang received audiences of Christian missionaries, who sometimes gave him the [Gospel](#).^{[53][54]} His son Ma Jiyuan received a silver cup from Christian missionaries.^[55]

[\[edit\]](#) **Comparison with Islamism**

Main article: [Islamism](#)

Salafism differs from the earlier contemporary Islamic revival movements of the 1970s and 1980s commonly referred to as [Islamism](#), in that (at least many) Salafis reject not only [Western](#) ideologies such as [Socialism](#) and [Capitalism](#), but also common Western concepts like economics, constitutions, political parties and revolution.

Salafi Muslims often promote not engaging in Western activities like politics, "even by giving them an Islamic slant."^[56] Instead, it is thought that Muslims should stick to traditional activities, particularly Dawah. Salafis promote that the *Sharia* (Islamic law) takes precedence over civil or state law. Nevertheless, Salafis do not preach wilful ignorance of civil or state law. While preaching that the Sharia takes precedence, Salafi Muslims conform to civil or state law as far as they are required, for example in purchasing mandatory motor insurance. Here, a Salafi Muslim would purchase "third party, fire and theft" insurance in order to avoid going to jail, but he/she would not purchase "fully comprehensive" insurance because commercial insurance is seen as gambling.

[\[edit\]](#) **Criticism**

Salafism, or at least the so called "puritanical" forms of it, has been recently criticized by Professor [Khaled Abou El Fadl](#) of [UCLA School of Law](#). El Fadl claims that the Salafi methodology "drifted into stifling apologetics" by the mid-20th century, a reaction against "anxiety" to "render Islam compatible with modernity," by its leaders earlier in the century.^[57]

Some Salafi writers would allegedly claim, for example, that "any meritorious or worthwhile modern institutions were first invented and realized by Muslims." The result was that "an artificial sense of confidence and an intellectual lethargy" developed, according to Abou El Fadl, "that took neither the Islamic tradition nor" the challenges of the modern world "very seriously."^{[58][59]}

Egyptian scholar [Tawfik Hamid](#) says that Salafist [Muslim fundamentalists](#) believe that Saudi Arabia's petroleum-based wealth is a divine gift, and that Saudi influence is sanctioned by God. Thus this extreme brand of Sunni Islam that spread from the Saudi Arabia to the rest of the Islamic world is regarded not merely as one interpretation of the religion but the only genuine interpretation. The expansion of violent and regressive Islam, he continues, began in the late 1970s, and can be traced precisely to the growing financial clout of Saudi Arabia. He says "is puritanical, extreme and does, yes, mean that women can be beaten, [apostates](#) killed and [Jews](#) called pigs and monkeys."

[\[edit\]](#) Salafi scholars

[\[edit\]](#) Older authorities accepted by modern Salafis as Salafi

[\[edit\]](#) [Arabian Peninsula](#)

- [Ata ibn Abi Rabah](#)
- [Ibn Jurayj](#)
- [Yahya ibn Ma'in](#)
- [Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab](#)

[\[edit\]](#) [Egypt](#)

- [Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tahawi](#)
- [Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani](#)

[\[edit\]](#) [India](#)

- [Mohammad Hayya Al-Sindhi](#)

[\[edit\]](#) [Mesopotamia](#) and [Greater Khorasan](#)

- [Abu Hanifa an-Nu'man](#)
- [Ahmad ibn Hanbal](#)
- [Muhammad al-Shaybani](#)
- [Yaqub ibn Ibrahim al-Ansari](#)
- [hassan al-basri](#)
- [Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah](#)
- [Sufyan al-Thawri](#)
- [Muhammad al-Bukhari](#)
- [Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari](#)
- [Al-Bayhaqi](#)
- [Ibn Khuzaymah](#)
- [Al-Darimi](#)
- [Ishaq Ibn Rahwayh](#)
- [Ali ibn al-Madini](#)
- [Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub al-Juzajani](#)
- [Al-Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Barbahari](#)

