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Friend *and* foe: The early Ottoman reception of Ibn ‘Arabī

by

Ahmed Zildzic

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

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in

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

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Abstract

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The legacy of the great Muslim Sufi master from the XII century, Muhy al-dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī left broad, profound, lasting and polarizing impact on the development of Islamic mysticism in the centuries after his death. The underlying principles of Sufism such as the ideas of the transcendental unity of being, the Perfect Man, the sealhood of the Muhammadan sainthood in their final form and ultimate interpretation are usually, both favorably and unfavorably, associated with the name of Ibn ‘Arabī.

This dissertation is a historical inquiry into the pathways through which the influence of Ibn ‘Arabī, as well as that of his works, disciples and ideas was inherited and incorporated into the intellectual milieu of the Ottoman learned class represented here by two groups: religious scholars, and members of the imperial administration. This dissertation follows the continuities of the textual and interpretative community of IbnArabi, stretching through a series of IbnArabi’s disciples from the time of his sojourn in pre-Ottoman Anatolia until the first scholarly figures and institutions of the Ottomans whereby Akbari teachings were propelled into the nascent Ottoman scholarly circles.

The tumultuous historical events of the first decades of the XVI century, namely the Ottoman conquest of the Arab world and the resulting defeat of the Mamluks and the Safavids, provided an opportunity for the evaluation of the well-established Akbari teachings in an Ottoman context. A notable XVII century Ottoman commentator of the *Fusus*, Abdullah el-Bosnevi in his famous *Sharh* proposed that the advent of the Ottomans into the Arab world reinvigorated, or more precisely for the first time launched heated debates concentrated around the question of the acceptability of IbnArabi’s beliefs in Ottoman realm. The abundant amount of primary sources originating from that period shows intensive activities focused at attacking and defending Ibn ‘Arabī, his views and his follow-

ers, and that fact appears to bear out el-Bosnevi's assumption. Based on primary manuscript sources and an array of secondary literature this dissertation attempts to follow those debates in two textual corpuses: in imperial discourse represented here by a short, anonymous and obscure treatise titled *Al-Shajara al-nu'māniyya fī 'ulamā' al-dawla al-'uthmāniyya*, and in legal discourse represented by a selection of fatwas issued by some of the most illustrious Ottoman scholars and shaykh al-Islams from that period.

Dedicated to the real doctor in the house and our three girls.

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## List of abbreviations

BSOAS:	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
EI <sup>2</sup> :	The Encyclopaedia of Islam
EIR:	Encyclopedia Iranica
GHB:	Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, Sarajevo
ÍA:	İslâm ansiklopedisi
IJMES:	International Journal for Middle Eastern Studies
Ktp:	Kütüphanesi
PQ:	Pseudo-Qūnawī
PS:	Pseudo-Şafadī
R:	Rukopis (MSS)
SI:	Studia Islamica
SK:	Süleymaniye kütüphanesi, Istanbul
TDV İA:	Türkiye diyanet vakfı islâm ansiklopedisi

## Introduction

This study is an attempt to examine in some detail the influence of the great Andalusian Sufi master Muhy al-dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī and the ways in which his teachings and his followers were received among the Ottoman learned class, both those learned in religious sciences and Ottoman bureaucrats and administrators. Ibn ‘Arabī’s influence in general and the Ottoman Empire are such broad concepts in themselves that no study can claim any degree of exhaustiveness. The study of Ibn ‘Arabī’s trace in any society would be equivalent to the study of Sufism in its entirety. Inevitably, in this study both the temporal frame and textual corpus had to be narrowed down significantly in order to render the topic manageable. Given the bipartite definition of the term ‘learned’ in that it applies to both bureaucratic and religious officials, this study will focus on two types of textual evidence and through them show the degree to which Ibn ‘Arabī is embedded in the Ottoman intellectual milieu. The first text is an obscure millenarian treatise attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Shajara al-nu‘māniyya fī al-dawla al-‘uthmāniyya*, and the other textual corpus is a selection of fatwas on Ibn ‘Arabī delivered by the representatives of the highest judicial office of the Empire, shaykh al-Islams.

This thesis is divided into two parts, encompassing four chapters. The first part, consisting of a single chapter, aims to establish Ibn ‘Arabī’s credentials in the traditional Muslim curriculum of religious disciplines, and to answer the very basic question of whether the ‘ulama could rely on Ibn ‘Arabī’s training in the traditional curriculum in order to accept him into their fold or deny him that privilege. Using Ibn ‘Arabī’s autographed version of the *ijāza*, which in fact is a compendium of all of the *ijāzas* issued by the teachers he benefited from during his education, as well as supporting information gleaned from other sources, this study reconstructs his early education in the field of Qur’anic studies, *ḥadīth*, Islamic jurisprudence and all other relevant branches of the traditional Muslim scholarship. The next question, which is closely related to the first basic question of his membership in the scholarly class of Islam, is that of his approach to the principal epistemic methodologies developed and adopted by the ‘ulama class. In other words, to what extent are Ibn ‘Arabī’s works and ideas the result of his education in the religious sciences of Islam, and to what degree are his ideas traceable within the epistemological system of the *ijāza* and *sanad*, as the defining features of the traditional Muslim scholarship?

The question of the acceptability of Ibn ‘Arabī’s written opus and religious doctrine was the subject-matter of heated debates among his supporters and opponents beginning already during his lifetime and lasting with varying degree of intensity to this day. The issue of the pedigree of Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrinal system is undoubtedly at the center of the controversy surrounding his polemical image. Based on quotations from his works, the supranatural genesis of some of his writings, especially the most influential ones like the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* is examined as a possible source of the existing misunderstanding between the *shaykh al-akbar* and his followers on the one hand, and some members of the ‘ulama class on the other.



The second part of the thesis, comprising the remaining three chapters, addresses the reception of Ibn ‘Arabī in what may be provisionally called the Turkish world. Chapter Two presents Ibn ‘Arabī’s links and relations with Saljūqid Anatolia, his physical presence and activities in the Saljūq dominion during his lifetime and, more importantly, the transfer of authority to his foremost disciple Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī and the posthumous formation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s textual and interpretative community at the hands of the latter in Konya. Through a succession of al-Qūnawī’s pupils and the authentic textual body endowed in his *zaviye* in Konya, the distinct doctrinal system of the Akbari circle reaches Ottoman times. Just as the Ottomans inherited many other aspects of Islamic culture and civilization from their immediate predecessors in Asia Minor, the Saljūqs, they also inherited Ibn ‘Arabī’s legacy. This chapter, furthermore, shows the ways in which that legacy was integrated and made to be part and parcel of the nascent Ottoman scholarly infrastructure. Largely through the efforts of the first Ottoman müderris, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī and the first Ottoman mufti, Fenārī Efendi at the first Ottoman medrese of Orhaniye at Iznik, Ibn ‘Arabī and his school of thought became a potent constituent of the emerging Ottoman intellectual scene.

A celebrated Ottoman commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ*, ‘Abdullāh al-Bosnevī in the introduction to his famous *Sharḥ*, records an intriguing proposition: he contends that Ibn ‘Arabī’s saintly figure was largely intact among the Ottomans until Sultan Selim conquered the Arab world. After Selim’s seizure of the two traditional centers of Muslim scholarship that were in Mamluk possession, namely Damascus and Cairo, the heated debates regarding Ibn ‘Arabī’s acceptability, or lack thereof, from the works of the Arab *fuqahā*<sup>1</sup> who lived in those centers of learning were transferred into the Ottoman scholarly milieu and wrought havoc there. The intent of Chapters Three and Four is to examine that proposition in some detail.

Chapter Three deals with a short treatise attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī, or more precisely with the two commentaries on that treatise attributed to al-Qūnawī and Ṣafadī. Every aspect in relation to this work is dubious: its very existence in the original form is questionable as no more than a couple of sentences from the original work are recorded; its content is obscure and largely impenetrable; its attribution to Ibn ‘Arabī and the attribution of the commentaries to al-Qūnawī and al-Ṣafadī are decidedly spurious; and the date of its composition, as well as that of the commentaries, is unknown and impossible to determine. There is, however, one single aspect to this work that is certain and that makes this work indispensable in the study of Ibn Arabī’s influence on the Ottomans: it is a supreme example of the official Ottoman imperial propaganda devised and used to support the Ottoman paramountcy over all other Muslim dynasties of the age, which is in line with the pronounced Messianic aspirations entertained by both Sultan Selim and Süleyman.<sup>2</sup> Alt-

<sup>1</sup> ‘Abdullāh al-Bosnevī mentions al-Biqā‘ī by name. See SK Carullah 1032, fol. 2b.

<sup>2</sup> Ottoman sources record a revealing episode that clearly demonstrates the purpose to which this confusing text was employed. During the negotiations leading to the famous Treaty of Ahmed Pasha in 1736 between the Ottoman State and Safavid Persia, apart from the question of territorial exchanges between the two states, the issue of the permissibility for Iranian pilgrims to visit Mecca, at the time under Ottoman control, was also raised and that resulted in sectarian and legitimacy debates. An unnamed Ottoman delegate, while enumerating the merits of the Ottoman

though the date of the composition of this work is unknown and can only be speculated about, the date and the setting of the historical events to which the text makes reference is clearly observable. The text links the fortunes of the Ottoman State in the tumultuous sixteenth century with the veneration of Muslim saintly figures, particularly Ibn ‘Arabī, and identifies their defense against all critics as the ultimate priority. The miraculous discovery of Ibn ‘Arabī’s tomb in the Şālihiyya district of Damascus, the building of a mausoleum there, the commission of works in defense of the greatest shaykh by Sultan Selim and the very first Ottoman fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī, are all but segments of an officially orchestrated effort at preserving the favorable status of Ibn ‘Arabī within the Ottoman intellectual and imperial milieu. All these events transpired shortly after Selim’s defeat of the Mamluks and his conquest of Damascus and Cairo, and that fact gives some credence to al-Bosnevī’s contestation.

Chapter Four examines the status of Ibn ‘Arabī in Ottoman fatwas. From the time of the Ottoman ‘first’<sup>3</sup> to the conquest of the Arab world by Sultan Selim there has been no single fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī issued by Ottoman muftis. This chapter examines Ibn ‘Arabī’s entrance into the legal discourse by through a study of the first distinctively Ottoman fatwa on the question of Ibn ‘Arabī and the subsequent responses, both positive and negative, by a series of Ottoman shaykh al-Islams. In this chapter I survey how Ibn ‘Arabī’s orthodoxy, once a general issue in Islamic thought, became thoroughly ‘Ottomanized’, and discuss what strategies were at work to achieve that goal. Inasmuch as the affirmative and negative fatwas on Ibn ‘Arabī were given by scholars who were occupying the identical scholarly and official rank, and who in many cases succeeded each other in office, it is intriguing to examine the manner in which they built their legal argument, ending in the two opposite extremes of full acceptance and full rejection. Every shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the sixteenth century issued a legal opinion on Ibn ‘Arabī and this question appears to be one of those that inevitably required the mufti to disclose his opinion. The debate started with the fatwa of Ibn Kemal and in this chapter, I looked at how it developed and what direction it took in the view of his successors.

At the end, I provide two appendices. In the first appendix I give an overview of the existing manuscript copies of *al-Shajara al-nu‘māniyya* and its commentaries by different authors in libraries and collections around the world. Apart from those manuscripts heretofore identified by scholars who addressed Ibn Arabī’s bio-bibliography, I was able to identify some new copies and list them in the supplement. The second supplement con-

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State, made a reference to the Prophetic tradition glorifying the conqueror of Constantinople and then added: “Quite apart from this singular virtue [of the Ottomans-AZ], Muḥy al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, the interpreter of the Unseen (*lisān-i ghayb*), composed a work entitled *al-Shajara* in which he predicted the emergence of this noble dynasty, its glorious sultans, ministers and scholars, pointing out that this State (*devlet*) will last until the Day of Judgment, under the banner of the Prophet.” Coupled with the virtuous practice of *ghazā*, the text of *al-Shajara* was as late as XVIII century, invoked in the legitimization and favorable positioning of the Ottoman Empire against its adversaries and rivals in the Muslim world. See Koca Rağıp Paşa, *Taḥqīq al-tawfīq*, SK Esad Efendi 2154, fol. 44a, quoted from Mustafa Tahralı, “Muhyiddin Ibn Arabī ve Türkiye’ye te’sirleri”, *Kubbealtı akademi mecmûası*, vol. 23, 1994, no. 1, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> By the Ottoman firsts I mean the first Ottoman religious establishment, the Orhaniye in Iznik, the first Ottoman *müderris* Dawud al-Qaysari and arguably the first Ottoman mufti Mola Fenari – the initial Ottoman institutions and scholars under the influence of Ibn ‘Arabī.

tains facsimile copies of the fatwas and longer excerpts from different works that were treated as fatwas in regard to Ibn ‘Arabī, by both his defenders and detractors. Fatwas are given in the original languages: Arabic and Turkish. I did not come across a Persian fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī by an Ottoman scholar, even though it is certain that some shaykh al-Islams (Ebu Su’ud, for instance) used to issue fatwas in Persian as well.

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Thank you all. Needless to say, for any error or inadequacies that may remain in this work, the responsibility is entirely my own.

## Part One

## Chapter I

### Ibn ‘Arabī and the scholarly class of Islam

The greatest shaykh Muḥy al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, a celebrated Muslim Sufi and mystic from Andalusia, hardly needs any introduction to Western audiences. His life and extraordinary opus have been so far the subject of many scholarly studies in many European languages.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to examine in some detail documents relevant to his education in the traditional Muslim religious sciences, as well as to review the dynamics of the relationship between Ibn ‘Arabī and the official ‘ulama in an attempt at answering the very basic question of whether the ‘ulama accepted Ibn ‘Arabī as one of their own. In order to approach that question we need to delineate and classify all the different types of knowledge which Ibn ‘Arabī claimed to possess. Even a cursory glance at many of his works and especially at the plethora of bibliographical data that he provided suffices to identify at least three major varieties of knowledge Ibn ‘Arabī acquired through different epistemological methods. These are:

- knowledge originating from numerous mystical visions, divine inspiration and disclosure,
- knowledge about the theory and practice of the Sufi way and related ordinances which represent the backbone of Sufi teachings like the remembrance of God, seclusion and other similar practices.
- knowledge acquired through the well-established system of *isnād* pertaining to traditional Muslim curricula consisting in the Noble Qur’an and related disciplines like recitation and exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence, Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*). In this category we can include a number of other sciences which are ultimately related and considered relevant to the study of scripture, like Arabic grammar, stylistics, poetry, and literature in general.

The first class of knowledge relies integrally on supranatural authority and as such prevails over the remaining two, the integrity of which is in the view of Ibn ‘Arabī measured by its proximity to and congruity with the first knowledge or lack thereof. Strictly speaking, supranatural origin of knowledge in Islam is restricted to the Noble Qur’an and in the most conventional form of revelation (*vaḥy*) is considered terminated with the completion of the scripture. Because of that, it is precisely the supranatu-

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<sup>4</sup> The most recent and most reliable account of his life so far is Claude Addas’s work entitled *Quest for the Red Sulphur: the life of Ibn ‘Arabī*, translated from French by Peter Kingsley, The Islamic Texts Society: Golden Palm Series, 1993, 347 p. (henceforth referred to as Addas).

ral origin of some of Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings that represents the root cause of the existing misunderstanding between him and some members of the scholarly community in Islam.<sup>5</sup> Assigning clear predominance to the supranatural insight represented by the scripture of Islam was in fact a measure to assure the pre-eminence of the sacred volume in the life of believers, if such an assurance was indeed needed. Various claims to possession of a share in supranatural insight were sometimes regarded as an endangering factor to the sacred volume by some ‘ulama.

While it is very hard to trace and map Ibn ‘Arabī’s sources of knowledge coming from the imaginal world of the unperceivable reality, it is relatively easier by comparison, and necessary, to examine the sources of his “worldly” education in the traditional Muslim curriculum. These consist of the study of the Qur’an, its recitation methods and exegesis (*qirā’a*, *tajwīd*, *tafsīr*), Prophetic tradition including the six canonical collections of *ḥadīth* and other relevant disciplines (*‘ilm al-rijāl*, for instance), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), its sources and different branches (*uṣūl* and *furū’*), and many other forms of traditional sciences like history, grammar, literature, and rhetoric. These disciplines alone would normally suffice to establish one’s scholarly credentials and qualify him for membership in the ulama class, even in the absence of the remaining two types of knowledge that Ibn ‘Arabī claimed for himself.

The study of Ibn ‘Arabī’s early education is greatly facilitated by the abundance of autobiographical information that he left, including especially valuable data on his teachers, and on the various shaykhs and saintly figures he had met and benefited from on the path of spiritual evolution. We also find mentioned in the *Futūḥāt* and other works a large number of books he studied, which makes his formative years of training clearer and easier to trace. Evidently, as with most scholars of Islam, Ibn ‘Arabī’s training in the traditional disciplines was an extensive and lifelong process. It started at an early age in the illustrious cultural and intellectual centers of Muslim Spain, the cities of Cordoba and Seville, two competing capitals of learning that flourished under the Almohad dynasty. His first steps in acquiring knowledge, in accordance with the spirit of his era, must have started at home, in his family and with private tutors. His family is listed as descended from one of the oldest Arab lineages in Muslim Spain. Belonging to the administrative and military elite society (*al-khāṣṣa*), some of his immediate relatives assumed responsibilities in civil and military administration.<sup>6</sup> His father and uncles (both paternal and maternal) were all in the service of the ruling house. Their privileged social status was defined by good connections in social circles and a high level of cultural sophistication which Ibn ‘Arabī was about to inherit and partake in. He mentions that two of his maternal uncles had a pronounced interest in Sufi teachings and alongside the then young Muḥy al-dīn accompanied

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<sup>5</sup> See below, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> In light of some new evidence that emerged from manuscript biographies of poets, Gerald Elmore offered new insight into Ibn ‘Arabī’s social background, comprehensively different from the one usually advanced by his biographers. Instead of describing him as a member of the Andalusian ruling class, Elmore presents Ibn ‘Arabī as a scion of a family with military background. See Gerald Elmore, “New Evidence on the Early Life of Ibn al-‘Arabī”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 117, no. 2, 1997, p. 347-9.



many Sufi preceptors of the West. Nevertheless, his scholarly upbringing commenced in earnest only when the family moved to Seville because of the political and social unrest in his native town of Almeria.

Approximately at the same time that his career as a young scholar was still in making, he had chosen the pathway of retreat and spiritual seclusion. According to his biographers, al-Baghdādī and Ibn Ṣawdaqīn, during this stage of his life and as a result of concentrated spiritual efforts, Ibn ‘Arabī acquired the arcane knowledge and the secrets which he subsequently divulged in his numerous writings. That divinely inspired knowledge received as a gift of grace from the perfect space of the *malakūt* was to record its first signal victory over no less seminal a figure than Ibn Rushd, the celebrated Muslim philosopher and chief judge (*qādī*) of Cordoba. The meeting was arranged by Ibn ‘Arabī’s father, who enjoyed some intimacy with the great philosopher in what is an important indication of his high social standing. In the famous biographical anecdote which is recorded in almost all accounts of Ibn ‘Arabī’s life, during a brief and rather enigmatic encounter Ibn ‘Arabī’s knowledge frightened Ibn Rushd, who is justifiably or not portrayed as the last authentic representative of an extant rational and philosophical tradition in Islam. The story is related in detail by many modern scholars:

As I entered the philosopher rose from his seat and came to meet me, showing me every possible token of friendship and consideration and finally embracing me. Then he said to me: ‘Yes’. I in turn replied to him: ‘Yes’. Then his joy increased as he saw that I had understood him. But next, when I myself became aware of what it was that had caused his joy, I added: ‘No’. Immediately, Averroes tensed up, his features changed color and he seemed to doubt his own thoughts. He asked me this question: ‘what kind of solution have you found through illumination and divine inspiration? Is it just the same as we receive from speculative thought?’ I replied to him: ‘Yes and no. Between yes and no, spirits take flight from their matter and necks break away from their bodies. Averroes turned pale. I saw him start to tremble. He murmured the ritual phrase: ‘There is no strength save in God’ because he had understood my allusions.<sup>7</sup>

The sweeping, if enigmatic, victory recorded by young Ibn ‘Arabī over the last scion of speculative philosophy caused little alarm in the ranks of philosophers, as the tradition of rational philosophy was rapidly approaching its end in the Muslim West. It was time for it to be replaced by a philosophy faithful to its definition: love for wisdom. That philosophy could not come from anywhere else but from God, the ultimate

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted here from Addas, p. 37.

source of both love and wisdom, which He bestows upon whomsoever He pleases. Ibn ‘Arabī had just been crowned its splendid champion. His knowledge not only confounded the great philosopher but also, and more importantly, made him ask all the right questions. It was not insignificant at all, in hindsight, that someone like Ibn Rushd was instantly able to recognize the source of Ibn ‘Arabī’s knowledge as being illumination and divine inspiration, in front of which rational reasoning humbly retreats.

Much more commotion, however, would be caused in the ranks of the ‘ulama when the fruits of Ibn ‘Arabī’s heavenly insight were probed. That Ibn Rushd was simultaneously an eminent jurisconsult and the chief judge of the Andalusian metropolis Cordoba, in addition to being a philosopher as well, was not sufficient: the intellectual encounter between Ibn ‘Arabī and many members of the scholarly class would be much longer and exhausting. The latter confrontation was not for the most part conducted in person and the victory, to whichever side one chooses to accord it, was not nearly as decisive as in the former case. At least, it never entailed the capitulating confession that we have in the case of Ibn Rushd. Apart from that, Ibn ‘Arabī had undergone extensive training in the traditional Islamic disciplines and this if nothing else formally qualified him to be included in the fold of the ‘ulama. It is indeed of great importance to scrutinize his *Ijāza*, the basic identifying document in the sphere of traditional Islamic scholarship.

### *The Ijāza*

Several distinct circumstances surrounding Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Ijāza* carry a number of significant implications. To begin with, the *Ijāza* is an autographed document, written by Ibn ‘Arabī himself and with particular attention paid to the question of its originality. *Ijāzas* are normally composed and issued by teachers, not disciples. They are thus essentially different from classical Islamic literary tradition, which, a few significant exceptions apart, never produced autobiographical works of great importance. The compilation of a biographical dictionary, a literary form generally named *ṭabaqāt* was a flourishing genre in Muslim literatures in many languages. However, it is very seldom that one finds a purely autobiographical work by a Muslim scholar, and even more seldom to find one by a Sufī. Ibn ‘Arabī is one of the few in that regard as well. It is one of his distinctive features that he left a great amount of biographical data in his works. As regards the *Ijāza*, approaching the end of his life he felt compelled to collect most of his certificates in a single document and preserve it for his adherents.

Another important aspect pertinent to the *Ijāza* is that it was composed at the behest of the Ayyubid ruler al-Malik al-Muzaffar Bahā’ al-dīn Ghāzī b. Malik al-‘Ādil, who ruled in Damascus from 627/1229 until his death in 635/1237.<sup>8</sup> Its actual historical identity is hard to firmly establish, as there are two other Ayyubid rulers with the

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<sup>8</sup> Addas, p. 96.

same name who held sway approximately at the same time in the Sham. There is some historical evidence to suggest that the relationship between the rulers of the Ayyubid dynasty and the ‘ulama was often very tense because of their passive, even pacifist attitude towards the Crusaders, who were occupying the neighboring Muslim lands in Palestine. Could it be that Ibn ‘Arabī’s presence in Malik al-‘Ādil’s dominion was a burden for him and yet another cause of tension with the ‘ulama? The text of the *Ijāza* suggests that Ibn ‘Arabī was under suspicion.

*Rūḥ al-quḍs*, another important autobiographical work of Ibn ‘Arabī, was also born out of suspicion towards his Sufi credentials. He was simply the victim of a greater concern; precisely at that time, there existed a great unawareness and suspicion surrounding Sufi masters in the West that Ibn ‘Arabī attributed to the general lethargy of Sufi teachings and spiritual curiosity characteristic for his time. Ibn ‘Arabī was to have a bitter personal experience of that distrust. During a visit to Cairo, a certain shaykh from Irbil made some offensive comments about the spiritual abilities and knowledge of Sufi masters from Andalusia and the Muslim West in general.<sup>9</sup> Fortunately for us, Ibn ‘Arabī’s answer came in the form of an important work entitled *Rūḥ al-quḍs*, in which he systematically listed all the shaykhs he met and from whom he benefited on the Sufi Path. In light of that situation, it appears probable that his *Ijāza* was inspired by similar circumstances of distrustfulness.

According to his own testimonies, the jurists of Sham were not very inclined to him. In Hebron he was accused of heresy, and it was in Aleppo that jurists protested the perceived impropriety of his *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*. There is also textual evidence in the *Ijāza* itself to support the proposition that Ibn ‘Arabī was compelled to compose his *ijāza* by the environment and circumstances he lived in at the time. The closing sentence of the first part of the *Ijāza* relays a fear on part of Ibn ‘Arabī, a peculiar variety of fear: the fear of tedium (*khawf min al-malal*). This is a clear sign that the writing of the *Ijāza* could have been something he felt he had to do; in any event, he appeared not to perceive it as an enjoyable activity. Apart from being dull, the writing of the *Ijāza* proved to be an arduous activity for him as well; in some instances he had to track back in time for more than forty years to remember names of the teachers, books and circumstances— such as times and places of instruction – that informed his education. The *Ijāza* was written only six years before he died in Damascus in year 638/1240.

The opening line of the *Ijāza* takes an almost confessional tone: Ibn ‘Arabī records his name in full and points to the important fact that he authored the document himself. Even though his certificate is not the only document relevant to our attempts to recon-

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 68; Ibn ‘Arabī, *Risāla rūḥ al-quḍs fī muḥāsaba al-naḥs*, Mu’assasa al-‘ilm, Damascus, 1964, p. 9 (henceforth *Rūḥ al-quḍs*). In return, Ibn Arabī challenged the understanding of the Irbil shaykh of some basic Sufi concepts in an attempt to convey that his ignorance of the Maghribī Sufi masters was just an extension of his heedlessness. The fateful encounter between the two, which take place in a *khānaqāh* in Cairo, must have been just an indication of a more general tendency, because it prompted Ibn ‘Arabī to compose a separate volume remedying the undesirable reality.

struct his curriculum, it is nevertheless the most important one, and the only one composed with that goal in mind. Occasional remarks on his teachers are scattered, with varying length and frequency, throughout many of his works, particularly the *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār*, *Rūḥ al-quḍs* and *al-Durra al-fākhira*. The text of the *Ijāza* falls into two main sections. In the second part, which is of lesser significance here, Ibn ‘Arabī gives a partial list of his own works. The first part, however, contains references to some seventy teachers who had instructed Ibn ‘Arabī in many different disciplines. Before he embarks on establishing his credentials, the author begins with a particular type of Muslim prayer called *istikhāra*,<sup>10</sup> which seeks divine guidance and inspiration. The placement of a Muslim prayer of uncertainty at the beginning of a bare legal document is noteworthy. That Ibn ‘Arabī would not produce such a simple legal document on his education without seeking divine inspiration is perhaps an argument for him and against him with respect to the acceptability of his doctrines at the same time depending on one’s perspective. It certainly marks his epistemic preferences. If the document was drafted to appease the ‘ulama and demonstrate that the totality of his knowledge is not merely a celestial conjunction of questionable genesis, but rather knowledge with firm and traceable roots in the traditional Islamic scholarship, then the opening *istikhāra* seems utterly out of place and compromises the purpose of the document. For his followers, however, establishing the connection with God through the prayer, which is never integrally part of the *ijāza*, demonstrates clearly that all his texts, including the most barren one like his diploma, possess a quality absent from the writings of the official ‘ulama: an unbreakable link between the author and eternal sources of divine inspiration.

Ibn ‘Arabī lists five different methods of acquiring knowledge from his teachers:

- *qirā’a* (reading)
- *samā’* (hearing certificates; listening)
- *munāwala* (literally: presentation, deliverance)
- *kitāba* (by correspondence)
- *ijāza* ‘*amma* / *tamma* (general certificate)<sup>11</sup>

To conclusively assert what he meant by some of these methods is not an easy task. The last method of ‘general certificate or authorization’ is commonly held to be a certification *in absentia* whereby he was authorized to teach and transmit all the works of one author based on his instruction in some of them. Additionally, one of his teachers who transmitted to him his works was entitled through the process of the general cer-

<sup>10</sup> See Fahd Toufic, “Istikhāra”, *ET*, vol. IV, p. 259-60.

<sup>11</sup> On the *ijāza*, its types and the epistemological methods used in the traditional Muslim scholarship, see Ḥusain Ḥasan Karīm, *Ijāzāt mawlānā Khālid: ‘ilmīyya wa taṣawwufīyya*, Manshūrāt al-multaqā al-‘ālamī li-mawlānā Khālid number 8, Ārās, Arbil, 2009, p. 74-84 and Hisham Nashabi, “The Ijaza: Academic Certificate in Muslim Education”, *Hamdard Islamicus*, vol. VIII, number 1, 1985, pp. 7-13.

tification to issue him an authorization to teach works by other scholars as well. On the other hand, two more procedures could possibly mean the same: *qirā'a* and *kitāba*. The former is identical to *ijāza 'amma*, whereas the latter implies learning through correspondence which does not necessarily need to be from the authors themselves. When all of the above terms are taken in their literal meaning, only the *samā'* implies meeting. The term *munāwala* is also unclear and only by its grammatical form (of the third class of expanded verbs) indicates a sense of reciprocity and an action where more than one doer is involved. Indeed, in the *Ijāza* there are a number of teachers who were at the same time Ibn 'Arabī's disciples in other disciplines. Could *munāwala* also stand for that type of scholarly exchange? There is no way to conclusively answer that question, because Ibn 'Arabī uses terms in a seemingly contradictory manner. In the case of his revered teacher Ibn Sakīna, who was *shaykh al-shuyūkh* in the city of Baghdad, Ibn 'Arabī mentions that he awarded him a general authorization (*ajāza lī ijāza 'amma*), and immediately adds that he was engaged in *munāwala* with him: "I took from him as he did take from me (*akhadhtu 'an-hu wa akhadha 'an-nī*)", which unambiguously conveys the sense of meeting in person. Similarly in some cases we have *ijāza 'amma* coupled with the standard formula of the *ijāza haddathānī* (he narrated to me...) which is synonymous with *sami'tu* (I heard) and which clearly implies a meeting in person.<sup>12</sup>

From the names contained in the first part of the *Ijāza* it could be inferred that Ibn 'Arabī's education did not take place on the margins of the scholarly life in his native Andalusia or elsewhere in the main scholarly centers of the Muslim world like Cairo, Mecca and Damascus, but rather in elitist circles.<sup>13</sup> While the influence of his family could testify to an elitist upbringing in Andalusia, his personal abilities and prestige no doubt opened many doors for him in the later stages of his career. Many of his teachers were not just learned and isolated individuals submerged in their studies and preoccupied with solely scholarly quests. Some of them also held the highest religious and administrative offices at the time and were part of the official 'ulama establishment. This should not be taken as a definite proof of mutual acceptability because most of his ideas that the later 'ulama found controversial or blasphemous were still not fully formed at the time or committed to writing. He was able to combine the companionship of many highly influential Sufi masters with association with members of the official 'ulama class, which in some cases Ibn 'Arabī himself considered to be a remarkable achievement. Among his teachers, such is the case with Ibn Ṣā'igh, who taught him *ḥadīth*, and was at the same time his spiritual preceptor. In *Rūḥ al-quḍs* Ibn 'Arabī tellingly reveals in connection with relationship with him:

<sup>12</sup> On some of the overlapping terms used in the science of *ḥadīth* and their meanings see Ṣubḥī al-Ṣālih, '*Ulūm al-ḥadīth wa muṣṭalaḥu-hu*, Dār al-'ilm li al-malāyīn, Beirut, Forth Edition, 2009, p. 89.

<sup>13</sup> Addas, p. 97.

He came from Ceuta, a Traditionalist and a Sufi, which is a truly amazing combination.<sup>14</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī’s digression about his teacher here directly demonstrates his understanding of the state of affairs regarding the relationship between Sufi masters and what one could call ‘*ulamā al-rusūm*, exoteric ‘ulama. That the traditionalists, as specialists in *ḥadīth* and people who are the most knowledgeable about the ways of the Prophet, were not particularly inclined to the Sufi way, appears to be deeply troubling for many, including Ibn ‘Arabī. It is perhaps this disheartening fact of religious life that induced Ibn ‘Arabī to devote himself predominantly to the study of *ḥadīth*. Could it be an attempt by Ibn ‘Arabī at bridging the existing gap? The study of *ḥadīth* is central to scholarly upbringing and hardly needs any justification. It is the shortest path to knowing the Prophet of Islam through the testimony of his closest and most reliable companions. As we will see later, Ibn ‘Arabī’s *ḥadīth* studies were rather extensive and encompassing.

However, the text of the *Ijāza*,<sup>15</sup> traditionally structured by the significance of study themes, opens with his studies in the field of the Noble Qur’an. It is followed by the study of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and Sharī‘a, and towards its end come sections on the study of language, literature, rhetoric and other so-called auxiliary disciplines. The order of his teachers is dictated by their fields of expertise and because of that reason could not follow in line with the descending importance of study themes. The information provided about his professors gradually becomes more sparse. Entries are usually succinct and schematic. At times he also mentions places and dates where meetings took place, and in many other cases that information is lacking and needs to be recovered from other works.

#### a) *The Qur’an*

Recitation of the Noble Qur’an seems to have had a special place for Ibn ‘Arabī. It is usually the first field of study for young scholars, undertaken at a very early age, and is conducted by *qurrā’*, specialists in the field of recitation, its principles and different methods. According to a prophetic tradition, the Qur’an has been revealed on seven

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<sup>14</sup> See R.W.J Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia: The Ruh Al-Quds and Al-Durrat Al-Fakhirah of Ibn ‘Arabi*, translated with introduction and notes by R.W.J. Austin, with a foreword by Martin Lings, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972, p. 136; henceforth referred to as *Sufis of Andalusia*.

<sup>15</sup> I used the following sources in examining the text of the *Ijāza: Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī*, ed. by Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāh, Mu‘assasa intishār al-‘Arabī, Beirut, VI vols, 2001-2006: vol. I, pp. 43-61; ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, “Autobibliographia de Ibn ‘Arabī”, *Al-Andalus*, 20:1, 1955, pp. 107-127; Abū ‘Alā’ al-‘Affī, *Fihris al-mu’allaqāt Ibn ‘Arabī*, Turkish translation by Veysel Kaya, “İcâzetnâme: İbn Arabî’nin kendi kaleminden icazet aldığı hocaların ve yazdığı eserlerin listesi”, *Tasavvuf - ilmi ve akademik araştırma dergisi*, İbnü’l-Arabî özel sayısı, vol. 9, 2008, no. 21, pp. 525-539. All the references to the *Ijaza* will be to that edited by Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāh, in *Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī*.

different letters (Ar. *ḥarf*, pl. *ḥurūf*),<sup>16</sup> and thus can be recited in seven highly elaborate methods. Ibn ‘Arabī studied the principles of Qur’an recitation with Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Khalaf b. Ṣafī al-Lakhmī, whose name is the first to appear in the *Ijāza*. The manual of instruction was *al-Kitāb al-kāfī* by ‘Abdullāh al-Ra’īnī al-Maḥarrī. He studied the same book another time with a different teacher, ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ghālib al-Sharrāṭ<sup>17</sup> from Cordoba, who through his son enjoyed a direct link with the author in the chain of transmission of that book. It is a general feature frequently seen in the case of Ibn ‘Arabī, that his teachers were only one or two generations removed from the authors of the books he studied. Apart from the works cited, Ibn ‘Arabī studied a number of other works relevant to this field:

- 1) *Kitāb al-tabṣira fī madhhab al-qurrā’ al-sab’* by Muḥammad b. Ṭālib al-Maḥarrī, which he studied with the chief judge of the city of Fas in the Maghreb, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh al-Tādīlī.<sup>18</sup>
- 2) *Kitāb al-taysīr fī madhhab al-qurrā’ al-sab’* by Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān al-Dārī al-Maḥarrī; Ibn ‘Arabī obtained his certificate for this volume and all other works by the same author from the *qāḍī* Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ḥamza.
- 3) *Kitāb al-taqaṣṣī*<sup>19</sup> by Abū ‘Umar Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Birr al-Shātibī, taught to him by the famous Almohad judge Ibn Zarqūn al-Anṣārī. Ibn ‘Arabī in his *Ijāza* draws a sketch of the very extensive studies he conducted with Ibn Zarqūn.<sup>20</sup> Apart from *Taqaṣṣī* he studied with him all other works by al-Shātibī: *al-Istidrāk*, *al-Tamhīd*, *al-Isṭī‘āb* and *al-Intiqā’*. It is unfortunately impossible to classify those works thematically as the titles contain no indication of their content. Ibn Zarqūn authorized him to teach all of his works.

With the name of Ibn Zarqūn, the Qur’an section of the *Ijāza* comes to a close. Conspicuously absent from this section is any reference to the study of the Qur’an exegesis. This is an important segment of the traditional curriculum and a rather curious circumstance for Ibn ‘Arabī, who repeatedly stated that his entire opus is nothing else

<sup>16</sup> In a well known tradition recorded in the six canonical collections of *ḥadīth*, it is narrated that the Prophet said that the Qur’an was revealed on seven different letters ( انزل القرآن علي سبعة احرف ), which led to various interpretations by different scholars. For the tradition itself, see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb faḍā’il al-Qur’ān, Bāb unzil al-Qur’ān ‘alā sab‘a aḥruf.

<sup>17</sup> Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbār, *Takmila li-kitāb al-ṣila*, ed. by ‘Izzat al-‘Aṭṭār al-Ḥusaynī, Maktaba al-Khanjī, Turāth al-Andalus no. 5, Cairo, 1375/1956, vol. II, p. 602; henceforth referred to as *Takmila*.

<sup>18</sup> His name is often given as Bādīlī or Bādhalī, which is an obvious misprint. He was the first scholar to award Ibn ‘Arabī with a general authorization (*ijāza tāmma*). For the correction of his name and the function of *qāḍī* he held see Evariste Levi-Provencal in *Arabica*, vol. III, number 1, 1956, p. 119 in response to Badawī’s article in *Al-Andalus*, see footnote 11 above.

<sup>19</sup> This is in fact a work in the field of Mālikī *fiqh*, listed under the heading on the Qur’an.

<sup>20</sup> On Ibn Zarqūn see *Takmila*, vol. II, pp. 540-542.

except an exegesis of the Qur'an.<sup>21</sup> It should be borne in mind, however, that the *Ijāza* was not meant to be a complete and exhaustive reference to his teachers or his works. Both of its sections are lacking in that regard. There are a great number of works whose topics are not clear from the title. Likewise, many teachers are recorded only by name and we do not know what he studied with them. Undoubtedly, there are some others whom he simply forgot to include in his own explicit statement:

Were it not for the fear of tedium and the lack of place and time, I would have listed all of my teachers...<sup>22</sup>

Only one name is directly connected with Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), that of Abū 'Abdullāh al-Kharrāṭ<sup>23</sup> who instructed Ibn 'Arabī in "the mysteries of the Qur'an",<sup>24</sup> a phrase with unmistakable Sufi coloring.

b) *Ḥadīth*

It is only suitable that the second most significant source of Islam be accorded second place in the *Ijāza*. One cannot but notice Ibn 'Arabī's attachment to the study of Prophetic traditions. As it has been mentioned earlier, one of the possible reasons for his focus on the *ḥadīth*, apart from everything else, could be an attempt to mitigate the situation and bridge the disquieting gap that existed between Sufis and traditionalists in his time. In his *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt* (Book of annunciatory visions) Ibn 'Arabī narrates an interesting anecdote which partly explains this deep attachment:

During the period when as yet I knew nothing of learning, some of my companions had planned to encourage me to study books of *ra'y* [speculative opinion]; at the time I was completely ignorant of this science as well as *ḥadīth*. In my sleep I saw myself in a large space surrounded by armed people who intended to kill me. There was nowhere at all where I could find refuge. Then I saw in front of me a hill on which the Messenger of God was standing. Immediately I took refuge beside him, he opened his arms wide and pressed me very forcefully against himself

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<sup>21</sup> Osman Yahya, *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn Arabi: etude critique*, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Damas, 1964; henceforth referred to as Yahya. One title in particular draws attention: it is listed # 303, entitled *Ishārat al-Qur'ān fi 'ālam al-insān*, and in Yahya's description consists of "une méditation intérieure de l'auteur devant chaque sourate du Coran". In light of the famous prophetic tradition on the impermissibility of the application of one's personal opinion in commenting on the sacred volume as well as the dearth of systematic education in the field of Qur'anic exegesis on the part of Ibn 'Arabī, his methodology of *tafsīr* could be regarded as problematic and disquieting.

<sup>22</sup> *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī*, vol I, p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> *Takmila*, vol. II, p. 634, # 1601.