- [Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj Nishapuri](#)
- [Ibn Majah](#)
- [Abu Dawood](#)
- [al-Nasa'i](#)
- [Tirmidhi](#)
- [Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari](#)
- [Ibn Battah](#)
- [Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi](#)
- [Ibn Rajab](#)
- [Ibn Abi Asim](#)

[edit] [Greater Syria](#)

- [Muhammad ibn Idris ash-Shaf'i](#)
- [Abd al-Rahman al-Awza'i](#)
- [Ibn Qudamah](#)
- [Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi](#)
- [Ibn Taymiyyah](#)
- [Al-Dhahabi](#)
- [Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya](#)
- [Ibn Kathir](#)
- [Ibn Abi al-Izz](#)
- [Ibn al-Salah^{\[60\]}](#)

[edit] [Al-Andalus](#)

- [Yusuf ibn abd al-Barr](#)
- [Al-Qurtubi](#)
- [Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi](#)
- [Ibn Hazm](#)

[edit] [Yemen](#)

- [Muhammad ash-Shawkani](#)
- ['Abd ar-Razzaq as-San'ani](#)

[edit] [Contemporary Salafi scholars](#)

[edit] [Afghanistan](#)

- [Muhammad Muhsin Khan](#)

[edit] [Albania](#)

- [Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani](#)
- [Abdul Qader Arnaoot](#)

[edit] [Mauritania](#)

- [Muhammad Ash-Shanqeeti](#)

[edit] [Morocco](#)

- [Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali](#)

[edit] [Pakistan](#)

- [Ehsan Elahi Zaheer](#)

[edit] [Saudi Arabia](#)

- [Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Latif Al ash-Sheikh](#)
- [Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al ash-Sheikh](#)
- [Abd ar-Rahman ibn Nasir as-Sa'di](#)
- ['Abdullaah bin Muhammad Al-Qar'aawee](#)
- [Rabee Al-Madkhali](#)
- [Abdul-Azeez ibn Abdullaah Aal ash-Shaikh](#)
- [Saleh bin Abdul-Aziz Al ash-Sheikh](#)
- [Abdul Rahman Al-Sudais](#)

- [Haafidh ibn Ahmed 'Alee al-Hakamee](#)
- [Ali Jaber](#)
- [Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd Allah ibn Baaz](#)
- [Muhammad ibn al Uthaymeen](#)
- [Saleh Al-Fawzan](#)
- [Saud Al-Shuraim](#)
- [Salih Al-Talib](#)
- [Usaama bin Abdullah al Khayyat](#)
- [Ibn Humaid](#)
- [Salih bin Abdullah al Humaid](#)

[edit] [Somalia](#)

- [Muhammad Al-Sumaalee^{\[61\]}](#)

[edit] [Syria](#)

- [Muhammad bin Jamil Zeno](#)

[edit] [Yemen](#)

- [Abdur-Rahman al-Mu'allimee al-Yamani](#)
- [Muqbil bin Haadi al-Waadi'ee](#)

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Salafi

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A **Salafi** (*Arabic:* سلفي) is a [Muslim](#) who emphasises the *Salaf* ("predecessors" or "ancestors"), the earliest Muslims, as model examples of Islamic practice.^[1] The term has been in use since the middle ages but today refers especially to a follower of a modern [Sunni Islamic](#) movement known as the **Salafiyyah**, which is related to or includes [Wahhabism](#), so that the two terms are sometimes erroneously viewed as synonymous.^[2] Salafism has become associated with [literalist](#), [strict](#) and [puritanical](#) approaches to Islamic theology and, in the [West](#), with the [Salafi Jihadis](#) who espouse violent [jihad](#) against civilians as a legitimate expression of Islam.^[3] Academics and historians use the term to denote "a school of thought which surfaced in the second half of the 19th century as a reaction to the spread of European ideas," and "sought to expose the roots of modernity within Muslim civilization."^[4]

Just who, or what groups and movements, qualify as *Salafi* remains in dispute. In the [Arab World](#), and possibly even more so now by Muslims in the West, it is usually secondary to the more common term *Ahl-as-Sunnah* (i.e., "People of the *Sunnah*") while *Ahl al-Hadith* (The People of the Tradition) is more often used in the [Indian subcontinent](#) to identify adherents of Salafi orthodoxy, a term used more in Arabic

academia to indicate scholars and students of [Hadith](#). All are considered to bear the same or similar connotation and have been used interchangeably by Muslim scholars throughout the ages, *Ahl al-Hadeeth* possibly being the oldest recorded term used to describe the earliest adherents^[5] while *Ahl as-Sunnah* is overwhelmingly used by Muslim scholars, including Salafis as well as others, such as the [Ash'ari](#) sect, leading to a narrower use of the term "Salafi".^[6] The [Muslim Brotherhood](#) includes the term in the "About Us" section of its website^[7] while others exclude that organisation^[8] in the belief that the group commits religious innovations. Other self-described contemporary salafis may define themselves as Muslims who follow "literal, traditional ... injunctions of the sacred texts" rather than the "somewhat freewheeling interpretation" of earlier salafis. These look to [Ibn Taymiyyah](#), not the 19th century figures of Muhammad Abduh, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and Rashid Rida.^[4]

Contents

[\[hide\]](#)

1 The Salaf

2 Tenets

3 History

- 3.1 Early examples of usage
- 3.2 Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab
- 3.3 Contemporary Salafism
- 3.4 Salafism in China
- 3.5 Comparison with Islamism

4 Criticism

5 Salafi scholars

- 5.1 Older authorities accepted by modern Salafis as Salafi
 - 5.1.1 Arabian Peninsula
 - 5.1.2 Egypt
 - 5.1.3 India
 - 5.1.4 Mesopotamia and Greater Khorasan
 - 5.1.5 Greater Syria
 - 5.1.6 Al-Andalus
 - 5.1.7 Yemen
- 5.2 Contemporary Salafi scholars
 - 5.2.1 Afghanistan
 - 5.2.2 Albania
 - 5.2.3 Mauritania
 - 5.2.4 Morocco

- [5.2.5 Pakistan](#)
- [5.2.6 Saudi Arabia](#)
- [5.2.7 Somalia](#)
- [5.2.8 Syria](#)
- [5.2.9 Yemen](#)

[6 References](#)

[7 External links](#)

[\[edit\]](#) The Salaf

The first generations of Muslims are collectively referred to as the "Pious Predecessors" (*as-Salaf as-Saleh*),^[9] and include the "Companions" (*Sahabah*), the "Followers" (*Tabi'un*) and the "Followers of the Followers" (*Tabi' al-Tabi'in*). These are revered in Sunni Islamic [orthodoxy](#) and their example used in understanding the texts and tenets of Islam by [Sunni](#) theologians since the fifth Muslim generation or earlier, sometimes to differentiate the creed of the first Muslims from subsequent variations in creed and methodology (see [Madhab](#)),^{[10][11]} to oppose religious innovation (*bid'ah*) and, conversely, to defend particular views and practices.^{[12] [13]}

This veneration is based on a number of records of the sayings of Muhammad who said, "I am the best *Salaf* for you"^[14] and, as narrated in the *Sahih al-Bukhari* of `Abd Allah ibn `Umar, a companion of Muhammad; "The best people are those of my generation, and then those who will come after them and then those who will come after them..."|*Sahih al-Bukhari* collected by [Muhammad al-Bukhari](#)^[15] Other narrations indicate that there will follow people who will bear false witness of Islam,^[16].