<sup>24</sup> Addas, p. 32.



saying: ‘My beloved, hold fast to me and you will be safe.’ I then looked around me to see my assailants,<sup>25</sup> but there was no longer a single one of them to be seen. From that time onward, I gave myself to the study of *ḥadīth*.<sup>26</sup>

That the mystical vision of the Messenger of God occurred before he had any knowledge of the Path or traditional sciences of Islam is important in more ways than one. For one thing it shows that *ḥadīth* could be one of the first disciplines Ibn ‘Arabī took to studying in earnest and thus the one that inaugurated his scholarly interests. More importantly, this anecdote suggests that the mystical vision of the Messenger which Ibn ‘Arabī experienced was entirely unrelated to any knowledge he could have possessed at the time. It is God’s perfect and unsolicited gift, a quality vouchsafed for him before he had any awareness of the religious sciences (*qabla an a‘rif al-‘ilm*). Even though Ibn ‘Arabī refers to his pre-*sulūk* years as *jāhiliyya* and “sinful youth”, this can hardly be taken to mean his complete ignorance of Islam and its principles. Rather in the days of his *jāhiliyya* he combined Islamic piety and practices with occasional lapses into the worldly attractions the Almohad capital offered.<sup>27</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī’s *ḥadīth* training cannot easily be placed in a firm geographical and temporal setting. It started in Andalusia, continued in the Maghreb and, especially intensively, in the East. Some of the *ḥadīth* scholars he met at an advanced age, and a particularly fertile ground for his studies and writing career was the holy city of Mecca, where he settled for years after having performed the obligatory pilgrimage. There he benefited from the presence of many scholars from different corners of the Muslim world and improved his knowledge in many fields. *Ḥadīth* education encompassed all six standard collections of *ḥadīth* canonized in Sunni Islam. He studied them with great scholars, people of good standing and influence, jurists, judges and revered leaders of the *umma*. The reputation that Muslim scholars of *ḥadīth* commanded among their colleagues and the ordinary populace was such that all other honorific titles except *muḥaddith* (i.e. specialist in the *ḥadīth*) were usually suspended and considered superfluous. That appellation alone was often sufficient to establish unquestionable authority. That is how his teachers are routinely addressed in the *Ijāza*; relying largely on other works of Ibn ‘Arabī and biographical dictionaries of the ‘ulama of that period, we obtain some additional and important information about them and their scholarly careers. Either Ibn ‘Arabī’s initial astonishment at the unusual combination of the Traditionalist who is also a Sufi master has to be modified, we must conclude that he was extraordinary fortunate, because almost half of his *ḥadīth* instructors were known to be from among the folk of the Path. At least three of them were advanced Sufi masters and invested him with a *khirqā* (initiatory robe):

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<sup>25</sup> See certain similarities with al-Jandī’s story below, Chapter II, pp. 67-68.

<sup>26</sup> *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, SK Fatih 5322, fol. 90, quoted from Addas, p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> See Addas, ‘In the time of my sinful youth’, p. 27

Muḥammad al-Fāsī,<sup>28</sup> who invested him with the *khirqā* in the city of Fas in 594/1197, and Taqī al-dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Alī al-Qastillānī, a *muḥaddith* – Sufī who awarded him the *khirqā* in Seville in 592/1195.<sup>29</sup> While Ibn Ḥajar considered ‘Abd al-Raḥmān a reliable transmitter of *ḥadīth*, the contemporary poet and biographer Ibn ‘Abbār voices considerable reservations regarding al-Fāsī’s *ḥadīth* credentials.<sup>30</sup> Another figure that was simultaneously his Sufī master and his main teacher of *ḥadīth* was Yūnus b. Yaḥyā al-Hāshimī, whose name frequently occurs in the *sanads* in *Muḥāḍarāt*.<sup>31</sup>

In the text of his *Ijāza*, the first name to appear among Ibn ‘Arabī’s *ḥadīth* instructors was that of the *muḥaddith* Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Azdī al-Ishbīlī. He narrated all of his *ḥadīth* works to Ibn ‘Arabī and there is reason to conclude that al-Ishbīlī was his teacher in other religious disciplines as well. Ibn ‘Arabī studied with him a work entitled *Talqīn al-mubtadi’*, as well as works like *Aḥkām al-ṣuḡhrā*, *Aḥkām al-wuṣṭā* and *Aḥkām al-kubrā*. From the titles it appears that al-Ishbīlī narrated to him works that constituted a full course in *ḥadīth*, conceived for the purposes of instruction, in terms of a gradual progression from the beginning to advanced levels. Even though his name suggests a Sevillean origin, we do not know where their meeting took place. He also taught him *Kitāb al-tahajjud* and *Kitāb al-qibla*. Al-Ishbīlī is credited with giving instruction in Ibn Ḥazm’s *fiqhī* works to the young Ibn ‘Arabī and it is very likely that this fact explains numerous and sometimes vigorous attempts to make Ibn ‘Arabī into a *Zāhirī*.<sup>32</sup>

By way of summarizing this survey of his *ḥadīth* studies, we may divide all the works he studied into two major categories: the six canonical collections (*al-ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*) and other works that include some major works in *ḥadīth* like Imam Ḥanbal’s *Musnad* as well as a number of minor collections of prophetic traditions. There are also works on auxiliary *ḥadīth* disciplines like *‘ilm al-rijāl* (biographical dictionaries of transmitters) and various selections from major collections composed with a focus on a specific topic or simply to facilitate a gradual acquisition by the novice. Despite the importance of *ḥadīth*, its central point in the traditional curriculum and the fact that it comprises a good portion of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Ijāza*, the information on his instructors is extremely limited and must constantly to be supplemented by data from other sources. Fortunately, the author wrote several works relevant to *ḥadīth* and took great trouble

<sup>28</sup> *Takmila*, vol. II, p. 682.

<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s brother Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad was himself a celebrated Sufī whom Ibn ‘Arabī met in Cairo and at whose behest he wrote *Kitāb al-khalwa*. Abū al-‘Abbās’s son, the famous Quṭb al-dīn Qastillānī, was to voice his dissenting attitude towards Sufism in general and especially Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. See Addas, p. 143.

<sup>30</sup> *Takmila*, vol. II, p. 682.

<sup>31</sup> Addas, p. 214. For the full list of *sanads* that should be used as supplementary to the *Ijāza* for a complete reconstruction of Ibn ‘Arabī’s studies see Muḥy al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *Kitāb muḥāḍarāt al-abrār wa musāmara al-akhyār fī al-adabiyāt wa al-nawādir wa al-akhbār*, Dār al-yaqza al-‘arabiyya, 1388/1968, vol. I, pp. 13-21; henceforth referred to as *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār*.

<sup>32</sup> On Ibn ‘Arabī’s *madhhab* see below, pp. 20-21.

in to painstakingly record all chains of transmissions stretching back to the authors of the collections.

These *sanads*<sup>33</sup> offer a wealth of information about the scholars who narrated *ḥadīth* to Ibn ‘Arabī and whose names were not indicated in the *Ijāza*. Two other works by Ibn ‘Arabī are of notable significance for the reconstruction of his *ḥadīth* studies: *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār* and *Mishkāt al-anwār*. The names immediately preceding that of Ibn ‘Arabī represent transmitters of *ḥadīth* with whom he in most cases studied. When that is not the case, Ibn ‘Arabī often refers to the procedure used, that is, to whether he was instructed through reading (*qirā’atan*), or correspondence (*kitābatan*).

We must begin the survey with the six canonical collections. It would be unrewarding to even attempt to categorize them by their respective merits. They are grouped together and commonly regarded as equally valuable in authenticity and usefulness. The unofficial ordering, however, places the collection of Bukhārī at the forefront. Based on frequency of traditions occurring in the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn ‘Arabī’s preference has been noted as favoring the second collection in line, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*.<sup>34</sup> So far as any preference is to be noted, one is perhaps justified in awarding primacy to a particular variety of *ḥadīth*, namely *ḥadīth qudsī*, defined as Divine sayings transmitted through the authority of the Prophet of God and outside of Scripture. These are an altogether different category of traditions and Ibn ‘Arabī manifests a pointed liking for them that culminates in his commitment to compose a separate volume on them called *Mishkāt al-Anwār*. To go back to the prophetic traditions, we note indeed that Muslim’s collection tops the list in the *Ijāza*. Some other canonical *ḥadīth* works are omitted completely. For example, the *Sunan* of al-Nasā’ī and the *Sunan* of Ibn Māja do not feature in it at all. With the latter it is through the chains of transmission recorded in the *Muḥāḍarāt* that we know Ibn ‘Arabī in fact studied it, while the *Sunan* of al-Nasā’ī is not mentioned anywhere in our sources.

One of the first *ḥadīth* teachers of Ibn ‘Arabī was a certain Abū al-Walīd Ibn al-‘Arabī,<sup>35</sup> for long considered one of his uncles until his modern biographer Claude Addas convincingly proved otherwise. Despite the fact that they share a family name, Abū al-Walīd is descended from another lineage, and was a scion of the famous Andalusian judge and *ḥadīth* expert, Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-‘Arabī. He was educated for the most part in the Muslim East, more precisely Baghdad, where he studied at the famous university of Niẓāmiyya while its renowned *mudarris* al-Ghazālī was still alive. Among Abū Walīd’s works that Ibn ‘Arabī studied is *Sirāj al-muhtadīn* or *Sirāj al-muwaḥḥidīn*. No additional details are given about Abū al-Walīd. It is likely that Ibn ‘Arabī met him at Seville where he studied with Ibn al-Kharrāṭ as well.

### *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*

<sup>33</sup> *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār*, vol I, pp. 13-21.

<sup>34</sup> Addas, p. 98.

<sup>35</sup> On him see *Takmila*, vol. II, p. 652, #1673.

According to the *Ijāza*, Ibn ‘Arabī began studying Muslim’s collection at a very advanced age while resident in Damascus. It was in that city that he made the acquaintance of the chief judge of Damascus (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*), the great scholar ‘Abd al-Ṣamad b. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl al-Kharastānī, who instructed him in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The chain of transmission going back from al-Kharastānī is connected with the compiler himself. The *Muḥāḍarāt* records one additional detail: we learn that the instruction took place in the famous Umayyad mosque in the city. Al-Kharastānī is also mentioned as his teacher of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, which is probably a misprint.<sup>36</sup> One question, however, presents itself at once: could it be possible that Ibn ‘Arabī studied Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* that late in his career? Ibn ‘Abbār suggests a negative answer.

According to his account in the seminal work *al-Takmila*, shaykh ‘Alī b. Naṣr al-Bijā’ī transmitted Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* to Ibn ‘Arabī in Cairo. The list of his favors to Ibn ‘Arabī does not end there: al-Bijā’ī is also credited with saving his life after he was accused and allegedly sentenced to death by city jurists. While the historical accuracy of this episode is highly questionable, and the story of his near execution is probably apocryphal, one thing is certain: Ibn ‘Arabī had many difficulties and was not warmly welcomed in Mamluk Cairo. The chronology of his travels suggests that Ibn ‘Arabī visited Cairo on two occasions. The first time he was in Cairo was in Ramadan 598/1202. We know that he visited the city for a second time five years later when we find him since sources relate he was reading some of his works to a selected group of his disciples and granting them a hearing certificate (*samā’*).<sup>37</sup> Whichever date we take as accurate, it follows that Ibn ‘Arabī’s instruction in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, instruction that he conducted with al-Bijā’ī, and which is, as far as we know, the first encounter with this *ḥadīth* collection, clearly falls into the second phase of his life when he had already abandoned the Maghreb.

### *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*

One of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *ḥadīth* teachers who narrated Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* to him is a scholar named Yūnus b. Yaḥyā b. Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Abbāsī al-Hāshimī. Despite his full name he cannot be presently identified.<sup>38</sup> It is recorded in the *Ijāza* that he resided in Mecca where Ibn ‘Arabī met him. He narrated to him *Bukhārī* and “numerous other books of *ḥadīth*”. Indeed, we find his name occurring frequently in the *sanads* that were written down in the *Muḥāḍarāt*, in relation with many other *ḥadīth* works. According to the

<sup>36</sup> Addas, p. 98.

<sup>37</sup> The so-called “hearing certificates” (Ar. *samā’*) are an important source for the study of Ibn ‘Arabī’s life and career. They are documents autographed by Ibn ‘Arabī and delivered to a limited number of his closest disciples following one complete round of collective reading of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works in his presence. The apparent goal of the issuance of these hearing certificates was to establish the final form of a text and thus protect its integrity, as well as to authorize those who completed the reading of the text in the author’s presence to disseminate and possibly teach it to the coming generations of students.

<sup>38</sup> He is presented as one of ‘Abd al-Qādir Gīlānī’s disciples who died in 1211. More than 20 out of 40 *ḥadīth-i qudsī* in the *Mishkāt al-Anwār* are narrated through him. See Stephen Hirtenstein and Martin Notcutt, *Divine Sayings 101 Hadith Qudsi: The Mishkat al-Anwar of Ibn ‘Arabi*, Anqa Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p. 27.

information from Ibn ‘Arabī’s certificate, apart from *ḥadīth* Yūnus b. Yaḥyā instructed him in *raqā’iq* as well, a term which perhaps should be taken as meaning Sufism.<sup>39</sup> Thus, he is yet another individual from among the precious few who were Sufi masters and experts in *ḥadīth*.

From the *Muḥāḍarāt* we know that Yūnus narrated to him works of the famous historian al-Dīnawārī, as well as books by the celebrated traditionalist from Baghdad, Ibn Abī Dunyā (d. 281/894). Another *sanad* for *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* listed in the *Muḥāḍarāt* reveals the name of another shaykh who transmitted it to Ibn ‘Arabī: a certain ‘Abd al-Jalīl al-Shurayḥānī. His name is not included in the *Ijāza*, and the *Muḥāḍarāt* contains textual indications that the two of them were not the only experts who related *Bukhārī* to Ibn ‘Arabī. Both their names are listed as “among others” (*fī akharīn*). Unfortunately, we know nothing about other shaykhs who taught him *Bukhārī*. In the *Rūḥ al-Quds* we encounter another, rather stranger statement that Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Qassūm, who was for seventeen years Ibn ‘Arabī’s Sufi teacher and companion, narrated *Bukhārī* to him “in a dream”.<sup>40</sup>

#### *Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd*

Two additional standard collections from among the *ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*, those of Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd, were narrated to Ibn ‘Arabī in Mecca. Upon his arrival in Mecca, among the many scholars whom he befriended there, the name of one family which will leave a pervasive influence on him is worth attention. This is the family of Abū Shujā‘ Zāhir b. Rustam al-Iṣfahānī, obviously an individual of Iranian origin. In Mecca, he was the imam of Ibrāhīm’s *maqām* in the Holy Ka‘ba. Himself an astute scholar in many fields of traditional religious learning, he was an accepted authority in the field of *ḥadīth*. He narrated to Ibn ‘Arabī Tirmidhī’s *Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. Abū Shujā‘’s sister, a woman very advanced in age and the wise lady of Hijāz, Fakhr al-Nisā’ by name, invested Ibn ‘Arabī with a general certificate. She was one of many women from whose instruction Ibn ‘Arabī benefited in the path of spiritual progress. Fakhr al-Nisā’ distinguished herself in that she was the only woman who officially taught Ibn ‘Arabī and issued him an *ijāza*. Another prominent member of the family, Abū Shujā‘’s Niẓām, was destined to have an even deeper impact on Ibn ‘Arabī: her most profound impact inspired Ibn ‘Arabī to compose some of his finest poems, which are collected in a tiny yet highly influential volume *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*. That book of lyrical verses will permanently record his name in the annals of mystical poetry in Ara-

<sup>39</sup> It could be taken to mean Sufism as a discipline pertaining to the subtleties or fine points of knowledge (*raqā’iq*); See Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Spoken Language Services, 1976, p. 352; Teufik Muftić, *Arapsko-srpskohrvatski rječnik*, Starješinstvo Islamske zajednice BiH, Hrvatske i Slovenije, Sarajevo, 1984, tom I, p. 1278: fine point, witticism, quibble, subtlety; A work by the famous Sufi master ‘Abdullāh Ibn al-Mubarāk is entitled *Kitāb al-zuhd wa al-raqā’iq*. Veysel Kaya translated the term *raqā’iq* as Sufism in “Icazetname...”, *Tasavvuf*, p. 527.

<sup>40</sup> See *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 83.

bic. The book will also cause the very first rift with the ‘ulama.<sup>41</sup> By all accounts, the relationship between Ibn ‘Arabī and the family of Abū Shujā’ was deep and extraordinary. Ibn ‘Arabī mentions the name repeatedly not only in the *Tarjumān*, but in a number of other works especially the *Futūḥāt*.

As for the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, it was another influential scholarly figure from Mecca who narrated it to Ibn ‘Arabī. He was al-Burhān b. Naṣr b. Abī al-Futūḥ b. ‘Alī al-Khaḍramī,<sup>42</sup> the imam of the Ḥanbalī corner in the courtyard of the Ka’ba (*imām al-Ḥanābila*). Ibn ‘Arabī says that he had studied many works with al-Khaḍramī (*kutūb kathīra*), among them Abū Dāwūd’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*. He also obtained from al-Khaḍramī a certificate to teach the works of Ibn Thābit al-Khaṭīb and Abū Ja‘far al-Simnānī. The *Muḥāḍarāt* adds some details here as well: besides al-Khaḍramī, Ibn ‘Arabī studied Abū Dāwūd’s *Sunan* with a certain Aḥmad b. Maṣṣūr, who remains unknown for now. It is, however, worth noticing that Aḥmad’s *sanad* leads back to Abū Dāwūd al-Sijjīstānī through an entirely different chain of transmitters. Not a single name can be found in both al-Khaḍramī and Aḥmad’s *sanads*. No other circumstances of their meeting or the instruction are known.

### *Ibn Māja*

Relying solely on the *sanads* in the *Muḥāḍarāt*, we know that Ibn ‘Arabī had instruction in Ibn Māja’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* with a scholar named Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Ubayd al-Rāḍī, who unfortunately could not be traced in our sources. As for the sixth collection, that of al-Nasā’ī, there is no evidence from the *Ijāza* or other relevant works by Ibn ‘Arabī that he studied it. As many instances so far have shown, the *Ijāza* and other relevant books of Ibn ‘Arabī are indeed of limited reliability for a complete reconstruction of his traditional curriculum.

### *Other works of ḥadīth*

Ibn ‘Arabī studied a number of other works in the field of *ḥadīth*, apart from the six standard collections. We will content ourselves with mentioning only major and well-known collections. All the references are given in the chains of transmissions from the *Muḥāḍarāt*, and the *Ijāza* is, a few instances notwithstanding, for the most part silent on the issue. The famous work of Mālik b. Anas *al-Muwaṭṭa’* was narrated to Ibn ‘Arabī by Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl and others (*wa ḡhayru-hu*). The copious *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, universally revered by the scholars and almost equal in merit to *ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*, was transmitted to him by an ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī, among others (*fī akḥar-rīn*). Other works include *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān, narrated by Ishāq b. Yūsuf and a great number of other minor collections by al-Aṣma‘ī, al-Kharā’iṭī, al-Ramlī, Ibn Abī ‘Ara-

<sup>41</sup> See below, p. 32.

<sup>42</sup> *Muḥāḍarāt* gives it as al-Khaḍrī instead of al-Khaḍramī, which is most probably incorrect. See *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār*, p. 13. The correct form is listed in the *Ijāza*, see *Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī*, # 10, p. 45

fa, al-Baghawī and others. In many cases, the transmitters are mentioned by first names only in the most general manner (i.e. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, etc.) and nothing further can be learned about them.

The scrutiny of the *Ijāza* and other supplementary sources pertinent to Ibn ‘Arabī’s training in *ḥadīth* leaves no doubt that he had a comprehensive education in the field. Nevertheless, he is seldom if ever referred to as a *muḥaddith* and sources on the VII/XIII century transmitters of *ḥadīth* are silent about him as a narrator of prophetic traditions, despite the fact that Ibn ‘Arabī significantly contributed to the *ḥadīth* with more than a dozen titles. No less than five of the first titles in the list of works that constitutes the second part of the *Ijāza* are directly related to *ḥadīth*. The first title is in fact an ambitious project entitled *al-Miṣbāḥ fī al-jam‘i bayn al-ṣiḥāḥ*, a compendium of the six standard *ḥadīth* collections that was never finished. As we read in the introductory remarks, composed by the author himself, this compendium is meant to facilitate the study of the collections. There is, however, some doubt as to whether short selections (*ikhtisār*) from the individual collections like Muslim, Bukhārī, and Tirmidhī - numbered two, three, and four in the list respectively<sup>43</sup> - represent the conclusive proof that he abandoned his *ḥadīth* project, or they were conceived to be integral parts thereof.

At least one other compilation project was conducted by Ibn ‘Arabī and entitled *Kitāb miṣṭāḥ al-sa‘āda*. It includes selections from both Muslim and Bukhārī, and some *ḥadīth* (*ba‘d aḥādīth*) from Tirmidhī’s collection.<sup>44</sup> Both works appear to be study aids. Furthermore, there are a number of other ambitious works in *ḥadīth*. Many of them have never reached us, and those that exist in fragments have not been the subject of much study to date. The most noteworthy is a multivolume set entitled *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍā’* [*fī al-aḥkām al-shar‘iyya*],<sup>45</sup> which Ibn ‘Arabī began writing in Mecca. He finished the first three volumes in traditional order, dedicating the first volume to ritual cleanliness and the second to the daily prayers. The third volume, according to the author’s testimony, was in the process of being written and the last chapter composed thereof was *Kitāb al-jum‘a* (Book on the Friday congregational prayer). The book seems to be lost. Chronologically, it follows the *Mishkāt al-anwār*, which was written a year later and contains a reference to it. An authentic prophetic tradition postulating that whosoever preserves forty of his sayings for the coming generations will be entitled to his intercession on Judgment Day gave rise to a whole genre of collections of forty *ḥadīth* each. In his own right, Ibn ‘Arabī also significantly contributed to the genre with two titles, as can be seen by the following:

- *Al-arba‘ūn al-mutaqābila fī al-ḥadīth*
- *Al-arba‘ūn ḥadīthan fī al-muṭawwilāt*<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Ijāza*, p. 50.

<sup>44</sup> *Ijāza*, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> *Ijāza*, p. 52.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite the similarity of the titles, which made some authors doubt whether they were indeed two separate works, the two treatises are recorded separately in all available copies of the *Ijāza. Mishkāṭ al-anwār*, the only book in Ibn ‘Arabī’s opus that was partly dedicated to the *ḥadīth qudsī*, was conceived in conformity with the “forty *ḥadīth*” tradition.<sup>47</sup> The full title of the book is given differently. The *Ijāza* lists it as *Mishkāṭ al-anwār fī mā ruwiya min al-nabī min al-akhbār*. The authors of the English translation entitled *Divine Sayings*, based on some early manuscripts predominantly from Turkish collections, replaced the noun *al-nabī* from the title with God’s name. The book itself falls into three sections: two sets of forty *ḥadīth*, appended to the final section of twenty plus one more *ḥadīth*, to make the sum of one hundred and one *ḥadīth qudsī*. The terminal *ḥadīth* deliberately cancels the wholeness of the hundred preceding it and is included as a symbolic indication of God’s unmatched singularity. The tripartite structure, and the fact that the work has been referred to by different titles, offer some support to the assumption that the sections could have been initially written as separate works and joined into a single composition at a later time. The significance which Ibn ‘Arabī accords to *ḥadīth qudsī* in general, as is demonstrated by his composing a separate volume on the topic, is hardly surprising for any student of Sufism: some of the most essential doctrines of Sufism are founded on *ḥadīth al-qudsī*. One need not go further than the doctrine of the theory of existence, which is based on the *ḥadīth qudsī* commonly referred to as the “Hidden Treasure,” the doctrine of *wilāya* related to the *ḥadīth* of supererogatory ordinances<sup>48</sup> (*ḥadīth al-nawāfil*) and many others.

c) Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)

Because of his occasional and vitriolic remarks about the jurists that are scattered in many places in the *Futūḥāt*, as well as heated debates about his orthodoxy which ensued posthumously and were for most part prompted by the jurists, many have succumbed to the temptation to view Ibn ‘Arabī the jurist as a contradiction in terms. Evidently, the relationship between Ibn ‘Arabī and some jurists was strained already during his lifetime and even nowadays represent a thorny issue. His contemptuous pronouncements not only on jurists as a social category, but more importantly and rather curiously on the merits of their trade as well,<sup>49</sup> caused a lot of mistrust and dislike. For most of his defenders, all of his trouble and misunderstanding lay solely with jurists as such, i.e. doctors of law (Ar. *fuqahā’*), who were never referred to with any of the additional titles usually applicable to most of them (*mufassir*, *muḥaddith* etc). Even the most general label of ‘ulama was often missing, for a good reason. They were doctors of law who forever worried in tiresome detail about many issues that already in his time were deemed irrelevant; they were not the ones who possessed real

<sup>47</sup> Only the last forty traditions are in fact *ḥadīth qudsī*.

<sup>48</sup> For the full text of this *ḥadīth*, see below p. 86.

<sup>49</sup> Addas, pp. 46-47.



knowledge. From an early age, even before he embarked on a serious study of religious disciplines and throughout his career, Ibn ‘Arabī considered himself to be, and was prodigiously taken by many of his teachers and all of his followers as, possessing knowledge of real standing in all matters spiritual. He and his like were more entitled to be called ‘ulama in the true sense, i.e. the heirs of ‘*ilm ladunnī*, possessors of true knowledge and hence the heirs of the Prophet. The ultimate dimensions and implications of this knowledge of reality were almost always lost to the jurist whose imagination was constrained in the straitjacket of legal peculiarities often seen by Ibn ‘Arabī and his likes as *trivia*.<sup>50</sup> The most common suggestion on his part is that jurists lacked ability to penetrate the secrets of this arcane knowledge and as a result were dismissed as unworthy of the knowledge that could not be acquired from books. Jurists themselves retaliated in kind. There are many aspects of Ibn ‘Arabī’s persona, as well as his training and career, that constitute a source of serious anxiety for this all-powerful social class. In what can be taken as the ultimate point of contention for jurists, Ibn ‘Arabī at the beginning of the *Futūḥāt* records a promise that he never lived long enough to fulfill - he was to devise and legally articulate his own school of thought and practice of Islam:

I have the intention, if God gives me a long life, to compose a major work which will deal with all legal questions as they appear in their external aspects, first of all expounding and elaborating on each question from the outward point of view and then examining its status in relation to the inward aspect of man (*ḥukmu-hā fī bāṭin al-insān*).<sup>51</sup>

Unarguably this passage suggests that the doctors of law of his time had remained on the surface of issues (*ẓāhir al-amr*) and never ventured further to address the more advanced and important aspect of inner meaning of legal matters. As disquieting as that statement could appear, it also points to an equally troubling attitude of Ibn ‘Arabī who through a never completed elaboration of his own legal school<sup>52</sup> all but rejected the existent legal traditions of Sunni Islam as inadequate. Because of his ap-

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<sup>50</sup> Writing on Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh al-Mawrūrī in the *Rūḥ al-quds*, Ibn ‘Arabī wrote: ‘God forbid, my brother, that you should think I blame the jurists for being jurists or for their practice of jurisprudence, for such an attitude is not permissible for a Muslim and the nobility of Law is beyond question. However, I do censure those jurists who, harbouring merely worldly aims, cynically study the Law with the sole object of acquiring fame, of putting themselves in the public eye, and who indulge in constant hair-splitting and useless controversy. It is such men who seek to refute the claims of the brethren who fear God and who are instructed by God directly’. See Muḥy al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Durra al-fākhira*, SK Esad Efendi no.1777, fol. 102a; *Rūḥ al-quds*, p. 63, quoted here from: *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 105.

<sup>51</sup> *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 334, quoted from Addas, p. 46.

<sup>52</sup> One significant consequence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s stance on this matter is that he evidently did not share the common opinion that *ijtihād* in the area of *uṣūl* came on an end with the elaboration of the four legal traditions of Sunni Islam, but rather considered *ijtihād* in its absolute form (*muṭlaq*) still permissible. More on this issue can be found in Wael Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?" *IJMES*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1984, pp. 3-41.

proach to legal matters, Ibn ‘Arabī’s possible affiliation with any of the existent legal schools of his time remains an elusive and ambiguous question.

Despite its cultural and intellectual brilliance, Andalusia was always considered to be a province and to be on the periphery in relation to central Muslim lands. Its geographical remoteness only helped to foster this feeling. Political elites in early Andalusia, consisting of the remnants of once universally accepted Umayyad ruling dynasty, used the question of a different legal tradition to increase the gap between the periphery and the center and thus reassert their political and religious independence from the Islamic center represented by the nascent Abbasid caliphate.<sup>53</sup> Because of their tacit approval, if not official patronage, Andalusia became highly fertile ground for the flourishing of several competing legal systems of Islamic law.

The first legal school to be established in Muslim Spain was that of Imam al-Awzā‘ī from the Sham (d. 157/773). According to the testimony of Ibn Kathīr in his seminal *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, quoted by ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ al-Fakhūrī in his *Tuḥfa al-anām fī mukhtaṣar tarīkh al-islām* (p. 80),

The madhhab of Imam al-Awzā‘ī was predominant among the Damascenes, followed by the people in Andalusia who continued to adhere to his school for more than two centuries. One of Imam al-Awzā‘ī’s disciples, a man by the name of Abū ‘Abdullāh Ṣa‘ṣā‘ b. Salām,<sup>54</sup> brought his teacher’s legal school to Andalusia.<sup>55</sup> In our sources he is referred to as a Damascene, as well as an Andalusian. The latter proposal is unlikely and the *nisba* Andalusī is probably due to his prolonged sojourn and death in Andalusia, which occurred in 192/807.<sup>56</sup> According to Abū Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yūnus, he died in 180/796. No information on his birth is available; nevertheless, taking into account that the conquest of Andalusia occurred in 711/1311, we can ascertain from the date of his death in the time of Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I (d. 796/1393 in Cordoba) that he must have entered Andalusia and begun his mission there some time immediately after the Arab conquest. It is not known precisely when the al-Awzā‘ī legal school lost its footing to the Mālikīs who chronologically are next in line. Al-Dhahabī is one of the few authors who comment on the durability of the Awzā‘ī madhhab in Andalusia. While in *Siyar ‘a‘lām al-nubalā’* he states that the madhhab was followed in al-Andalus for an unspecified period of time (*mudda*), in his voluminous *Tārīkh al-islām* (vol. IX, pp. 498) he elucidates the issue further:

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<sup>53</sup> Mālikī *madhhab* was firmly linked with political elites of the time in Andalusia; it is asserted that Ibn al-Ḥakam facilitated the spread and wide acceptance of the *madhhab* as a means of spiritual and political independence. See Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, pp. 156-157.

<sup>54</sup> On him see al-Ḥamīdī, *Judhwa al-muqtabas fī dhikr wūlat al-Andalus*, al-Maktaba al-Andalusiyya” No. 3, Dār al-miṣriyya li al-ta’līf wa al-tarjama, Cairo, 1966, §510, p. 244.

<sup>55</sup> He is also credited with bringing the science of *ḥadīth* to Andalusia (*awwal man adkhala al-ḥadīth al-Andalus*), which is one more indicator of the fruitful marriage between *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* that was almost a general rule. Naturally, other possibilities of pairing were also common.

<sup>56</sup> A second *nisba* often indicates place of residence and burial, not of origin.

The madhhab of Imam al-Awzā‘ī was manifest in al-Andalus until approximately the year two hundred and twenty after the Hijra; after that it disappeared and another school, that of Mālik Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Laythī, became popular. The Al-Awzā‘ī school was also famous in Damascus until the year three hundred and forty after the Hijra. The Judge Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn Hadhlām(?) had a circle of students in the Damascene mosque where al-Awzā‘ī school was championed (*yantaşir*).

This brief statement is important because it offers a reasonable time frame and an allusion to the circumstances under which the al-Awzā‘ī school faded into historical oblivion, at least in the West.

In tracing the Mālikī beginning within Ibn ‘Arabī’s homeland, a work entitled *Judhwa al-muqtabas fī dhikr wūlat al-Andalus* is a very valuable source of information on the issue. Its author, al-Ḥamīdī, in the biography of a certain Ziyād b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, writes that he was the first person to bring Mālikī *fiqh* into Andalusia and that before his efforts at the dissemination of Malikism the predominant school was al-Awzā‘ī. By the time of Ibn ‘Arabī, Malikism was already a firmly established tradition which surpassed all competing legal schools. While Ḥanbalī and Ḥanafī legal tradition never gained a footing in Andalusia, with the possible exceptions of a few newcomers who belonged to them, the real rivals of the Mālikī school were al-Awzā‘ī madhhab and the Zāhirī school which developed within Shafī‘ism. There is little doubt that most of the spiritual leaders and traditional scholars whom Ibn ‘Arabī met in the West were followers of Imam Mālik. By the mere accident of birth, he might be considered Mālikī, even though he consistently regarded himself as being outside of the madhhab and having outgrown the need of *taqlīd* in its strict technical sense. *Taqlīd*, or unquestioning adherence to the legal rulings of one of the four imams of Sunni Islam, appeared to be incompatible with the office of Seal of Prophetic sainthood (*wilāya*), which he claimed to have received very early in his career. That is the reason why he was often referred to as “Muḥammadī” (i.e. Muhammadan) in the sense that an unmediated line of inspiration from the Prophet has been vouchsafed for him, exempting him from the need of any supervising legal agency. Unsurprisingly, his adversaries used his vague status in relationship to the question of madhhab in general to wage brutal campaigns against him, accusing him, among a good number of other things, of extreme permissiveness in matters legal, analogous to antinomianism (*al-ibāḥa*).

In his *Futūḥāt*, Ibn ‘Arabī narrates a revealing account of the discrepancy between the name and named, the superficial and essential (*ism* vs. *musammā*), the unhidden sarcasm of which is directed against the Mālikī madhhab. The hero of the story is no less a figure than the eponymous founder of the legal school, Imam Mālik himself. In this work we read:

Imam Mālik’s legal opinion has been solicited about the permissibility of capybara’s<sup>57</sup> meat (*khinzīr al-mā*). He replied: ‘Its meat is not permissible for eating.’ An objection was raised that capybara belongs to the family of mammals living in water, i.e. fish whose meat is in general considered religiously edible. Imam Mālik replied to the criticism: “But you named it pig (*khinzīr*).<sup>58</sup>

It is hard to expect that someone who did not hold *fiqh* and its doctors in particularly high esteem and was moreover interested in establishing his own legal school would be much devoted to the study of existing legal traditions. The sources at our disposal bear this presumption out. There are but few names of scholars among his teachers who can be linked to *fiqh* with any degree of certainty. Even among them we find scholars who were jurists but also specialists in other disciplines, and in most cases there is really no way of telling for sure what discipline they taught him. The most reliable name among his *fiqhī* masters is that of a certain Muḥammad b. al-Walīd b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Shibl, for whom biographical details are not available. According to the *Ijāza*, Ibn ‘Arabī studied with him many of his works, including some titles that unmistakably point to legal themes. Among the works he studied with this scholar are: *Kitāb al-mu‘tamad*, *Kitāb al-maqṣad* and *Kitāb al-aḥkām al-shar‘iyya*. Other teachers are mentioned just by name, and because compilers sometimes list them as jurists, we can assume that Ibn ‘Arabī might have studied law with them. These are Abū ‘Abdullāh Ibn al-‘Āṣ al-Bājī mentioned in the *Rūḥ al-quḍs* as a *zāhid* and jurist from Seville. Of him Ibn ‘Arabī says:

He was, God have mercy on him, a jurist and an ascetic and that is also unusual; a jurist [who is also] an ascetic is [something that is usually] not found (*lā yūjad*).<sup>59</sup>

Another scholar listed as Ibn ‘Arabī’s *fiqh* instructor is Ibn al-Firās ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Khazrajī (d. 595/1200). He was named as a *qāḍī* several times and excelled in many fields, but Islamic jurisprudence and its sources (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) seem to have been his specialty. In the *Ijāza* only his name is given, without any reference to his works; and therefore we cannot say for sure whether he narrated *fiqh* to Ibn ‘Arabī. Ibn Abbār refers to opinions of different scholars where al-Khazrajī is described as the most knowledgeable person on the legal issues in different madhhabs. He also narrated *al-Muwaṭṭa*’ of Ibn Mālik to more than one student.

<sup>57</sup> *Hydrochoerus capybara*; in Arabic, literally ‘the water pig’.

<sup>58</sup> *Futūḥāt*, Cairo, 1329 AH, vol. IV, p. 465, quoted from: Michel Chodkiewicz, “Ibn Arabi, la lettre et la loi”, *Actes du colloque: mystique, culture et société*, ed. M. Mesin, Paris, 1983, pp. 27-36.

<sup>59</sup> *Rūḥ al-quḍs*, p. 82.

The text of the *Ijāza* records another author whose scholarly output in scope and diversity can only be compared with that of al-Ghazālī or Ibn ‘Arabī himself: Abū al-Faraj Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzī, a celebrated polymath and a Ḥanbalī jurist from Baghdad. The year of his death is usually given as 597/1201, which is precisely the year of Ibn ‘Arabī’s final departure for the Muslim East. That fact not only excludes any possibility of their meeting, but also casts serious doubt on the possibility of instruction by correspondence to which the *Ijāza* alludes. In the *Ijāza*, we have the names of two works by al-Jawzī that Ibn ‘Arabī studied: *Ṣafwa al-ṣafwa*, which is a Sufī biographical work, in fact an abridgement of the better known *Hilya al-Awliyā’* by another teacher of Ibn ‘Arabī, Abū al-Na‘īm al-Iṣfahānī; and *Muthīr al-gharām al-sākin ilā ashfar al-amākin*, also a work with heavy Sufī coloring. The claim of Ibn ‘Arabī, that he was instructed in, and authorized to instruct, all of his works in prose and poetry (*jamī’ ta’līfī-hi wa nazmi-hi*), is an exceedingly doubtful statement taking into account the extraordinary industriousness of Ibn al-Jawzī. In what is probably the most reliable critical study of his works currently available, more than three hundred books are attributed to Ibn al-Jawzī.<sup>60</sup> The second title that features in the *Ijāza* is a work with the full title *Muthīr al-gharām al-sākin ilā ashfar al-amākin*, which is indeed a comprehensive encyclopedia on the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, their history and religious merits, and places of pious visiting and pilgrimage. That Ibn ‘Arabī could have studied a lot more than the two mentioned titles is obvious in itself and is supported by a phrase in the text of the *Ijāza* stating that he studied many works by Ibn al-Jawzī (the Arabic expression reads: *wa ghayr dhālik*). We can never know for sure whether he studied *fiqh* with Ibn al-Jawzī; however, if we judge by the titles given, as well as Ibn ‘Arabī’s apparent lack of interest in studying any particular school of Islamic jurisprudence, the prospect of his having undertaken *fiqhī* studies with this celebrated Ḥanbalī scholar seems unlikely. After all, if he never studied in any considerable detail the Mālikī madhhab into which he was most probably born, as one could gather from his *Ijāza* and other supporting sources, why would he then study any other *fiqhī* tradition?

Another name from among his teachers that can be connected with *fiqh* is that of the first Mālikī judge of Damascus, Yaḥyā b. Abī ‘Alī al-Zawāwī (d. 610/1214). He is mentioned in *Rūḥ al-quḍs* as well as in the *Futūḥāt*.<sup>61</sup> According to ‘*Unwān al-dirāya*, he used to lecture on *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* but it is not known whether he taught Ibn ‘Arabī any of those two disciplines.<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, speaking of Ibn ‘Arabī’s own writings in the field of *fiqh*, its sources and branches, one finds a similar discrepancy between the number of works he might have studied and the number of works that he wrote on the subject. It is

<sup>60</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-‘Alūjī, *Mu’allafāt Ibn al-Jawzī*, First edition, 1992, 329 p.

<sup>61</sup> On him see Addas, pp. 89, 251.

<sup>62</sup> Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abdullāh al-Ghubrīnī, ‘*Unwān al-dirāya fīman ‘urifa min al-‘ulamā’ fī al-mi’a al-sābi’a fī al-Bijāya*, ed. by ‘Ādil Nuwayhid, Dār al-āfāq al-jadīda, Beirut, second edition, 1989, p. 136.

somewhat reminiscent of his writings in the field of the Qur'an exegesis, but here perhaps quite different in nature. His legal writings could be seen as preserved bits and pieces of a much larger project that he had announced: the theoretical articulation of his own legal school.

The first book on *fiqh* listed in the *Ijāza* stands out in this category. It is an abridged version of the famous *Kitāb al-muḥallā* by the celebrated *Zāhirī* jurist Ibn Ḥazm. Ibn 'Arabī's work is entitled *Ikhtišār al-muḥallā*; as we see in many other cases, it represents an internal copy composed by the author for his personal use as a study aid. In turn, that means that he studied the work with someone with no mention of the name of its transmitter. In the *Ijāza*, however, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Azdī from Seville, apart from being his primary teacher of *ḥadīth*, is also credited with the transmission of Ibn Ḥazm's works to Ibn 'Arabī.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, the *Ijāza* unambiguously states that he transmitted a single work by Ibn Ḥazm (*ḥaddathani bi-kitāb al-Imam*), and since we could not find one reference to any other work of Ibn Ḥazm that was included in Ibn 'Arabī's curriculum, it can be proposed to be *Kitāb al-muḥallā*.<sup>64</sup>

His other major work in the realm of *fiqh* is *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍā'*, which is cross-referenced to *ḥadīth* as well. According to modern scholars,<sup>65</sup> the title pertains to *fiqh*, whereas Ibn 'Arabī himself states that it is a work on *ḥadīth*. Indeed, because of the many common points and overlap between *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*, it is not surprising that the work in question would be categorized as belonging to both branches. Most of Ibn 'Arabī's other *fiqhī* writings are short treatises, usually not longer than a couple of pages. They include:

1. *Risāla fī a'māl al-ḥājj wa al-'umra*, Yahya # 27
2. *Asrār al-wuḍū' wa aḥkāmuhu*, Yahya # 54<sup>66</sup>
3. *Asrār takbīrāt al-ṣalā*, Yahya # 58
4. *Jam' al-aḥkām fī ma'rifa al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām*, Yahya #173
5. *Hijjat al-widā'*, Yahya # 232
6. *Kitāb al-ḥukm wa al-sharā'i'*, Yahya # 248
7. *Risāla fī al-ṣalā*, Yahya # 620a
8. *Risāla fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, Yahya # 806.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> The plural 'writings' is mentioned by Addas, p. 45.

<sup>64</sup> This is also a partial explanation for the inclination on the part of many authors to consider Ibn 'Arabī a *Zāhirī*, even though he repeatedly distanced himself from affiliation with any particular *fiqhī* school.

<sup>65</sup> See Yahya, vol. II, p. 352; Stephen Hirtenstein and Martin Notcutt, *op.cit.*, p. 10. The book is also characterized as a *fiqhī* work, even though it is listed under the heading "Ibn 'Arabī's other *ḥadīth* writings".

<sup>66</sup> As this and the subsequent titles containing the word mysteries (Ar. *asrār*) readily indicate, Ibn 'Arabī emphasized the *bāṭinī* aspect of the topics covered, in accordance with his pronounced tendency to merge outward and inward aspects in treating legal issues.

<sup>67</sup> This work is also found in *Futūḥāt* (tome II, pp. 162-166), and is separately printed in Beirut. Manuscript is in SK Izmirli 69, fols. 17-36.

After having examined in some detail Ibn ‘Arabī’s scholarly credentials in accordance with the traditional ulama curriculum, we now proceed to offer some general remarks on possible sources of anxiety that strained the relationship between Ibn ‘Arabī and his supporters on one side, and a selection of eminent jurists and ulama on the other.

\* \* \*

### *Ibn ‘Arabī’s challenge to the ‘ulama*

In light of the afore-mentioned series of statements and attitudes by Ibn ‘Arabī in regard to the ulama and their prerogatives, one can ascertain that the challenge Ibn ‘Arabī with his opus and teaching posed to the privilege and offices of the scholarly class was undoubtedly formidable and serious. We intend to examine some of them in detail without a pretentious claim to pretending to be exhaustive, a claim which cannot be sustained. Because of the very nature of the problem, any attempt at delineating and identifying variables of misunderstanding must of necessity be suggestive rather than exhaustive.

It is important at the outset to state certain very important limitations. It always has to be borne in mind that a significant number of pre-eminent jurists, both in the time of Ibn ‘Arabī and after him, held him in great esteem and unreservedly approved all of his claims, including one that the ulama finds particularly hard to accept - his being the seal of sainthood. Among his staunch defenders were some seminal figures in the history of Islamic law and scholarship. Others simply preferred to remain silent on the issue. There is, however, a powerful and well-organized third cohort, detractors who leveled fierce attacks on him and his followers. It is the almost equal proportion of Ibn ‘Arabī’s proponents and opponents that makes him one of the most polarizing figures in later Islamic thought. This is no reflection on the profoundness of his influence, which is beyond question. Its reach and depth need not necessarily be measured through his followers. At times it is even more easily observable in the works of his detractors. Few things point to the depth of the influence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s major doctrinal concepts not only among the Sufis but also over a much wider span, than the ferocious attack of his detractors.

What precisely is controversial about Ibn ‘Arabī? It is not easy to this question. It is a mixture of principled grievances and very specific and often very technical teachings that some members among of the traditional ulama found too extravagant or purely baseless. It has been pointed out that his ideas did not develop in a conventional and gradual evolution analogous with his scholarly maturing. In fact, and this is the central point, there was no maturing at all. More importantly Ibn ‘Arabī did not miss an opportunity to emphasize that none of his ideas are a corollary of his education in the traditional Islamic disciplines, but rather unsolicited gifts in form of unveiling (*kashf*) and divine inspiration (*ilhām*). As result, his ideas are already full-blown wherever

they are encountered, whether in his earlier or later writings. Most of them are several times revisited until finally stated in final form in his monumental *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. Alongside *al-Futūḥāt*, another of his writings, possibly the most famous and influential treatise entitled *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, was the one most frequently quoted. Apart from those two works, other works of Ibn ‘Arabī are seldom invoked in the debate on the soundness of his ideas.<sup>68</sup> It is the Ibn ‘Arabī of the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* who is controversial, and that is the reason why these two works are frequently and almost exclusively the subject of numerous commentaries and explanatory introductions by his followers and disciples.

On the other hand, *Futūḥāt* is in many instances nothing but a chrestomathy of the final editions of concepts whose earlier versions were scattered in his other works or preserved as separate treatises. Thus we can hardly establish a chronological framework in relation to the discussion on his orthodoxy. Indeed, Ibn ‘Arabī had become more prominent in the East, and that is where the vast majority of attacks came from, but there is nothing inherent in his works that will exonerate him in the eyes of his opponents even earlier in his career. Many of the most important events for his spiritual career took place while he was still in the West: his conversion, the vision of the prophets and saints, the investment with the robe of Khidr, visionary marriage with all letters of the alphabet,<sup>69</sup> and, most notably, his accession to the pinnacle of the hierarchy of the Muhammadan *wilāya*.

Even though the solidification of the case concerning Ibn ‘Arabī’s alleged heresy took place posthumously, already during his lifetime; and significantly while he was still in the West the signs of the controversy in the making could be seen. *Al-Durra al-fākhira*, a biographical treatise penned by Ibn ‘Arabī and containing additional information on the shaykhs he met during his spiritual upbringing, reports an episode of an early confrontation between Ibn ‘Arabī and a traditionalist in Seville. In the entry on Abū ‘Imrān Mūsā b. ‘Imrān al-Marṭūlī, from the town of Mertola, Ibn ‘Arabī writes:

One day I went to see him and found him with the preacher Abū Qāsim b. Ghafīr, a Traditionalist who denied the miraculous powers of the Saints. As I entered I heard the Shaikh refuting something he had said. The preacher was adducing against us two prohibited things which we ourselves had never committed and which we could not imagine any other of our number committing. I then asked the Shaikh, with whom I enjoyed a relationship of humble companionship, to leave the fellow to

<sup>68</sup> In the case of Ibn Taymiyya, Chodkiewicz identified four other works cited by the jurist in his attack on Ibn ‘Arabī: *al-Durra al-fākhira*, *‘Anqā’ al-maghrib*, *Kunhu mā lā budde li al-murīd min-hu*, and *Amr al-muḥkam*. See Michel Chodkiewicz, “Le proces posthume d’Ibn ‘Arabī” in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. F. de Jong and B. Radtke, Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. 93-123.

<sup>69</sup> An account of this event is given in the *Futūḥāt*, tome IV, p. 559; see also *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 35.



me. I said to him: ‘O Abū al-Qāsim, you are a Traditionalist, are you not?’ He replied that he was. Then I said: ‘When the Apostle of God, upon whom be the peace and blessings of God, knew that his community would contain people of your kind, he denied the possibility of miraculous power in the case of those who simply obey God’s commands. However, he did say one or two things which might cause you some confusion.’ He then asked what they might be. I replied: ‘Is it not related to us that the Apostle, the peace and blessings of God be upon him, said: ‘O my Lord, how many a disheveled man clothed in rags and ignored by men might hold God Himself to an Oath and He would keep it!’<sup>70</sup> Did he not also say: ‘There are those servants of God who, were they to adjure God, He would fulfill their trust’. He further said: ‘... and among them are the absolved ones’. Do you accept these sayings? When he had admitted them I said: ‘Praise be to God Who did not restrict the Apostle to any particular kind of miracle, but granted him the possibility of an oath being adhered to. He did not specify with what the oath should be concerned. Thus all possibilities are implied, so that were such a one to adjure God concerning walking on air or water, the traveling of great distances quickly, subsistence without food, the perception of what is in the souls and other things recounted of the righteous, God will fulfill His oath.’ At this Abū al-Qāsim was very confused and fell silent. The Shaikh said to me: ‘May God reward you with much good from His Saints’.<sup>71</sup>

Even though Ibn ‘Arabī and his claims were not the topic of the discussion, this early episode in many ways sets the tone for future events. He generously and confidently appointed himself to defend his spiritual teacher before an unconvinced Traditionalist scholar, which considerably modifies the assertion often made by his supporters that the majority of the difficulties he faced came from jurists. He refutes arguments of a Traditionalist with something he could not ignore if he were faithful to the ways of his trade: the sayings of the Prophet of Islam, moreover from the two canonical collections of *ḥadīth*. He scored the first recorded victory for the people of the Way and marked the beginning of his career as a spokesperson for them which was to place him in the focus of the ‘ulama’s attention afterwards. Nobody else’s faith and orthodoxy in the history of Islam have been discussed so passionately and thoroughly as Ibn ‘Arabī’s.

<sup>70</sup> This *ḥadīth* is narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayra and is recorded in Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* and Tirmidhī’s *Jāmi*. The original reads: “رَبُّ أَشْعَثَ أُعْبِرَ ذِي طَمْرِينٍ لَا يُؤْبَهُ لَهُ، لَوْ أَقْسَمَ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِأَبْرِهِ”. See *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “Kitāb al-janna wa wasf na‘īmi-ha wa ahli-ha”, *ḥadīth* number 2853-4.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Durra al-fākhira*, SK Esad Efendi no. 1777, fols. 116b-117a; quoted here from *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp. 89-90.

The question of his status as a Muslim scholar is inevitably raised. Did the ‘ulama in his time and afterwards recognize him as one of their kind? It is noteworthy that people arguing against him, some of them widely revered scholars, routinely used inflammatory terminology in reference to him, unambiguously stating their own belief that he was outside of the fold of Islam. He is commonly called an apostate (*mur-tadd*), an atheist (*mulhid*, *zindīq*), an infidel and an unbeliever (*kāfir*).<sup>72</sup> Coming from very consequential people, in some instances those occupying the highest official posts in the hierarchy of the scholarly class, these are evidently extremely serious charges. Occasionally, when specific merits of his doctrinal system were discussed, such as the question of the unity of being or sainthood, he is labeled with derogatory names like *ittiḥādi* (a believer in substantial oneness of God and man) or *wujūdī* (pantheist). One thing should be noted however: polemical treatments often build a larger context and it is sometimes a particular point of view or an entire school of thought that is criticized, and not always Ibn ‘Arabī *per se*. The designation “pantheist”, which is an incorrect in many ways, is often applied to many others as well, such as Ibn Sab‘īn, Ibn Tilimsānī and others. Ibn ‘Arabī is in focus partly because he chose to be: he had presented himself as the founder or authoritative codifier of the doctrines under attack. Undoubtedly, many ideas of his followers and commentators of his school of thought were retrospectively attributed to him, ideas that were not his. Ibn ‘Arabī’s main adversary Ibn Taymiyya considered the school of *waḥdat al-wujūd* to be a scholarly and spiritual doctrine the epigones of which were more dangerous and wayward than the founder himself, who was, according to the Shaykh al-Islam, “closest among them to Islam”, but obviously still residing outside of its fold.

On the other hand, very frequently his detractors sought to present themselves as principally sympathetic to Sufism, citing works of al-Qushayrī, Shihāb al-dīn al-Suhrawardī and others in an attempt to demonstrate that Ibn ‘Arabī’s ideas were not only opposite to the views of the jurists, but could be considered odd and outrageous even by Sufi standards. Through a carefully construction of the narrative, the principal Akbari teachings were driven out of mainstream Sufism as well.

### *The Interpreter interpreted*

Oddly enough, Ibn ‘Arabī’s vicissitudes with members of the scholarly class did not start spectacularly: it was his slim collection of poetry entitled “The Interpreter of Ardent Desires” (*Tarjumān al-ashwāq*) that created an uproar, revealingly not because of the doctrinal points that the author wove into the fabric of his lyrical poems, but because of their alleged erotic nature and impropriety. This is an important fact which can help us to answer the question of his affiliation with the ‘ulama. During his long and productive visit to Mecca, Ibn ‘Arabī studied with the celebrated muḥaddith Abū Shujā‘ Zāhir b. Rustam, a descendant of an Iranian family from Isfahan. It appears that apart from the shaykh, other members of his family were also to leave a lasting

<sup>72</sup> See Chapter IV on fatwas regarding Ibn ‘Arabī and his status.

impact on him: his elderly sister Bint Rustam and particularly Zāhir's daughter Nizām, whose beauty and virtues ravished the senses of Ibn 'Arabī and inspired him to write his finest poetry collected in the *Tarjumān*. He describes her as religious, learned, ascetic, and a sage among the sages of the Holy Places.<sup>73</sup>

Through the poetry collection's introduction, we can follow the unfolding of the debate concerning the *Tarjumān*. The introduction to the first edition sounds preemptive, as if the author were expecting trouble. Yet it did not prevent some scholars, despite clear statements on the part of its author, from interpreting the collection as purely erotic and blasphemous:

Whenever I mention a name in this book I allude to her,<sup>74</sup> and whenever I mourn over an abode I mean her abode. In these poems I always signify Divine influences and spiritual revelations and sublime analogies according to the most sublime way which we [Sufis] follow... God forbid that readers of this book and of any other poem should think of aught unbecoming to souls that scorn evil and lofty spirits that are attached to the things of Heaven. Amen!<sup>75</sup>

As regards the style of the *Tarjumān* Ibn 'Arabī states:

In these poems I point to various sorts of Divine knowledge, spiritual mysteries and intellectual sciences and religious exhortations. I have used the erotic style and form of expression because men's souls are enamoured of it, so that there are many reasons why it should commend itself.<sup>76</sup>

The fact that Ibn 'Arabī felt compelled to explain himself in such explicit terms in an introduction to a work of poetry which is anything but explicit, as well as the fact that a misapprehension occurred even despite that, speaks for itself and unmistakably points to the massive amount of suspicion that existed. Only a few months after the first recension, which contains only poems without a commentary, Ibn 'Arabī em-

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<sup>73</sup> See the Preface to Nicholson's English translation of the Diwan: *The Tarjuman al-Ashwaq: A Collection of Mystical Odes by Muhy'iddin Ibn Arabi*, ed. and trans. by Reynold A. Nicholson, Royal Asiatic Society, Oriental Translation Fund, New Series, vol. XX, London, 1911, pp. 3-4.

<sup>74</sup> Characteristically, in a bid to explain and protect himself Ibn 'Arabī might have made things even more difficult for himself. The source of the problem, and the reason why his collection of poetry was seen by some readers as erotic, is precisely because of an actual, specifically named woman who was involved, rather than the *ma'shūq* with an assumed identity.

<sup>75</sup> *The Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*, p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

barked on composing an explanatory commentary on his work. From this it is clear that in a very short period after their composition, Ibn ‘Arabī’s poems were criticized by the ‘ulama, which is a remarkable fact taking into account the means of dissemination and circulation of books available in his times. Two of his faithful companions and disciples, ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥabashī and Ibn Ṣawdaqīn, reported an incident in which an unnamed jurist in Damascus rejected the author’s declarations from the preface and remarked that:

Probably he adopted this device in order to protect himself from the imputation that he, a man famous for religion and piety, composed poetry in [an] erotic style.<sup>77</sup>

It was Ibn ‘Arabī’s detractors indeed who offered the most immediate and trustworthy testimonies to his reputation. That the jurist who criticized him and accused him of deception would at the same time record his reputation as a man of religion and piety is also noteworthy. At the behest of his disciples and aiming to repel the untrue imputations, Ibn ‘Arabī began writing a commentary on the collection, spelling out the ties between the surface and the intended meaning. Portions of the commentary were endorsed and read aloud in Ibn ‘Arabī’s residence to the criticizing jurist and a number of other theologians by no less a figure than Abū Qāsim Kamāl al-dīn Ibn al-‘Adīm, then the chief *qāḍī* of Aleppo.<sup>78</sup> The commentary, undoubtedly in conjunction with the investment of authority by Ibn al-‘Adīm, had a healing impact on the jurist, who experienced a total change of heart and took an oath never to misunderstand allegorical words of the Sufis in the future.

The question that poses itself is why would the scholarly class, here represented by an unidentified number of opponents as well as the influential *qāḍī*, react to a collection of poetry if they did not consider Ibn ‘Arabī to be one of their number? Is it rare that we encounter statements in verses that from the theological point of view could be unequivocally characterized as irreligious and much more outrageous and scandalous for religious sentiments than anything Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Tarjumān* contains? The problem is of a principled nature. Other authors were poets, but he was not: his poetical career was the least important, poetry being but an effective tool for the figurative expression of complex doctrinal points. How disheartening an irony it is that some of the greatest poets of the classical literary period in the Muslim world did not consider themselves poets at all and at times uttered contemptuous statements with regard to their art! One need not go further than several great Persian classics like Jāmī, ‘Aṭṭār and Mawlānā Rūmī, to name but a few. At best, they were poets among other things with clearly ordered priorities. Poets could not be taken to task for their words because of the clear

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<sup>77</sup> Addas, p. 210.

<sup>78</sup> A famous historian of Aleppo and a scion of the learned family that for five centuries held the office of chief judge in that city. See Bernard Lewis, “Ibn al-‘Adīm”, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 1997, vol. III, p. 695.

Qur'anic clarification that they are people who "say that which they do not".<sup>79</sup> Acknowledged as an *'ālim*, even if nominally, Ibn 'Arabī could not enjoy similar liberties as that would set a dangerous precedent and would be totally opposite to the gravity of the task that the 'ulama bore.

### *Sources of trouble*

Here we propose to examine a few causes of the seemingly deep mistrust and animus that existed between members of the scholarly class and their unruly colleague. While in Cordoba, Ibn 'Arabī overheard a certain shaykh Abū Muḥammad 'Abdullāh al-Qaṭṭān saying in the grip of honest fideism:

Poor wretches, they who compile books and essays, for how great a reckoning they will have to face on the morrow! Are not the Book of God and the Traditions of His Messenger sufficient for them?<sup>80</sup>

The young Ibn 'Arabī, to the great chagrin of the 'ulama and the great pleasure of his admirers and followers, did not heed the advice of his master. Whatever the nature of reckoning in the Hereafter could be for him, his unmatched opus, both in terms of its sheer size and pervasive influence, caused uproar and turmoil already during his life.

One of the first causes of anxiety for the ulama was perhaps the size of his output. He is easily one of the most prolific writers Islamic tradition has ever known and the number of works attributed to him varies from four hundred to a fantastic eight hundred pieces of varying length. Even the most critically careful estimates speak of around three hundred works, from treatises a few pages long to multivolume esoteric encyclopedia such as the *Futūḥāt*. If in the past the scholarly class sometimes felt compelled to react to some verbal statements or opuscles, however influential they might have been, as in the case of al-Ḥallāj or 'Ayn al-Qudāt, in the case of Ibn 'Arabī and during the many years of his productive life and stunningly industrious career as a writer, they were overwhelmed by a more or less systematically organized and comprehensive belief system - a single well organized textual and interpretative community. Its sheer size was awe-inspiring. To be sure, in more than a few cases, Ibn 'Arabī was simply the one who codified already existing doctrines and gave them the final form, as in the case of the Perfect Man. Even his adversaries correctly recognized that, as did his principal opponent Ibn Taymiyya, who in discussing this item of

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<sup>79</sup> Thus an essentially negative description of poets is mobilized as an expression of poetic license. The whole *aya* reads: 'As for poets, the erring follow them; hast thou not seen how they stray in every valley; and how they say that which they do not?; save those who believe and do good works ...' (XXVI: 224-7). All translations from the Noble Qur'an are by Marmaduke Pickthall, and are taken from *The Meanings of the Glorious Koran*, Everyman's Library, 1992.

<sup>80</sup> *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 112.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine correctly remarks that it was not Ibn ‘Arabī who invented the concept, but rather an early Sufī master, al-Tirmidhī. The bulk of the controversy was perhaps caused by the single fact that he was the first to express in writing certain teachings, which until his times had remained within the confines of oral transmission or veiled allusion. Contextualized in the entirety of his belief system, the doctrine of the Perfect Man gained new significance and connotations to such an extent that the name of its originator arises mostly in historical discussion thereof, less frequently in the context of reflection on its spiritual significance and consequences which are fully elaborated by Ibn ‘Arabī.

Similarly, if we look at the Muslim umma as a textual and interpretative community, then we should note that Ibn ‘Arabī’s vast corpus created an enormous textual community within the umma which threatened to overwhelm and absorb other textual colonies, while in some of its claimed prerogatives it came dangerously close to the unapproachable boundaries of the primary textual community of Islam, that of the sacred volume. One of his shorter works, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, boasts of more than one hundred commentaries in various languages of the Muslim world, primarily Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Few books can be compared to the *Fuṣūṣ* in that regard.

### *Ocean in the bosom*

Undoubtedly the biggest source of conflict between the ‘ulama and Ibn ‘Arabī was the alleged supranatural source of his knowledge, the celestial origin he claimed for some of his most important works, primarily the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*. The question of inspiration in general, particularly divine inspiration, could be raised in many other cases, both before and after Ibn ‘Arabī, but he seems to have taken the whole issue one step further as usual. The question of inspiration is an elusive one and is hardly ever referred to by authors in plain and explicit terms. With Ibn ‘Arabī, he could not possibly have been clearer as to what exactly he had in mind: there existed no writing process in its conventional meaning and he did not claim the privilege of authorship, at least in the case of the *Fuṣūṣ*. Largely because of its size and scope, such a claim is a bit harder to sustain in the case of the *Futūḥāt*, but Ibn ‘Arabī advanced it nonetheless.

Every stage of Ibn ‘Arabī’s spiritual evolution is marked by a monumental vision. He collected them in a volume entitled *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt* (Book of visions). In the uncharted space of the autonomous spiritual realm of perfection, the Unseen (Ar. *ghayb*) Ibn ‘Arabī was able to benefit from various spiritual entities: he communicated with the spirits of prophets, learned men and awliyā, including the highest-ranking Pole of the time. Furthermore, through a symbolic marriage with the letters of the Arabic alphabet, he gained access to the totality of knowledge. Nothing exists until it is named. The Almighty Creator taught the first man of Earth, Adam, the names of all things and thus bestowed upon him the totality of knowledge pertaining to the world of creation. In a somewhat similar fashion, having married all the letters in a blissful spiritual vision, Ibn ‘Arabī grasped the totality of knowledge as nothing can be named

outside of the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet. It is indeed easy to see how others could view as hallucinatory that which for some people is visionary.

As expected, the holy city of Mecca appears to be a particularly fertile point of divine inspiration for the author. Nevertheless, that fact hardly imposes any spatial or temporal limit on his celestial excursions. His earlier works, composed while he was still in the Maghreb, were uniformly results of supranatural insight. A tiny volume written in the city of Almeria during eleven days spent there and entitled *Constellations of Stars* (*Mawāqī' al-nujūm*) could serve as an obvious example. Even though its themes relevant to the principles of spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) were expressed in simple and accessible language, Ibn 'Arabī in its introduction bears witness to the method of its composition:

I was involved in the process of writing an inspired book [*kitāb ilqā'ī*] when I was told: 'Write, this is a chapter of subtle description and most rare unveiling'. I had no idea what to write next; I awaited the rest of the inspiration with such expectancy that I became so disturbed I was virtually at death's door. Then a luminous tablet was placed in front of me. It contained radiant green lines on which was written: This is a chapter of subtle description and most rare unveiling and the discourse regarding the chapter ... I copied [what I saw] right to the end, then [the tablet] was withdrawn.<sup>81</sup>

Here we have, written in straightforward language, a description of the methods in which divine inspiration was vouchsafed to Ibn 'Arabī early in his career. One must admit that the described method of *ilqā'* (casting of meaning) appears to be unique for Ibn 'Arabī.<sup>82</sup> In it, the earthly author is but a means of transmission of the intended divine message in what must have been seen as a markedly disquieting methodology for the traditional 'ulama class of Islam. Not only is Ibn 'Arabī entirely excluded from the procedure, reduced to nothing more than a scribe of the miraculously descended "tablet", but the whole adventure, notwithstanding some obvious differences, unmistakably resembles the reception of the Divine revelation by the Prophet of Islam. Almost everything is there: the command of writing authoritatively issued by an unknown heavenly communicator, an imperative analogous to the one which the Prophet received; the luminous tablet where the original was preserved before its unveiling to the humanity and its similarities with the *lawḥ al-mahfuz*, as well as the disturbed state of being after the spiritual encounter and its parallel in the condition of the Prophet of Islam upon receiving Archangel Jibril, as described in the sacred volume

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<sup>81</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Mawāqī' al-nujūm*, p. 65, quoted from Addas, p. 160.

<sup>82</sup> His use of the verb calls to mind the Qur'anic expression from the following *āya*: 'The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him', Qur'an, IV: 171.

and biographical literature. Despite this perilous encroachment on the untouchable prerogatives of Scripture, it must be noted that *Mawāqī‘ al-nujūm*, largely because of its contents, was never mentioned in discussing Ibn ‘Arabī’s orthodoxy, but the procedure whereby the work is written remains at the root of the trouble for him in the eyes of the ‘ulama. However, things were destined to escalate.

The Meccan Revelations (*al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*), as the name itself indicates, was similarly born from a mystical experience on a much larger scale, which occurred in the holy city. The episode marks the ultimate unification of the tripartite elements of knowledge symbolically marking the apex of mystical maturing: the unification of the knower, that which is the object of knowledge, and knowledge itself (*‘ālim, ma‘lūm* and *‘ilm*). All veils and intermediaries are permanently removed and he was to partake in unmediated knowledge. No date is given from the famous episode and for the meeting between Ibn ‘Arabī and an enigmatic youth at the Yemeni corner of the Ka‘ba. While performing the ritual circumambulation (*tawāf*), Ibn ‘Arabī saw “the Evanescent Youth, the Silent Speaker, He who is neither alive nor dead, the Simple Composite, He who envelops and is enveloped.”<sup>83</sup> The nature of the meeting and the mysterious youth have been analyzed by a number of scholars and interpreted differently: he was identified as the Holy Spirit, the spiritual *alter ego* of the author himself, and his celestial twin. The several apparently contradictory attributes with which he is described in the account provided in the preface to the *Futūḥāt* leave no doubt as to origination. He is a Silent Speaker, neither dead nor alive, simple and composite at the same time. Only God has described His Exalted Essence in opposite and seemingly contradictory epithets: He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, the Most Merciful and He who punishes severely. The nature of these attributes is of course entirely different, yet the very concept of mutually exclusive epithets serves as a methodological trick to allude to the divine source of inspiration. Could this *coincidentia oppositorum*, as Corbin termed it,<sup>84</sup> be taken as an indication that Ibn ‘Arabī experienced a manifestation of the Exalted Essence, “the Form of God” as some put it?<sup>85</sup> As the term itself represents a mere contradiction, perhaps another explanation must be sought. Moreover, Ibn ‘Arabī’s account does not offer a basis to answer the question decisively.

The sanctified courtyard of Ka‘ba where the meeting took place commands extraordinary symbolic potential in Islamic mysticism. It is taken to be a valid representation of its celestial counterpart (*al-bayt al-ma‘mūr*), even of God’s throne (*‘arsh*) on Earth.<sup>86</sup> The heart of a true believer is said in a *ḥadīth qudsī* to be the only thing that can encompass God’s Essence. Part of the ambiguity regarding the secret encounter is the form of its realization: was it a physically materialized form of a visionary lumi-

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<sup>83</sup> The account is given in Addas, p. 210.

<sup>84</sup> See Henry Corbin, “Theory of Visionary Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy”, *Temenos* 8, 1977, pp. 224-237, translated to English by Liadain Sherrard.

<sup>85</sup> This is the name of the final chapter in Corbin’s influential study: *Creative imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, Princeton University Press, 1981, 423 pp.

<sup>86</sup> See Fritz Meier, “Das Mysterium der Ka‘ba”, *Eranos Jahr Buch*, vol. XI, 1944, pp. 187-214.



nous entity? According to Ibn ‘Arabī’s account, it was the composition of the youth (*nash’a*) that contained all the knowledge disclosed to him; he became its guardian and interpreter *par excellence*. Its detailed exposition followed afterwards in the *Futūḥāt*. It appears to be the final arrangement of all previous visionary experiences where everything was ordered in its place. Despite recent criticism,<sup>87</sup> Meier has raised a question that is not insignificant: what is one to make of the rather exuberant claim Ibn ‘Arabī advances, that the totality of knowledge which permeates the *Futūḥāt* in all its five hundred and sixty chapters is inspirational and visionary? Evidently, it is difficult to substantiate the claim that the *Futūḥāt*, in a fashion similar to other works, is a verbatim transcription of a divine *ilqā’*, mediated or not.

The *Futūḥāt* is a work of extraordinary proportions that hardly admits to such an extraordinary proposition. It has been revised by its author and partly rewritten; it includes many of his earlier and shorter works as well as contributions from some of his principal disciples. On the other hand, however, it is perhaps only the last circumstance that compromises the proposition for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is true that the *Futūḥāt* was revisited and revised at a later time by Ibn ‘Arabī, yet that revision is the result of an inspiration as well; an earlier inspiration abrogates a later one.<sup>88</sup> Even if the *Futūḥāt* did not assume its final form at the time of the mysterious encounter in Mecca, it was revised through inspiration. Addas puts it in the following paragraph:

Regardless of how one chooses to explain the vision [of the youth], it is quite wrong to suppose that the *Futūḥāt* immediately assumed their final form in Ibn ‘Arabī’s consciousness as soon as he had seen what he saw. Quite the opposite is the truth. As we will see, very specific inspirations were to intervene repeatedly throughout the process of composition – which was to span a good number of years – and take Ibn ‘Arabī himself by surprise.<sup>89</sup>

This paragraph shows that the *Futūḥāt* was not ‘given’ at once as were some other works of Ibn ‘Arabī. It is a question of one vision corrected by another in a lengthy process that took Ibn ‘Arabī himself by surprise. The corollary is that the *Futūḥāt* in its totality is a work of inspiration, albeit gradual and in succession, and that is the main point. In another instance we read:

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<sup>87</sup> In her biography of Ibn ‘Arabī, Addas called Meier’s interpretation of the episode “rather disappointing” and “obscure”. See Addas, p. 201, footnote 69.

<sup>88</sup> That is another apparent resemblance to the sacred volume and its abrogating and abrogated verses (*al-nāsikh* and *al-mansūkh*).

<sup>89</sup> See Addas, p. 203.

Out of this silent dialogue with the Youth a book was born. Apart from being a testimony to his own destiny and his own visionary experience, the “Book of Meccan Revelations” is also – on Ibn ‘Arabī’s own admission – a faithful transcription of all the things he was allowed to contemplate on that particular day in the form of the Spirit he saw.<sup>90</sup>

In the introduction to his autographed *History of Writings (Fihris al-muṣannafāt)* the author advances the claim of verbatim transcription of his works as being universally applicable to his opus:

In what I have written I have never had a set purpose, unlike other writers. Flashes of divine inspiration used to come upon me and almost overwhelm me, so that I could only put them from my mind by committing to paper what they revealed to me. If my works evince any form of composition, that form was unintentional. Some works I wrote at the command of God, sent to me in sleep or through a mystical revelation.<sup>91</sup>

Obvious exceptions are works about which the author himself stated he composed them as study aids, abridged versions of the standard *ḥadīth* collections of Bukhārī, Muslim and the Musnad of Imam Ḥanbal. It is beyond dispute that his most important and at the same time most controversial works, primarily but not exclusively the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*, were written in the afore-mentioned fashion of heavenly dictation. The inspirational time spans were significantly different. For instance, a work entitled *Ḥilya al-abdāl* consumed only one hour to compose, whereas the *Fuṣūṣ* was revealed to him in a single dream whose length is undisclosed.<sup>92</sup> While engaged in writing of the *Futūḥāt*, according to the testimony of his famous biographer Maqarrī, he would fill three notebooks a day.<sup>93</sup>

However extravagant the details of his mystical experiences may be, the story of his subjective ventures into the realm of *mundus imaginalis*, and the resulting heavenly foundation of the great bulk of his works *in toto*, amounts to nothing less than a grossly intolerable material transgression of the fundamental principles of scholarly authenticity laid down by the ‘ulama in order to protect the integrity of the Muslim *umma* as the scripted society and its interpretative community, and thus to establish and maintain the social order of Muslim polities. In light of the great contrast that exists in

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 202.

<sup>91</sup> A.A. Afifi: “Memorandum by Ibn ‘Arabī of His Own Works”, *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts*, Alexandria University, VIII, 1954, p.109-117, quoted from *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 48.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>93</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Maqarrī al-Tilimsānī, *Naḥḥ al-ṭīb min ḡhusn al-Andalus al-raṭīb*, ed. by Iḥsan ‘Abbās, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1408/1988, vol. I, p. 650.

scholarly and epistemic methods between Ibn ‘Arabī and the epistemic authority of the ‘ulama, reasons for animus and intolerance become self-evident.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s methodology was unacceptable because it violated and in an important way negated the institution of *isnād*, arguably the most important feature of traditional Muslim scholarship. The importance of *isnād* can hardly be overestimated. It is visible in the study of history, Prophetic tradition and a number of other traditional disciplines. The corresponding institution of *ijāza* (scholarly authentication) is based upon the *isnād* and remains valid in almost all disciplines, *fiqh*, its sources and branches, Qur’anic exegesis. In the recorded history of Islam information and knowledge without pedigree that is positively verifiable and traceable back to its source holds little value. Ideally, all traces lead back to the foundational document of the umma, the Noble Qur’an. Everything that is not congruent with this basic pathway of knowledge is automatically liable to be rejected. Viewed against this background, individual celestial shortcuts in the quest for *‘ilm ladunnī* coupled with verbatim and widely circulated “proceedings” become dangerous adventures.

In this respect, Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Ijāza* is of utmost significance because it sought to anchor his knowledge in the universally acceptable and revered system of the *isnād*. The document subsequently sought to establish a valid pedigree for the totality of his knowledge in the system of *isnād*, the system that is comprehensible and adhered to by the ‘ulama. A great portion of the misunderstanding and misgivings about Ibn ‘Arabī and his doctrines appears to stem from the fact that not many of his books, in his own admission, could be reasonably taken to be result of the *isnād* and *ijāza*. To what extent are the fruits of his education in the traditional Muslim curriculum built into the fabric of his works? It is in the eye of the beholder, and one’s answer to this fundamental question would determine the final stance towards Ibn ‘Arabī and his opus. Ibn ‘Arabī’s repeated statements, whereby he dissociates himself from the privileges (and perils) of authorship, are somewhat suggestive in this regard. In the case of the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn ‘Arabī styled his role as a simple deliverer of what had been revealed to him without having changed a single letter. That clearly verges on the initial prophetic revelation. That fact did not elude scholars because many of them interpreted his visionary experiences – for them obviously hallucinatory – as byproducts of a painful history of mental illness caused by lengthy retreats and self-imposed physical hardship.<sup>94</sup> The knowledge he claimed to have possessed could be at best accepted as suppositional by the ‘ulama, and a significant number of them rejected it thoroughly. Ironically, even the text of the *Ijāza* as the basic document of authentication of his credentials in the traditional Muslim curriculum, produced most likely in order to appease his critics and demonstrate the embededness of his gnosis in a tradition of texts, could have contained seeds of trouble.

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<sup>94</sup> Such is the case with celebrated Dhahabī. Some traditional and modern authors seem to agree with him. Ateş likewise asserts that Ibn ‘Arabī’s visions came as a result of illness. Ahmet Ateş, “Ibn al-‘Arabī”, *EP*<sup>2</sup>, vol. III, p. 707.

The determining factor of the distribution of ‘ulama along the line of Ibn ‘Arabī’s acceptance or rejection appears to be the attitude which individual scholars developed towards the visionary literature produced in Islam, its methods, validity and applicability. We encounter terms like *ru’yā* (vision), *wāqī’a* (an event), *mubashshira* (auspicious dream), *manām* (dream), *wārida*, *ilhām* and *fath*, which, despite some semantic subtleties, all mean generally the same thing: inspiration, unveiling, and revelation. In the *Futūhāt*, Ibn ‘Arabī offers his definition of visionary knowledge, explaining that visions, which he terms as *mubashshira*, represent annunciatory events that constitute the beginning of divine revelation in the case of the Prophets (*awā’il waḥy al-ilāhī*).<sup>95</sup>

In his short treatise on Sufī terminology he adds that every vision (*wāqī’a*) is indeed *wārida*, i.e. a divine inspiration that in one form or the other enters from the realm of the Unseen.<sup>96</sup> His own experience with visionary knowledge is lucidly summarized in a revealing paragraph in the preface to the *Rūḥ al-quds*. There we read:

When I came to understand that the Almighty God opened a gate of wisdom and knowledge in my heart, and made torrents rushing through it, I saw my heart swimming in high seas without a shore.

Then I realized that most of that ocean was an undulating heavy and endless ocean gusted by stormy winds that were foaming its waves and sending their echoes far and wide. Thereafter I looked at the ocean of knowledge and mysteries in my bosom and I saw it for the most part calm and with no commotion, unaffected by the storm and high waves particularly observable while I was in Noble Mecca. Upon seeing it [i.e. that discrepancy between the undulating ocean of God’s mysteries and the calmness of the ocean in my bosom], I was overwhelmed by great chill and endless fear: I decided not to mingle with people, but then I was ordered to surely meet them and offer them advice as an inevitable office and religious duty of mine.

When I would meet them, I used to talk only the noble speech [i.e. Qur’an], and about the rest I would be silent or reserved.

But my noble master, when I would stay on my own in my residence I used to reckon the gifts of the spiritual state I was in and I could not establish any link or reason [for the discrepancy]; my state did not have any structure or harmony [*sabab* or *nasab*], so I feared that the Almighty could have been testing me with trials. In my solitude I have seen so many difficulties because of that, only God knows their scope. I did not know where to turn, where to start with the purification of my soul and through these wanderings I found the way by returning to ini-

<sup>95</sup> *Futūhāt*, II, p. 491 quoted from Addas, p. 43, footnote 36.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

tial truths and taming of my *nafs*. Thereupon I realized how merciful Allah was to me when He granted me a vision in which I saw myself entering Paradise, and there I saw no hellfire, gathering of the Day of judgment, and reckoning of good and bad deeds, and in that moment I experienced a tremendous relief and calmness.<sup>97</sup>

Unfortunately, the celestial spiritual geography of Islam is not fully protected from intrusion by alien and unwelcome entities. The autonomous realm of the imaginal world is subject to constant encroachments from evil forces so that the standard dream repertoire must be expanded by an infelicitous addition of dreams inspired by Satan, *jinn*s and other harmful and invisible entities; those dreams are also named differently, as *hulm*. That possibility of intrusion was at the root of Ibn ‘Arabī’s anxiety: he was unable to determine the true source of his inspiration and the origin of the ocean in his bosom until God granted him another confirmatory vision to set him at ease. It is rather obvious how detrimental an influence they could have on the religious life of a believer. During the time of the Prophet, he was the supreme authority divinely supported to arrest the destructive impact of alien intrusions. After his final departure, Islamic tradition developed two seemingly simple yet very effective safeguard mechanisms of protection. Firstly, in an authentic prophetic tradition it has been narrated: “Whosoever sees me in a dream or a vision can rest assured that it was me”. The only person whom negative forces cannot impersonate is the Prophet of God. From the outset of his mission, the Prophet was divinely protected as the transmitter of the divine message to humanity. Another mechanism was born out of the necessity to protect the unprotected: anything pertinent to Islamic doctrines and practice that was in violation of the sacred volume was immediately rejected as innovation and heresy. Muslim scholars, as the heirs of the Prophet, took up the task of delivering the verdict. Their scholarly supervision concerned not only dreams, but also more highly positioned sources of knowledge in the epistemic hierarchy of Islam. Any *ḥadīth* that contradicted the message and the spirit of the sacred volume and its unambiguous meaning was rejected regardless of any other circumstance.<sup>98</sup> Naturally, the problem is that the meaning of a Qur’anic message is hardly ever singular. The differences, to put it mildly, existing between Ibn ‘Arabī and his opponents could be inspired by a belief in a different spiritual geography. It is not surprising, then, that Ibn ‘Arabī made extensive use of the first safeguard. The main protagonist of his dreams is the Prophet of God, very rarely somebody else like the mysterious youth or God himself.