[\[edit\]](#) Tenets

Salafis view the *Salaf* as an eternal model for all succeeding Muslim generations in their beliefs, exegesis, method of worship, mannerisms,[morality](#), [piety](#) and conduct: the Islam they practised was pure, unadulterated and, therefore, the ultimate authority for the interpretation of the [Sunnah](#).^[17] This is not interpreted as an imitation of cultural norms or trends that are not part of the legislated worship of Islam but rather as an adherence to [Islamic theology](#).^[18] Salafis reject [speculative theology](#) (*kalam*) that involves discourse and debate in the development of the Islamic creed. They consider this process a foreign import from [Greek philosophy](#) alien to the original practice of Islam. The [Imam](#), Al-Dhahabi (d. 748H / 1348) said:

It is authentically related from ad-Daraqutnee that he said: There is nothing more despised by me than *kalam*. I say: He never entered into *kalam* nor argumentation. Rather, he was a Salafi.^[19]

Salafism holds that the [Qur'an](#), the [Hadith](#) and the consensus (*ijma*) of approved scholarship (*ulama*) are sufficient guidance for the Muslim. As the Salafi *da'wa* is a methodology and not a *madh'hab*, Salafis can come from the [Maliki](#), [Shafi'i](#), [Hanbali](#) or the [Hanafi](#) schools of Sunni [jurisprudence](#)^[20] and accept teaching of all four if supported by clear and authenticated evidence from the Sunnah. Their interpretation is based on

a strict form of [Athari](#) theology and they are generally opposed to imitation ([taqlid](#)) of a religious authority's rulings in matters of law.

Salafism condemns many common Muslim practices as [polytheism](#) ([shirk](#)) and [impermissible intercession](#) of religious figures, such as venerating the graves of Islamic prophets and [saints](#). They maintain that many other practices are *bid'ah* or innovation, beliefs or actions of worship are totally without sanction. Salafis believe that Islam's decline after the early generations results from religious innovations and from an abandoning of pure Islamic teachings; that an Islamic revival will only result through emulation of early generations of Muslims and purging of foreign influences.

Salafis, similar to adherents of most other Islamic denominations, place great emphasis on ritual - not only in prayer but in every activity in daily life. Many are careful to always use three fingers when eating, drink water in three pauses with the right hand while sitting^[21] and make sure their [jellabiya](#) or other garment worn by them does not extend below the ankle so as to follow the example of Muhammad and his companions.

[\[edit\]](#) History

From the perspective of Salafis the history of the Salafi [dawah](#) starts with Muhammad himself. They consider themselves direct followers of his teachings as outlined in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (prophetic traditions), and wish to emulate the piety of the first three generations of Islam (the Salaf). All later scholars are merely reviver's (not 'founders') of the original practices. Modern scholars may only come to teach (or remind) Muslims of the instructions of the original followers of Islam, who based their beliefs and actions on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Landmarks claimed in the history of Salafi [da'wah](#) are [Ahmad ibn Hanbal](#) (d.240 AH / 855 AD) who is known among Salafis as *Imam Ahl al-Sunnah*, and one of the three scholars commonly titled with the honorific *Sheikh ul-Islam*, namely, Taqi ad-Deen [Ibn Taymiyyah](#) (d.728 AH / 1328 AD) and [Ibn al-Qayyim](#) (d.751 AH / 1350).^{[22][23][24]}

[\[edit\]](#) Early examples of usage

- Some scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, have noted: "There is no criticism for the one who proclaims the [madh'hab](#) of the Salaf, who attaches himself to it and refers to it. Rather, it is obligatory to accept that from him by unanimous agreement because the way of the Salaf is nothing but the truth."^[19]
- The term *salafi* has been used to describe the theological position of particular scholars. Abo al-Hasan Ali ibn Umar al-Daraqutuni (d. 995 C.E., 385 A.H.) was described by [al-Dhahabi](#) as: "Never having entered into [rhetoric or polemics](#), instead he was *salafi*."^[25]