Apart from all other aspects of the controversy, there is one circumstance intrinsically connected with the inspirational genesis of his works that makes Ibn ‘Arabī difficult to accept for many Muslims. This is the unforgiving nature of his writings, this abso-

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<sup>97</sup> *Rūḥ al-quds*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>98</sup> It is no mean undertaking given that Scripture as well as traditional corpus of Prophetic *ḥadīth* superlatively lend themselves to different interpretations.

lutistic “all or nothing” affair that is very unfashionable among the ‘ulama and learned believers in general. That demand for total acceptance is reserved for the sacred volume only. While the celestial genesis of his most important writings could have inspired and did inspire unlimited numbers of Muslims throughout many centuries that followed, the same fact, coupled with the lack of maneuvering space for doubting readers, facilitated its rejection by many more. Coming from the Seal of Muhammad-an Sainthood and being a faithful transcription of divine dictations, his ideas had to be accepted root and branch or rejected in similar fashion. In reality, however, a full range of possible approaches is observable, from those authors who accept it *in toto* hardly ever questioning any part of it, to partial acceptance and some criticism, to total rejection. Faced with such uncompromising claims, some decided for the latter. The faith which some place in his works and ideas is truly remarkable, at least as remarkable as the vehemence with which they are rejected by others. His adherents and followers for the most part remained untouched by the serious controversy surrounding the founder of their school and the accusations leveled against him. In turn, they devoted the bulk of their energy to the interpretation and systematic elaboration of his teachings, informing in doing so one of the most lasting and influential textual communities in the Muslim *umma*. That is not to suggest that they were not active in occasional refutations of Ibn ‘Arabī’s critics. Quite the opposite is true. Nevertheless, the arguments on both sides remained largely unchanged.

## Part Two

## Chapter II

### Pre-Ottoman Anatolia and the shaykh

In a remarkable resemblance to Ibn ‘Arabī’s native Andalusia, Asia Minor was another frontier Muslim polity destined to leave a profound and lasting impact on the general development of Muslim civilization. It was the home of the illustrious dynasty of the Saljūqs of Rum that disintegrated into numerous principalities, one of which would later become the nucleus of the Ottoman dynasty, the last great Muslim empire.

#### *Pre-Ottoman Anatolia: the historical setting*

Despite a great deal of modern scholarship and numerous studies mostly in European languages and Turkish,<sup>99</sup> our understanding of the political history or even the chronology of pre-Ottoman Anatolia is still plagued with many insufficiencies and ambiguities. Countless small borderline principalities that came into being following Alp Arslan’s decisive and crushing victory at the battle of Malazgirt (463/1071) were in time incorporated into a more stable system of ruling dynasties such as that of the Danişmendis, that in turn became part and parcel of the long-lived Saljūqid Sultanate of Rum. The Saljūqs of Rum were part of an even larger Saljūqid Empire that held sway over broad territories in the central Muslim lands, Central Asia and Iran. Following the breakup of that umbrella political structure generally referred to as the Sultanate of the Great Saljūqs, there emerged a number of splinter groups of provincial Saljūq rulers, including the following dynasties:

- The Saljūqs of Iraq (ruled from 511/1117 to 590/1194)
- The Saljūqs of Syria (ruled from 470/1078 to 511/1117)
- The Saljūqs of Kirmān (ruled from 432/1041 to 583/1187)
- The Saljūqs of Rūm (ruled from 469/1077 to 706/1307)

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<sup>99</sup> Some important secondary sources consulted here are as follows: *A History of the Seljuks: Ibrahim Kafesoğlu’s Interpretation and the Resulting Controversy*, translated, edited and with an introduction by Gary Leiser, Southern Illinois University Press, 1988; Kerimü’-din Mahmūd Aksaraylı, *Musâmeretü’l-ahbâr: Mongollar zamanında Selçukları tarihi*, ed. Osman Turan, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1944; Mükrimin Halil Inanç, *Türkiye tarihi Selçuklar devri*, Istanbul Üniversitesi yayımlar no. 240, Istanbul, 1944; Aydın Taneri, *Türkiye Selçukları kültür hayatı: Menâkibü’l-arifin’in değerlendirilmesi*, Bilge yayımları, Konya, 1978; Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, Taplinger: New York, 1968. For a fuller list of works on various aspects of the Saljuq Sultanate see *Selçuklu tarihi, Alparslan ve Malazgirt bibliografyası*, Ankara, Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1971; and Kosuke Shimizu, *Bibliography of Saljuq Studies*, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, 1972.



The Saljūqs of Rum originated as part of the Great Saljūqs who had settled in Anatolia and who, from their capital in Konya, controlled much of Asia Minor approximately from 463/1071 to 708/1308.<sup>100</sup> After suffering defeat at the battle of Köse Dağ at the hands of the Mongols in 825/1423, they continued in power as vassals of the Ilkhanids.<sup>101</sup> While the political history of the Saljuq rule in Anatolia has been well studied and reconstructed, there exists no detailed account of the intellectual, cultural and religious history of the period. This is particularly true of the early period of the Sultanate, namely the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the history of which is still obscure and often confused even with respect to political chronology. This obscurity is due to the paucity of historical sources and competing historiographical interpretations of the available sources. It is ironic that there are so few sources for the study of the intellectual and cultural history of this period when one considers the great surge in official patronage bestowed on scholars and artists as well as numerous architectural projects that the Saljūqs of Rūm initiate during their reign.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, we possess no more than two historical chronicles for the entire period in question. Both are official court historical chronicles commissioned by the ruler and written by court chroniclers who, not surprisingly, understood and approached history simply as a succession of important political events and of the achievements of their respective patrons. Nevertheless, in the absence of other primary sources, one could hardly overestimate the significance of these works for the study of the Saljūq dominion in Anatolia.

The first of those two works is that by a Turkish historian and poet, Qāḍī Burhān al-dīn Abū Naṣr b. Mas‘ūd, who composed a versified chronicle in Persian entitled *Anīs al-qulūb* and presented it to ‘Izz al-dīn Kaykāwūs I (r. 607/1211-617/1220). The other is the comparatively more famous work by Ibn Bībī, entitled *al-Awāmir al-‘Alā’iyya fī al-umūr al-‘alā’iyya* and which is written in Persian as well. It is arguably the single most useful source on the history of the Saljūqs of Rum. Moreover, because both works are typical political chronicles and they offer next to nothing in way of cultural and religious survey of the period. In order to grasp the cultural and religious circumstances prevailing under the Saljūqs, one must therefore turn to supplementary material consisting largely of diplomatic documents, especially those pertaining to religious endowments (*waqfiyya*).

There is, however, a whole separate genre of literature encompassing epic literary sources on ghazis and hagiographical works on the lives and feats of Muslim *awliyā’*

<sup>100</sup> The last Saljūq Sultan in Rūm was Ghiyāth al-dīn Mas‘ūd II, who exchanged the throne with his nephew ‘Alā’ al-dīn Kayqubād three times before his death in 708/1308. He died in Kayseri but was buried in the town of Simriye, close to Amasya. See Niğdeli Kadı Ahmed, *Fatih Kütüphanesi* number 4519, fol. 302, quoted from *Fatih devrinde Karaman eyaleti vakıfları fihristi*, ed. by Feridun Nâfiz Uzluk, Vakıflar umum müdürlüğü neşriyatı, Ankara, 1958, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> Clifford E. Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Handbook*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1967, pp. 116-117.

<sup>102</sup> On Islamic architecture in Saljūq and Ottoman times see Behçet Ünsal, *Turkish Islamic Architecture in Saljūq and Ottoman Times 1071-1923*, London, 1959; and Albert Gabriel, *Monuments turcs d’Anatolie*, vol. I-II, Paris 1931-1934.

who left their mark on the religious landscape of Asia Minor such as Mawlānā Rūmī, Ḥājī Bektaş and others. The little information one can glean on social and cultural history of the Saljūq Sultanate of Rūm comes from these *manāqib* sources.<sup>103</sup> As is well known, this genre of literature often combines mythical and historical elements; as a result its validity is often highly questionable. Arguably the most important source from this category is *Manāqib al-‘arīfīn*, a biography of Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī and his descendants by a follower of his order named Aflākī. This source has been used extensively for the reconstruction of religious and cultural conditions in Saljūqid Anatolia.<sup>104</sup> A few other sources of similar nature, and comparatively less importance, are *Saltuqnāma* by Abū al-Khayr al-Rūmī from the 15th century (which chronicles the life of a semi-legendary Muslim hero Sarı Saltuk), and the *Vilayatname-yi Ḥājī Bektaş*, among others. Even purely religious works like *Mirşād al-‘ibād* by Najm al-dīn Dāya and literary works of poetry like *Divan* of Sultan Veled are not without importance for the study of social conditions in pre-Ottoman Anatolia.

The famous Turkish scholar Fuad Köprülü has the following to say about to Aflākī’s *Manāqib*, a statement which to some degree can be extended to this category of sources in general:

In a number of subjects that I studied, I noticed that Aflaki completely agrees with our most reliable sources, including inscriptions; indeed, this *manāqib* book, which is frequently based on what the author personally saw and heard, was written much more carefully than many chronicles. I would say, therefore, that it is an important source of the first order.<sup>105</sup>

It is not possible to give here a detailed analysis of the rather complex ethnic and religious structure of Anatolia immediately following the Turkish invasion. We still lack detailed study (and consequently, complete understanding) not only of the language and literature, but also the architecture and other forms of artistic expression prevalent among the Saljūqs of Rūm starting from the eleventh century. Leaving apart the problem of the general paucity of historical sources, the objective picture that could result from the scrutiny of available material is distorted by competing ideological approaches. This is most clearly manifest in modern Turkish studies of the Republican period. Turkish scholars have been at pains to claim that the cultural heritage of the

<sup>103</sup> For some important *manāqib* sources for the study of Turkish history see İsmail Hakkı Mercan, “Türk tarihinin kaynaklarından olan bazı menakibname ve gazavatnameler hakkında”, *Sosyal bilim dergisi*, 2003, vol. 6, pp. 107-130.

<sup>104</sup> One possible explanation of its fame and frequent usage, apart from obvious historical value, is an early French translation by Clement Huart entitled *Les saints des derviches tourneurs. Récits traduits du persan et annotés par Clement Huart*, two volumes, Paris 1918-1922.

<sup>105</sup> See Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion: Prolegomena*, English translation by Gary Leiser, 1993, p. 39, henceforth referred to as *Islam in Anatolia*.

Sultanate of Rum as uniquely Turkish, setting aside other influences that had an obvious impact. Other scholars, however, have tried to establish an overall continuity in form and substance with the Great Saljūqs of Iran. From the names of several Saljūq rulers of Rum, the influence of even pre-Islamic Iranian history is observable; if we add to this the Christian component – not only in ethnic terms (referring to Greek, Armenian, and including Syriac inhabitants of the region), but also in religious terms (referring to the official Orthodox church and a number of surviving Christian heresies) - we only begin to discern the contours of the complex fusion that was formed in the Anatolia from the XI to the late XIII century, a phenomenon that eludes easy understanding.

Because of the geographic origin of the Turkish conquerors consisting of Oğuz tribes from Central Asia and their nomadic lifestyle and allegedly heterodox form of Islam which was deeply permeated with age-old Shamanist traditions, the social and religious traditions of the Saljūqs of Rum have been analyzed mainly according to the established dichotomy between sedentary and nomadic population. However, in analyzing the Turkish component of Anatolian population the terms Oğuz and Turkmen should be taken as generic rather than specific. Indeed, the ethnic composition of the Turks who entered Anatolia was far from monolithic; at different stages, Turks from among Qipchaks, Khwarazmians, Ak-Koyunlu, Kara-Koyunlu, and some Mongol-Tatar groups all entered Anatolia. On the other hand, the Christian population they encountered in Anatolia was equally divided between urban Greek (or otherwise largely Hellenized city dwellers), and a rural population that remained far less affected by the process of Hellenization.<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, the religious life of early Anatolia is explained principally along the line of the afore-mentioned bipolar division. It is among the rural population in Anatolia, and nomadic Turkmen tribes that escaped sedentarization, that local elements and ancient beliefs struggled and persisted during the processes of Christianization and Islamization respectively. Anatolia was the largest Byzantine province and its religious significance could be grasped from the number of churches, sanctuaries, and monasteries that point to the intensive religious and missionary activity.<sup>107</sup> In spite of this highly concentrated religiosity, the plateau of Asia Minor hosted several heretical movements of great vitality and considerable geographic distribution. The two most important of these early heretical movements, some of them indigenous to Anatolia, are the cult of Montanism, and the Paulician heresy, whose followers were termed variously as Paulicians, Bogomils, and Messalian. Both developed within Christianity itself, and in partial violation of the accepted tenets of Chalcedonian Christianity. To this list should be added Mani's heresy, the presence of which is recorded in a number

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<sup>106</sup> Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks: An Annotated Translation of 'Historia Turco-Byzantina'* by Harry J. Magoulias, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1975, p. 44.

<sup>107</sup> Speros Jr. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, University of California Press, 1971, pp. 34-35; henceforth Vryonis.

of Byzantine themes in Asia Minor.<sup>108</sup>

The biggest challenge to the official teaching of Orthodox Christianity, however, was posed by the Monophysites, who came to Anatolia in the tenth and eleventh centuries as a result of the official Byzantine policy of transfer of populations. Because it was strong primarily amongst Armenians and Syrians, the heresy had a double nature and at once constituted both an opposition to the Chalcedonian Christianity and cultural resistance to Hellenization. Overall, it was an attempt by those ethnic communities at preserving their own cultural and linguistic identity. The widespread distribution of the Monophysites in central and eastern Anatolia, and their involvement in the Battle of Malazgirt, has generally been seen as one of the primary reasons for the crushing defeat of the Byzantine army at the hands of the Turks. Finally, the loss of vast areas and the destruction of many churches and monasteries only increased the scope of the challenge, enabling the heresies to survive long into the following centuries.

### *The Turkish component*

There is little doubt that Sufi groups played the central role in the establishment of early Muslim society in Anatolia.<sup>109</sup> The four groups of Sufis that entered Anatolia and actively participated in its Islamization are characterized by a famous Ottoman historian as follows:

In Rum there are four bands who are among the strangers and travelers; one of them is the *ghaziyān-i Rum*, another of them is the *ākhiyān-i Rum*, another of them is the *‘abdālān-i Rum*, and the fourth one is the *bajiyān-i Rum*. (Aşıkpaşazade, ed. by ‘Ālī p. 201)

All of them were in one way or another related to Sufi ideals and principles and instrumental in the process of Islamization of Anatolia through individual or collective missionary activities. Some Sufi shaykhs used to send contingents of their followers to actively participate in conquests. Such was the case with Abū Ishāq al-Kāzarūnī from Shiraz in Iran. The presence of the Kāzarūnī dervishes is well attested in pre-Ottoman Anatolia far into the XIV century and beyond.

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<sup>108</sup> For an informative survey of dualist heresy in history, see Yuri Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy*, Yale University Press, 2000, which gives an extensive bibliography on the subject. There is a separate chapter in the book pertinent to the question of heresy in Byzantine Anatolia, p. 169. Vryonis considers that one of the factors facilitating the spread of heresy among Christians in Anatolia was the transfer of imperial capital to Constantinople and the absence of central church authority, as well as the destruction of a great number of churches and monasteries. See Vryonis, p. 252.

<sup>109</sup> The same trend would continue into the Balkans, where the earliest Turkish missionaries were Sufi masters; the most famous among them, at the very least the only one explicitly named, is a semi-legendary figure of Sarı Saltuk. See also Ömer Lütfi Barkan, “İstila devirlerinin kolonizatör türk dervişleri ve zaviyeler”, *Vakıflar dergisi*, vol. II, Ankara, 1942, pp. 279-304.

As mentioned above, Fuad Köprülü, one of the pioneers in the study of the socio-religious history of Islam in Anatolia, proceeded a step further than Aşıkpaşazade in that he was the first to establish a dichotomy model for the Sufis who entered Anatolia. According to this model, one can observe two broad categories of Sufis: urban Sufi masters who enjoyed the official patronage of the Saljūq rulers while being vigorous promoters of orthodox Islam, and itinerant dervishes who were seen as professing a highly heterodox form of Islam permeated with a deep residue of the pre-Islamic Shamanist elements originating in their homeland in Central Asia.<sup>110</sup> In the first category there were numerous famous Sufi masters who spent all or part of their life in the urban centers of Saljūqid Anatolia. In this group we can name Ibn ‘Arabī, Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī, Awḥad al-dīn Kirmānī,<sup>111</sup> Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī, ‘Affī al-dīn Tilimsānī, al-Jandī, Farghānī, and others. It is interesting to note that Köprülü disregarded insignificant differences in their points of view, and with complete confidence lists all of them as defenders of a broad Sufi philosophy that Ibn ‘Arabī tried to spread with “rather obscure and dry symbolism”.<sup>112</sup>

The fact that this list, with the exception of Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī and a few possible additions like Dāwūd al-Qayşarī and to some extent Najm al-dīn Dāya, contains names of the most celebrated members of Ibn ‘Arabī’s textual community, would seem to bear out his assertion. Almost the entire scholarly and spiritual careers of Ibn ‘Arabī’s companion and disciple Tilimsānī, his foremost disciple al-Qūnawī, his teacher Kirmānī, and a number of important disciples, were devoted to the diffusion of the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī. Alongside these prominent exponents and defenders of the Greatest Shaykh, among urban Sufis Köprülü lists members of the Rifā‘ī, Bektaşī, and later Mevlevi orders. Despite the official patronage and support they enjoyed, as well as the great respect they commanded among Muslims, the confines of their urban settlement meant that the influence these individuals exerted was largely confined to the urban population. The fact that the broad rural masses remained untouched, acted to further deepen the gap between the two social groups. Köprülü opposed to them many Turkmen babas, shaykhs from the Yasawī, Malāmī and Qalandarī brotherhoods who roamed freely through Anatolia, conveying their teachings in a much less organized manner. Charged with satisfying the religious needs of Turkmen nomads, Turkmen babas in Köprülü’s model emerge as little more than superficially Islamicized *bakhsis* and *özans* from the Shamanist tradition of Central Asia.

The two groups differed radically as concerns the scope of impact and approach to the

<sup>110</sup> It is only in modern scholarship that this division is firmly established; there is no evidence that the Sufis at the times regarded themselves along those lines of sedentary/orthodox and nomadic/heterodox division. While initiated by Köprülü, the model was adopted by many other modern scholars who studied Sufi groups in Anatolia and elsewhere. A most noticeable example is Trimmingham who in his seminal *The Sufi Orders in Islam* upholds the same dichotomy. See J. Spencer Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 22.

<sup>111</sup> On him and the Awḥadiye Sufi order which was named after him see Mikâil Bayram, *Şeyh Evhadü’-d-din Hâmid El-Kirmânî ve evhadiyye tarikati*, Damla matbaacılık, Konya 1993, 141 pp.

<sup>112</sup> *Islam in Anatolia*, p. 10; See also Köprülü, *Les origines de l’empire ottoman*, De Boccard, 1935, pp. 95-120.

question of Islamization. The scope and outreach of urban Sufis was severely limited by their linguistic background, as many of them were Arabic and Persian speakers and had limited influence among the Turkmen masses loosely organized under the leadership of babas. According to Köprülü's model, besides the heterodox religious beliefs and heterogeneous practices of the latter group, they also constituted a nucleus of social protest and were an obstacle to forming a homogeneous cohesion of the Muslim component in the population of pre-Ottoman Asia Minor.

In fact, the Turkmen nomads of Anatolia were viewed quite negatively at the time: Michael the Syrian, for instances, states that the tribesmen "submitted lands by cruel destruction and pillage."<sup>113</sup> Similarly and somewhat surprisingly, Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī, according to the *Manāqib al-‘arīfīn*, also appears to be very ill-disposed towards them. The *Manāqib* reports an encounter in which Jalāl al-dīn praises the 'constructive' character of Greeks and contrasts them with the 'destructive' Turkmens:

It is a well-known story that one day shaykh Ṣalāḥ al-dīn hired Turk manual workers to repair a fallen wall of his garden. Mawlānā Rūmī, upon spotting that, said: 'Ṣalāḥ al-dīn Efendi, when it comes to construction Greek workers ought to be hired instead, and when demolition is desired, then Turk workers should be employed, because the construction of the world is reserved for the Greek and its destruction for the Turks.'<sup>114</sup>

This statement, however, should be viewed in the context of a more general conception of Central Asiatic Turkmen and Mongol tribes, in which the destruction of the central Muslim lands foreshadowed events that would usher in the end of the world—a well-known theme in Islamic literature at that time. Moreover, it is precisely Rūmī, and Aflākī's account of his life and deeds, that makes Köprülü's model somewhat problematic. Despite its historical plausibility and great helpfulness in the systematic analysis of the complex socio-religious situation in early Anatolia, the binary model separating Sufis in Anatolia into two major groups is not applicable in all instances. The case of Jalāl al-dīn illustrates this very well. Even though he belonged to the branch of so-called urban Sufis, was a proponent of orthodox Islam and enjoyed the official patronage of the ruling dynasty, it was his spiritual *alter ego*, the wandering dervish Shams-i Tabrīzī, who exerted the greatest influence on Mawlānā Rūmī and directly inspired some of the finest poetry in the Persian language. It is thus that the case of the foremost Sufi figure of pre-Ottoman Anatolia whose influence was before long to decisively alter the religious currents in the nascent Ottoman Empire goes di-

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<sup>113</sup> Michael the Syrian, III, 170-171, quoted from Vryonis, p. 279.

<sup>114</sup> Ṣams al-dīn Aḥmad al-Aflākī al-‘Ārifī, *Manāqib al-‘arīfīn*, ed. by Tahsin Yazıcı, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1980, vol. II, p. 721. See also *Les saints des derviches tourneurs: récits traduits du persan et annotés par Clement Huart*, Paris 1918-1922, vol. II, pp. 208-9.

rectly counter to the asserted binary relationship of superiority and inferiority between urban and rural dervishes, respectively. In fact, here we have the exact opposite: a wandering dervish of questionable orthodoxy held sway over Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī, who was undoubtedly a true representative of the urban Sufi category. The same is true of Fakhr al-dīn ‘Irāqī, who was affiliated with the so-called urban Sufi circles through Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī and was at the same time a wandering dervish. His urban character is further seen in the fact that Mu‘īn al-dīn Pervane built a dervish lodge for him in Amasya.<sup>115</sup>

On the other hand, association with urban Sufi movements did not necessarily mean political loyalty to the Saljūqīd ruler. Consider the case of two lesser known individuals who actively participated in patronage, Fakhr al-dīn ‘Alī, *ṣāhib dīwān* (minister of state), and the above-mentioned Mu‘īn al-dīn Pervane, a highly-positioned governor. Although both were closely related to the Mevlevi circles, both ventured to set up their own dynasties in defiance of central authority.<sup>116</sup> In the case of the latter, the political adventure succeeded and he founded a short-lived ruling house. Overall, there were numerous contacts and much intermingling between the two groups, which makes the general application of the binary model somewhat questionable.

### *Ibn ‘Arabī and pre-Ottoman Anatolia*

One of the constant features of Ibn ‘Arabī’s life was permanent movement and incessant travelling. *Siyāḥa* and *sayr*—both broadly meaning travelling and journeying—

<sup>115</sup> Ṣams al-dīn Aḥmad al-Aflākī al-‘Ārifī, *Manāqib al-‘ārifīn*, vol. I, p. 400; Ethel Sara Wolper, *Patronage and Practice in Saljuq and Early Beylik Society: Dervish Lodges in Sivas, Tokat and Amasya*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), 1994, p. 41.

<sup>116</sup> One of the few prose works by Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī, *Kitāb fī-hi mā fī-hi*, contains numerous references to Pervane; in fact not a few of the ‘discourses’ are directed to him personally. From the narrative of the book, Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī emerges as a personal adviser and spiritual preceptor of the governor, furnishing guidance and approval of his acts including his political alliance with the Mongols. By way of example, the following excerpts from the afore-mentioned book are noteworthy:

“The Pervane said: ‘Night and day my heart and soul are intent upon serving God, but owing to my preoccupations with Mongol affairs I am not able to discharge that service.’ The Master replied: ‘These works too are works done for God, since they are means of procuring peace and security for Muslimdom. You have sacrificed yourself, your possessions and your body, to bring their hearts to a point that a few Muslims are occupied peaceably in obeying God’s will. So, this too is a good work’”;

“The Master said: ‘I have been longing to call upon you, but as I know that you are busy with the interests of the people I have been sparing you the trouble.’ The Parvana said: ‘This duty was incumbent upon me. Now that the emergency has ended, henceforward I will attend upon you.’ The Master said: ‘There is no difference. It is all the same thing. You are so gracious that all things are the same to you. How can one speak of troubles? But since I am aware that today it is you who are occupied with good deeds and charities, naturally I have recourse to you.’”

See *Discourses of Rumi*, translated by A.J. Arberry, Samuel Weiser, New York, 1972, Discourse # 3, p. 23 and discourse # 12, p. 63. The Persian original edited by Badī‘ al-zamān Furūzanfar (Amīr Kabīr, Tehran, 1369 Sh=1990) has an index of proper names which shows that Pervane is mentioned more than a dozen times in the text. See *Kitāb fī-hi mā fī-hi*, p. 365. Al-Aflākī’s *Manāqib al-‘ārifīn* also records many insightful stories about Rūmī’s close relationship with Pervane. See for instance in volume one, pp. 99, 100, 108, 118, 122, 129, 145, 151, 157, 181, 183.

seem to have been his mode of life, in an age when travel was equivalent to the acquisition of knowledge. In light of his nearly nomadic lifestyle it is not easy, nor is it indeed necessary, to establish the exact date of his final departure to the East. In 597/1200, he visited the city of Fez for the third time, and in the following year he proceeded eastward, apparently never to return to his native Andalusia.<sup>117</sup> His journey towards Mecca in order to perform pilgrimage was gradual and was interspersed with sojourns of varying length in Tunis and Cairo. Like all other important episodes in his life, his journey towards the East came as a result of a mystical vision he experienced in the Andalusian outpost of *Jazīra al-khadrā'* (Algeciras) in 589/1193. Many years later, in a conversation with his foremost disciple and possibly stepson Ṣadr al-dīn Qūnawī, Ibn 'Arabī relates the following in a confessional tone:

When in Andalusia I arrived at the Mediterranean Sea I resolved not to make the crossing until I had been allowed to see all the internal and external states that God had destined for me until the time of my death. So I turned towards God with total concentration and in a state of contemplation and vigilance that were perfect; God then showed me all my future states, both internal and external, right to the end of my days. I even saw that your father, Ishāq b. Muḥammad, would be my companion and you as well. I was made aware of your states, the knowledge you would acquire, your experiences and stations, and of the revelations, theophanies and everything else with which God was to grace you. I then went to sea, with insight and certainty as my possession. Everything was and everything is just as it was bound to be.<sup>118</sup>

The great emphasis Ibn 'Arabī places on Ṣadr al-dīn in the mystical vision shows that the encounter with him was the ultimate goal of his migration to the East. Meeting al-Qūnawī meant reaching a culmination point that would finally make sense of all his peregrinations and tribulations, known to him even before he would set out on the journey. The central role played by Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī in the theoretical articulation and overall consolidation of what later became known as Ibn 'Arabī's school of thought apparently demonstrates the veracity of Ibn 'Arabī's spiritual unveiling. His first destination, however, was Mecca, where he spent very fruitful years in devotion to worship and learning. Mecca was also the place where he met many important individuals, some of whom were to leave a permanent mark on his life. One of the people he met in Mecca, who was important to his future relationship with Anatolia and its Saljūq rulers, was Ṣadr al-dīn's father Majd al-dīn.

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<sup>117</sup> *Rūḥ al-quds*, p. 9; Addas, p. 300.

<sup>118</sup> Addas, p. 111.



Very little is known about Majd al-dīn Ishāq b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Rūmī, and the only source that offers any concrete information is Ibn Bībī’s famous chronicle entitled *al-Awāmīr al-‘alā’iyye*, from which it can be inferred that Majd al-dīn was a high-ranking Saljūqid official, *mulāzim* and possibly chancellor (*ṣadr*) of the Saljūqid ruler ‘Izz al-dīn Kaykāwūs, and in any case, a person of immense influence on the sovereign and relied on by him. Ibn Bībī records that Majd al-dīn acted as an emissary of Kaykāwūs to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, al-Nāṣir li-dīn Allah, and that he was sent to inform him about Kaykāwūs’s triumphal entrance into the important port town on the Black Sea, the city of Sinop. The same source suggests that he spent many years as a Saljūqid ambassador in Sham and Mecca. From the hearing certificates Ibn ‘Arabī issued for two of his works, *Tāj al-rasā’il* and *Rūḥ al-quds*, both in 600/1203 and both in Mecca, we find Majd al-dīn among the names of those who attended.<sup>119</sup>

Given the great care and caution Ibn ‘Arabī displayed in choosing his entourage and the listeners of his works, the inclusion of Majd al-dīn in the private circle of Ibn ‘Arabī seems to indicate a high degree of intimacy between the two. His presence in Ibn ‘Arabī’s entourage shows that Majd al-dīn possessed pronounced qualities and spiritual aspirations, a fact corroborated by Ibn Bībī’s chronicle where he is referred to with unambiguous and highly honorific religious titles. He is referred to as *shaykh al-‘ālam*, (the elder of the world) and even more explicitly as *ṣadr-i islām* (at the forefront of Islam), *nabī sunnat* (an ardent follower of the Prophet’s tradition and example), *walī sīrat* (exhibiting godliness in his personal life) and *umdat al-‘arīfīn* (the succor of those endowed with the knowing of God – all of terms which betray the unmistakable Sufi coloring, and indicate his mystical aspirations.<sup>120</sup> Despite their close companionship, Ibn ‘Arabī has little to add about Majd al-dīn and mentions him by name only on a few occasions in the *Futūḥāt* and *Muḥādarāt al-abrār*. Majd al-dīn’s political career was directly linked to the ups and downs of the Saljūq Sultan Kaykhusraw I. After the sovereign was ousted for a while, from 592/1196 to 605/1205, Majd al-dīn was forced to leave Anatolia and to spend many years in major cultural and intellectual centers of the Muslim world such as Damascus, Baghdad, and Mecca, where he met Ibn ‘Arabī. After Kaykhusraw recovered the throne in 605/1205, he extended an invitation to Majd al-dīn to return to Anatolia, an invitation that included Ibn ‘Arabī as well.<sup>121</sup>

Ibn ‘Arabī’s journey towards the north from Mecca marked a turning point for the future history of his school of thought. In Anatolia, under the rule of a Turkish dynasty, Ibn ‘Arabī came in touch with the Sufi tradition of the Turco-Persian speaking world

<sup>119</sup> Addas, p. 226.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn-i Bībī (El-Ḥüseyn bin Muḥammed bin ‘Alī el-Ca‘ferī er-Rügedī), *El-Evāmīrū ‘l-‘Alā’iyye fī ‘l-umūri ‘l-alā’iyye*, I cild: *Kılıç Arslan’ın vefatından I. Alaüddin Keykubad’in cülüsüne kadar*, ed. Necati Lugal and Adnan Sadık Erzi, Türk Tarih Kurumu basımevi, Ankara, 1957, p. 157, quoted from Addas, p. 225. His actual affiliation to any of the existent Sufi orders at the time remains unknown. One of the Sufi masters with whom Majd al-dīn seemed to have worked closely is Suhrawardī.

<sup>121</sup> Stephen Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ‘Arabī*, Anqa Publishing, Oxford, 1999, p. 174; referred to as *The Unlimited Mercifier*.

of the eastern Muslim lands of Khurāsān and Central Asia. Furthermore, it was in Anatolia that the textual community of Ibn ‘Arabī took shape, posthumously and through the efforts of Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī and a host of his disciples. Even though his textual community remained for quite some time exclusively Arabic and Persian in expression,<sup>122</sup> its influence was at the greatest in Anatolia, and because of its geographical distribution was destined to be inherited by the Ottomans whose rise to power Ibn ‘Arabī allegedly predicted.<sup>123</sup>

Information in sources is scarce about Ibn ‘Arabī’s movements in Anatolia at the time; he does not provide much information in his own works and the single most reliable source undoubtedly is the hearing certificates he issued for a number of his works that were read to his companions in Anatolia. Also the autograph manuscripts wherein the author recorded where and when he finished any given work should be considered in reconstructing his itinerary in pre-Ottoman Anatolia.<sup>124</sup> There is little doubt that he was on very close terms with the ruling house of the Anatolian Saljūqs; this is a fact noted by all traditional and modern biographers. Still, the story of his relationship, as well as the great influence and respect he commanded, remains largely anecdotal in nature. His companion and confidant Majd al-dīn was doubtless very instrumental in helping him forge close ties with the upper segments of the Saljūqid polity. In more general terms, Ibn ‘Arabī’s close association with several ruling dynasties in the Muslim East could also be regarded as a potential cause of the existing misunderstanding between him and some ‘ulama. Ever since leaving the West, he had enjoyed royal protection and in many cases royal patronage, something that obviously run contrary to the well-known ill disposition of many scholars, particularly Sufis, towards the agents of worldly power.<sup>125</sup> In the case of Anatolia, he even managed to remain on close terms with both the Ayyūbids and the Saljūqids, a remarkable achievement when one takes into account the fact that they were at times bitter opponents and waged several campaigns against each other.

In Saljūqid Anatolia Ibn ‘Arabī became a member of a revered group of spiritual leaders and teachers who at the same time acted as trusted advisers to the rulers. His host Majd al-dīn seemed to have acted in that capacity as well to both Kaykhusraw and the Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir. The latter also enjoyed the service of another remarkable figure almost as influential as Ibn ‘Arabī, Shihāb al-dīn Suhrawardī, whose mission to the Saljūqid court was alluded to earlier. After a short period of exile

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<sup>122</sup> Presumably, the first Turkish commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ* was composed by ‘Abdullah al-Bosnevī (d. 1054/1645).

<sup>123</sup> See Chapter IV.

<sup>124</sup> *The Unlimited Mercifier*, p. 172.

<sup>125</sup> The shift in this traditional Sufi attitude and understanding of the concept of *zuhd* will occur some centuries later. See Reşat Öngören, “XV ve XVI asırlarda Osmanlı’da tasavvuf anlayışı”, *XV ve XVI asırlarda türk asrı yapan değerler*, Ensar neşriyat, İstanbul, pp. 409-441; One illustrative case of this change in understanding of *zuhd* is that of Pir Ali Aksarayi and his critique of Ibrahim Adham’s abandonment of this world, p. 411. The most notable result of this shift is forging a close relationship between Ottoman sultans and Sufi shaykhs, representing two poles of power and authority. Of course, such a phenomenon is not restricted to the Ottoman Empire; similar instances are found in Central Asia and Mughal India as well.

Kaykhusraw I was reinstated as sultan in approximately 600/1204, a year which marks the beginning of what could be termed a golden half-century of the Rum Sultanate under his rule and that of his two sons, Kayqubād and Kaykāwūs. Majd al-dīn and Ibn ‘Arabī met at Mecca in the same year, 600/1204.<sup>126</sup> The following year, we can trace their move north towards Baghdad and Mosul, where they stayed for some time. Already by the next year, 602/1205, Ibn ‘Arabī has arrived in the Saljūq capital of Konya, where he wrote a number of his works including *Risāla al-anwār* and *Kitāb al-amr*. It is then and there that Ibn ‘Arabī met Awhād al-dīn Kirmānī, who would play an important role in disseminating his teachings and training his foremost disciple Ṣadr al-dīn some years later. What followed was a period of intense travelling during which Ibn ‘Arabī crisscrossed the entire region of Anatolia, Sham, Iraq and Arabia, moving back and forth between Baghdad, Jerusalem, Aleppo, Mecca, and a few towns in the Saljūqid realm; in the last, his presence is documented in the cities of Malatya, Sivas, and Konya. His travels led him back to Anatolia in or around the years 608-609 (1211-12), then again in 612/1215. This time he stayed until 615/1218, possibly 618/1221. A number of the *samā’* certificates establish his presence in Malatya from 612/1215 until 615/1218. He also attended the funeral of his companion ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥabashī in Malatya in 618/1221.

Almost nothing is known about his relationship with the scholarly class in Saljūq Anatolia. There are no traces of controversy such as that which has been recorded elsewhere in Cairo, Hebron, Aleppo, and Mecca. Malatya seems to have been in any case more amicable towards him than Aleppo. The commentary on the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* was begun in Aleppo, but finished in Malatya. Majd al-dīn’s hometown has been suggested as a base from which Ibn ‘Arabī embarked on his many journeys.<sup>127</sup> In the *Durra al-fākhira*, Ibn ‘Arabī recounts the details of Ḥabashī’s death and offers a rare insight into his own relationship with the ‘ulama of the town:

He died in the night. I myself had intended to wash his body. However in the morning the people came to pay their respects, and among them was the righteous jurist Kamāl al-dīn Muẓaffar, a man of the town and one of the folk. When I explained about the washing, he exclaimed ‘God is the greatest’ and was overcome by a spiritual state (*ḥāl*). Yesterday when I was in my garden a voice told me to wash myself, to which I replied that I had no need to do so. The request was made three times and after the third time I was told to be ready to wash the body of one of God’s servants on the morrow... The preacher Badr al-dīn told me at Malatya on the authority of some of his household that they had

<sup>126</sup> *The Unlimited Mercifier*, p. 173; Addas, p. 226.

<sup>127</sup> *The Unlimited Mercifier*, p. 179.

looked down by night from the rooftop to the grave of al-Ḥabashī and had seen a great light reaching to it from the sky.<sup>128</sup>

It is obvious that Kamāl al-dīn and Badr al-dīn as two representatives of the scholarly class had unmistakable Sufi leanings, were possessors of a spiritual state, and were counted by Ibn ‘Arabī among the Folk. It is not possible to infer from their titles, *faqīh* and *khaṭīb* respectively, how prominent they were in the ranks of the ‘ulama, yet in the case of the latter it can be seen that he was one of the leaders of the scholarly class who attended the central mosque of the town. The overall impression, however, is that of acceptance, and not only of Ibn ‘Arabī but of his disciples and companions alike.

Other Sufi figures, even those close to Ibn ‘Arabī, seem to have been less fortunate in Malatya. One of them was like Awḥad al-dīn Kirmānī. On the surface there is little to justify such a fate. He faced fierce opposition from the city ‘ulama and was forced to leave Malatya. Awḥad al-dīn Kirmānī, the celebrated Sufi master after whom the Awḥadiye Sufi order was named, was for more than two decades a close associate of Ibn ‘Arabī. The two of them also shared the acquaintance of Majd al-dīn. Alongside Ibn ‘Arabī, Kirmānī was the major formative influence on Ṣadr al-dīn, who was entrusted to him for spiritual upbringing by Ibn ‘Arabī himself.<sup>129</sup> That biographical fact, like his works, testifies that the ideas Kirmānī exposed were similar to those of Ibn ‘Arabī. Moreover, unlike Ibn ‘Arabī, Kirmānī was said to be of the Saljūqid royal lineage, a fact that could have played a role in his departure from Malatya, but could also be considered as a privilege and an advantage.

There is, however, one probable cause for the fierce opposition he faced from the city ‘ulama. Through his shaykh, Rukn al-dīn Sijjāsī, Kirmānī was related to the Sufi teaching and practices of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, who had a noted inclination toward the controversial practices of *samā’* and the even more problematic practice of *shāhidbāzī*.<sup>130</sup> The question of *samā’* to this day remains a stumbling block in the relationship between some ‘ulama and those Sufis who are in favor of it. It should be noted

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<sup>128</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Durra al-fākhira*, SK Esad Efendi no. 1777, fols. 119a-120b; quotation here and translation taken from *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 158.

<sup>129</sup> See Anonymous, *Manāqib Awḥad al-dīn Ibn Abī al-Fakhr Kirmānī*, ed. Badī‘ al-zamān Furūzanfar, Enteshārāt-e Bongāh-e tarjome ve nashr-e ketāb no. 38, Tehran, 1347 Sh.= 1969, pp. 84-86ff.

<sup>130</sup> The controversial practice of *shāhidbāzī*, the practice of witnessing the beauties of God’s creation through the means of young beardless boys, was at the heart of hostility towards the many Sufis who were in favor of it in Khurāsān and elsewhere. Apart from Kirmānī, who supposedly upheld the practice and antagonized ‘ulama and ordinary Muslims who demonstrated little understanding for it, another prominent devotee of Ibn ‘Arabī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, was sharing the similar fate in Herat. On Jāmī’s practice of *shāhidbāzī* and the Akbari stance on the issue see Hamid Algar, “Jāmī and Ibn ‘Arabī: Khatam al-shu’ara and Khatam al-awliya’”, *Ишрак: ежегодник исламской философии*, № 3, 2012, pp. 138-158. On the importance of *samā’* and *raqs* in the Awḥadiye practice see Mikāil Bayrām, op. cit, p. 78. Referring to Kirmānī’s practice of *shāhidbāzī*, Mawlānā Rūmī is quoted as saying, in a rather unusually harsh tone, that Kirmānī had left “a bad legacy in this world and will be responsible on behalf of all those who engaged in it”. See Ṣams al-dīn Aḥmad al-Aflākī al-‘Arifī, *Manāqib al-‘arifīn*, vol. I, p. 440.

that many distinguished Sufi masters, including Ibn ‘Arabī, were fierce opponents of *samā*.<sup>131</sup> and Kirmānī’s approval thereof very likely caused him many difficulties not only with the ‘ulama but with some Sufis as well.