- Also, al-Dhahabi described [Ibn al-Salah](#), a prominent 12th century hadith specialist, as: "Firm in his religiosity, *salafi* in his generality and correct in his denomination. [He] refrained from falling into common pitfalls, believed in [Allah](#) and in what Allah has informed us of from His names and description."^[26]
- In another of his works, *Tadhkirat al-huffaz*, al-Dhahabi said of Ibn al-Salah: "I say: He was *salafi*, of sound creed, abstaining from the interpretations of the scholars of [rhetoric](#), believing in what has been textually established, without recourse to unjustified interpretation or elaboration."^[27]
- In his book, *Tabsir al-Muntabih*, [Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani](#) mentioned the ascription *al-Salafi* and named Abd al-Rahman ibn Abdillah ibn Ahmad Al-Sarkhasi al-Salafi as an example of its usage. Ibn Hajar then said: "And, likewise, the one ascribing to the *salaf*."^[28]
- Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani also used the term, *salafi* to describe Muhammad ibn al-Qaasim ibn Sufyan al-Misri al-Maliki (d. 966 C.E., 355 A.H.) He said that al-Malaiki was: "*Salafi al-madh'hab* – *salafi* in his school of thought."^[29]
- In the book *Al-Ansaab* by Abu Sa'd Abd al-Kareem as-Sama'ni, who died in the year 1166 (562 of the [Islamic calendar](#)), under the entry for the ascription *al-Salafi* he mentions an example or more of people who were so described in his time.^[30] In commenting upon as-Sama'ni, [Ibn al-Athir](#) noted; "And a group were known by this epithet."^[31]

[edit] **Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab**

Main article: [Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab](#)

Many today consider Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab as the first figure in the modern era to push for a return to the religious practices of the *salaf as-salih*.^[32] His evangelizing in 18th century [Arabian Peninsula](#) was a call to return to the practices of the early Muslims. His works, especially *Kitab at-Tawhid*, are still widely read by Salafis around the world today, and the majority of Salafi scholars still reference his works frequently.^[33] After his death, his views flourished under his descendants, the [Al ash-Sheikh](#), and the generous financing of the [House of Saud](#) and initiated the current worldwide Salafi movement.^[citation needed]

Some Salafis reject the Wahhabi label because they consider it unfounded, an object of controversy,^[34] holding that Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not establish a new school of thought but restored the Islam practised by the earliest generations of Muslims.^[citation needed] Followers of Salafiyah

consider it wrong to be called "Wahhabis" as the 16th Name of God is *al-Wahhab* ("the Bestower") and to be called a "Wahhabi" they see as being equal to Allah, which they strictly prohibit. Wahhabism has been called a "belittling" and derogatory term for Salafi,^[35] while another source defines it as "a particular orientation within Salafism,"^[20] an orientation some consider ultra-conservative,^{[36][37]} and yet another describes it as a formerly separate current of Islamic thought that appropriated "language and symbolism of Salafism" until the two became "practically indistinguishable" in the 1970s.^[38]

Trevor Stanley states that, while the origins of the terms Wahhabism and Salafism "were quite distinct" – "Wahhabism was a pared-down Islam that rejected modern influences, while Salafism sought to reconcile Islam with modernism" – they both shared a rejection of "traditional" teachings on Islam in favor of a direct, more puritan reinterpretation. Stéphane Lacroix, a postdoctoral fellow and lecturer at [Sciences Po](#) in [Paris](#), also affirmed a distinction between the two: "As opposed to Wahhabism, Salafism refers here to all the hybridations that have taken place since the 1960s between the teachings of Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab and other Islamic schools of thought. [Al-Albani's](#) discourse can therefore be a form of Salafism, while being critical of Wahhabism."^[39]

The migration of Muslim Brotherhood members from Egypt to Saudi Arabia and [Saudi King Faisal's](#) "embrace of Salafi [pan-Islamism](#) resulted in cross-pollination between Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab's teachings on *tawhid*, *shirk* and *bid'ah* and Salafi interpretations of the sayings of Muhammad."^[40]

[\[edit\]](#) Contemporary Salafism

Salafism is attractive because it underscores Islam's universality.^[41] It insists on the literal truth of Muslim scripture and what might be called a very confined and narrow brand of sharia or religious law.^[41] yet may challenge [secularism](#) by appropriating secularism's traditional role of defending the socially and politically weak against the powerful.^[42]

In recent years Salafis have come to be associated with the jihad of [Al-Qaeda](#) and related groups that advocate the killing of civilians, which are opposed by most other Muslim groups and governments, Such as Emir Khatib an islamist revolutionary from Saudi Arabia who died Fighting in Chechnya; who often has been quoted denouncing violence against non-combatants. Debate continues today over the appropriate methods of reform, ranging from violent "Qutubi [jihadism](#)" to lesser politicized proselytizing.^[citation needed] A majority of Salafi scholars stand firmly with the present-day manifestations of [jihad](#), particularly as it relates to terrorism and the killing of civilians and innocents. They hold their opinion against as:

No individual has the right to take the law into his own hands on any account. Even the closest of Prophet Muhammad's companions never killed a single of his opponents even when invectives were hurled at him day and night in the first thirteen years of his Da'wah at [Makkah](#). Nor did they kill anyone in retaliation when he was pelted with stones at [Ta'if](#).

The spread of Salafism has prompted political leaders in the Middle East to accommodate a greater role for jihadist in public policy.^[43]

Salafist jihadism is a school of thought of Salafi Muslims who support [jihad](#). The term was coined by scholar [Gilles Kepel](#)^{[44][45]} to describe Salafi who began developing an interest in jihad during the mid-1990s. Practitioners are often referred to as Salafi jihadis or Salafi jihadists. Journalist [Bruce Livesey](#) estimates Salafi jihadists constitute less than 1 percent of the world's 1.9 billion Muslims (c. 10 million).^[44] This misnomer, due to popular usage in Western media and opponents to Salafiyya, has been used to describe those who are not truly "Jihadists", or those who gravitate toward use of violence in manners that were not Legislated by Allaah in the Quraan or the Prophetic Sunnah whilst calling that Jihad. Each Muslim believes in the Jihad Legislated by Allaah in the Quraan and the Prophet Sunnah, its specific dynamics are very clearly stated and described in detail, circumstance by circumstance. Although many seek to obscure the clear explanations from the Prophet and his Companions as it has been preserved, their unadulterated terms are public knowledge.

See descriptions and references to jihadism in context in this [explanation on modern extremism falsely attributed to Islaam](#).

Despite some similarities, the different contemporary self-proclaimed [Qutubi](#) groups often strongly disapprove of each other and deny the others Islamic character.^{[35][35][46]}

[\[edit\]](#) **Salafism in China**

Salafism is intensely opposed by the [Hui Muslims in China](#), by the Hanafi Sunni [Gedimu](#) and Sufi [Khafiya](#) and [Jahriyya](#). So much so that even the [Yihewani](#) (Ikhwan) Chinese sect, which is fundamentalist and was founded by [Ma Wanfu](#) who was originally inspired by the Salafis, condemned Ma Debao and Ma Zhengqing as heretics when they attempted to introduce Salafism as the main form of Islam. Ma Debao established a Salafi school, called the Sailaifengye (Salafi) [menhuan](#) in [Lanzhou](#) and [Linxia](#), and it is a completely separate group than other [Muslim sects in China](#).^[47]

Salafis have a reputation for radicalism among the Chinese Gedimu and Yihewani groups. The Sunni Muslim Hui avoid Salafis, even if they are family members, and they constantly disagree.^[48]

The amount of Salafis in China is so insignificant that they are not included on percentage lists of Muslim sects in China.^[49]