It has been reported that Rūmī’s master Shams-i Tabrīzī was very critical of Kirmānī precisely because of *samā*. Because Kirmānī moved from Malatya to another city under the Saljūq ruler, Kayseri, the criticism he faced was local in nature and demonstrates the degree of independence that main metropolitan centers of the Sultanate possessed. As regards textual evidence relevant to Ibn ‘Arabī’s relationship with pre-Ottoman Anatolia, we possess two texts written by Ibn ‘Arabī himself, one poem and one letter, that indicate the level of intimacy he enjoyed with the sultan as well as his influence at the Saljūq court. Both texts were addressed to ‘Izz al-dīn Kaykāvūs (r. 607-616/1211-1220). The first is related to an incident that occurred in Sivas in the year of 612/1215, when Ibn ‘Arabī witnessed a vision announcing Kaykāvūs’s victory over the Crusaders in Antioch.<sup>132</sup> Following the dream, he sent the ruler a congratulatory poem from Malatya. The original of the poem is included in the *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār*.<sup>133</sup>

A far more important piece of correspondence is Ibn ‘Arabī’s famous letter to Kaykāvūs. The date of the letter is not given in the original. The letter ends in a poem dedicated to the sultan, and could have been written around the same year when Kaykāvūs took Antioch. The text of this revealing letter is worth quoting *in extenso*:

This is what we wrote to the sultan ‘Izz al-dīn Kaykāvūs, always victorious with God’s help in response to his letter which reached us earlier, may Allah support him:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

The request of that noble and victorious sultan with the help and support of the Omnipotent God, may He render his rule prolonged and full of justice, has come to his father and well-wishing adviser so that the response became obligatory with a piece of religious advice and [it is well known that] advice is divine policy. The reply follows as much as time permitted and paper could convey until the meeting in person would be enabled whereby all veils would be removed.

<sup>131</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī addressed the issue of *samā* in many places in his writings. In *Rūḥ al-quds*, he mentioned it as one clear indication of the overall decadence of Muslims in his time. See *Rūḥ al-quds*, p. 9.

<sup>132</sup> This alleged prediction of the victory of a Muslim army over Christians is not the only one Ibn ‘Arabī claimed. While still in the Maghreb, in the city of Fez, he is said to have predicted another instance like that: the brilliant victory of Almohad Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr over the Christian armies at Alarcos. See *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 29.

<sup>133</sup> *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār*, vol. II, pp. 454-457; Ibn ‘Arabī’s vision of Saljūqid victorious march on Antioch is recorded in the same volume, p. 420. The original letter is in the *Futūḥāt*, vol. IV, p. 710 and M. Asín Palacios gives a Spanish translation in *El Islam cristianizado. Estudio del sufismo a través de las obras de Abenarabi de Murcia*, Madrid, 1931, pp. 93-94.

In a sound tradition it has been narrated from the Prophet that he said: ‘Advice is the essence of believing.’ They asked: ‘To whom oh Apostle of God should advice be directed?’ Then he replied: ‘to God<sup>134</sup>, His Messenger and the leaders of the Muslim community, as well as the rest of the believers.’

And you are without a doubt one of the leaders of the Muslims. God entrusted this matter to you and made you His deputy (*nā’ib*) in His lands to rule and judge among His bondsmen to the maximum of your ability; He established a truthful scale for you so that you apply it among them and expounded to you the ultimate argument so that you may lead them in accordance with it, and call them unto it; under that condition He delegated you to rule and under it we pledged you our allegiance. If you do justice to it, then for you and them result good and salvation; should you violate it, then [the responsibility and punishment will be] upon you and them. Beware, lest I see you the morrow on the Day of Judgment to be the one with the feeblest account of deeds among the Muslim leaders and lest your response to the countless blessings that the Almighty bestowed upon you in your leadership and polity be equated with the utmost ingratitude for bounties, used to upkeep disobedience and investing the agents of evil with the rule over the weak and impoverished subjects; [in that case] they would rule over them with ignorance and negligence and you will be responsible for all of that.

So God indeed was generous to you that He clothed you with His deputyship; You are His shade cast over His land. So, protect the one to whom injustice has been done against his oppressor. Do not be deceived that God has enlarged your dominion and laid earth flat in front of you in spite of your perseverance in violating His rules in injustice and transgressions; that allowance while you are as described above is but a postponement from God not a neglect [as to what you are doing]. Between you and your fate with deeds as such is no barrier save reaching a pre-determined appointment. There you will be taken to the abode where your fathers and ancestors already journeyed and at that time you will [not be able] to repent. At that time repentance will be fruitless.

Oh you, among the greatest calamities that befell Islam, and how numbered they might be is the clang of church bells in open manifestation of rejection, the lightening of its slogans and the removal of the social conditions that the *Amīr al-mu’minīn* and *imam* of the God-fearing,

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<sup>134</sup> The original reads *lillah*, a dative compound consisting of the divine name and a preposition. It has been explained and translated differently. It is usually translated as ‘for the sake of God’. Another possible explanation is the meaning of sincere devotion to God, as the Arabic original for advice (*al-naṣīḥa*) comes from the same root as the word *naṣūh*, exclusively used as an attribute with the word *tawba* (repentance) and meaning the true, ultimate act of sincere repentance to God.

‘Umar b. Khattāb, may God be pleased with him, had sanctioned for the *dhimmi*s [people of social contact] that they are not to erect in their towns or around them new churches, chapels nor monasteries, neither will they mend what had fallen; [that] they will not prevent their churches from hosting and feeding a Muslim visitor for three nights, neither shelter a spy nor conceal any conspiracy or sabotage against Muslims; they are also not to teach the Qur’an to their children or manifest any form of idolatry, must not prevent their relatives from embracing Islam if they wished to do so. They must respect Muslims and stand up from their seats if they wish to sit and must not resemble Muslims in any parts of their clothing like shirts, turban, shoes or hairstyle. They must not call each other by Muslim names or use their nicknames. They are also not permitted to ride in saddle or take up sword or any other piece of weaponry. Christians are not to engrave their rings with Arabic script, or sell wine and intoxicants. They must observe dress codes wherever they are and should tie up the *zunnār* on their waists; they must not show crosses open nor make any of their books available on the wayside where Muslims might go; they are not to bury their dead alongside the deceased Muslims and can only sound their bells [at the time of funerals] lightly; at the church ceremonies they should not raise their voices in the presence of Muslims, nor lament over their dead; they are also not to show open flames to Muslims, nor buy slaves that were in the possession of Muslims. Should they violate any of these regulations, the social protection (*dhimma*) will be no more applicable to them and it will be permissible for Muslims to treat them as enemies and disrupters of social order (*ahl al-mu‘ānada wa al-shiqāq*).

That is the regulation of the just imam ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb, may God be pleased with him. It was truthfully related that the Prophet declared: ‘There is no building of churches in Islam nor reconstruction of what has been fallen’. Ponder carefully on my letter and you will be guided, God permitting, as long as you act according to it.

An advisory poem is appended to the letter in which Ibn ‘Arabī eloquently warns ‘Izz al-dīn of his prospects and fortune should he not comply with the requirements of the Sharī‘a. What is one to make of this detailed barrage of sanctions? The letter to Kaykāvūs is a well-known document and represents one of the few reliable pieces of correspondence between Ibn ‘Arabī and any of the Saljūq rulers. It has been analyzed and interpreted differently by different scholars. For Asín Palacios it is a document that clearly demonstrates Ibn ‘Arabī’s ill-disposition towards the Christians, which does not prevent him from labeling the totality of his teachings as a Christianized Islam.

There is an obvious social and historical context to the letter that should not be ignored: the letter was written in an atmosphere in which Christianity and its warriors were gaining momentum on many fronts including Ibn ‘Arabī’s native Andalusia and Palestine as well as Anatolia. From the Muslim perspective, that is indeed a broad global context. There is, however, a narrower context pertaining to the personality of ‘Izz al-dīn and the circumstances of his life and career. Not only was ‘Izz al-dīn surrounded by Christians at his court: he was himself the son of a Christian woman, who was the daughter of a Christian priest. He was thus effectively half-Greek by birth, married to a Christian woman and baptized at birth, which is probably the farthest possible departure made by any Muslim ruler in the direction of another religious tradition.<sup>135</sup> These personal circumstances could have made him particularly lenient and sympathetic towards Christians. The level of intermingling between Muslims and Christians in Saljūq Anatolia is many ways unique, and the sources are replete with details of syncretic practices.<sup>136</sup>

The text of the letter is revealing in a number of ways. At the beginning, Ibn ‘Arabī states that he wrote it at the behest of ‘Izz al-dīn who sought advice, which excludes the possibility that any other circumstance might have prompted Ibn ‘Arabī to write it.<sup>137</sup> Another remarkable feature of the letter is a total absence of any honorific titling: in fact, in three instances Ibn ‘Arabī addresses ‘Izz al-dīn as “oh you” [Ar. *yā hādhā*], which is intriguing. Moreover, in the invocation he calls himself the king’s father. From the text of the letter Ibn ‘Arabī emerges as an upholder and protector of Sharī‘a par excellence—an office he took upon himself. The restrictions of which ‘Izz al-dīn was reminded represented the standard set of regulations for non-Muslims living in Muslim lands as *dhimmi*s, and as such had to be upheld scrupulously and at all times. His concern for their application is sincere and could be taken as a testimony to Ibn ‘Arabī’s overall attention to the Sharī‘a.

### *In Damascus*

<sup>135</sup> Vryonis, p. 227-8. On ‘Izz al-dīn’s baptism, see Vryonis, p. 488. Other sources indicate that ‘Izz al-dīn actively participated in the liturgy and kissed icons in Constantinople. The practice of baptism as a form of medical treatment appears to have been carried on into Ottoman times. For instance, Hasluck reports that Murad I was baptized against epilepsy. See *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. I, p. 34.

<sup>136</sup> Vryonis, Chapter III: “The Beginnings of Transformation”, *passim*.

<sup>137</sup> The Sultan of Rum sought Ibn ‘Arabī’s advice on how to treat his Christian subjects in 609/1212, while passing from Konya on his way to Baghdad. There is some evidence that the sultan acted on Ibn ‘Arabī’s recommendations, which amounted to what Vryonis termed as heavy oppression of the Christians in Anatolia at the time. The judgment he passes on the condition of Christians following Ibn ‘Arabī’s advice is ironically included into a section of Vryonis’s book *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism...*, entitled “Integration of the Christians into Muslim Society (1071-1276)”, pp. 223-244, where Vryonis goes to some length to describe the unprecedented social influence Christians enjoyed at the Saljūqid court. As regards Hasluck, the underlying theory of his study of pre-Ottoman religious situation in Anatolia is that of shared spirituality or what he termed as “non-committal personage”, where the main difference between Muslim and Christian holy men and sanctuaries in most cases was a matter of a proper name. See Frederick Hasluck, *Islam and Christianity under the Sultans*, two volumes, Oxford, 1929: vol. I, p. 50.



Despite this proximity to the Saljūqid sovereigns and the marked influence he exerted on their court and in pre-Ottoman Anatolian society in general, Ibn ‘Arabī decided to leave Anatolia and permanently settle in Damascus. His transfer to Damascus marks the official end of several decades of wandering throughout the East.

There are numerous clues as to why the shaykh decided to depart from Anatolia. In the year 617/1220 Ṣadr al-dīn Qūnawī’s father, Majd al-dīn, died. He was not only a close companion to Ibn ‘Arabī, but also the initial motivator of his coming to Anatolia, and most certainly the primary source of his influence with the Saljūqs. The next year, 618/1221, marked the death of Badr al-Ḥabashī, who was Ibn ‘Arabī’s life-long spiritual and travelling companion. It is in these two tragic losses that we should perhaps seek the cause of Ibn ‘Arabī’s decision to move from Anatolia. Only a couple of years later, more precisely in 620/1223, we find him again in Damascus, this time permanently, as it turned out. The nearly twenty years which he spent in Damascus before his death, in 638/1240, mark an exceedingly significant and prolific period of Ibn ‘Arabī’s life. Most of the ideas that are associated with the greatest shaykh, and that were previously given as either indications or in a rudimentary form, were now put into their final form and more importantly, incorporated into the spiritual system that his works informed.

It is in Damascus that Ibn ‘Arabī experienced a vision of the Prophet handing him the book of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* in 627/1229. His *magnum opus*, the *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, was begun in Damascus and written there in two drafts. The first draft was finished two years after the receipt of the *Fuṣūṣ*, and the second draft was finished in 636/1238. In addition, he completed his *Dīwān* in Damascus in 634/1236. In addition to a great number of shorter works and treatises that he wrote while there, it is clear that the textual corpus of Ibn ‘Arabī as we know it today emerged during these two decades of his settled life in Damascus. The textual body was the final output of his previous writings, and the visions and experiences vouchsafed to him up to that time. Alongside the composition of his textual corpus, Ibn ‘Arabī took particular care to educate his foremost disciple and formulator of his school of thought, Ṣadr al-dīn Qūnawī, as well as a score of other followers whose names are recorded in the *samā’* certificates that have come down to us.<sup>138</sup>

A lot has been said already regarding the central role of Ṣadr al-dīn in the theoretical solidification of the Akbari worldview and its geographical dissemination through a number of his disciples.<sup>139</sup> Here, attention should be directed towards two significant transfers of authority: the first is that from the master to his disciple, from Ibn ‘Arabī himself to Ṣadr al-dīn, and the second is the linking of Ṣadr al-dīn with the first seminal scholarly figures of the Ottoman Empire, Fenārī Efendi and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, who were in turn succeeded by a series of Ottoman Akbari scholars.

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<sup>138</sup> Yahya, vol. I, pp. 76-78.

<sup>139</sup> See William Chittick, “The Last Will and Testament of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Foremost Disciple, Ṣadr al-dīn Qūnawī”, *Sophia Perennis*, vol. IV, number 1, 1978, pp. 43-58; Ekrem Demirli, *Sadreddin Konevi: hayati, ilmi şahsiyeti ve eserleri*, MEBKAM yayınlari, Konya, 2007.

As was the case when examining Ibn ‘Arabī’s pedigree in terms of traditional Muslim education through his numerous *ijāzas* combined in a single document he composed for al-Malik al-Muzaffar, we are fortunate to possess the original of his authorizing document to Ṣadr al-dīn, which establishes the latter’s credentials not only within the community of ‘ulama, but also his credentials for the nascent textual community of Ibn ‘Arabī, informed principally by his two most famous works, the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*, both of which he authored during his stay in Damascus. The first significant detail to be noted about the *Ijāza* Ibn ‘Arabī granted to Ṣadr al-dīn is that the document is not a copy, but the original version that the author wrote in his own handwriting. The text is in Yusuf Ağa 5624 (fols. 671 – 79) and has already been translated and studied.<sup>140</sup> Although the document contains the titles of the books that Ṣadr al-dīn read in the presence of his master, the *Ijāza* also serves as a general authorization (*ijāza ‘amma*) allowing him to transmit all of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works, which demonstrates once more the organic unity of the ideas they contain. The opening and closing parts of the *Ijāza* are reserved for Ṣadr al-dīn’s other teachers, and a few of them are mentioned by name. From a reference at the beginning of the *Ijāza* we know that he studied with a Ḥanbalī traditionalist, shaykh Shams al-dīn Yūsuf b. Khalīl b. ‘Abdullāh al-Dimashqī (d. 648/1250), who transmitted to him the hagiographical work *Ḥilya al-awliyā’*; and in the closing parts of the *Ijāza* we find the names of three scholars, apparently traditionalists, and the works they transmitted to Ṣadr al-dīn. According to this information, Ṣadr al-dīn studied a work entitled *al-Nāsikh wa al-mansūkh fī al-ḥadīth* with shaykh Taqī al-dīn Ibn Bābawayh; another shaykh, Sharaf al-dīn al-Sullamī, gave him *ijāza* for Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

The central part of the *Ijāza* is, of course, reserved for Ibn ‘Arabī’s works. The titles Ṣadr al-dīn read and studied in the presence of his master were added in temporal sequence as he completed their reading, sometimes in as much as a year. It is impossible to ignore the great insistence on authenticity of the document, readily visible in every passage. The text is replete with phrases like ‘and I wrote this with my own hand’, followed by repeated mentions of the full names of the books and exact dates.<sup>141</sup> This is not surprising, given the nature of *ijāza* as a legal document. In this particular case, in light of the fact that more than two thirds of all titles mentioned are works by the same author, the *Ijāza* suggests the formal transfer of power and authority within the informing Akbari tradition, between the eponymous master and his main pupil. The insistence on authenticity demonstrates a keen awareness of the document’s significance for future generations of scholars associated with the Sufi group of Ibn ‘Arabī.

<sup>140</sup> See Gerald Elmore, “Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī’s Personal Study-List of Books by Ibn al-‘Arabī”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 56, no.3, 1997, pp. 161-181; Mikāil Bayram, “The Library of Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qunavī and its Books”, *Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts; Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Istanbul on March 28-30 2001*, eds. Judith Pfeiffer and Manfred Kropp, Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 2007, pp. 177-183.

<sup>141</sup> See a facsimile specimen from the Yusuf Ağa manuscript, in Gerald Elmore, “Ṣadr al-Din Qūnawī’s Personal List ...”, p. 168.

A separate chapter in the codex is given to Şadr al-dīn's accounts of various spiritual events such as visions, dreams and unveilings that occurred in the presence of his master. Apparently while studying Ibn 'Arabī's *Kitāb al-mushāhadāt*, which is a compendium of the author's visions, his disciple was granted one vision of the Prophet,<sup>142</sup> suggesting that the transfer of authority was not limited to the mere understanding of its textual basis: Şadr al-dīn was to inherit the spiritual prowess of his master resulting in what the author terms *fath kullī*, i.e. a total unveiling of the invisible world as allegedly occurred during his stay in Damascus.<sup>143</sup> This type of spiritual insight into the invisible world, while shared by most Sufis, remained the standard *topos* of the Akbari school, mentioned by almost all subsequent Akbari authorities, including al-Qāshānī, al-Qayṣarī and 'Abdullāh Bosnevī.<sup>144</sup>

### *The hospice of Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī in Konya*

Şadr al-dīn's *zaviya* in the city of Konya proves that the Akbari textual community did not consist solely of a number of disciples and associated individuals, but that it was soon institutionalized.<sup>145</sup> The hospice was most probably built in 673/1274 and its pre-Ottoman history is obscure. The little which is known is that already during the reign of Karaman Ibrahim-bey the *zaviya* enjoyed the status of a sanctuary, which is demonstrated by the fact that the Karamanid ruler endorsed it with a *mu'afname*, a document exempting it from paying certain categories of state taxes.<sup>146</sup> This was a regular practice at the time, one inherited and widely practised by the Ottomans as well. The main purpose behind it seems to have been the hope that the state would benefit from the increasing number of inhabitants flocking to the mausoleum, encouraged by the partial tax exemption.<sup>147</sup> The *zaviya* appears to be one among a significant number of the buildings that belonged to Şadr al-dīn. *Manāqib al-'ārifīn* contains a few references to the prominent social role that the edifice played in Saljuqid times. It was regularly frequented not only by the members of the ruling class, where the name of Pervane again stands out, but also by the most influential members of the 'ulama class in Konya. A mention is made of a ceremony which used to take place on Fridays

<sup>142</sup> Idem, op.cit, p. 177.

<sup>143</sup> William Chittick, "Şadr al-Din, al-Qūnawī", *EI*<sup>2</sup>, vol. VIII, p. 753.

<sup>144</sup> See, for instance, Bosnevī's account of a spiritual vision that prompted him to write a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* in the introduction of his *Sharḥ*.

<sup>145</sup> His hospice is an excellent example of a building that became the center of a community organized around one pivotal religious figure. This religious association is double in the case of the hospice and includes both Şadr al-dīn and Ibn 'Arabī. Contrary to many other communities and groups, most notably that of Mawlānā Rūmī and Hājī Bektaş, the community around Şadr al-dīn never fully formalized into an order despite possessing some elements of hierarchical organization.

<sup>146</sup> Suraiya Faruqi, "Vakıf Administration in Sixteenth Century Konya: The Zaviye of Sadreddin-i Konevī", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 17, No. 2, May 1974, p.147.

<sup>147</sup> In many instances, *mu'afname* or tax exemptions were strategically distributed in frontier places where the state sought to populate certain areas for military or strategic considerations.

after the congregational prayer, in which most dignitaries of the city were present.<sup>148</sup> The head of the *zaviya*, al-Qūnawī, undoubtedly used the *zaviya* as a form of medrese where he taught his disciples, including Mu‘īn al-dīn Pervane.

Even though the hospice was of moderate size in terms of its area and yearly budget, compared to other endowments at the time of Ottoman rule in Konya, it was listed alongside the mausoleum of Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī as one of the most prestigious *waqf* properties in the city. *Waqf* records make it plain that the hospice enjoyed significant material support that enabled it to function well into the seventeenth century without reliance on the central government. In 881/1476, at the time of Mehmed Fatih, the hospice’s endowment had the following properties or the profit yielded by them in its exclusive possession: the settlements of Çandır, Kırılı, Ladık and Kafirdegirmeni, the villages Mahmudlar and Abd al-Raşid around Konya, one hamlet in Sille and one in Zengicek, and a number of smaller scattered settlements in the *kaza* of Ilgin. Apart from these çiftluks, the hospice was further supported by revenue from some mills and vineyards (*bağ*) in and around Konya.<sup>149</sup>

### *The library*

Perhaps the most valuable holding of this *waqf* endowment at the time of its integration into the Ottoman system was a fairly large manuscript collection consisting of Şadr al-dīn Qūnawī’s personal library of his own works as well as those by his master, gradually enriched in time by important contributions from Qūnawī’s disciples. The beginning of this collection was Şadr al-dīn’s gift of books to his friends and associates; his *waşiiyya* (personal will), in parts relevant to the donation of books, is a revealing document. According to his will, the books he held were to be divided into several categories: books on philosophy, books on medicine, *fiqh* and *hadīth*, and the books that Şadr al-dīn authored. The latter category presumably included also Ibn ‘Arabī’s autographed works and was offered as a gift to his son in law, ‘Afīf al-dīn. Books on philosophy were designated for sale and the resulting income was to be divided among the poor as charity. The second category comprised books on Islamic jurisprudence and prophetic traditions which were to be sent to Damascus and placed at the disposal of students there.<sup>150</sup>

In light of this initial division of Şadr al-dīn’s books and the collection surveyed and recorded by the Ottomans in their Konya *waqf* records, it becomes obvious that

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<sup>148</sup> Mawlānā Rūmī is frequently mentioned among the visitors of the *zaviya*. For the references to al-Qūnawī’s *zaviya* and its place in the religious life in pre-Ottoman times see *Manāqib al-‘arīfīn*, vol. I, pp. 151, 165, 219, 278, 318, 359, 417, 421, 438.

<sup>149</sup> See *Fatih devrinde Karaman eyaleti vakıfları fihristi*, ed. by Feridun Nâfiz Uzluç, Vakıflar umum müdürlüğü neşriyatı, Ankara, 1958, pp. 10-11; Suraiya Faroqhi, op.cit, pp. 145-172.

<sup>150</sup> See Mikâil Bayram, *Türkiye Selçukları üzerine araştırmalar*, Konya, Kömen Yayınları, 2003, pp. 190-203. The *waşiiyya* was published more than once in facsimile form as well. See for instance Osman Nuri Ergin in *Şarkiiyyat Mecmuası II* (1957), pp. 82-83 and İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı, *Konya tarihi*, Konya belediyesi, 1964, pp. 496-498.

Qūnawī's will was not respected. Some authors even claim that it was precisely the will left by him that prompted students, scholars and local authorities to build a hospice and its library, thus preventing this valuable textual treasure from leaving Anatolia.<sup>151</sup> There is some evidence to support such an assumption. Very strict regulations relevant to the upkeep of the collection were given on Şadr al-dīn's behalf, i.e. in the words of others, which is unusual. If the author himself had had the intention of to establish *waqf*, he would have been the one to prescribe its conditions as well, which is not the case here. Whatever the case, the collection had some two hundred titles at the beginning. Many of Qūnawī's students were involved in the process of enriching it by contributing their own titles, commentaries and other works, or by copying the existing works of their teaching as part of and for the reasons of their own studies. Apart from them, many illustrious scholars visited the library and the hospice, and then stayed and worked there for some time. The names of Quṭb al-dīn Shīrāzī, Sayyed Sharīf al-Jurjānī, and al-Fīrūzābādī are invoked in that regard.<sup>152</sup> This pre-eminent Akbari textual collection, around which an interpretative community of Şadr al-dīn Qūnawī's students and followers came into being, was transferred to the hands of the Ottomans and was able to continue its remarkable intellectual mission.

In the *waqf* record for the area of Karaman eyaleti from the time of Sultan Fatih, Şadr al-dīn's hospice is listed in second place and given a detailed overview by Ottoman officials. Both way in which Qūnawī's *waqf* complex was introduced, and the title that was used to refer to Şadr al-dīn, are suggestive of the manner in which he was received among the Ottomans: "Waqf of the reviver of the way of the Prophet, shaykh al-Qūnawī Şadr al-dīn"; a sentence and title that elevates him to the symbolic office of *mujaddid* (religious renewer).<sup>153</sup> After reviewing the material base of the *waqf* in question, which comprised settlements, gardens and the resulting income, the record gives a list of the books kept at the hospice at the time of inspection. The total number of books on record is one hundred and sixty manuscript volumes, many of which presumably included more than a single work. The books are categorized according to the traditional order, according to which the first to come were Qur'an copies together with all Qur'an related works, primarily commentaries. We have both complete works and separate parts, whole *muṣḥafs* and separate chapters, and the same is true for the *tafsīr* works. The most notable work in the field of *tafsīr* found at the library is the famous *Kashshāf* by Zamakhsharī, preserved in more than one copy. The next category is that of *ḥadīth*. Complete copies of the six canonical collections of *ḥadīth* are not listed; what is listed instead is a variety of commentaries and works pertinent to the science of *ḥadīth*.<sup>154</sup> Another category consists of works related to principles of Islamic jurisprudence and its sources (*fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*), where we see works from dif-

<sup>151</sup> Mikâil Bayram, "The library of Şadr al-Dīn ...", p. 178.

<sup>152</sup> Op.cit, p. 180.

<sup>153</sup> "Peygamber yolunun uyandırıcısı Konyalı Seyh Sadru'ddin (Tanrının geniş rahmeti onun ustune olsun) 'in vakfı" See *Fatih devrinde Karaman eyaleti vakıfları fihristi*, p. 10.

<sup>154</sup> A full list of books is available in *Fatih devrinde Karaman eyaleti vakıfları fihristi*, pp. 11-13.

ferent schools of Islamic Sunni law like *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, the famous work of Ḥanafī law and *Kitāb al-mahzūm fī al-fīqh al-Shāfi'ī* by an unknown author.

Undoubtedly the most significant works in the collection are those by Ibn 'Arabī and the endower himself. Ibn 'Arabī's works are all grouped together in the list. From among his books we have:

1. *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*
2. *Riyād al-'uns*
3. *Mawāqī' al-nujūm*
4. *Kitāb al-nash'atayn fī taḥṣil al-sa'ādatayn*
5. *Kitāb al-hadiye*
6. *'Anqā' al-maghrib*
7. *Tanazzulāt al-mawṣiliyya*
8. *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*
9. *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ*
10. *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*
11. *Waṣāyā al-futūḥāt*
12. *Maḥja al-bayḍa'*
13. *Kitāb rūḥ al-quds*

Some of these titles are multivolume collections, which is especially true for the *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, written in thirty-seven volumes. We should add to this list works of pronounced Akbari coloring like *al-Qaṣīda al-tā'iyya* and its commentaries, as well as the original works of Shaykh Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī himself, either in the form of complete books like *Tafsīr al-fātiḥa* or collections of shorter treatises (*majmū'a*).

The social and intellectual function of the hospice continued well into the following centuries. Another register of *waqfs* from 924/1518 gives the names of people in charge of the complex, all of them descendants of the founder.<sup>155</sup> The prosperity of the hospice was no doubt further enhanced by a royal decree exempting it from *avariz* taxes. Another record from 974/1566 enumerated twenty-four employees at the hospice, showing that its operations increased in the middle of XVI century.<sup>156</sup>

The library of Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī has reached us in a somewhat different form. Many books were lost and new ones acquired. The ups and downs of the collection can be followed by comparing in detail the three Ottoman surveys of the *waqf* complex and its library during the reigns of Mehmed Fatih, Bayezid II and Murat III with

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<sup>155</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, "Vakıf Administration...", p. 162, footnote 28.

<sup>156</sup> Op.cit, p. 164.

the manuscripts from the library currently available at the Yusuf Ağa library in Konya.<sup>157</sup>

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The line of transmission of Akbari teachings from the time of Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī to Dāwūd al-Qayşarī, who died in the middle of the XIV century, is easily traceable. Although there is some historical evidence suggesting that al-Qayşarī met and studied with al-Qūnawī in person, modern scholars dismiss this possibility because of its chronological uncertainty.<sup>158</sup> It is not known whether al-Qayşarī journeyed to Konya in the early stage of his life, which would have been required if we were to accept the immediacy of his studies with al-Qūnawī; such a journey is not mentioned anywhere in the existing accounts of his life. At the time of al-Qūnawī's death, al-Qayşarī would have been around fourteen years old, and his companionship with such an illustrious figure as al-Qūnawī would have attracted the attention of his biographers. A more likely means of transmission is the indirect one, through a succession of al-Qūnawī's pupils, members of the Akbari scholarly circle. In light of their connection to their teacher, we can divide them into two broad groups. The first group includes al-Qūnawī's immediate disciples like Mu'ayyad al-dīn al-Jandī and Fakhr al-dīn al-'Irāqī, Sa'īd al-dīn al-Farghānī and Shams al-dīn al-Īkī.<sup>159</sup> The second group are their students, the most important of which are 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī and his pupil, Dāwūd al-Qayşarī.

In order to reach Ottoman times, the lineage of Akbari school of thought had to extend for more than a century, bringing into its fold a number of scholars, all of whom without exception were pupils of Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī. The first of them is al-Qūnawī's immediate disciple Mu'ayyad al-dīn al-Jandī.

### *Al-Jandī*

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<sup>157</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, I.B. Taurus, 2005, p. 27.

<sup>158</sup> In fact, the same author is the source of both assumptions. The foremost Turkish scholar of al-Qayşarī, Mehmet Bayraktar relying on *Sicil-i Osmani* in his dissertation on al-Qayşarī entitled *La Philosophie mystique de la religion chez Davud de Kayseri* (PhD thesis at Sorbonne, Paris, 1978), published in Ankara (Editions ministère de la culture, 1235, 1990) initially stated that there was strong possibility of al-Qayşarī having studied in person with al-Qūnawī in Konya: "Donc, il devenait élève de Kâşāni, ainsi que c'est fort possible, de Qonawī, qui est lui-même le disciple éminent d'Ibn-'Arabī", p. 14. Later on, in his entry on al-Qayşarī for *Türkiye diyanet vakfı İslām ansiklopedisi (TDV İA)*, the author modified his position disallowing the possibility that the two would have met in person because of the reasons of historical chronology. See *TDV İA*, cilt 9, where he states on page 32: "Bazı kaynaklara onun Sadreddin Konevî'nin öğrencisi olduğunu kaydederlerse de, bunun doğru olması mümkün değil."

<sup>159</sup> The names of Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī's disciples are also mentioned in the *Manāqib al-'arifīn* by al-Aflākī. See volume one, p. 359.

The first link in the chain of transmission of Akbari teachings from al-Qūnawī to Ottoman times was a supreme Muslim scholar and formidable commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ* from the eighth century after the Hijra, Mu'ayyad al-dīn al-Jandī. There is very little information on his life in biographical or hagiographical sources. He is thought to have been born in the city of Jand in Turkestan, which was a prosperous city inhabited by Muslims and for a while ruled by the Saljūqs. Nothing is known about his early education except the miraculous story of his entry to the Sufi Path. The account reveals the fact that he did not start as a scholar but was rather a trader who abandoned all his possessions and embarked on pilgrimage to Mecca, which is a standard topos of many a Sufi vita. During his trip to perform ḥājj and his subsequent sojourn in the West, he encountered and entered the service of Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī, most likely in the latter's lodge in Konya.

He kept the company of the greatest Sufi Pole of his times, as al-Jandī identifies al-Qūnawī,<sup>160</sup> for more than a decade, and this period is the time of al-Jandī's spiritual upbringing, maturing and ultimate fruition, which resulted in the very first commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* in the Akbari circle. In his *Nafaḥāt al-'uns* Jāmī narrates the episode of al-Jandī's confrontation with a pseudo-Mahdī in Baghdad which shows that al-Jandī enjoyed the spiritual protection of the Greatest Shaykh, which saved him from hostile plots of the false claimant. After having resolutely dismissed his claim, al-Jandī was threatened by the pseudo-Mahdī, whereupon as he narrates:

I took refuge in the spiritual protection (*rūḥaniyyat*) of the greatest shaykh Ibn al-'Arabī and with my whole aspiration (*himmat*) turned towards him. Thereupon I spotted an unknown visitor who grabbed both hands of the attacker and repelled his evil from me.<sup>161</sup>

In a similar fashion, through an instantaneous and miraculous revealing of all the secrets of the *Fuṣūṣ*, al-Jandī was encouraged by Ṣadr al-dīn to write his commentary on the famous work. Apart from being the first commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ*, initiating a remarkable tradition of *sharḥ* writing and by virtue of his primacy serving as the main source for all subsequent commentaries, al-Jandī was also the first author in the Akbari circle to have written a *sharḥ* on a less famous work by Ibn 'Arabī, *Mawāqī' al-nujūm*. The only other author to have written a commentary on that work was an Ottoman Sufi author of a later generation, Ṣalāh al-dīn al-'Uṣṣāqī al-Bosnevī (d. 1197/1782).<sup>162</sup> If these are the only existent glosses on the *Mawāqī'*, it is probably not

<sup>160</sup> Mu'ayyid al-dīn al-Jandī, *Nafḥa al-rūḥ wa tuḥfa al-futūḥ*, ed. by Najīb Māyel Haravī, Enteshārāt-e Moulā, Tehran, 1362 Sh.= 1983, p. 144. Al-Jandī's autobiographical account of the early stage of his wayfaring and association with his Sufi preceptors is found on pp. 142-146.

<sup>161</sup> Nūr al-dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-'uns min ḥadarāt al-quḍs*, edited and annotated by Maḥmūd 'Ābidī, Enteshārāt-e Eṭṭela'āt, Tehran, 1382 Sh.=2003, p. 557, henceforth referred to as *Nafaḥāt al-'uns*.

<sup>162</sup> The only existing autograph manuscript of this work is in Kayseri, Raṣit Efendi Ktp 1103.



altogether unreasonable to assume that ‘Uṣṣāqī’s *sharḥ* was fundamentally based on the only preceding one, i.e. that of al-Jandī. Since al-Jandī’s text has not reached us, ‘Uṣṣāqī’s commentary gains additional value. Upon completing his commentary on the *Mawāqī’* in Baghdad, al-Jandī moved to Anatolia once again, this time enjoying the patronage of the Pervaneoğlus and settling in the northern town of Sinop.<sup>163</sup>

Al-Jandī’s commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* was well received and widely used by Ottoman authors, which is demonstrated by the fairly large number of copies in Turkish libraries. Ḥājī Bayrām Veli’s *khalifa*, Yazicioğlu Mehmed, wrote a *ḥāshiya* (super-gloss) on al-Jandī’s commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* while his brother Yazicioğlu Bīcān translated Mehmed’s work into Turkish under the title *Kitāb al-muntaha ‘ala al-Fuṣūṣ*. Turkish collections of manuscripts also list two other works by al-Jandī, apart from his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*. These are *Durra al-ghāliya* and his reflection on entering the Sufī path in a semi autobiographical work *al-Mukhtaṣar fī luzūm al-tajrīd al-kullī zāhīran wa bāṭinan ‘an mā siwā Allāh*.<sup>164</sup>

### *Al-Farghānī*

Another scholar in the line of succession of Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī is the other prominent disciple who studied with him at the same time as al-Jandī, Sa‘īd al-dīn al-Farghānī. As his name readily indicates, he was a native of the Fergana Valley in Central Asia, where he was born in the city of Kasan. As with all other early members of al-Qūnawī’s circle, very little is known about his early life; like the others he enters the historical stage by joining the service of Ṣadr al-dīn, which happened during his stay in Sham.

Based on the statement recorded in Dhahabī’s *Kitāb al-‘ibar* that he was eighty years old at the time of his death in 699/1300, he was born around year 620/1222.<sup>165</sup> The most important piece of information on his early scholarly activities is provided in a brief sketch of his biography in Jāmī’s *Nafaḥāt al-‘uns*. According to Jāmī, al-Farghānī was already affiliated with the Suhrawardī order through the successor of its eponymous founder, Najīb al-dīn ‘Alī al-Shīrāzī.<sup>166</sup> Al-Farghānī received his initial Sufī training from that shaykh, whereupon he moved westward and reached Sham, where he entered Qūnawī’s circle. He is seen by Jāmī as the supreme and unmatched commentator on Sufī teachings. His prominence derives from his commentary on the famous work *Qaṣīda al-tā’iyya* by Ibn Fāriḍ, another central Muslim figure whose works by that time had become inseparable part of Ibn ‘Arabī’s interpretative community. Like his master al-Qūnawī, al-Farghānī wrote in both Arabic and Persian. He first wrote his commentary on Ibn Fāriḍ’s *Tā’iyya* in Persian and offered to Qūnawī

<sup>163</sup> Süleyman Ülüdağ, “Cendī”, *TDV İA*, cilt 7, p. 361.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Mahmud Erol Kılıç, “Fergānî Saīdüddin” in *TDV İA*, cilt 12, p. 378.

<sup>166</sup> *Nafaḥāt al-‘uns*, p. 558.

for review. Al-Qūnawī, having greatly praised the work, added an introduction to it. Later, the author translated his work into Arabic in the quest of a wider audience.<sup>167</sup>

One other work by al-Farghānī demonstrates his superb knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the alleged negligence of which on the part of Sufis in general represents one of the most common stereotypes in accusing them of antinomianism. The work entitled *Manhaj al-‘ibād ilā al-ma‘ād* is a comparative compendium of Islamic law according to the four established legal schools of Islam. This work was so influential that Jāmī characterized it as an indispensable companion for all wayfarers of the Path who would find in it the needed in terms of *‘ibādāt* (details on acts of worship) and *mu‘āmalāt* (social aspects of religious life) for the successful completion of their godly quest.<sup>168</sup>

### *al-Qāshānī/Qāsānī*

Arguably the most important scholarly figure for the transfer of Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī’s legacy, and thus that of Ibn ‘Arabī, from Saljūqid into Ottoman times was ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī. He stood as the link between two generations of Ṣadr al-dīn’s disciples – the first generation represented by scholars who were his companions and studied directly with him, like al-Jandī and al-Farghānī, and the third generation of scholars who never personally met him but who furthered his teachings by actively contributing to his and Ibn ‘Arabī’s textual and interpretative community. The most remarkable scholar of the latter generation is Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, who stands at the origin of Akbari studies in the Ottoman intellectual milieu.

As al-Qayṣarī was an immediate disciple of al-Qāshānī, the most reliable information on the latter’s life will frequently be found in his writings. His name is recorded as Kamāl al-dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq Ibn Jamāl al-dīn Abū al-Ghanā’im al-Qāsānī. The information on ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī offered by his disciple al-Qayṣarī differs from most other biographical sources in another noticeable detail – that of his origin. While most other authors record his appellation as al-Qāshānī or al-Qāshī<sup>169</sup>, both pointing to an origin in the city of Kashan in central Iran, al-Qayṣarī gives his appellation as al-Kāshānī (al-Qāshānī).<sup>170</sup> According to Yāqūt’s geographical dictionary, Kāsān (or alternatively recorded as Qāsān) is a town in Transoxiana or Turkestan.<sup>171</sup> Ḥājji Khalifa in his *Kashf al-zunūn* records his name as al-Samarqandī, which appears

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<sup>167</sup> Many centuries later in the case of ‘Abdullah Bosnevī the exact opposite would occur. He wrote his *Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ* in Arabic; later, at the behest of his numerous students and in order to reach wider audiences, he translated the work into Turkish, thus producing what is arguably the very first Turkish commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.

<sup>168</sup> *Nafahāt al-‘uns*, p. 558.

<sup>169</sup> See for instance Jāmī’s biographical sketch of al-Qāshānī in *Nafahāt al-‘uns*, p. 483ff.

<sup>170</sup> See Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, al-Tab‘a al-Ḥajariyya, Tehran, n.d., p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Shihāb al-dīn Abū ‘Abdullāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Baghdādī, *Mu‘jam al-buldān*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn al-Khanjī, first edition, Maṭba‘a al-sa‘āda, Cairo, 1906, p. 11 = Qasan.

to bear out al-Qayṣarī's suggestion of the central Asiatic origin of his teacher.<sup>172</sup>

Jāmī in the *Nafahāt* cites the correspondence between al-Qāshānī and a bitter opponent of the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, 'Alā' al-dawla al-Simnānī, from which there emerge some significant details of al-Qāshānī's early career. His scholarly trajectory is typical for many Sufis: he began his education with the traditional curriculum of Islamic disciplines like *fiqh* and *kalām*, followed by an eager interest in "rational" sciences and finally settled on mystical disciplines. At the outset of his Sufi career, al-Qāshānī entered the service of Mawlānā Nūr al-dīn 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Naṭanzī, who was the follower of al-Farghānī's first spiritual preceptor, Najīb al-dīn Buzgush al-Shīrāzī. One of the first Sufi texts that draw his attention, according to Jāmī, was the *Fuṣūṣ* which he presumably had studied with al-Shīrāzī earlier. After his first shaykh, al-Qāshānī kept the company of many other Suhrawardī shaykhs in Iran and Baghdad. According to al-Qāshānī's own account of events, the most prominent part of his mystical education and upbringing was the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* explicated to him by Shams al-dīn al-Kīshī, in the understanding and exposition of which al-Qāshānī became an unparalleled authority in Shiraz during his sojourn there. Jāmī writes:

At the time in Shiraz there was no one who could match him in discourse regarding this subject, including his shaykh Ḍiyā' al-dīn Abū al-Ḥasan. 'I was in the state of bewilderment (*ḥayra*) until I came upon the *Fuṣūṣ*; as soon as I looked at it, I grasped the meaning (*ma'nī*) and was grateful to see the path unfolding in front of me thanks to other masters who had found the way and reached it.<sup>173</sup>

His fame appears to have reached beyond Shiraz, as al-Qāshānī states in his introduction to his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*:

I was approached by a group of people of certitude and honesty, brethren of purity and loyalty, among them that great honored master who attained the true knowledge of God, leader of all wayfarers on the Path, Shams al-dīn Muṣliḥ b. Muḥammad known as Tabrīzī and [they all] asked me to interpret the *Fuṣūṣ* for them.<sup>174</sup>

Alongside that of his disciple al-Qayṣarī, al-Qāshānī's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* is counted among the pioneer works in the field, and it served as model for all similar

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<sup>172</sup> Ḥājī Khalīfa (Muṣṭafa Ibn 'Abdullāh), *Kashf al-ẓunun 'an asāmī al-kutub wa al-funūn*, Dār al-fikr, Beirut, 1410 AH (1989), p. 81.

<sup>173</sup> *Nafahāt al-'uns*, p. 487.

<sup>174</sup> *Muqaddima Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*, p. 2.

works on the *Fuṣūṣ*. Another fundamental text written by al-Qāshānī is his exposition on Sufī terminology, which stands in close relationship to his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*. In the introduction to his *Iṣṭilahāt al-ṣūfiyya*, al-Qāshānī writes that the main motivation for composing the glossary is to attain correct understanding of three Sufī texts: *Fuṣūṣ* by Ibn ‘Arabī, accompanied by his commentary; Khwāja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī’s *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, likewise accompanied by al-Qāshānī’s commentary; and his own work on Qur’anic exegesis entitled *Ta’wīlāt*.<sup>175</sup> The most important part of his spiritual biography is his prominent role in transferring Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings as formulated by al-Qūnawī to succeeding generations. His activities in that regard can be divided into two categories: his writings, and his mentorship of Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī.

### *Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī*

Originating from Ibn ‘Arabī himself, through his foremost disciple al-Qūnawī and carried on from one generation to the next by means of Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, distinctive Akbari teachings reach Ottoman times. The importance of al-Qayṣarī is thus twofold: on the one hand he is one of the most respectable members of Ibn ‘Arabī’s interpretative community, contributing a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* which had a lasting impact on the Akbari school of thought; on the other hand, through the course of his academic career he is the first scholar to bring Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrines onto the Ottoman scholarly scene by virtue of serving as head teacher at the very first Ottoman educational institution, the Orhaniye madrasa in Iznik. Another genuinely Ottoman scholar who is widely considered to be the architect of the Ottoman ‘ulama structure and the first Ottoman shaykh al-islam, Molla Fenārī was also associated with the Orhaniye at the same time, possibly during Qayṣarī’s tenure there or shortly thereafter. The Orhaniye thus became a nucleus from which the Ottoman Akbari school of thought grew and developed.

Due to the lack of detailed historical documents, it is not possible to conclusively establish whether any of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works were officially part of the Ottoman curriculum at the Orhaniye. Much later, and in the provincial Ottoman center of Sarajevo, we have some indications that together with Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ* was taught to students at the Gazi Husrev-beg madrasa established in 945/1539 by the Sultan’s son-in-law and twice governor of Bosnia, Ghazi Husrev-beg.<sup>176</sup> Whatever the case may be with the Orhaniye, it is possible to assert that in light of Qayṣarī’s works and teaching career there, the general scholarly atmosphere and academic tendencies could not be completely free of Akbari influence. Not without significance in this regard is the historically verifiable fact that Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī was

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<sup>175</sup> This work was published many times in India and Egypt and is often wrongly attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī.

<sup>176</sup> Mehmed Handžić, “U povodu 400-godišnjice Gazi Husrev-begove medrese”, *Kalendar za 1937/1355 godinu*, Narodna Uzdanica, V, Sarajevo, 1936, p. 40; see also Džemal Čehajić, *Derviški redovi u jugoslovenskim zemljama sa posebnim osvrtom na Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, Sarajevo, Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu, Posebna izdanja XIV, 1986, p. 86.

the first member of the Akbari circle to have prefaced his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* with a long and instructive introduction in which he offered a simplified exposé of the Greatest Master’s doctrinal system, rendering it more conformable to the Sharī‘a and more accessible to a general audience. It would appear that both purposes suggest an eagerness on the part of Qaysarī to prepare the text of the *Fuṣūṣ* for general reading and instruction, possibly even in madrasas. This tradition continued throughout Ottoman times and reached its zenith in the work of another influential Ottoman commentator on Ibn ‘Arabī from XVII century, ‘Abdullāh Bosnevī, who likewise prefaced his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* with an extensive twelve-chapter introduction, drawing heavily on Qaysarī’s earlier work.

Qaysarī’s life is not much better known than that of his predecessors, as biographical dictionaries provide little information on his life. His full name is given as Sharaf al-dīn Dāwūd al-Qaysarī and he was born around 660/1260 in the Anatolian town of Kayseri, becoming alongside Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī the second member of the Akbari school to originate in pre-Ottoman Anatolia. While some authors consider him to be of Iranian origin, others argue for his genuine Anatolian, i.e. Turkish ancestry.<sup>177</sup> Whatever the case may be, we find him leaving Anatolia on a quest for higher education, as Anatolia could not match any of the traditional centers of learning at the time. The first station was Egypt. We know nothing about his teachers there or how much time he spent studying the religious sciences. After Egypt he came back to either Kayseri or Bursa. As is the case with others at the time, his most profound interest arose in the second phase of his life, after he had completed his education in the traditional curriculum. It is presumably in this second phase of his career that al-Qaysarī travelled eastward and entered the service of his foremost teacher, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, with whom he studied the fundamental mystical concepts of the Akbari school. In addition to being his head teacher in the mystical sciences, Qāshānī was al-Qaysarī’s spiritual preceptor in the Suhrawardiya order, to which he belonged. It is most likely that the two of them met and spent time together in the town of Saveh in central Iran.

Of particular importance is the question of whether or not Dāwūd al-Qaysarī met Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī personally and studied with him, as some sources indicate. Despite a few reports to that effect, it is very unlikely that any meeting took place. Even though the account of his biography is sketchy, a journey to and sojourn in Konya would definitely have merited a mention had he actually travelled there. However, no such reports exist. In addition, given that Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī died in 673/1274 and that al-Qaysarī could have probably been born around 660/1260, it would have been too early in his scholarly career for such a meeting and instruction to have taken place.<sup>178</sup> Like

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<sup>177</sup> Mehmet Bayraktar, “Dāvūd-i Kayserī”, *TDV İA*, cilt 9, p. 32-35. In his article Bayraktar points to Henry Corbin who in two different works of his identified al-Qaysarī first as being of Iranian origin (*Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, III, 1289 [sic]) and later of indigenous Anatolian extraction (*Corps spirituel et terre celeste*, p. 139).

<sup>178</sup> See above, p. 66, footnote 158.

other members of Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of thought, al-Qayṣarī tried his hand at commenting on and expanding the usual corpus of texts. A particular type of originality is involved in contributing to the existing body of commentaries on the founding texts. Most members of the Akbari school did not write anything other than commentaries and al-Qayṣarī is a good example of that. Although he wrote a few works on Aristotelian philosophy, his most successful and most influential works are those written as commentaries on mystical texts usually encountered in the same scholarly circles from the time of al-Qūnawī.

The most outstanding is undoubtedly al-Qayṣarī’s commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* entitled as *Maṭla‘ khuṣūṣ al-kilam fī ma‘ānī fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which the author dedicated to the son of the famous historian Rashīd al-dīn Faḍlullah, Ghiyāth al-dīn Muḥammad, who served as a *ṣadr* (grand vizier) for the Ilkhanid ruler Abū Sa‘īd Bahādur. Al-Qayṣarī’s commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* is widely regarded by both traditional authorities and modern scholars as the best, and is portrayed as a model and sourcebook for all other commentaries. Being a direct scholarly offspring of the same interpretative community as al-Qūnawī, al-Jandī, and al-Qāshānī, al-Qayṣarī propagated a broad understanding of the main doctrinal concepts of Sufism in general and of Ibn ‘Arabī’s school in particular. Without a doubt, this was the outcome of his education at the hands of al-Qāshānī, as well as through divine inspiration that was ceaselessly bestowed upon the members of the Akbari circle. In his own words, al-Qayṣarī states:

By disclosing to me the light of His sacred secrets, Allah bestowed upon me the greatest fortune in both worlds. He lifted the veil from the vision of my heart and supported me with His help through vouchsafing of His treasure to me.

Of his special status among the students of the *Fuṣūṣ* who attended the circle of al-Qāshānī, al-Qayṣarī says:

I was unique among my colleagues in receiving knowledge and attaining understanding without an effort at reflection on studying.<sup>179</sup>

While other commentators on the *Fuṣūṣ* among al-Qayṣarī’s predecessors had enjoyed their share of divine succor and inspiration, the unique popularity of al-Qayṣarī’s

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<sup>179</sup> Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. by Ḥasanẓāde Amolī, Qom, 1378 Sh./1999, p. 14, quoted from Mukhtar Hussain Ali, *Qayṣarī’s Muqaddima to His Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam: A Translation of the First Five Chapters Together with a Commentary on Some of Their Themes*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 2007, p. 6. This work was subsequently published as *Foundations of Islamic Mysticism: Qaysari’s Introduction to Ibn ‘Arabi’s Fusus al-Hikam*, London, 2012.

commentary owes more to his ability to find a suitable way of communicating Akbari ideas and concepts in an accessible and manageable language than to any unique or unmatched insight into the secrets of those concepts. An immediate outcome of al-Qayṣarī's efforts at rendering the basic doctrines of Sufism more readable is his famous *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena) to his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*. The main objective of the *Muqaddima* appears to be to walk the reader through the central topics of the *Fuṣūṣ* in a simplified and linguistically accessible manner. It is divided into twelve chapters, each pertaining to one of the main themes of the *Fuṣūṣ* or of Ibn 'Arabī's general corpus like a discussion on being, God's attributes and names, the Immutable Archetypes, the Five Divine Presences, the Perfect Man, and other topics. In light of the comprehensiveness of the *Muqaddima* and its thematic inclusiveness, it could be assumed that al-Qayṣarī conceived and composed this work as a separate treatise, and that because it was such an excellent sourcebook for the study of Sufism of the Akbari variety, he later chose to make it the introduction to his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*. In any event, al-Qayṣarī's *Muqaddima* stands at the origin the tradition, to become well established with time, of attaching explanatory prefaces to commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ*.

In addition to the commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, al-Qayṣarī wrote a number of other similar works. He wrote commentaries on two of Ibn Fāriḍ's poetical works: one was *al-Qaṣīda al-tā'iyya*, by his time a standard text of the Akbari community; and the other was the lesser known *al-Qaṣīda al-mīmiyya*, a text pertaining to the question of divine love. All of al-Qayṣarī's texts, and in particular his commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* and Ibn Fāriḍ's *Tā'iyya*, had considerable impact on Ottoman scholars of later generations. From biographical sources we know for instance that Shaykh Badr al-dīn of Simawna wrote a treatise on al-Qayṣarī's commentary under the title *Ta'līqāt*, a text which no longer exists.<sup>180</sup> On the other hand, a whole series of supreme Ottoman scholars wrote their works in interpretation of al-Qayṣarī's works or works inspired by him. Among these we can count Molla Fenārī, Quṭb al-dīn Iznīqī, and later Ismail Hakki Bursevi, Sofyali Bali Efendi and 'Abdullāh Bosnevī. Equally important as the texts he produced was al-Qayṣarī's teaching career at the first Ottoman madrasa in Iznik, built by Sultan Orhan.

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### *Orhan and his endowments*

Orhan was the second Ottoman sovereign; he ascended the throne in 724/1324 after the death of the eponymous founder of the Empire, Sultan Osman. The main focus of the new sultan remained territorial expansion of the nascent empire, mostly directed towards the two main centers of the Byzantine Anatolian provinces, Bithynia and

<sup>180</sup> Mehmet Bayraktar, "Dâvûd-i Kayserî", *TDV İA*, cilt 9, p. 34.

Mesothenia, namely Bursa and Nicea. Both cities served as Ottoman capitals during Orhan's tenure, since he had, for reasons of his health, established in them his summer and winter residences respectively. While Bursa surrendered to Orhan by most accounts as early as 726/1326 following a brief siege and subsequent agreement, the first scholarly infrastructure of the Ottoman Empire is linked to Nicea which followed suit in 731/1331. The religious project of the Orhaniye medrese in Iznik antedates that in Bursa bearing the name of the same ruler.

Valuable information on the events immediately following the Ottoman seizure of Iznik is provided by Aşıkpaşazade in his famous Chronicle.<sup>181</sup> From his account, as well as from some other sources, the town of Iznik emerges as a depopulated<sup>182</sup> ghost town that escaped large-scale destruction by paying tribute to the Sultan. Following the conquest, Orhan inaugurated architectural projects manifestly aimed at the Islamization of space: for instance, one main church in town was turned into a mosque,<sup>183</sup> similarly, at the Yenişehir gate an *imaret* was erected the management of which was entrusted to a certain Hāj Hasan whose Sufi lineage is demonstrated by Aşıkpaşazade: Hāj Hasan's grandfather was a disciple of Edebali,<sup>184</sup> and this indicated that the project was not merely a soup kitchen or charitable foundation, but rather a larger structure with unmistakable Sufi function. Aşıkpaşazade does not fail to point out that Orhan was involved in the performance of daily duties of the complex, in that he took part in distributing meals and taking charge of its chandeliers, which symbolically indicates not only proximity but rather a submission of the temporal ruler to the spiritual preceptor.<sup>185</sup>

### *Orhaniye in Iznik*

Historians of the Ottoman scholarly institution use the term “early Ottoman medrese” to describe all religious schools built in the Empire in the first century and half of

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<sup>181</sup> *Tavarih-i Al-i Osman'dan Aşıkpaşazade tarihi*, ed. by 'Ālī Bey, Istanbul, Matba'a-yi 'Āmire, 1332/1914, p. 41ff.

<sup>182</sup> In Gregory Palamas's testimony Nicea was not unlike a ghost and half-abandoned town even in 1355, more than two decades following its takeover by Orhan. Given his status as the prelate of Orthodox Christians and the specific conditions of his sojourn in Nicea, he must have had in mind the pitiful condition of once flourishing Christian quarters and institutions in mind when he described the general conditions of the city. Another eyewitness who visited Nicea immediately after its conquest recorded the destruction and depopulation in the city using Qur'anic expressions and stating that the city was “khāwiyatun 'ala 'urūshi-hā”. See *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah* (Arabic and French text) edited and translated by Defrémery and Sanguinetti, 4 vols, Paris: Société asiatique, (1853-1858), vol. II, p. 330.

<sup>183</sup> It has been established that the church in question was St Sophia, the site of the First Ecumenical Council. See Georgiades Arnakis, “Gregory Palamas among the Turks and documents of his captivity as historical sources”, *Spectrum*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1951, p. 117, footnote 7.; See also: Katharina Otto-Dorn, *Das islamische Iznik - mit einem quellenkundlichen Beitrag von Robert Anhegger*, Istanbul Forschungen Bd. 13, Berlin 1941, p. 9.

<sup>184</sup> The influence of Hāj Hasan appears to be considerable. Aşıkpaşazade (d. 888/1484) records that the descendants of this Hāj Hasan were until the time of the composition of the chronicle in charge of the imaret, more than a century later. See *Tavarih*, p. 42.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*



their rule, more precisely until the building of the famous Üç Şerefeli Medrese<sup>186</sup> in Bursa in the time of Murat II.<sup>187</sup> When discussing the first Ottoman medreses, the focus is primarily on three cities: Iznik, Bursa and Edirne, all three of which served as Ottoman capitals.

While it is widely accepted that the first Ottoman medrese was the Orhaniye, built in Iznik by Sultan Orhan, this view has not gone undisputed in Turkish scholarship. One of the earliest Turkish scholars to write on the ulama structure of the Ottomans, Arif Bey, voiced a dissenting opinion on the issues, assuming a slightly different chronology. According to him, Orhan conquered the town of Izmit in the third year of his rule, i.e. in 727/1327,<sup>188</sup> and only four years later, more precisely in the sixth year of his tenure, did he seize Iznik where the supposed first Ottoman medrese was built. While this reversed chronology need not inevitably impact the issue of the first medrese, Arif Bey's assertion is that Orhan's son and vizier Süleyman Paşa turned one of the city's several churches into a medrese immediately upon the takeover of Izmit and that this Süleyman Paşa medrese is in fact the first Ottoman medrese.<sup>189</sup>

There are several inconsistencies in this theory. First, it is well established that Izmit was seized by the Ottomans only in 738/1337, six years after the capture of Iznik rather than before it, as Arif Bey states. Moreover, it is rather unlikely that the first Ottoman medrese would be linked not to the name of the Sultan himself but rather to that of his son. Most authoritative sources on the Ottoman scholarly system establish the fact that Iznik's Orhaniye was indeed the first medrese. Even if we admit the possibility that the Orhaniye was preceded by some other structure, it certainly soon overshadowed it in terms of importance. Both Ottoman and Western sources record that the medrese was built shortly after the conquest of Iznik. Thanks to the building efforts of Orhan and his son Süleyman Paşa,<sup>190</sup> the city quickly became an important center for religious scholarship.

A Western historian of the Empire, D'Ohsson, observes:

His [i.e. Osman's] son and heir Orhan Gazi built an imperial mosque in Iznik and next to it erected a medrese that for one century and half remained the highest in rank in the whole of the Empire. Established anew

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<sup>186</sup> The construction of this medrese was begun in 840/1437 and lasted for a decade; it was thus finished in 850/1447. See Câhid Baltacı, *XV-XVI asırlarda Osmanlı medreseleri: teşkilat, tarih*, İrfan matbaası, İstanbul, 1976, p. 450, henceforth Baltacı.

<sup>187</sup> See Mustafa Bilge, *İlk Osmanlı medreseleri*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi yayınları, no. 3101, İstanbul, 1984, p. 5, henceforth Bilge.

<sup>188</sup> The year of 738/1337, as provided by İdris Bitlisi, is generally regarded as accurate for the date of Izmit's conquest. See Halil Inalcık, "Orhan", *TDV İA*, cilt 33, pp. 375-386; İdris Bostan, "Izmit", *TDV İA*, cilt 23, p. 536.

<sup>189</sup> See Arif Bey, "Devlet-i Osmaniye'nin teassüs ve tekarruru devrinde ilim ve ulema", *Darülfünun edebiyat mecmuası*, vol I, 1922, p. 132.

<sup>190</sup> Both of them built a medrese in Iznik.

in 731/1330 and bearing his name the instruction in this medrese was entrusted to Shaykh Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī who was named müderris as was the case in other parts of the Muslim world.<sup>191</sup>

All the essential information drawn from Ottoman sources is included in this quotation. As for the year of Orhaniye's construction, two dates are put forward, one in 731/1331, only one year after the conquest of Iznik, which is clearly preferred in modern scholarship, and another one in 736/1336-7. In addition, while some sources<sup>192</sup> indicate that the madrasa and neighboring mosque forming a complex were built at a place where a church once stood, we can infer from a copy of Orhan's *waqfiyye* the fact that the medrese was erected anew as a separate structure next to Hayruddin Paşa mosque, built earlier in Iznik and made part of the same endowment.<sup>193</sup> The same conclusion could be drawn from Taşköprüzade's note on the medrese.<sup>194</sup>

The medrese's *waqf* document was recorded by Molla Husrev. According to this document, Sultan Orhan had, for the upkeep of the edifice and its normal functioning, endowed it with the village Kozluca together with surrounding orchards and olive groves, as well as a number of houses in the immediate surroundings of the medrese. One third of the income was to be given to students. The same endowment conditions were preserved in two other recensions of the document, in 1006/1597 and 1007/1598.<sup>195</sup>

All sources agree that the general instruction at the medrese, what in Turkish is termed as *müderrislik*, was given to Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī. According to some, he was personally summoned by the Sultan to assume this post. It should be noted that the responsibility of *müderrislik* at this stage of Ottoman scholarly development differs from that of later centuries. In an essential similarity with medreses in the rest of the Muslim world, particularly that of Niẓāmiya, the first Ottoman medreses had only one müderris, whose scope of activities was much greater than in later years. In point of fact, he should be equated with a school principal or headmaster who was entirely responsible for the instruction and the organization of academic life at school. In light of the prominence of his role, the appointment to this post by the Sultan himself preceded by an invitation could be regarded as a sign of the great prestige and influence which the Akbari scholar Qayṣarī enjoyed.

Information on the Orhaniye's curriculum is scarce. It is not possible to ascertain whether any work pertinent to Sufism in general or Akbari doctrine in particular could

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<sup>191</sup> D'Ohsson, *Tableaus General de L'Empire Othoman*, Paris, MDCCLXXXVII, I, p. 289, quoted from Bilge, p. 6.

<sup>192</sup> This information is included in some authoritative Ottoman chronicles, like that of Neşri and Solakzade.

<sup>193</sup> "Qad banā madrasatan fi ittişāl-i jāmi'i Hayruddin Pasha", in Ali Emiri Ktp., Arapça Yazmalar 4474, quoted from Baltacı, p. 326.

<sup>194</sup> He uses the term 'benâ etmiş', i.e. he built. See *al-Shaqā'iq* vol I, p. 8.

<sup>195</sup> Baltacı, p. 327.

have been part of curriculum. Despite this uncertainty, it is difficult to imagine that the flourishing career of Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī as a contributor to the Akbari circle would not have left an impact on his immediate academic and religious environment in the Orhaniye medrese. His most influential work, his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, was written before the establishment of the Orhaniye, or at around that time. The work was dedicated to the Ilkhanid vizier Ghiyāth al-dīn Muḥammad Ibn Rashīd al-dīn Faḍlullāh, who died in 736/1335. While the dedication indicates that al-Qayṣarī most likely wrote his commentary while still outside Ottoman dominion, he spent the last fifteen years of his life in Iznik. No exact dates of composition are available for any of his writings and we do not know if he wrote any of them while there. In any event, judging from the large number of manuscripts of his works preserved in Ottoman collections, it is certain that they enjoyed a wide circulation and a fitting scholarly reception.

Although it only had the status of a 30-akçe medrese, Iznik's Orhaniye remained the most prestigious Ottoman medrese until the same ruler moved his capital to Bursa and established a 50-akçe medrese there. Nevertheless, this did not cause the Orhaniye to become obscure. It remained an important center of learning in the Ottoman Empire and hosted a great number of teachers and students some of whom became prominent members of the Ottoman scholarly class as well as the Akbari intellectual circle.

#### *Orhan's medrese in Bursa*

Early Ottoman scholarly institution established by the same sultan was the Orhaniye medrese in Bursa. In the case of this medrese all the Ottoman biographical sources agree that the medrese was built on the ruins of a Christian place of worship, either a church or a monastery,<sup>196</sup> and that for that reason it came to be mentioned in the literature as the Manastir medrese. Its construction took place in 736/1335, a decade following the Ottoman conquest at the hands of Orhan. As in the case of Iznik's Orhaniye, the founder provided a generous endowment for the upkeep and functioning of the medrese. According to the *waqfiyya* recorded on various occasions in Ottoman sources, the medrese benefited from the income of the Manastir hammam in Bursa as well as one whole village by name of Bukluç, recorded as the religious endowment of a certain 'Alā' al-dīn Bey. Endowed with a solid material basis and staffed by the most prominent members of the Ottoman ulama class, the medrese was destined to witness a steady increase in its scholarly rank. Its initial rank was 50 akçe per day, which lasted until the first half of the XVII century when the medrese was recognized as a member school of the largest Ottoman partnership of religious seminaries, the famous Sahn consortium.

Undoubtedly, a school's prestige was not measured solely by its material foundations, but also by the prominence of its teachers. In this regard, the Manastir medrese was

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<sup>196</sup> Some authors give the name of the monastery as Sainte Elie Monastery. See Baltacı, p. 294.

initially entrusted to Molla Muḥammad Shams al-dīn Fenārī, generally viewed as the first Ottoman mufti and magistrate. According to Taşköprüzade, Molla Shams al-dīn Fenārī simultaneously performed a threefold function, serving as the medrese's müderris, qāḍī and mufti of Bursa, which effectively meant that he singlehandedly represented the totality of the Ottoman ulama structure, which would in time become very elaborate.<sup>197</sup> What is important for our study is the fact that Molla Fenārī, much like Dāwūd al-Qayşarī, was a prominent and active member of Ibn 'Arabī's textual circle and had a solid Akbari pedigree.<sup>198</sup> Orhan's medreses in both Bursa and Iznik remained centers of premium teaching under the management of scholars who could be related to Ibn 'Arabī's school of thought. For several generations the main instruction (*müderrislik*) duties at Manastir medrese were performed by scholars who were not only favorable to Ibn 'Arabī, but also closely related to Fenārī. They might very well have been the first Ottoman ulama dynasty of the kind which will later become a norm in the Ottoman scholarly class. Upon his death in 834/1431, the müderrislik at Manastir madrasa was offered to Mawlānā Muḥammad b. Armağān b. Khalīl also known as Molla Yeğān. Based on a report by Taşköprüzade, we may assume that he succeeded Molla Fenārī not only in the medrese but also in the two remaining posts, i.e. as mufti and qāḍī of Bursa.<sup>199</sup> Molla Yeğān was in turn succeeded by his son Yūsuf Bali, whereby the link with Molla Fenārī was again firmly established: Yūsuf Bali was Molla Fenārī's son in law and father of the next müderris at the Manastir medrese, 'Alā' al-dīn 'Alī Fenārī (d. 901/1495). Before coming to assume his duties at Manastir medrese, 'Alī Fenārī had an illustrious scholarly career that took him to Iran, Samarqand and Herat where he enjoyed patronage of the Timurid ruler Shāhrukh Mirza. At the behest of Molla Gurani he returned to the Ottoman dominion and was appointed müderris at Manastir. Further advancement in the ranks of the 'ulama hierarchy took him to the post of Rumeli *kadiasker* during the reign of Sultan Bayezid II.<sup>200</sup> Two other illustrious scions of the Fenārī scholarly dynasty were the sons of 'Alā' al-dīn 'Alī Fenārī, Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi and Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Mehmed Şāh, who during their careers occupied the highest positions in the Empire, and who represent the halcyon days of the Fenārī dynasty. Thus from the first Ottoman mufti Molla Fenārī (d. 834/1431), through his sons Mehmed Şāh Çelebi (d. 838/1435), and his two great-grandsons, Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi (d. 954/1548) and Muḥy al-dīn Mehmed Şāh (d. 929/1523), for almost a century the affairs of the Ottoman scholarly class were in the hands of a single family descended from a highly promi-

<sup>197</sup> Taşköprüzade, *al-Shaqā'iq*, vol. I, p. 27.

<sup>198</sup> Through his father he was connected with the teachings of Sadr al-dīn Qūnawī. Taşköprüzade says that Molla Fenārī's father was instructed in the concepts of Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* by the author himself. Molla Fenārī read Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* in the presence of his father first, and thereafter composed a commentary on that work. See Taşköprüzade, *al-Shaqā'iq*, vol I, p. 24, quoted from İbrahim Hakkı Aydın, "Molla Fenari", *TDV İA*, cilt 30, p. 245.

<sup>199</sup> See Bilge, p. 89.

<sup>200</sup> Baltacı, p. 295.

ment Akbari figure.<sup>201</sup> At one point or another, their lives and works were related to Orhan's medrese in Bursa or Iznik from where they launched remarkable careers, becoming and serving as *qādīs*, *qadiaskers* and *shaykh al-islams*.

Another remarkable scholarly figure of Akbari provenance who lived and worked during the XV century and whose career was linked to the Orhaniye was Quṭb al-dīn Zade Iznīqī. In his writings he recorded his name as Mehmed b. Mawlānā Quṭb al-dīn al-Iznīqī. He was Molla Fenārī's disciple and later in his life remained linked to his scholarly dynasty: during the müderrislik tenure of Fenārī's grandson at the Orhaniye, Quṭb al-dīn Zade served as his assistant and subsequently himself assumed the duties of müderris at Orhan's medrese.<sup>202</sup> It can be inferred from his biography and writing that he enjoyed a close relationship with Sultan Mehmed Fatih and especially his long serving *sadrzam* of Balkan extraction, Mahmud Paşa Adni, for whom he wrote a few short letters and treatises.<sup>203</sup> Quṭb al-dīn Zade is generally associated with the activities of the Zayniye Sufi Order, having written a commentary upon Zayniye's *evrad*.<sup>204</sup> A number of his other works are relevant to his Akbari lineage. His most substantial work, entitled *Faḥ Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*, is a commentary on the famous work by Şadr al-dīn Qūnawī, with numerous references the *Miṣbāḥ al-'uns* of his teacher, Molla Fenārī. Iznīqī's work is said to have been commissioned by Mehmed Fatih and dedicated to him.<sup>205</sup>

A much more influential work by al-Iznīqī is his short treatise on Pharaoh's faith and the status of unbelievers in the Hereafter, both thorny issues on which Ibn 'Arabī in his works presented opinions often seen by some members of ulama as being contradictory to the teachings of Islam. In an extraordinarily confessional introduction to his treatise,<sup>206</sup> al-Iznīqī regrets that his stance on the issue has caused great amounts of distress and argument, linking his opinions not only to Ibn 'Arabī, who was sufficiently controversial himself, but to less polarizing and almost universally revered scholars like al-Ghazālī and Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī. The treatise does not deal in depth with the issue of Pharaoh's faith, even though it is occasionally referred to as a *Risāla*<sup>207</sup> pertaining to that issue specifically. The much more prominent question that occupies most of the text is that of the eschatological status of unbelievers in Islam, both according to the teachings of Islam as represented by most 'ulama postulating the eterni-

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<sup>201</sup> On shaykh al-islam Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi (d. 1548) and Rumeli kadiasker Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Mehmed Şāh (d. 1523), see Mehmet İpşirli, "Fenarizadeler", *TDV İA*, cilt 12, pp. 339-341.

<sup>202</sup> Baltacı, p. 327.

<sup>203</sup> Al-Iznīqī wrote him letter of condolence upon Mahmud Paşa's fall from the grace of Sultan Mehmed Fatih. See Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hacı Mahmud Efendi, number 4223, fols. 27a, and especially 90b – 92a; quoted from Reşat Öngören, "Kutbüddinzâde Iznikî", *TDV İA*, cilt 26, p. 489.

<sup>204</sup> See Reşat Öngören, *Tarihte bir aydın tarikatı: Zeyniler*, İnsan yayınlari, İstanbul, 2003, p. 162.

<sup>205</sup> See Taşköprüzade, *al-Shaqā'iq*, vol I, p. 106-107; Reşat Öngören, *ibid*.

<sup>206</sup> In examining this work I used a manuscript copy of the *Risāla* from SK Lala Ismail 708, fols. 170a-172a.

<sup>207</sup> *Risāla muta'alliqa bi'imān al-fir'awn* as given in Şükrü Özen, "Ottoman ulama debating Sufism: Settling the conflict on the Ibn al-Arabi's legacy by fatwas", *El sufismo y las normas del Islam: Trabajos del IV Congreso Internacional de Estudios Jurídicos Islámicos, Derecho y Sufismo*, ed. by Alfonso Carmona Gonzalez, Murcia, 7-10 mayo 2003, pp. 309-341; henceforth Özen.

ty of unbelievers' punishment, and the perspective of other scholars who offered more nuanced views on the issue. The author clearly positions himself with the latter. Relying on al-Ghazālī and Tirmidhī, he advanced the view that the corporal punishment of infidels will be finite, and will divide them into several different categories. Using a variety of Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions, al-Iznīqī sought to portray the issue in all its complexity, further dividing punishment into corporal and spiritual and ultimately concluding his treatise by affirming that what is eternal and most devastating is the spiritual punishment consisting of the infidels' distance from the Absolute Reality and the state of being veiled from it. On the other hand, the corporal punishment would terminate after a cycle of seven thousand years.<sup>208</sup>

His treatise and the ensuing controversy are evidence that debates concerning the acceptability of some of Ibn 'Arabī's opinions were lively prior to the Ottoman conquest of the Arab world. Two things appear rather clear. Firstly, these debates did not reach the level at which they could challenge the overwhelming influence of the Akbari circle in Ottoman intellectual milieu, which was supported by a series of highly prominent scholars occupying the highest administrative positions of the Empire. On the other hand, while the Ottoman advance into the Arab world need not have caused controversy regarding Ibn 'Arabī, as some scholars have maintained, it most certainly reinvigorated the old disputes. It is equally invalid to invoke al-Iznīqī's treatise as an anti-Akbari text *par excellence*. It does not in any way challenge the typical Akbari stance on the issues discussed. Moreover it is replete with standard Akbari terminology. As we will see later, a disagreement with some aspects of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings did not directly indicate an anti-Akbari position or a full rejection of his views. Quite the contrary: some noted Akbari scholars, such as Ibn Kemal, wrote dissenting treatises on the issue of Pharaoh's faith and in spite of that went down in history as ardent supporters and admirers of Ibn 'Arabī.

### *Concluding remarks*

Ibn 'Arabī's physical presence in Anatolia left an impact on the ways in which the spiritual landscape of the region took shape in pre-Ottoman times. Particularly significant was the presence and activities of his foremost disciple, Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī, whose fame attracted not only numerous scholars from distant lands, such as Qāshānī and others, but also local scholars such as al-Qayşarī. It is through their efforts that ideas associated with Ibn 'Arabī not only became deeply rooted in that region of the Muslim world, but were also carried forth in all directions.

As with numerous other aspects of their material and spiritual life, the Ottomans inherited Ibn 'Arabī and his school from the Saljūqids: they incorporated Şadr al-dīn Qūnawī's *zaviya* and its textual treasures, *waqfs*, books and scholars, some of whom became pioneers in erecting a distinct Ottoman scholarly tradition, beginning with the

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<sup>208</sup> SK Lala Ismail 708, fols. 171b-172a.

Ottoman ‘firsts’: the first Ottoman medreses and their respective teachers, the first muftis and qāḍīs were not just under the heavy influence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings but even its formulators and proponents.

Through the efforts of ‘ulama members like al-Qayṣarī, Fenārī and his numerous descendants, al-Iznīqī and countless other lesser known scholars, during the course of more than a century and a half, from the construction of Iznik’s Orhaniye in 731/1331 to the beginning of the XVI century and Selim’s advance into the Arab and Muslim world, Ibn ‘Arabī grew in influence, becoming regarded as patron saint of the Empire. In addition, through the *al-Shajara al-nu‘māniyya fī al-dawla al-‘utmāniyya*, a brief and confusing astrological text replete with obscure innuendos that allegedly predicted the rise of the Ottomans to a global super-power, the formidable apparatus of Ottoman imperial propaganda embraced its alleged author Ibn ‘Arabī, which further enhanced his already pervasive influence in Ottoman society.

As the case of al-Iznīqī and his treatise demonstrates, that pervasiveness was neither universal nor unchallenged. Nevertheless, the political circumstances of the XVI century reinvigorated debates concerning the acceptability of Ibn ‘Arabī’s views and those of his supporters, such that the age-old divide along those fault lines was destined to become increasingly more deep. Much of the vigor and liveliness of this debate goes back to the inherent qualities of the type of legal discourse into which the debate developed. It left behind the dormant world of short treatises and became a bone of contestation fought over in legal briefings, succinct, solemn and forbidding. Those acute and powerful rejections and approvals were issued and advanced by most powerful members of the ‘ulama structure: shaykh al-Islams.

## Chapter III

### Ibn ‘Arabī and the Ottoman dynasty: the case of *al-Shajara al-nu‘māniyya*

It was not only for the prominent personalities and the first Ottoman scholarly institutions to demonstrate the prominence of Ibn ‘Arabī in the early Ottoman Empire. While assessing the scope and depth of the influence Ibn ‘Arabī and his works exerted in the early and classical period of the Ottoman Empire, which is still, as we will see, a period of consolidation of the Empire in more than one sense, one inevitably must pay attention to a particularly unique text which bears witness to that influence. This work is a text attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī and is entitled *al-Shajara al-nu‘māniyya fī al-dawla al-‘uthmāniyya*.

This work has undoubtedly played an important role in establishing the influence and prestige of Ibn ‘Arabī and consequently of his school of thought, not only in the circles of the Ottoman learned but also, and even more so in that it inaugurated him as a singularly significant figure in the Ottoman dynastic ideology. At least two major circumstances in relation to this work prove the level of this influence: the first is the significant number of manuscripts of this work<sup>209</sup> that are scattered throughout the manuscript collection and libraries in Turkey as well as important scholarly centers of the Ottoman world like Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad; and the second is that the work, despite its internal contradictions and more or less clear signs of lack of authenticity, was never questioned or presented as a forgery. Moreover, the text was allegedly glossed upon by no less important scholarly figures than Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī and Şalāḥ al-Şafadī, representing two opposite approaches to the legacy of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>210</sup>

#### *The Shajara and its authors*

The broad geographical dissemination of the work, and the status of almost unquestionable authority which it apparently enjoyed, stand in clear contrast to the essential aspects of the work. Apart from its mysterious and obscure content, many aspects of

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<sup>209</sup> I was unable to find any sound manuscript version of the original *al-Shajara*. All existent copies are commentaries mostly by pseudo al-Qūnawī and al-Şafadī, or in few instances by other authors. Even though the Süleymaniye Library catalogue lists a couple of copies of the original work, they turned out upon inspection to be something else, or at best extracts from *al-Shajara* no longer than a few lines on astrology. Commentaries on the *Shajara* by these two seminal figures of Islam al-Qūnawī and al-Şafadī, as well as other authors, seem to be much more important than the original work, which Mustafa Tahralı characterized as ‘a very little treatise (çok küçük hacimli bir risâle)’. See Mustafa Tahralı, “Muhyiddin Ibn Arabî ve Türkiye’ye te’sirleri”, *Kubbealtı akademi mecmûası*, vol. 23, 1994, no. 1, p. 29.

<sup>210</sup> The choice of these two scholars as the alleged commentators of the original text by Ibn Arabī is peculiar. They entertained diametrically opposite views of Ibn Arabī and his legacy. While al-Qūnawī is foremost among his students, Şafadī was by all accounts a bitter opponent of the Akbari ideas, much befitting his scholarly lineage as Ibn Taymiyya’s pupil. Why then would these two scholars comment on a prognostic text glorifying the Ottoman dynasty? The only possible answer, speculative though it may be, is the Ottoman universality, of which a few words will be said in this chapter. See also below, p. 83.



this work remain unknown even to modern scholarship. In examining *al-Shajara* I used a single manuscript from the Ali Emiri Efendi Collection in the Bayezid Library in Istanbul, number 2279, which contains the commentaries of both pseudo-Qūnawī and pseudo-Şafadī, apart from a third work titled *Miftāh al-jafr al-kabīr* by al-Biṣṭāmī. It was copied by a certain Ahmed b. ‘Uthmān al-Futūhī al-Ḥanbalī in 1650; it is the oldest existent copy of the work in question after the Berlin manuscript, which was composed a decade earlier. Full information on all the available manuscripts of the original work as well as its commentaries in libraries of Turkey and elsewhere is included as a supplement at the end of this work. One of the intriguing points about *al-Shajara* is the reference to Nu‘mān in the title. According to some modern scholars, it most likely refers to the founder of the Ḥanafī legal school in Islam, Nu‘mān Ibn Thābit,<sup>211</sup> whose legal school of thought was promoted and encouraged under the Ottomans in the Muslim world. Apart from the title, however, this name does not appear anywhere in the text. The author of the text remains unknown.