The [Kuomintang](#) Sufi Muslim General [Ma Bufang](#), who backed the Yihewani (Ikhwan) Muslims, persecuted the Salafis, forcing them into hiding. They were not allowed to move or worship openly. The Yihewani had become secular and Chinese nationalists, and they considered the Salafiyya to be "heterodox" (xie jiao), and people who followed foreigners' teachings (waidao). Only after the [Communists](#) took over were the Salafis allowed to come out and worship openly again.^[50]

In contrast to his treatment of Salafis, General Ma allowed polytheists to openly worship, and [Christian](#) missionaries to station themselves in [Qinghai](#). General Ma and other high ranking Generals even attended the [Kokonuur Lake](#) Ceremony where the Chinese "God of the Lake" was worshipped, and during the ritual, the [Chinese national anthem](#) was sung, all participants bowed to a portrait of Kuomintang

party founder Dr. [Sun Yat-sen](#), and the God of the Lake was also bowed to, and offerings were given to him by the participants.^[51] Ma Bufang invited some [Kazakh](#) Muslims to attend the ceremony honoring her god.^[52] Ma Bufang received audiences of Christian missionaries, who sometimes gave him the [Gospel](#).^{[53][54]} His son Ma Jiyuan received a silver cup from Christian missionaries.^[55]

[\[edit\]](#) Comparison with Islamism

Main article: [Islamism](#)

Salafism differs from the earlier contemporary Islamic revival movements of the 1970s and 1980s commonly referred to as [Islamism](#), in that (at least many) Salafis reject not only [Western](#) ideologies such as [Socialism](#) and [Capitalism](#), but also common Western concepts like economics, constitutions, political parties and revolution.

Salafi Muslims often promote not engaging in Western activities like politics, "even by giving them an Islamic slant."^[56] Instead, it is thought that Muslims should stick to traditional activities, particularly Dawah. Salafis promote that the *Sharia* (Islamic law) takes precedence over civil or state law. Nevertheless, Salafis do not preach wilful ignorance of civil or state law. While preaching that the Sharia takes precedence, Salafi Muslims conform to civil or state law as far as they are required, for example in purchasing mandatory motor insurance. Here, a Salafi Muslim would purchase "third party, fire and theft" insurance in order to avoid going to jail, but he/she would not purchase "fully comprehensive" insurance because commercial insurance is seen as gambling.

[\[edit\]](#) Criticism

Salafism, or at least the so called "puritanical" forms of it, has been recently criticized by Professor [Khaled Abou El Fadl](#) of [UCLA School of Law](#). El Fadl claims that the Salafi methodology "drifted into stifling apologetics" by the mid-20th century, a reaction against "anxiety" to "render Islam compatible with modernity," by its leaders earlier in the century.^[57]

Some Salafi writers would allegedly claim, for example, that "any meritorious or worthwhile modern institutions were first invented and realized by Muslims." The result was that "an artificial sense of confidence and an intellectual lethargy" developed, according to Abou El Fadl, "that took neither the Islamic tradition nor" the challenges of the modern world "very seriously."^{[58][59]}

Egyptian scholar [Tawfik Hamid](#) says that Salafist [Muslim fundamentalists](#) believe that Saudi Arabia's petroleum-based wealth is a divine gift, and that Saudi influence is sanctioned by God. Thus this extreme brand of Sunni Islam that spread from the Saudi Arabia to the rest of the Islamic world is regarded not merely as one interpretation of the religion but the only genuine interpretation. The expansion of violent and regressive Islam, he continues, began in the late 1970s, and can be traced precisely to the growing financial clout of Saudi Arabia. He says "is puritanical, extreme and does, yes, mean that women can be beaten, [apostates](#) killed and [Jews](#) called pigs and monkeys."