Ottoman authors had no doubts that the work was Ibn ‘Arabī’s, and Ismā’īl Baghdadi’s supplement of the *Kashf al-ẓunūn* lists it under his name. Its attribution to the Greatest Master was never questioned in Ottoman sources that mention the work. This trend continued until very recently. As late as the Syrian authority on the bibliography of Ibn ‘Arabī, Osman Yahya fails to classify the *Shajara* among apocryphal works in his seminal work. As is apparent from the very title of his article, the modern scholar Denis Gril, in an article entitled “L’énigme de la Shagara al-Nu‘māniyya fil l-Dawla al-‘Utmaniyya, attribué a Ibn ‘Arabī questions the authenticity of the text and its attribution to Ibn ‘Arabī, as well as that of its two major commentaries attributed to al-Qūnawī and Şafadī. However, he does not offer a comprehensive case and hardly touches upon the issue, which he considers self-evident:

On montrera plus loin que cette attribution [i.e. the attribution of the *Shajara* to Ibn ‘Arabī - AZ] est irrecevable. Mais, plus étonnant encore, les deux principaux commentaires qui prolongent le texte plus qu’ils ne l’explicitent, attribués respectivement a Şadr al-dīn Qūnawī, gendre et disciple d’Ibn ‘Arabī, et a Şafadī, historien du XIV siècle, sont eux-mêmes évidemment des apocryphes.<sup>212</sup>

Occasional textual evidence present in the texts shares in the general nature of the narratives: the chronology is disrupted and the overall impression upon reading is that of

<sup>211</sup>Denis Gril, “L’énigme de la Shagara al-Nu'maniyya fi l-Dawla al-'Uthmaniyya, attribuée à Ibn 'Arabi”, *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tourant de la chute de Constantinople*, ed. Benjamin Lellouch and Stephanie Yerasimos, *VariaTurcica*, tome XXXIII, Paris – Montreal, 1999, p. 133-147. Another classical work of the Ottomans contains the similar reference, *al-Shaqā’iq al-nu‘māniyya fi ‘ulamā’ al-dawla al-‘uthmāniyya*. Apart from the obvious requirements of the rhymed prose, al-Shajara’s title could have been modeled upon *al-Shaqā’iq*.

<sup>212</sup> Denis Gril, op.cit, p. 133.

obscurity if not confusion. The sharpness of the discussion could perhaps be toned down by noting that the question of originality was perceived rather differently in the Ottoman and Islamic context of these texts, and differed substantially from the modern premises of authenticity and genuineness with which we operate today. It might have sufficed that the anonymous author of the *Shajara* was inspired by the works or ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī and found in his writing directives or guidelines for deciphering a line of events that allowed him to attribute his own writing to Ibn ‘Arabī, either in pious submission of his conclusions to the Greatest Master or in order to assure wider recognition and distribution of his work. In the case of this particular text, the attribution to Ibn ‘Arabī is not entirely inconceivable, given Ibn ‘Arabī’s pronounced and elaborate interest in the science of lettrism, as is evident in most of his writings.<sup>213</sup> For our purpose here, which is an examination of Ibn ‘Arabī’s influence in the Ottoman intellectual milieu of the XVI century and the centrality of his persona and school in the mainstream Ottoman royal ideology, the question of authenticity and real authorship of the *Shajara* is hardly relevant. Nevertheless, the date at which the text originated is relevant in order to establish whether the influence in question was a retrospective perception or not. The text manifestly treats historical events from the time of the two illustrious Ottoman Sultans of the XVI century, Selim and his son Süleyman, with only occasional and confusing allusions to events and persons outside of that historical timeframe. The oldest existent copy of *al-Shajara* comes from the first half of the XVII century, and if we accept that the date is not a later interpolation, we can conclude that the text of *al-Shajara* as it reached us originated more than a century later than the events it discusses. What is evident, however, is the universal acceptance of the work in the Ottoman cultural and intellectual context. The inclusion of the original text and its commentaries in some of the major Ottoman bibliographical works like later supplements to *Kashf al-zunūn*, which attests of that reception and is highly suggestive of the place of the text with the Ottoman elite.<sup>214</sup>

It comes as no surprise that the two commentaries were significantly more important than the original text, which is elusive and indeed untraceable in the manuscripts from Turkish collections that list it. The reason for this is, as Gril notes, that the purpose of the commentaries was to expand on the original text, to open it up and unfold and not only to offer clarifications as one would expect from a commentary. The commentaries are a continuation of the original, and effectively function as separate texts with varying and limited amounts of references to the *Shajara*. Pseudo-Şafadī and pseudo al-Qūnawī both wrote their texts in a distinctive scholarly method of a combined commentary (*sharḥ-e mazj*) that includes quotations from the original and additionally disguises them. Indeed, in some cases it is the scribe who distinguishes for the reader the actual citations from their commentary and at times offers, on the margins, information essential for understanding the text.

<sup>213</sup> Science of letters is one of the recurrent themes in the *Futūḥāt*. For instance, see the second chapter in the *Futūḥāt*, ed. by Aḥmad Shams al-dīn, first edition, Dār al-kutūb al-‘ilmiyya, Beirut, 1420/1999, pp. 79-85.

<sup>214</sup> See Ismā‘īl Paşa al-Baghdādī, *İdāḥ al-maknūn fī al-dhayl ‘alā kashf al-zunūn*, Istanbul, 1945, two volumes.

### *The pedigree of secret sciences in the Shajara*

In the introduction to his *Sharḥ*, pseudo-Qūnawī identifies Ibn ‘Arabī as the heir and legate of the Prophet of Islam and all God’s envoys (*al-mursalīn*), the final inheritor of the knowledge of God’s secrets. He furthermore establishes a genuinely Islamic pedigree for the science of lettrism by establishing a chain of transmission which goes back to the beginning of creation and the first man Adem, a.s. According to the author, the mystery of divinatory knowledge was bestowed upon Adem a.s. as part of the names which he received. The secret of the first divine command of ‘be’ and its two constituent letters (*kāf – nūn*) was revealed to Adem and then transmitted from one prophetic generation to another until it finally reached its maturity and culmination in the persona of the Prophet of Islam. A Qur’anic verse usually advanced in refutation of the possibility of human insight into the secrets of the Unseen is then cited where God states:

And with Him are the keys of the Invisible. None but He knoweth them  
(VI: 59).<sup>215</sup>

Although the exclusive possession of the keys and secrets is herein reserved for God alone, the author plays down this exclusivity as an outward (*zāhirī*) explanation of the *aya*. While consenting that the majority of ulama as well as masses of Muslims follow the outward understanding of the *aya*, it is the often quoted Prophetic tradition of gaining proximity (*qurb*)<sup>216</sup> which commands a marked significance in most Sufi texts, and that helps moderate the exclusivity contained in the *aya*. In accordance with the *ḥadīth*, the author redefines the exclusivity as including the people of spiritual realization (*ahl al-taḥqīq*). Having acquired the highest degree of proximity through the performance of supererogatory observances, and as a result of that having deserved His affection, the people of realization become a place of manifestation of all of His names, including the most unifying one of *huwa*. The third person singular pronoun

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<sup>215</sup> It is worth pointing out that the key word in the *aya* (*mafātiḥ*), while unanimously translated as ‘keys’, is not necessarily synonymous with the word *mafātiḥ* (note the lengthened back vowel). According to the famous *tafsīr* work *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān* by ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī, the *mafātiḥ* (without long vowel as in the *aya*) can also mean ‘divine treasures encompassing the things (*ashyā*)’ before their engenderation in the world of reality’. See ‘Allāma al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, Mu’assasa al-A‘lamī li al-maṭbū‘āt, Beirut, Lebanon, 1417/1997, vol. VII, pp. 126-129.

<sup>216</sup> It is often referred to as *ḥadīth al-nawāfil*, the tradition of supererogatory deeds of worship. The hadith is narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayra and is recorded in Bukhārī’s collection. The text of the hadith is as follows: ‘Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My slave does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My slave continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he holds, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it’.

then becomes shared between God and his true bondsmen, admitting them into the exclusivity of the *huwa* from the quoted verse. It is only He/he who knows the secrets of the Invisible. For the author of the text, there is no doubt that Ibn ‘Arabī was not only one of them, but their foremost representative who occupies the highest peak in the spiritual hierarchy of *ahl al-tahqīq*.

As regards the keys referred to in the verse, the author divided them into five different categories.<sup>217</sup> The first two categories ranked by the author as the most noble and majestic are revelation (*wahy*) and divine inspiration (*ilhām rūhī*). While revelation reached its limits with the Prophet of Islam, as emphatically noted by the author, the second avenue for knowing the invisible remains accessible to all heirs (*waratha*) once they attain the *maqām* of universal spiritual stability (*maqām al-tamkīn al-kullī*). Its universality indicates perhaps that this level lies beyond the established dichotomy of *tamkīn* (stability) and *talwīn* (variability) and signifies the last stage of spiritual advance whereby one qualifies to be a legatee of the Prophet. The remaining three categories of “the keys” are distributed in the following manner: the first subdivision consists of Prophetic traditions, their explanations and subtleties<sup>218</sup> as revealed by the Prophet to ‘Alī Ibn Abī Tālib and his likes (*wa adrābu-hu*) among the senior companions.<sup>219</sup> ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib was not merely a receiver of the knowledge but the first person to have collected, systematized and explained the corpus. In what might appear to be a markedly Shi’i point of view on the part of the author, the legacy of this secret knowledge was, according to him, handed down through generations in the household of ‘Alī’s descendants from the time of the Prophet’s death until the end of time. The corpus entitled *al-Jafr al-kabīr* was inaccessible to others until the moment of death of the Prophet, and thereafter remained exclusively in the possession of *ahl al-bayt* until Judgment Day.<sup>220</sup> Apart from the mysteries included in the Prophetic utterances,

<sup>217</sup> He uses the identical term ‘the key’ (*miftāh*).

<sup>218</sup> The way in which the author terms them indicates varying degree of intimacy. In addition to *ḥadīth (al-aḥādīth al-nabawīyya)*, he also refers to something that he calls *al-ikhbārāt al-Muṣṭafawīyya* (pronouncements of Mustafa), which appears to be exclusive to a limited number of his companions.

<sup>219</sup> There are some reports that indicate that a number of most prestigious companions of the Prophet, including the first caliph, Abū Bakr, were well versed in certain aspects of divination. Caliph Abū Bakr was, according to one report, well known for his ability to interpret dreams. See Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe: etudes religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l’islam*, Leiden: Brill, 1966, p. 64.

<sup>220</sup> “Thumma lam yazalhadhā al-‘ilm yanfarid bi-hi al-wāḥid ba’d al-ākhar min al-imām ‘Alī ila yawmi-nā hādihā wa ilā ākhar waqt.” See PQ, fol. 4a. In Shi’i tradition, the presence of the corpus is well attested with a great number of *ḥadīths*. It is alternatively named as *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Jāmi‘a* or *Kitāb ‘Alī* and it contained the explanation of everything a Muslim needed to know regarding his religion until the end of time. Kulaynī in his *al-Kāfī* reports on the authority of Abī Baṣīr that Abū ‘Abdullāh, e.i. Imām al-Ḥusayn said: “O Abū Muḥammad, we do possess the *Jāmi‘a* and would you like me to tell you what that is? I responded: ‘O Imām, may I be your sacrifice, what is the *Jāmi‘a*?’ He said: ‘That is a *ṣaḥīfa* whose length is seventy arms which the Prophet dictated to ‘Alī and he wrote it with his right hand. In it every Muslim can find all he needs to know about *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* in the matters of his faith until the end of time.’” The cover of the *ṣaḥīfa* was made of camel’s leather and the corpus was therefore known as *jafr*. See al-Kāfī I/239, al-Majlisī’s *Bihār al-Anwār*, XXVI/ pp. 22, 38 and al-Saffār: *Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt*, pp.143, 152; quoted from Mustafa Qaṣīr al-‘Āmilī, *Kitāb ‘Alī wa al-tadwin al-mubakkir li al-sunna al-nabawīyya al-sharīfa*, Dār al-thaqaalayn, Beirut, Lebanon, 1995, pp. 23-24. For a separate and detailed discussion about *jafr* and some misconceptions regarding it from the Shi’i perspective, see pp. 79-93 of the same work.

two other keys are mentioned as well. The first is knowledge of the movements of celestial bodies, their constellations and positions; and the appearance and disappearance of the seven planets, and their joining and disjoining. The third and last key is the science of letters, their geomantic and symbolic value. The text of the *Shajara* and its commentaries, even though presented as an inspirational work by both pseudo-Qūnawī and pseudo-Şafadī, is based upon the last two keys of the arcane knowledge. Needless to say, the mysteries of these two keys, despite being the subject matter of separate and elaborate works, remain inaccessible for the modern reader.

### *Methodology of the texts*

Regarding the structure, the work is divided into an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The original *al-Shajara* and its commentaries are patently complex texts and it is because of the methods utilized by the authors that the text is so hard to penetrate. The author has used four different methods of encrypting and decrypting. One is divine inspiration, indicated by the reference of the *istikhāra* prayer<sup>221</sup> in the opening paragraph of the work. The other three are the “keys” which he discusses in some detail in the introduction, namely: astrology (*ilm al-falak*), divination (*jafr*) and the science of letters (*ilm al-ḥurūf*).<sup>222</sup>

Astrological references are somewhat limited and revolve around the names of a few planets like Jupiter, Saturn,<sup>223</sup> and Mars. This attention is occasioned by a short quote from the original work of *al-Shajara* in which most of the named planets are mentioned. The author expounds on the quoted statement by laying down the principles and the outcome of ascension, setting and conjunction of the mentioned planets. The astrological *key* can be further attested in the author’s frequent mention of astrological circles that were not graphically represented in the work, but which are instead minutely described within the text. The classification of the planets and the regions under their influence is presented as a rather sophisticated pattern of multiple cosmological rings (*dawā’ir*) whose foundations are three main circles, comprising a minor, a medial, and a major circle. The reasoning behind placing Egypt (Miṣr) in the focus of his attention appears to be astrological as it occupies the center of the major circle and is as such characterized by an extraordinary and unparalleled beauty<sup>224</sup> to the exclusion of all other countries (*amṣār*) that are dependent on it. The remaining two disciplines/keys— divination, and the science of letters – are used more frequently. The latter is often utilized to extract the date and year of prophesies or events that took place.

<sup>221</sup> See PQ, fol. 15b.

<sup>222</sup> The text is pointedly Ḥurūfī, i.e. it uses the same methods and principles that constitute the science or discipline of lettrism. On Hurūfism see Hamid Algar, “Horufism”, *EIR*, vol. XII, fasc. 5, pp. 483-490; Idem, “Nuqtavī”, *ET*, vol. VIII, pp. 114-117.

<sup>223</sup> Pseudo Qūnawī uses both Arabic and Persian word for Saturn, *zuhāl* and *kayvān*. According to the celebrated Persian lexicographer Dihkhuda the word ‘kayvan’ is of Babylonian origin and this planet was unknown to the ancient Iranians.

<sup>224</sup> The author likens it with the beauty mole on the face of all regions. See PQ, fol. 18a.

Letters indicating the year are often used in isolation without forming any meaningful word and are for most part written in red ink. Occasionally, the author warns the reader that the year acquired through the calculation of numerical values of Arabic letters is not Hijri, but divinatory (*jafrī*). Isolated letters of the Arabic alphabet are also used to allude to the protagonist(s) of historical events, usually by indicating the initial letter of their names, i.e. the letter *sīn* for Selim, *mīm* for Mehmed or Murad, *ayn* for Osman, and so forth. Sometimes, the first and last letters are used, as in “*sīn –nūn*” to name Süleyman. At least on one occasion a seemingly unrelated letter is used to point to an Ahmed: *jīm al-‘adad*.<sup>225</sup> It is not only Ottoman sultans who are mentioned. In a similar fashion the author names their adversaries, as in the case of the Mamluk ruler Qansuh (*qāf al-jīm*), as well as other high-ranking officials of the Empire, grand viziers and pashas who took part in the events under discussion.

Pseudo-Qūnawī’s authorial intention is in agreement with the secret sciences that he uses: his overtly stated purpose is not to disclose anything (*‘ibāra*) but to make allusions in an indirect way (*ishāra*). The reader is furthermore repeatedly urged to conceal the meaning of encrypted prophecies if ever they are deciphered. The author also eulogizes his predecessors in the field for keeping the mysteries hidden. Revealing the secrets would not only be inappropriate and contrary to the established etiquette of practitioners of these disciplines (*adab*), but could potentially cause disruption in the order of human affairs. Their explanation is to be acquired as an oral dictation (*talqīn mushāfahatan*) from a spiritual preceptor.

### *Analysis of the content*

Regardless of the issue of authorship of the main text and the two commentaries, its faulty attribution to Ibn ‘Arabī, and the attribution of its commentaries to two seminal figures of Islamic learning, al-Qūnawī and Şafadī, *al-Shajara*, is a fine example of the Ottoman prognostic literature that thrived at the turn of the tenth century of Hijra. In the case of pseudo-Qūnawī’s commentary, while there are many quotes from the *al-Shajara*, there are no inter-textual references to other apocalyptic texts written by that time. All other authors of apocalyptic works in the Ottoman realm were quite well acquainted with and influenced by the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition, and their works were significantly permeated by an eschatological scenario of the Last Hour wherein the Ottomans were to play a decisive role.<sup>226</sup> In the pseudo-Qūnawī, those two aspects, namely the evidence of an openly non-Islamic influence and the eschatological conclusion of the prophecies, are entirely absent, and the text emerges as a sort of

<sup>225</sup> This is found in PŞ, fol. 5a. The scribe’s intervention is the only way to decipher this riddle.

<sup>226</sup> The most notable representative of this tendency is Ahmed Bīcān (d. 1465) and his celebrated work *Durr-iMaknūn*. On him and the Byzantine influences observable in Ottoman prognostic and apocalyptic literature of his age, see Kaya Şahin, “Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 14 (2010), pp. 317-354.

coded frontline journal of the Ottoman sultans against the Mamluks and, later, the Safavids and the Portuguese.

Notwithstanding this, the text unfolds in a manner that unmistakably conveys awareness on the part of the author that conquests and victories vouchsafed for the Ottomans represented more than a mere military achievement. Remarkable victories are clear signs of divine favor and a direct outcome of the righteousness of the Ottoman house. Divine support for the victorious house of the Ottomans, and their suitability to earn it, configures the core message the author strives to convey. God's victory is bestowed upon the Ottomans against their rivals because they are the most righteous polity after that of the Prophet, his companions, and their followers in accordance with the hierarchical order of virtue that is manifest in the first generations of Muslims: rightly guided caliphs, other companions and their offspring. The Ottomans came to occupy the next rank on the ladder of Islamic authority by virtue of their resemblance to the first generations of Muslims in their strict obedience to the precepts of the Sharia, including practice of the fundamental tenets of Islam, such as prayer, struggle in God's path, offering alms, observing the imperative of fraternal unity (*al-jamā'a*), and, most importantly, following of the Prophet's *sunna*. As such, their emergence and rise to the rank of a world power could not be unforeseen by the body of authoritative texts and revered personalities.

At their zenith is indeed the Noble Qur'an. The Ottomans, that righteous house with a sound genealogical root, was recognized as the *chosen servants* and those *foremost in good deeds* of the two well known Qur'anic *ayas*:

Then we gave the Book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen: but there are among them some who wrong their own souls, some who follow a middle course, and some who are, by Allah's leave, foremost in good deeds; that is the highest Grace (XXXV: 32).

For pseudo-Qūnawī “they are undoubtedly included in the fold (*dimn*) of this *aya*”,<sup>227</sup> apparently among the last group described. Furthermore, the noble origination and grounding of the dynasty (what the author terms as *ta'şīl*) is identified in another Qur'anic *aya*:

Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): ‘My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth’ (XXI: 105).

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<sup>227</sup> See PQ, fol. 24b.

For their part, in order to justify this great honor and responsibility, the Ottomans had to possess the appropriate aptitude and suitability (*ṣalāhiyya*)<sup>228</sup> and their possession thereof is repeatedly and clearly stated by pseudo-Qūnawī in his commentary on *al-Shajara*. These statements stand out from the largely clandestine tone of the work. More significantly, such statements are made not only within the text of the commentary, but also in the original text, i.e. that of pseudo Ibn ‘Arabī. The original statement is introduced with the formulaic “*wa qawlu-hu,*” which separates quotes from the original text from the commentary.

The commentator’s statement to the effect that they, i.e. the Ottomans, epitomize the dynasty, and the individual leaders described in *al-Shajara* the leaders of the age at the turn of the tenth Hijri century until the centuries reach their fullness, describes a specific event, i.e. their loss of Egypt. This event is placed in the time when Mars meets Saturn in the last station of Libra (*al-Mīzān*). He then goes on to explain the key concept of *khurūj* used in this statement by saying that the event in question (i.e. the loss of Egypt) and the key word *khurūj* do not refer to an actual event as it could be interpreted superficially by those who are not well versed in the mysteries of secret sciences, but rather indicates that the Ottomans would not enjoy the full benefit of complete independence for a period of time.<sup>229</sup> While discussing this critical term, the author skillfully exploits the semantic potential of the root which in Arabic can refer to the meanings of loss and emergence. The play of words is to prevent the loss of Egypt (*khurūj*) being interpreted as the emergence (*khurūj*) of a new messianic figure personified in Ahmed Paşa, whom the Ottoman chroniclers of the time characterize as a false sultan.<sup>230</sup> The partial loss of independence is occasioned by the emergence of *ṣāhib al-qirān*, who is predicted to appear in Khurāsān and whose army would conquer the lands between Kirmān and the land of Nu‘mān.<sup>231</sup> *Ṣāhib al-qirān* is further described as the one who will enjoy allegiance after the conquest and the banners of whose commanders (*ṣāhib*) will emerge from Transoxiana. He is predicted to out-

<sup>228</sup> This doctrine was at the root of Ottoman imperial propaganda. ‘Umar Ḥafīd al-Shihāb Aḥmad al-‘Aṭṭār al-Dimashqī, in his short treatise entitled *Kitāb al-fath al-mubīn fī raddi ‘tiraḍ al-mu ‘tariḍ ‘alā Muḥy al-dīn* (Egypt, 1304 AH), writes: “The level of success of the Ottoman state (*dawla al-‘uthmāniyya*) is contingent and dependent on the level of their acceptance and reverence for holy men, their affirmation and protection”, establishing thus a direct link between the flourishing of the Empire and the protection of Muslim awliyā’, first and foremost among the Ibn ‘Arabī. Ibid, p. 4. The same idea is embedded in Süleyman’s Qanunname for Egypt, which in many aspects formulated the official Ottoman policy of conduct at the time of Süleyman. See Snježana Buzov, *The Law Giver and His Law Maker: The Role of Legal Discourse in the Change of Ottoman Imperial Culture*, University of Chicago, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2005, p. 34. An English translation of the Preamble of the Qanunname is included as a supplement, pp. 196-233.

<sup>229</sup> Ar. *burha min al-zamān* (a period of time), which points to a contradictory statement of the author: it is precisely this temporal limitation that implies the occurrence of an actual event.

<sup>230</sup> Mustafa Paşa Celalzade gives this qualification in: *Ṭabaqāt al-mamālik wa darajāt al-masālik*, Weisbaden, 1981, fol. 114b (henceforth *Ṭabaqāt*). For Ahmed Khā’in, see below, p. 106.

<sup>231</sup> This is the only other reference to the Nu‘mān from the title of the work. If we accept that the reference is to Nu‘mān Ibn Thābit, then it most likely stands for Iraq, which was both his birthplace and resting place. The reason it is included in the paragraph is most likely for the sake of style and rhyming (*ṣaj‘*). Echoes of the great Abbasid commander who emerged from Khurāsān and established the ruling house of the Abbasids are also noticeable in the text.



wardly share power and authority with the Ottoman Seal of *Sīn*, whereas inwardly it is exclusively he who would be bestowed with authority and power. Thus the *al-khurūj* refers to the appearance of two personae linked together by the predicted event of loss of Egypt and dated astrologically.

The author clearly differentiates between the Ottoman Seal of *Sīn* (*sīn al-khatm al-uthmānī*) and the *ṣāhib al-qirān* from Khurāsān. This separation of identity is one important conclusion of pseudo-Qūnawī which contradicts what we find elsewhere in his text and particularly in pseudo-Ṣafadī's commentary, as I will explain later. In the next folio,<sup>232</sup> the author mentions the line pertaining to the famous episode of discovery of Ibn 'Arabī's tomb in Damascus, which became an Ottoman motto: "When the *sīn* enters the *shīn*, then will emerge the tomb of Muḥy al-dīn". There can be no doubt that the *sīn* referred to in that sentence should be identified with Sultan Selim. The tomb in the Damascene quarter of Sālihiyya was desecrated until "the *ṣāhib al-qirān* and *ṣāhib al-zamān* from the lineage of Osman emerged".<sup>233</sup> Here he unambiguously equates Selim with *ṣāhib al-qirān/zamān* which patently contradicts a previous statement of his in which he ascribes to each of them a separate identity. In the apocalyptic and millenarian context, there always exist two divinely designated universal authorities, one of which is temporal, of this world (*al-qirān*) and the other of which is spiritual and eternal (*al-zamān*),<sup>234</sup> the last figure of the sacred history that unified both authorities was the Prophet. What is one to make of the author's claim that Sultan Selim had also combined them in his persona?

Be that as it may, it is the discovery of the tomb that is the central event revealing the identity of the divinely appointed ruler uniting the authority of (*ṣāhib qirān* and *ṣāhib zamān*). In both the original text and commentary this event serves as the juncture and the link connecting the Ottoman dynasty with seminal figures from Islamic history through the symbolic act of discovery. This practice had already been successfully utilized in the case of Sultan Mehmed al-Fatih at the time of the fateful conquest of Constantinople. His close associate and, according to most Ottoman accounts, spiritual preceptor, Akṣemsettin, used divinatory methods to lead the sultan to the tomb of another significant person from the early history of Islam, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī. He was not only among the closest companions of the Prophet, but also died during a Muslim siege of the city. The discovery of his tomb, as in the case with that of Ibn 'Arabī in respect to Selim, was primarily meant to establish a close link between the sultan and the most consequential figures from earlier Muslim history, as well as between the Ottoman army and early Muslim generations devoted to the practice of ji-

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<sup>232</sup>PQ, fol. 19b.

<sup>233</sup>Both attributes are gathered in one person.

<sup>234</sup>Cornell Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Suleyman", *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps*, ed. by Gilles Veinstein, Paris, 1992, p. 170 (henceforth *The Lawgiver*). It should be noted, however, that this distinction is for the most part circumstantial and does not follow from the titles themselves.

had.<sup>235</sup> If anything, this eagerness demonstrates the early XVI century necessity to provide specific proofs of legitimacy for the Ottoman dynasty.<sup>236</sup>

The link between Selim and Ibn ‘Arabī is not so much divinatory as it is spiritual: Selim was able to unearth Ibn ‘Arabī’s long neglected place of rest using his inner sense (*baṣīra*) and through *kashf* and *shuhūd*. The fruits of this mysterious achievement were immediate and gratifying: Ibn ‘Arabī addressed Selim in the following words: “Oh *Sīn*, you are possessor of spiritual stability (*tamkīn*); you will emerge and be endowed with God’s victory and support,<sup>237</sup> words which blend esoteric Sufi terminology with Qur’anic expressions of victory (*naṣr*) and support (*ta’yīd*).<sup>238</sup> Even though the emergence (*zuhūr*) of the *Sīn* as allegedly foreseen by Ibn ‘Arabī has an unmistakably messianic coloring, it is followed by a series of events whose protagonists are those many rulers that will come from his house and lineage. The author lists them by the initial and final letter of each name in the following manner and order:

*s-m* (س / م); (Selim I, reigned from 917/1512 to 926/1520)

*s-n* (ن / س); (Süleyman, r. 926/1520 – 973/1566)

*s-m* (س / م); (Selim II, r. 973/1566 – 981/1574)

*m-d* (د / م); (Murad III, r. 981/1574 – 1003/1595)

*m-d* (د / م); (Mehmed III, r. 1003/1595 – 1011/1603)

*a-d* (د / ا); (Ahmed I, r. 1011/1603 – 1025/1617)

*m-y* (ي / م); (Mustafa I, r. 1025/1617 – 1026/1618)

The actual historic chronology of the Ottoman rulers breaks up here, with the name of Mustafa I. Pseudo Qūnawī’s list appears to skip the names of two sultans, Osman II (r. 1026/1618 – 1031/1622) and (Mustafa I – Deli, r. 1031/1622 – 1032/1623). The list continues with next sultan, Murad IV:

*m-d* (د / م) (Murad IV, r. 1032/1623 – 1049/1640)

*i-m* (م / ا) (Ibrāhīm I, r. 1049/1640 – 1057/1648)

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<sup>235</sup> A similar legitimizing strategy was used in the case of the Timurid miraculous discovery of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s tomb in the present day city of Mazar Sharif that took its name after the mausoleum. It is possible to find other examples of undisclosed resting places of prominent personalities in the history of Islam, at times in the most unlikely places. There is abundant evidence of this, especially in the Balkans and Central Asia.

<sup>236</sup> See Fleischer, *The Lawgiver*, p. 161.

<sup>237</sup> PQ, fol. 19a.

<sup>238</sup> One of the names used for Selim in the *al-Shajara* is *al-mu’ayyad min ‘ind Allah* “the one supported by God”.

*s-m* (س/م) (unidentified; Selim III who ruled from 1203/1789 to 1221/1807 is the only Ottoman sultan to whom the acronym could possibly refer)

*m-y* (م/ي); (unidentified; Mustafa IV ruled after Selim III, from 1221/1807 – 1222/1808)

*a-n* (ن/ا) (unidentified).<sup>239</sup>

The list inevitably reframes the question of the date at which the text originated. It does not, however, have as devastating an impact on dating of the text as might appear. Setting aside the last three unidentified names of Ottoman rulers, the list is largely consistent until the time of Ibrahim I (ruled until 1057/1648). It is worthy of note that the oldest copies of *al-Shajara* are penned precisely around that time: the manuscript examined here is from 1059/1650. In light of the chronological list of Ottoman sultans given in both pseudo Qūnawī and pseudo Şafadī, and in an absence of more conclusive evidence to the contrary, I assume it to be very likely that the texts originated in the fourth and/or fifth decades of the XVII century.

This noble assembly of Ottoman sovereigns provided by the commentators of *al-Shajara* begins with the *sīn al-fātiḥ* and ends with the *alif al-khatm*, whereby Sultan Selim, thanks to his vast territorial acquisition, shares with Sultan Mehmed II the honorable title of al-Fātiḥ (the Conqueror). The last name on the list, and apparently the final ruler from the house of Osman, remains unknown. While this list at least partially corresponds to the actual historic chronology, correspondence between the text and the historical reality of the Ottoman XVI century world remains nonetheless controversial. The author clarifies his aim only by including *ishāra* rather than *ibāra*, as we have seen. Moreover, because of the density of events, and because of their complex nature and sheer number, he is admittedly only able to allude to the generalities, while setting aside the particularities. Indeed, he is keen to deliberately disrupt chronology at times by shuffling and mixing events for the sake of their concealment.

Two large thematic blocks are discernible in the text of pseudo-Qūnawī: Sultan Selim's conquering campaign to the East and to the West clearly stands at the forefront, whereas the author's focus on the question of justice (*ʿadl*) possibly indicates the shift of attention from Selim to his successor Süleyman, who is named a few times in the work. There is no doubt that Selim entertained hopes of achieving the stature of great world conquerors like Alexander, Chingiz Khan or, closer to his historical moment, Timur. Large scale military successes against the Safavids and Mamluks, both referred to by Ottoman imperial propaganda in debasing and contemptuous terms,<sup>240</sup> could not be seen as anything other than the immediate result of ever-present

<sup>239</sup> These encrypted royal lineage lists of the Ottoman house are given in both texts. See PQ, fol. 20a and PŞ, fol. 2b and again, in a more elaborate manner, fol. 8a.

<sup>240</sup> While more sectarian terms were reserved for the Safavids, the Mamluks are at times called *al-ʿabīd* (slaves), which is a calque of the name Mamluk. People of Egypt are incited to terminate the rule of the slaves and join in with the free ones (*aḥrār*), i.e. the Ottomans.

divine assistance and support. To a great extent, the proximity of the end of the tenth Hijri century enhanced messianic thought and millenarian expectation, which was elaborately reflected in a series of apocalyptic texts that formed a separate apocalyptic literature not only among the Ottomans, but also in other parts of the Muslim world.<sup>241</sup> This distinct literary tradition reached its high point in the sixteenth century, during the reign of Selim and Süleyman. The Sultans not only allowed this image to be associated with them, but actively promoted it.<sup>242</sup> The two texts examined here, pseudo-Qūnawī and pseudo-Şafadī are, replete with extravagant claims in their favor. Sultan Selim is designated as *şāhib al-qirān*, *şāhib al-zamān*, Mahdi and the seal of the Ottoman dynastic lineage; and Ottoman historians credit him as being the renewer of religion at the turn of the tenth Hijri century.<sup>243</sup> By far the most interesting and extravagant claim is found in pseudo-Şafadī, where Selim is named as the twelfth imam of ‘Alī’s lineage of the Prophet’s household (*ahl al-bayt*).<sup>244</sup>

However odd it may appear, this peculiar claim was meant to counterbalance the primary source of the Safavid legitimacy, which is identification with *ahl al-bayt*<sup>245</sup> of the Prophet and upholding their claims for authority and leadership in the Muslim world.<sup>246</sup> Through this claim, a distinctively Shiite doctrine became fully, if falsely, integrated into Ottoman imperial ideology and the Safavid claim was rejected. Selim’s sweeping victories on the battlefield were to account for most of this reputation. Strictly religious and messianic terminology, like the titles of *şāhib al-zamān*, *al-Mahdi*, *al-manşūr min ‘ind Allah*, *mujaddid*, *al-imām al-thāni ‘ashar*, etc. that are routinely associated with him in historical sources, had to be appended to form the full image of the divinely guided Muslim ruler. The title of caliph, which Selim assumed from the last shadow Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil III after his sack of Cairo in 1517, affords an additional window into this concerted effort towards full legiti-

<sup>241</sup> The most prominent case in point is of course that of Aḥmad Sirhindī and the Alfīya movement in the Subcontinent.

<sup>242</sup> Fleischer, *The Lawgiver*, p. 166.

<sup>243</sup> For all these qualifications and titles see Lütfi Paşa’s *Tevarih Al-i Osman*, p. 11-12, quoted from Fleischer, *The Lawgiver*, p. 163.

<sup>244</sup> PŞ, fol. 2b.

<sup>245</sup> Shah Ismā‘īl on the source of his legitimacy says:

*I don’t need this daftar and diwan  
my daftar and diwan is ‘Ali  
(Manga bu daftar ve divan garakmaz  
Manum daftarla divanum Ali dur.  
(Divan, ghazal no. 22).*

See also: Vladimir Minorsky, “The Poetry of Shāh Ismā‘īl I”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1942, pp. 1006-1053.

<sup>246</sup> Religious zeal led some of the first Safavid shahs to champion claims which stand outside of the confines of normative Shi’ism. Shah Ismā‘īl, for instance, in his collection of poetry claims to be a guiding imam, a manifestation of imam (*imamung tajalli*). See ghazals number 14. and 16. in *Divan Shah Ismā‘īl Khatā‘ī*. See Tourkhan Gandjei, *Il Canzoniere di Šāh Ismā‘īl Ḥaṭā‘ī*, Instituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, 1959, pp. 15-18. Only twenty-five years after the death of the eponymous founder of the Safavid Sufi Order and the dynasty, an official Safavid genealogy *Şafwa al-şafā’* was forged in which the dynastic house was shown to be descend from the lineage of the imams of *ahl al-bayt*, through the 7<sup>th</sup> Imām Mūsā al-Kāzim. See Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 3.

zation of Ottoman power primarily in the Muslim world.<sup>247</sup> The effort in question was directed not only against the Safavids who, notwithstanding the immediacy of their menace were easily dismissible from the contest because of their eccentric Shiite creed, but also, and more specifically, against the Mamluks and other dynasties<sup>248</sup> that could potentially endanger the Ottomans' universal monarchy.

The Sufi stratum of this terminological empowerment is equally interesting. Selim is repeatedly described having been endowed with astute spiritual insight (*'ayn baṣīra*) and as having attained the state of spiritual witnessing and manifestation (*kashf* and *shuhūd*), in principle one of the highest stages among people of the Path. The erstwhile grand-vizier Lütfi Paşa tells of Selim's consultation with his generals and ministers before the campaign against the Safavid Shah Ismā'īl in which Sultan addresses them in purely Sufi terminology.<sup>249</sup> The sudden death of a person who was invested with the Ottoman imperial project and messianic hopes of millenarian expectation must have caused considerable mayhem. The text of pseudo Qūnawī in certain passages shows signs of this transition of focus, from one *sīn* to another. Not only does it explicitly mention Süleyman on many occasions, but it also contains the second thematic block which is unmistakably "Süleymanic": the issue of justice (*'adl*). Upon his ascension to throne, Süleyman declared, both in word and highly symbolic action, that the hallmark of his reign would be perfect and impartial justice.<sup>250</sup> In so doing, he established an official setting that is well reflected in the writing of historians of that time. It is clearly a distinguishable layer of signification in the *Shajara* as well. While Selim's genuine connection with the concept and personality of the Messiah in Islamic doctrine was through his miraculous military victories, Süleyman's image of Mahdi was constructed around the issue of justice. The concept of *'adāla* was and is the underlining element of Islamic political thought. Süleyman's self-promoted image, as the one who promotes equity and justice (in conjunction with order and discipline), meant to rectify somewhat weak claims for legitimacy according to the dominant genealogical principles of the time: a curious fusion of Islamic and Mongol elements.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> For an informative historical overview of the principles of Ottoman caliphate see S. Tufan Buzpinar, "The Question of Caliphate under the last Ottoman Sultans" in *Ottoman Reform and Muslim Regeneration*, ed. by Itzhak Weismann and Fruma Zachs, Library of Ottoman Studies 8, I.B. Taurus and Co, 2005, pp. 17-37.

<sup>248</sup> This obviously excludes the Habsburgs, against whom an ordinary *ghazi* call could have sufficed; on the other hand it includes the rising power of Muslim ruling houses in the East, first and foremost the Safavids. In preparing his campaign against the Safavids, Selim, it appears, was able to forge a Sunni alliance in the East. He had received numerous letters from Sunni ulama in Transoxiana congratulating him on his victory over the Safavids and inviting him to extend his rule to Iran and Central Asia. See Fleischer, *The Lawgiver*, p. 163.

<sup>249</sup> According to Lütfi Paşa, Selim addressed them as: "*ey benim can ve gonülden muridlerim*". Fleischer, *The Lawgiver*, p. 163.

<sup>250</sup> Op.cit, p. 164.

<sup>251</sup> As against Timur and other dynasties of the time, the Ottomans did not have any connection to the Chingizid ruling house, which by that time was an important aspect of legitimacy to rule in the Muslim world. They allegedly adopted the typically Chingizid title of khan in order to rectify that lack, albeit superficially. On the other hand, as in the case of the Chobanids in Azarbaijan, the alternative pathway for bolstering dynastic claims to legitimacy was the concept of the rightly guided savior al-Mahdi. See Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War 1402-13*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, p. 11;

Based on a well-known Prophetic tradition that is frequently evoked in relation to Messiah, justice would not reach its fullness except with his emergence: “And he will fill the world with justice in the same way that it had been filled with injustice.”

Contrary to that of his predecessor, Süleyman’s military record is systematically overlooked by the author of the *al-Shajara*. Campaigns against the Safavids, the Habsburgs, and the siege of Vienna are entirely missing from the account. The author divides the two *sīns* into two time periods. The conquering *sīn* (*al-sīn al-fātiḥ*) represents Selim, who ruled over the first time period named *al-mudda al-ūlā al-ṣāfiyya* (the first glorious period). This period begins with the year when Cairo was captured (922/1517) and lasts until “it leaves the valley (*maḍrab*) of that time”. The second time period, ruled over by another *sīn*, in apparent reference to Süleyman, begins with the year of leaving / emerging out (*al-khurūj*) and lasts for the period of *alif* and *nūn*, i.e. 51 years according to numeric values of these two Arabic letters. The resulting year, 973/1567,<sup>252</sup> is the year of Süleyman’s death and Selim II’s accession to the throne. The two letters *alif* and *nūn* are the difference between the names of two sins: Selim + a-n = Süleyman, with a slightly alternate vocalization. The first period is called “pure” because the Ottomans would rule in it without any outside interference, whereas the second period is the time during which the Ottoman rule would be supplemented, indeed entirely overshadowed by that of *Mīm al-khatm*, as indicated in the meaning of Egypt’s “going out of hand” (*al-khurūj*). It is at the time of the second epoch, the one belonging to Süleyman, that the world would be filled with justice in the same manner as it had been filled with injustice before.<sup>253</sup> For the author of the *al-Shajara*, the emergence of Āl-i Osman is in itself an act of justice, at which point he uses two Arabic terms ‘*adl* and *qist*’.