[\[edit\]](#) Salafi scholars

[edit] Older authorities accepted by modern Salafis as Salafi

[edit] Arabian Peninsula

- [Ata ibn Abi Rabah](#)
- [Ibn Jurayj](#)
- [Yahya ibn Ma'in](#)
- [Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab](#)

[edit] Egypt

- [Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tahawi](#)
- [Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani](#)

[edit] India

- [Mohammad Hayya Al-Sindhi](#)

[edit] Mesopotamia and Greater Khorasan

- [Abu Hanifa an-Nu'man](#)
- [Ahmad ibn Hanbal](#)
- [Muhammad al-Shaybani](#)
- [Yaqub ibn Ibrahim al-Ansari](#)
- [hassan al-basri](#)
- [Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah](#)
- [Sufyan al-Thawri](#)
- [Muhammad al-Bukhari](#)
- [Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj Nishapuri](#)
- [Ibn Majah](#)
- [Abu Dawood](#)
- [al-Nasa'i](#)
- [Tirmidhi](#)
- [Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari](#)
- [Al-Bayhaqi](#)
- [Ibn Khuzaymah](#)
- [Al-Darimi](#)
- [Ishaq Ibn Rahwayh](#)
- [Ali ibn al-Madini](#)
- [Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub al-Juzajani](#)
- [Al-Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Barbahari](#)
- [Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari](#)
- [Ibn Battah](#)
- [Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi](#)
- [Ibn Rajab](#)
- [Ibn Abi Asim](#)

[edit] Greater Syria

- [Muhammad ibn Idris ash-Shafi'i](#)
- [Abd al-Rahman al-Awza'i](#)
- [Ibn Qudamah](#)
- [Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi](#)
- [Ibn Taymiyyah](#)
- [Al-Dhahabi](#)
- [Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya](#)
- [Ibn Kathir](#)
- [Ibn Abi al-Izz](#)
- [Ibn al-Salah^{\[60\]}](#)

[edit] Al-Andalus

- [Yusuf ibn abd al-Barr](#)
- [Al-Qurtubi](#)
- [Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi](#)
- [Ibn Hazm](#)

[edit] Yemen

- [Muhammad ash-Shawkani](#)
- ['Abd ar-Razzaq as-San'ani](#)

[edit] Contemporary Salafi scholars

[edit] Afghanistan

- [Muhammad Muhsin Khan](#)

[edit] [Albania](#)

- [Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani](#) [Abdul Qader Arnaoot](#)

[edit] [Mauritania](#)

- [Muhammad Ash-Shanqeeti](#)

[edit] [Morocco](#)

- [Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali](#)

[edit] [Pakistan](#)

- [Ehsan Elahi Zaheer](#)

[edit] [Saudi Arabia](#)

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| ▪ Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Latif Al ash-Sheikh | ▪ Rabee Al-Madkhali |
| ▪ Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al ash-Sheikh | ▪ Abdul-Azeez ibn Abdullaah Aal ash-Shaikh |
| ▪ Abd ar-Rahman ibn Nasir as-Sa'di | ▪ Saleh bin Abdul-Aziz Al ash-Sheikh |
| ▪ ‘Abdullaah bin Muhammad Al-Qar’ aawee | ▪ Abdul Rahman Al-Sudais |
| ▪ Haafidh ibn Ahmed 'Alee al-Hakamee | ▪ Saud Al-Shuraim |
| ▪ Ali Jaber | ▪ Salih Al-Talib |
| ▪ Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd Allah ibn Baaz | ▪ Usaama bin Abdullah al Khayyat |
| ▪ Muhammad ibn al Uthaymeen | ▪ Ibn Humaid |
| ▪ Saleh Al-Fawzan | ▪ Salih bin Abdullah al Humaid |

[edit] [Somalia](#)

- [Muhammad Al-Sumaalee^{\[61\]}](#)

[edit] [Syria](#)

- [Muhammad bin Jamil Zeno](#)

[edit] [Yemen](#)

- [Abdur-Rahman al-Mu'allimee al-Yamani](#)
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