This social perfection reached its apogee in the epoch of Süleyman. He was dubbed 'mercy for the believer' and 'benediction for the unbeliever and the unruly (‘*āṣī*).' The frequently repeated phrase which underscores the Ottoman eligibility for special divine attention as alluded to in the Qur’an, that their state is the best (Ar. *aṣlah*),<sup>254</sup> could very well be interpreted as the most orderly one: yet another hallmark of Süleyman’s incremental endeavor towards the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Although he initially seemed to have followed in his father’s footsteps, it appears that several historical factors had induced him to abandon the dream of the universal empire. A seemingly minor cause for this change of direction was the ultimate failure of Süleyman’s design to secure Iran for the Ottoman house through a political misadventure of Mirza Alkaş, a defecting Safavid prince whom Süleyman strove to put on the

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and Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 10.

<sup>252</sup> Süleyman died in 973/1566. The two-year difference is likely a result of the difference between the Hijri and Gregorian calendars.

<sup>253</sup> PQ, fol. 25a

<sup>254</sup> See footnote 226, p. 89.

Safavid throne.<sup>255</sup> This failure is usually blamed on Alqaş's sudden reversion to Shi'ism after he had openly converted to Sunni ways during his stay under the Ottoman protection. While in itself a relatively minor defeat of Ottoman diplomacy, it profoundly affected the Ottoman imperial dream. This episode led to the treaty of Amasya, which was ultimately intended to regulate the boundaries between the two adversaries; henceforth, the Ottomans accepted at least partial legitimacy of the Safavid Empire.<sup>256</sup> Moreover, the treaty and border demarcation acknowledged geographical limitation as a licit political principle. Added to this are complex questions of his succession and resulting internal discord, all of which in their own right contributed to the gradual shift inward, a shift wherein the principles of a just and well-organized empire were at the forefront of his efforts. Contrary to his father's titles celebrating conquest, i.e. activity, he became known principally as *qānūnī* (the Law-giver) and *cihānpanāh*, i.e. the one in which the world finds refuge, a symbol of passivity and inwardness.

This brings us again to the important question concerning the *al-Shajara*, that of its dating. Gril rightly points out that the prophecies contained in the *al-Shajara* were most probably circulated *ex post facto*. If that is correct, based solely on the names of the Ottoman sultans included in the work,<sup>257</sup> one could move the date of its final updating to as late as the eighteenth century. In the complete absence of other evidence, it is difficult, indeed impossible, to establish the date of the composition of the *al-Shajara* with any degree of certainty. It is possible that the *al-Shajara* was an open type text, begun in the XVII century and subsequently expanded and repeatedly changed as the "prophecies" materialized. Given the attention granted to Selim and Süleyman, however, the primary focus of *al-Shajara*, irrespective of the exact date of its composition, remains on the XVI century. The beginning of the tenth century after the Hijra was a clear landmark that triggered millenarian expectations and gave rise to a separate genre of apocalyptic literature.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> The account of the failed affair involving Mirza Alqaş is given in Peçevi, pp. 267-270. For discussion, see Cornell Fleischer, "Alqāş Mirza Şafawī", *EIR*, vol. I, fasc. 9, pp. 907-909. See also John Walsh, "The Revolt of Alqas Mirza" *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, vol. 68, 1976, pp. 63-95; Colin P. Mitchell, "Provincial Chancelleries and Local Lines of Authority in the Sixteenth-Century Safavid Iran", *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova Serie, Anno 88, no. 2, 2008, pp. 483-507.

<sup>256</sup> The acceptance of the Safavid dynasty and state is arguably the single most important outcome of the Amasya peace treaty. See Mikheil Svanidze, "The Amasya Peace Treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Iran (June 1, 1555) and Georgia", *Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences*, vol. III, no. 1, 2009, pp. 191-198. Occasional border disputes persisted well into the XIX century up until the time when the Treaty of Erzurum was concluded in 1847.

<sup>257</sup> See above, pp. 93-94. The last sultan identified in the chronology is Ibrahim I, who ruled from 1640 to 1648. Other names given in a random order after that could move the date of writing back into the XVIII century.

<sup>258</sup> It is usually accepted that Islamic apocalyptic literature in its Sunni version reached its maturity around the tenth century after Hijra. See Said Said Amir Arjomand, "Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classic Period", *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, eds. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen J. Stein, vol. 2: *Apocalypticism in Western History and Culture*, ed. Bernard McGinn, New York, Continuum, 1999, p. 238; quoted from Kaya Şahin, "Constantinople and the End of Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour", *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 14 (2010), p. 321. For an earlier period see Mohammad Ahmad Masad, *The*

### *Al-Biṣṭāmī and his legacy*

The originator of this apocalyptic trend in the Ottoman context was without a doubt ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī al-Biṣṭāmī. In a number of his pioneering works on the Last Hour and its portents, science of letters and divination suffused with prophetic and hermeneutic wisdom, he presented secret sciences, above all divination and lettrism, as the “rationally cultivable path to the same knowledge of the divine and the cosmos that was attained by mystics through inspiration.”<sup>259</sup>

Al-Biṣṭāmī is an interesting phenomenon in a number of ways. Unfortunately, information on his life and career is rather scarce and does not go beyond sketchy entries in classical dictionaries like *al-Shaqā’iq al-nu‘māniyya* and the bibliographical compendium *Kashf al-ẓunūn*. His full name is given as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Ḥanafī al-Biṣṭāmī.<sup>260</sup> He was a native of Antioch. The appellation al-Biṣṭāmī, instead of indicating his geographical origin, probably stands for his spiritual affiliation with the celebrated Sufi master Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī.<sup>261</sup> He seems to have been born in or around 782/1380.<sup>262</sup> Biographical data pertaining to his education, succinct as it may appear, suffices to demonstrate that the so-called secret sciences were part of the mainstream, and perhaps almost standard, curriculum of his time. By all accounts, al-Biṣṭāmī was an expert in traditional Islamic sciences, an authority in the field of Prophetic Tradition and Qur’an exegesis; he also cultivated a special liking for the Arabic language, its style and secrets, including the science of letters. The number of his works is significant, varying from thirty-six (according to Brockleemann)<sup>263</sup> to forty-six (Bagdadli Ismail Paşa). In his quest for knowledge he left his native Antioch and travelled to the classical centers of Islamic scholarship, Damascus and the Mamluk capital of Cairo. Along the way he acquired secret sciences from a number of prominent scholars, whom he named in his seminal work entitled

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*Medieval Islamic Apocalyptic Tradition: Divination, Prophecy and the End of Time in the 7th /13th Century Eastern Mediterranean*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of History, 2008.

<sup>259</sup> Cornell Fleischer, “Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries”, *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, ed. by M. Farhad and S. Bagci, Thames & Hudson, London, 2010, p. 234.

<sup>260</sup> İhsan Fazlıoğlu adds “al-Antakī” and “al-Ḥurūfī” in his article, “İlk dönem Osmanlı ilim ve kültür hayatında İhvānu’s-Safā ve Abdurrahmān Bistāmī”, *Dīvān ilmi araştırmalar dergisi*, sayı 2, 1996, pp. 229-240.

<sup>261</sup> In light of several cases in the same geographical area in which descent is claimed from prominent ancestors like Abū al-Ḥasan Kharāqānī and Ma‘rūf al-Karkhī, his sobriquet could even indicate a claim for genealogical descent from Abū Yazīd. The affiliation of this writer with the Syrian branch of the Bistamiya order is affirmed in Fleischer, “Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences...”, p. 232.

<sup>262</sup> Denis Gril obtained the year indirectly through the statement of the author that he finished one chapter of one of his works in 844 AH at the advanced age of 62. See Denis Gril, “Ésotérisme contre hérésie: ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Biṣṭāmī, unreprésentant de la science des lettres à Bursa dans la première moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in *Syncretismes et hérésies dans l’orient seljoukide et ottoman (XIV<sup>e</sup> – XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, ed. by Gilles Veinstein, Peeters, Paris, 2005, p. 185.

<sup>263</sup> Carl Brockleemann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*, v. II, pp. 300-301; Supplement, pp. 323-324.



*Durra tāj al-rasā'il*. The list included Abū al-‘Abbās Shams al-dīn al-Būnī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Harralī, shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Sab’īn, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shāzilī. He also credited Ibn ‘Arabī for his influence in *‘ilm al-ḥurūf*. That influence is visible everywhere; the titles of al-Biṣṭāmī’s most important work is *Fawā’ih al-miskiyya fī al-fawātiḥ al-makkiyya*, which undoubtedly resembles, both in title and structure, Ibn ‘Arabī’s oeuvre *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. Moreover, four chapters of his work (chapters three through seven) are nothing but an adaptation, in reverse order, of six chapters from the *Futūḥāt*. It was in Cairo that his path intersected with that of Ṣā’īn al-dīn Turkah Iṣfahānī. Addressing and naming a few contemporaries, al-Biṣṭāmī alluded to the existence of a secretive society modeled after that of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ and named similarly as the Brothers of Purity and Friends of Fidelity (Ikhwān al-ṣafā’ wa khullān al-wafā’). His works, including the *Miftāḥ al-jafr al-kabīr*, are the main inspiration for the emergence of the Ottoman apocalyptic literature that will be constituted in the sixteenth century. The halcyon days of his career were during his stay in Bursa, where he eventually settled and surrounded himself by a number of disciples. There he became a protégé, and teacher, of Molla Fenārī,<sup>264</sup> his son Muḥammad Shah as well as Shaykh Badr al-dīn Simawī, which clearly shows that his activities in writing and teaching a growing number of disciples did not take place on the margins of early Ottoman intellectual society, but rather had a elitist coloring. Some of his works were commissioned by sultans and upon completion dedicated to them. The composition of the inner circle of his disciples, namely the case of the first Ottoman *shaykh al-islam* Molla Fenārī and shaykh Badr al-dīn, shows that a similar teaching under different historical circumstances could possibly take two entirely different, indeed opposite, routes. While Molla Fenārī was one of the most revered Ottoman scholars (and thanks to his activities in the Orhaniye medrese as well as his various writings he is widely considered to be the architect behind the Ottoman scholarly system), it was shaykh Badr al-dīn, who also occupied one of highest official scholarly positions, that of *kadiasker*, who was destined to become the protagonist of a major rebellion which had an unmistakable millenarian coloring.<sup>265</sup> The influence of Ibn ‘Arabī on shaykh Bedr al-dīn is not only possible and visible in his association with al-Biṣṭāmī; there is also significant textual evidence thereof in his *Kitāb al-vāridāt* where he discusses the question of the unity of being in some detail, exhibiting an obvious Akbari approach. While one may argue that *waḥdat al-wujūd* and its penetrating influence had by that time reached an almost universal appeal among the Sufis, the shaykh also debates the question of the nature of divine punishment, citing Dāwūd Qayṣarī’s commentary on the

<sup>264</sup> Judging by the admiration attached to his name by Turkah and al-Biṣṭāmī, Fleischer concludes that Molla Fenārī could have been a third member of the Brotherhood. See Fleischer: “Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences...”, p. 232

<sup>265</sup> See Nedim Filipović, *Princ Musa i šejh Bedrudin*, Sarajevo, Svjetlost, 1971. This lineage shows that the influence of Ibn ‘Arabī and that of the science of lettrism by al-Biṣṭāmī entered Ottoman learned circles with a significant degree of overlapping: through the same people, places and institutions.

*Fuṣūṣ*, which demonstrates a more than usual affinity towards the doctrines related to Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>266</sup>

### *Şafadī’s commentary of the al-Shajara*

The second most important and most widely disseminated commentary of *al-Shajara* is that allegedly written by the famous scholar Şalāh al-dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Şafadī (d. 764/1363). He was a celebrated stylist, literary critic, and jurist, and the author of a multivolume biographical dictionary entitled *al-Wāfi fī wafayāt*, which stands out among his numerous works. Ibn Kathīr refers to him as *qādī*, which to all appearances is but an honorary appellation. Nonetheless, the statement points to the high level of his legal studies. The text of the commentary ascribed to al-Şafadī displays an identical set of features like that allegedly authored by al-Qūnawī. There is, however, one important difference. While the attribution of a commentary on a work by Ibn ‘Arabī to al-Qūnawī appears to be entirely plausible in light of their close relation, such an attribution in relation to al-Şafadī is particularly problematic given that al-Şafadī seems to have been ill-disposed, indeed hostile towards Ibn ‘Arabī. This attitude is unsurprising when one considers that al-Şafadī was on very close terms with al-Dhahabī and especially Ibn Taymiyya, who is said to have been among al-Şafadī’s principal teachers. Al-Şafadī’s feelings towards Ibn ‘Arabī are included in a brief note from the *al-Wāfi* and the story is related to the famous case of ‘Izz al-dīn b. Sullamī. Although the story came down to us through a quote by Fīrūzābādī, it originated with ‘Abd al-Ghaffār al-Qūsī. In his work entitled *al-Wāhid* he stated:

It is said that one day the servant [*khādim*] of ‘Izz al-dīn entered the Great mosque in the company of his shaykh and said to him: ‘You have promised to show me the Pole [*Qutb*]’. The shaykh replied: ‘That is the Pole’ – pointing his finger to Ibn ‘Arabī, who was sitting surrounded with his students. ‘Oh master, do you really mean to say that about him?’ ‘Yes, he is the Pole’.<sup>267</sup>

This short anecdote stands at the center of the century-long controversy which it triggered. The reason for the disproportional attention which the story attained lies in the person of ‘Izz al-dīn Sullamī, who commanded unprecedented respect among the scholars of law and enjoyed exceptional reputation during his lifetime. Al-Şafadī was the first to relate an entirely opposite version of the anecdote where ‘Izz al-dīn al-Sullamī, upon seeing Ibn ‘Arabī in the Great Mosque, declared him publicly to be a

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<sup>266</sup> For an overview of his ideas, including those traditionally ascribed to Ibn ‘Arabī see *Simawna qadisi oglu: Şeyh Bedreddin* by M. Şerefüddin Yaltkaya, Şehzadebaşı – Evkaf islamiyye matba’ası, Istanbul, 1924 (1340 AH), Chapter 12, pp. 23-27.

<sup>267</sup> Addas, p. 252.

liar and deceitful shaykh. Al-Şafadī then goes on to accuse Ibn ‘Arabī of sexual immorality, which is a typical slander frequently used in conjunction with the charge of heresy. Al-Şafadī’s account takes a rather bizarre turn when he includes the eccentric claim that Ibn ‘Arabī entertained marital relations with a *jinn*.<sup>268</sup> In light of these hostile remarks it seems very improbable that al-Şafadī would write a commentary on a work by Ibn ‘Arabī. It is truly astonishing that the attribution to al-Şafadī would remain unchallenged in the Ottoman context; a great deal of faith was required to disregard the obvious. Al-Şafadī’s authorship is also impossible for chronological reasons. As opposed to pseudo-Qūnawī, who wrote his commentary on the basis of divine inspiration, al-Şafadī does not claim that for himself. In an apparent similarity to Ibn ‘Arabī and his mysterious encounter with a youth at the Ka‘ba, pseudo al-Şafadī, according to his own account, received divine knowledge and an explanation of the secrets of the *al-Shajara* through an informant. His name is given as Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī Ibn Muḥammad al-Tūnisī<sup>269</sup> and the author made his acquaintance in Damascus at the shrine of shaykh Ruslan<sup>270</sup> in 773/1371. The author of the commentary then furnishes details about this chronologically spurious encounter<sup>271</sup> between al-Şafadī and al-Tūnisī. The latter appears to be his senior in age and knowledge;<sup>272</sup> for an undisclosed period of time they were engaged in scholarly exchange and al-Tūnisī instructed him in various disciplines (*‘ulūm shattā*) after which he endorsed al-Şafadī with a certificate (*ijāza*). The most important contribution of al-Tūnisī is the introduction he offered al-Şafadī to the key concept of *jafr* without which it is impossible to ponder upon the mysteries contained in a prophetic text. One of the texts which al-Şafadī allegedly studied with him and is part of *ijāza* is *al-Shajara* by Ibn ‘Arabī. Al-Tūnisī informed him:

My son, this *al-Shajara* contains many secrets, most of which are [related to] the letter *sīn* whom the shaykh [Ibn ‘Arabī] identified as being from the house of Osman who will reveal himself, God willing; in his *al-Shajara al-Kubra*, the shaykh stated that he will emerge in the year of *kaf* and *za*’ and thereupon will conquer the Arab lands up to the

<sup>268</sup> Al-Şafadī, *al-Wāfi bi al-wafayāt*, Wiesbaden 1981, tome IV, p. 174, quoted here from Addas, p. 7.

<sup>269</sup> Al-Tūnisī supposedly went to perform pilgrimage in Mecca where he resided for three years; he was buried at the famous cemetery of Baq‘a.

<sup>270</sup> The original text has *maqam*, which could be interpreted as a Sufi hostel as well as a shrine; however, they are often located within a single complex. The full name of Shaykh Ruslan is Arslan b. Ya‘qūb al-Dimashqī al-Turkumānī and his death date is some time after 550 A.H. He is known primarily for his *Risāla al-tawhid*; on him see Süleyman Derin, "Şamlı bir sûfi: Şeyh Arslan Dimaşkı ve Tevhid risālesi", *Tasavvuf-ilmî ve akademik araştırma dergisi*, vol XI, number 26, pp. 91-124.

<sup>271</sup> The reason the chronology must be wrong is because al-Şafadī died in 764/1363. See Franz Rosenthal, "al-Şafadī", *EI*<sup>2</sup>, vol. VIII, p. 759.

<sup>272</sup> He addresses al-Şafadī as "ya waladī", a term which suggests a typical Sufi rapport between a master and his disciple.

boundaries of al-Maghreb; after that he will return to his seat and his caliphal residence.<sup>273</sup>

The tone of his pronouncement is markedly prognostic. Al-Tūnisi then lists two other *sīns* that will follow the initial one on the throne and their feats. It is hard to comprehend what is the reference of the year included in the prophecy, 920/1510, as Selim I ascended the throne two years after that. On the other hand, the reference to his caliphal seat in Constantinople (*mahall khilāfati-hi*) suggests a different time frame.

Pseudo-Şafadī exhibits several other distinguishing features in comparison with pseudo-Qūnawī. It is a significantly shorter text, comprising only fourteen folios as against Qūnawī's twenty-five. Moreover, it contains many fewer citations from the original work whose commentary it is meant to be. On the other hand, the inter-textual nature of al-Şafadī's commentary is enhanced through several references to other works that form the core of the apocalyptic literature, beyond the confines of the Ottoman historical context. The author mentions the surely apocryphal work of Imam Fakhr al-dīn Rāzī and his commentary of *Miftāḥ al-jafr al-kabīr* by al-Biṣṭāmī, a treatise of al-Maqdisī entitled *Da'ira* and a sermon of Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib given as *Khuṭba al-bayān*.<sup>274</sup> Two other commentaries on *the Shajara* referred to by the author are the one by a certain Imam Yaḥyā b. 'Aqab, and second by 'Abdullāh al-Baghdādī, both of whom remain unidentified. Revealingly, the author also quotes from two works by Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī: *Tarikh* and *Sharḥ al-ḥawādith*. This fact suggests the possibility, noted by Gril, that the authors of both commentaries were contemporaries, perhaps even identical. The text repeats the same set of ideas seen in pseudo-Qūnawī. However, pointed attention is also given to the geographical region of al-Maghreb and the Ottoman conquest of Algeria. The sole allusion to Andalusia shows that at the time of writing it was in the hands of unbelievers. The author states the prophecy that it will be returned to the Muslims in the Maghreb.<sup>275</sup> The only known Ottoman campaign against Andalusia is recorded in year 891/1486.

### *The khurūj of Egypt*

In contrast to more than few uncertainties surrounding the *al-Shajara*, the historical events that it describes are much clearer. The loss of Egypt for the Ottomans, the *khurūj*, the meaning of which the author is striving to get across to the reader, was by all accounts much more than a symbolic event. The danger of losing Egypt was real

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<sup>273</sup>PŞ, fols. 2b-3a.

<sup>274</sup>There has been some amount of controversy concerning the sermon titled *Khuṭba al-bayān* and its attribution to Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. While the sermon is universally accepted as authentic among the Sufīs, the famous collection of sermons, letters and sayings of Imām 'Alī entitled *Nahj al-balāgha* does not contain it, and the Shi'ī tradition generally rejects it as spurious. See Sayyed Ja'far Murtaḍā al-'Āmilī, *Khuṭba al-bayān fī al-mīzān*, al-Markaz al-islamī li al-dirāsāt, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998, p. 90.

<sup>275</sup>PŞ, fols. 9b-10a.

and imminent, at the time when it became a possibility it was extremely a sensitive topic. It was one of the hardest tests for the young Sultan who ascended the throne shortly before that event.<sup>276</sup> In 922/1517, Sultan Selim began to rule in Egypt, transforming this important country of the Arab and Muslim world into a province in the Ottoman realm. As they did elsewhere when installing their own garrison of *muhāfaza* forces, the Ottomans relied heavily on local elites and administrators to govern and protect the province. Conquering another Muslim polity was always a sensitive issue; in an attempt to appease the local population and ameliorate his religious credentials, Selim marched into the city of Cairo accompanied by the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil III as well as the ruling chief magistrates of all four Sunni schools of Islam.<sup>277</sup>

The Ottoman conquest further added to the inner complexity of the political situation of Egypt. The contemporaneous political landscape consisted of a few relatively heterogeneous factions: former Mamluk ruling elites with divided Ottoman loyalties, Circassian troops in the service of the Mamluks, chieftains of various influential Arab tribes of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ottoman army and Janissary corps, and local Ottoman administrators and the central government in Istanbul. Establishing a working equilibrium between these factions, each of which had its own goals and agendas, would prove extremely difficult, indeed impossible at times. In order to maintain their precarious control of the province and prevent any possibility of a counter-attack, the Ottomans dispatched to Istanbul, in accordance with the time honored custom of the period, a number of consequential people from the newly conquered Egypt: judges, influential individuals from the previous Mamluk administration, artisans and military commanders.<sup>278</sup> This practice not only rendered them *de facto* hostages in the hands of the Ottomans, but also, and more importantly, put a stop to any possibility of a popular movement against the Ottoman administration by eliminating the elite echelon of the society.

The foundation was thus laid for the first Ottoman governor of Egypt, Hayri bey, a veteran and loyal official of the Ottoman house, to assume his duties. All Ottoman chronicles refer to him as an extremely shrewd and able individual who knew how to play all involved sides. His governorship of Egypt was by all accounts a period of great stability and progress. He was appointed governor of Egypt in Sha'ban of 923/1517. By choosing his immediate associates from the ranks of the remaining loyal Mamluk statesmen, he was able to reorganize the province and earn the loyalty and

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<sup>276</sup> This account of events in regard to Egypt and Ahmed Paşa is given here based on the following sources: Peçevi, *Tarih*, ed. by 'Alī, Istanbul, 1283; Mustafa Paşa Celalzade, *Ṭabaqāt al-mamālik wa darajāt al-masālik*, Weisbaden, 1981; Sadettin Hoca Mehmed, *Tac al-tavarih*, II, Istanbul, 1279; Seyyid Muḥammed es-Seyyid Maḥmūd, *XVI asırda Mısır eyaleti*, Marmara Üniversitesi yayınlari no. 483, Istanbul, 1990, p. 76-98, and a manuscript history of Egypt by 'Abd al-Şamad b. Sayyidī 'Alī b. Dāwūd al-Diyārbekrī: *Nawādir al-tawārikh*, Ali Emiri – Tarih, number 596, referred to as Diyarbekri.

<sup>277</sup> Seyyid Muḥammed es-Seyyid Maḥmūd, *XVI asırda Mısır eyaleti*, Marmara Üniversitesi yayınlari no. 483, Istanbul, 1990, pp. 55-56.

<sup>278</sup> Peçevi gives their number as six hundred households; see *Tarih*, p. 5.

respect of all the important political factions in Egypt. One of the most significant steps towards that goal was the proclamation of a general amnesty for all former members of the Mamluk state, who were called upon to integrate and support the Ottoman rule in Egypt. Moreover, Hayri bey deployed the Mamluk and Circassian troops stationed in Egypt and restored their monthly payments (*ulūfe*). Judging by the accounts of contemporary chronicles, he was especially successful in securing the allegiance of Arab tribes, whose affairs he knew very well. At his behest, both the central government in Egypt and the Sultan himself recognized the Arab chieftains as a separate and powerful political force in the country, occasionally sending them valuable gifts and allowances as a policy of *istimālet*, i.e. gaining goodwill. It seems, however, that there were limits to his successes and that the allegiance of Arab tribes had a rather peculiar geographical distribution, in that the tribes in Lower Egypt had relatively good relations with the Ottoman administration and the central government, while the tribes of Upper Egypt (*al-Ṣa'īd*) were rebellious and often challenged Ottoman authority. The administrative structure of the Mamluks was largely preserved and sometimes the process of adaptation did not require more than changing the names of some offices and positions. Hayri bey's death in 928/1522 marked a turning point for the worse. Before long, the careful balance and well-established system of the government of his time was disrupted; Circassian troops and Arab Bedouins were in a state of disarray following his death. The military commander of the Ottoman *muhafaza* garrison, a certain Sinan Bey, took it upon himself to govern the province until a new governor was appointed and sent by the central government. He replaced the Mamluk forces inside the Kal'a with his Janissary detachments and took control of the treasury.

During the siege of Rhodes, Süleyman learned of the death of Hayri Bey and immediately appointed his second vizier, Çoban Mustafa Paşa,<sup>279</sup> to the position with a yearly salary of one hundred thousand *altuni*.<sup>280</sup> Mustafa Paşa arrived in Cairo in the month of Dhu al-Qa'ade 928/1522. Upon his arrival, he assumed the office and instituted a series of fundamental changes, which potentially led to the ensuing dissent and uprising. He replaced most of Hayri Bey's military officers in the Qal'a with his own cadres and abolished the administrative structure of the province. The old system of government underwent substantial changes: tax rates were increased and the work of the Mamluk tax collectors was placed under the supervision of the chief treasurer (*defterdar*).<sup>281</sup> The point of no return was probably reached when Mustafa Paşa abolished the authority of the Circassian beys appointed by Hayri Bey as his advisers. In the meantime, a number of influential individuals who had spent several years in banishment in Istanbul managed to return home and to strongly encourage loyal followers to rebel against the Ottomans. It is important to note that it was Ahmed Paşa who ac-

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<sup>279</sup> Çoban Mustafa Paşa was one of the three main viziers whom Süleyman inherited and kept from the time of his father Selim. The other two were Piri Mehmed Paşa and Ferhad Paşa.

<sup>280</sup> Diyarbekri, fol. 236.

<sup>281</sup> As we will see, the nature of the measures implemented by both Mustafa Paşa and Ahmed Paşa is very similar.

cused the vizier Piri Paşa of corruption and involvement in allowing the exiled persons to return to Cairo.<sup>282</sup> At the Sultan's request, Mustafa Paşa was investigated by the military judge Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi, found guilty, and forced into retirement.

In light of these events, the reclamation of Egypt by the Mamluks seemed a likely prospect. As a result of the measures undertaken by Mustafa Paşa, Ottoman rule in Egypt was increasingly weakened and a number of revolts broke out. Circassian beys who occupied the military office of *kāshif* (sheriff) in the regions of Fayyum, Bahnasa, and Atfihiyye rebelled against him and were able to gather an army of twenty thousand cavalymen. Furthermore, they wrote letters to Arab chieftains urging them to line up with them on a promise of a one-year tax exemption (*mu'āfnāme*). Using tax privileges seemed to be a well established method of winning the hearts and minds of the people, and Mustafa Paşa utilized the same strategy. He was eventually successful in winning some of insurgents over to the Ottoman cause, but the rebellions did not abate altogether. Only after a strenuous effort were the Ottomans able to put down the rebellions in Upper Egypt and the *nahiyas* to the east and west of the capital. Owing to Mustafa Paşa's struggle to contain the revolts, and the turbulent uprisings which broke out primarily in the Egyptian cities under his governance, the Sultan in Rajab of 929/1522 appointed a new beylerbey Güzelce Kasim Paşa to Egypt. Although officially removed from office, Mustafa Paşa remained in Egypt and in fact actively participated in the affairs of the province alongside the newly elected beylerbey.<sup>283</sup> He was in charge of the divan, while Kasim Paşa was charged with governing. Diyarbekri reports that Mustafa Paşa was his closest aide and adviser. Shortly before the selection of Ahmed Paşa to the governorship of Egypt, there were in fact two high-ranking Ottoman officials jointly trying to put the province back in order after a series of armed uprisings and periods of unrest.

The succession of the three Ottoman governors, and the events which took place in Egypt, provide the historical background against which the appointment of Ahmed Paşa to the governorship of Egypt should be examined and contrasted. It is particularly hard to write about Ahmed Paşa because all available contemporaneous Ottoman chronicles unequivocally denounce him as a traitor, which is no surprise.<sup>284</sup> The derogatory attribute *khā'in* (traitor) is found alongside every single mention of his name and the collectively enforced notoriety accompanied him to the extent that even discussions of the period preceding his ascension to the post of governor of Egypt disparaged his name. He was one of the closest military commanders from the time of Sultan Selim whose exceptional military genius greatly contributed to the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans and elsewhere. After the seizure of Belgrade, he became

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<sup>282</sup> Kaya Şahin, *In the Service of the Ottoman Empire: Celalzade Mustafa (ca. 1490-1567), Bureaucrat and Historian*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, Department of History, 2007, p. 88.

<sup>283</sup> Peçevi states that Mustafa Paşa returned to Istanbul. See *Tarih*, p. 79.

<sup>284</sup> The most notable example is, of course, Celalzade Mustafa's *Ṭabaqāt*. For the unfavorable portray of Ahmed Paşa see on pages: 27b, 47a, 83a, 86a, 88a, and 110b.

Rumeli beylerbey and was promoted to the rank of second vizier after Çoban Mustafa Paşa assumed his office in Egypt. Following the removal of Piri Paşa, in which he was instrumental,<sup>285</sup> Ahmed Paşa harbored great hopes that he would be appointed to the vacant position of grand vizier, hopes that were largely justified and in concord with what was the norm up to that time. To his great dismay and disappointment, which he allegedly did not hesitate to voice to the Sultan, he was passed over in favor of Süleyman's childhood companion and head of his Privy Chamber (*has odabaşı*) Pargalı İbrahim Ağa, who was selected for the position of Grand Vizier. In the opinion of some modern historians, this was an obvious breach of the well established tradition of selection to the position of *şadārat*, and is largely seen as a move on the part of Süleyman to replace members of his father's retinue in the highest offices in the administration of the Empire with his own men.

The circumstances surrounding Süleyman's ascension to the Ottoman throne, unprecedented due to the fact that his father had died unexpectedly at the height of his military prowess, created a great urgency in assuming office, which left him neither time nor opportunity for him to develop a network of trusted associates within the ranks of the military and 'ulama, what is called by historians *devlet*.<sup>286</sup> Moreover, the fact that he had no living brothers to compete against for the throne resulted in the absence of his *devlet* and forced him to rely increasingly on his father's cadres among the bureaucrats, high military officers and officials, instead of appointing people from his own retinue as was the Ottoman dynastic practice. One of these individuals was Ahmed Paşa who, at the time of Selim, occupied the position of Rumeli beylerbeyi and, after the fall of Belgrade, became a vizier for the Sultan. As a result of this heavy reliance on the cadres of Selim, Süleyman's grip and control over the Empire was weakened and greatly aggravated by raging rivalries among the officials of his father. The appointment of İbrahim Paşa, may have been undertaken to solidify his control of the Empire, but in fact it had exactly the opposite outcome. The old rivalries were exacerbated and new ones were produced.

The main source for the study of Ahmed Paşa's revolt and the *khurūj* of Egypt from the Ottoman suzerainty is Celalzade Mustafa Paşa's detailed account of the crisis in *Ṭabaqāt al-mamālik*. Apart from the usual bias contained in the historical sources of the time, in which the image of Ahmed Paşa was deliberately fabricated, particular reservations are in order with the *Ṭabaqāt*. Mustafa Paşa leaves the reader in no doubt that Ahmed Paşa was his nemesis and traces of personal enmity are visible everywhere in his work. There is good reason for this animosity. After İbrahim Paşa had been appointed to the office of grand vizier, it was commonly accepted and acknowledged, even by his closest associates, including Mustafa Paşa, that he was unfit to run

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<sup>285</sup> In subsequent elaborations of his image in the Ottoman chronicles, this fact was overemphasized and treated as conclusive proof of his evil nature and subversive activity in the goal of availing himself of the highest executive office of the Empire.

<sup>286</sup> On this term and its significance, with particular emphasis on the case of Süleyman, see Snježana Buzov, *The Law Giver and His Law Maker: The Role of Legal Discourse in the Change of Ottoman Imperial Culture*, University of Chicago, unpublished PhD dissertation, p. 23.



the affairs of the state. His lack of skills further solidified Ahmed Paşa's claim to the office. Ibrahim Paşa had no military or bureaucratic experience of any significance and stood in need of a secretary who would rectify his lack of necessary skills. Mustafa Paşa, the author of the *Ṭabaqāt*, was delegated to the position as his assistant and remained in his service until the execution of Ibrāhīm Paşa in 943/1536. Nevertheless, in Celalzade's account, Ibrahim Paşa is deemed much more acceptable than Ahmed Paşa who is described with a litany of negative qualifiers. According to this account, he was not a member of any prominent or ulama family and particularly ignorant of the ways of the Sharī'a law, whose principles the grand vizier was expected to uphold; he took Sharī'a lightly and was overall a deceitful and evil natured person; and his horrendous actions were but a manifestation of his wretched character. From the point of view of the author and his superiors this set of statements provides a very convenient explanation, identifying possible causes for Ahmed Paşa's uprising by delving into the subtleties of his character as if he did not have any logical reason to act the way he did.

Celalzade indicates that he even feels uneasy about mentioning a dead person in such terms. His unsparing character assessment of Ahmed Paşa does, in fact, run counter to certain ideals of the Prophetic tradition, embodied in the prominent spiritual aphorism ordering believers to speak of the dead in terms of their virtues and good deeds. The author, however, exonerates himself by seeing a particular benefit in claiming that it is more important and beneficial to describe the true features and deeds of the evil, ignorant, arrogant, and contemptuous Ahmed Paşa to make sure that others would not follow his example. In agreement with his version of events and their consequences that will follow, Mustafa Paşa is keen to portray Ahmed Paşa as a wicked person. Even his previous military exploits from the time of Selim are at best marginalized in the *Ṭabaqāt*. For Celalzade, Ahmed Paşa's propensity to question the sovereign's authority was a natural consequence of his rebellious and disobedient nature. In Mustafa Paşa's opinion, Ahmed's plot was clearly apparent to the eye of the careful observer even before the affair of Ibrahim Paşa's appointment. Viewing things in hindsight, he believed that all previous actions of Ahmed Paşa served no other purpose than to lay the foundation for the master plan: secession of Egypt.

After being turned down for the office of *şadaret*, Ahmed Paşa was, according to Celalzade's account, in for yet another rejection. He allegedly advanced a request to be appointed sultan of Egypt (*sultānlık*), which was denied in a most humiliating way. There are at least two aspects of this statement that deserve further inspection. The first of these concerns the use of the title of sultan to refer to anyone other than the sovereign himself. In the XVI century, the abundance of apocalyptic literature that was produced and circulated at the Ottoman court elevated the sultan to the level of Messiah, religious reviver and universal savior of all of his subjects, Muslim or otherwise. Because of this, governing the daily affairs of the Empire was regarded as too base a duty for the sultan, and his grand vizier, as the second highest official in the Empire, took this responsibility upon himself and was at times allowed to use the title

of sultan. In this usage, the title was a token of appreciation and proximity to the sovereign, and it was in this manner that it was awarded to Ibrahim Paşa, who was almost routinely referred to as sultan until his fall from favor after a partly successful campaign against the Safavid realm in Iraq-i ‘ajam. The removal of the title was a prelude to his execution, which soon ensued. In this respect, therefore, Ahmed Paşa’s request for the title of sultan was in accord with the prevailing governing customs. Secondly, it seems unlikely that he would petition for the sultanate over a province that was in a state of agitation and plagued with continuous upheavals. Such a demand is in opposition to the subversive and conspiring nature of Ahmed Paşa as depicted in Celalzade’s own account. If he was not a trustworthy and reliable servant of the Sultan, then why send him to a province that was slipping out of the Sultan’s hands?

A number of Ottoman chronicles of that period also contain reports of Ahmed Paşa's disruptive behavior in the Imperial Council (*Divan-i humayun*). To avoid the difficulties entailed by this behavior and remove any risk that keeping him in Istanbul might entail, the Sultan decided to dispatch him to Egypt. But placing Ahmed Paşa as the head of Egypt heightened the risk instead, because the territory was still not firmly under Ottoman control. This particular circumstance makes one wonder why the sultan decided to appoint him to the governorate of Egypt, if he hoped to maintain the stability of the region? Could it be that the Sultan counted on Ahmed Paşa’s widely acknowledged reputation as an unquestionable military genius to quell protest in Egypt? In light of the gravity of the situation created by Circassian and Arab revolts, as well as the apparent inability of both Mustafa Paşa and Kasım Paşa to handle the challenge, the possibility exists that it might be so. Although Celalzade strives to portray the occasion of Ahmed Paşa’s departure from Istanbul in a negative light, it appears that the new governor did not sail out of the capital in total disfavor. He was given a small fleet of galleys loaded with ammunition and provisions and all of his desires met with acceptance, such that he obtained everything he requested. Another recorded version of the event postulates that it was Ibrahim Paşa, in conjunction with other members of the Divan, who suggested Ahmed’s assignment as a strategy to remove his rival from the capital and that, after obtaining approval from the Sultan İbrâhîm did everything to facilitate his departure. Celalzade’s account, which contends that Ahmed Paşa sought the sultanate of Egypt as a prelude for the total control of the province, appears to be the least plausible. In Celalzade’s words, the main motivation behind Ahmed’s request was his avaricious nature, which was tempted by the riches of Egypt, one of the biggest and most revenue-producing provinces in the Empire.<sup>287</sup>

After all of his requests were granted on Ramadan 20<sup>th</sup> 929 (Aug 2, 1523), Ahmed Paşa sailed for Egypt with a small retinue. Immediately upon his arrival, the new governor executed a number of administrative and military measures, which were seen by most Ottoman chroniclers as part of a comprehensive plan for the takeover of the province, a plan that Ahmed Paşa intended to set in motion without delay. Some of

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<sup>287</sup> His words read: “*Vafir altunu mülahazasıyla maftun olup*”. See *Ṭabaqāt*, fol. 112a.

these measures entailed the replacement of the majority of personnel inside the Qal‘a with men loyal to him.<sup>288</sup> To weaken the power and influence of the Janissary corps in the city, he created a counter-balance force comprised of volunteers and slaves obtained from the Arab chieftain Sa‘īd Ibn ‘Umar. He also worked on winning the Circassian forces to his side and announced general amnesty for everyone who had participated in the rebellions against the Ottoman administration, even including some of the main instigators. Ahmed Paşa reinstated four religious magistrates, each belonging to a different legal school within Sunni Islam, to their previously held legal positions. Disloyal entities within the ranks of the Janissaries, *sipahi* troops, and volunteers were executed.

It should be noted, however, that none of these measures were unprecedented. Their double nature makes it difficult to discern whether they were undertaken in order to appease the province or to prepare the necessary background for the eventual takeover and independence, which would happen a few months later.<sup>289</sup> Whatever the true nature of Ahmed Paşa’s activities, they only aroused subsequent interest and speculation from the central government. In Celalzade’s version of events, when news of the treacherous deeds of Ahmed Paşa reached the Sultan in Istanbul, he acted without hesitation. He caused to be written an imperial decree which appointed one of the beys of Egypt, a certain Kara Musa Paşa, as the new governor (*beylerbey*) of Egypt and issued an order for the execution of Ahmed Paşa. It is alleged that other beys in Egypt also received secret instructions. The decisive event, which according to many contemporaneous chroniclers triggered the outward uprising against the Sultan, occurred when the messenger carrying the imperial decree fell into the hands of Ahmed Paşa’s people. That event marks the point at which Ahmed Paşa overtly exposed his rebellion against Süleyman and proclaimed himself sultan of Egypt. He had Kara Mustafa killed alongside scores of other influential military and administrative cadres like the *dizdar* of the Qal‘a, and members of the Janissaries and *sipahi* troops. At that time, when suspicions concerning the actual intention behind his actions were disclosed, some Janissaries barricaded themselves inside the Qal‘a and withstood the siege for five days before being massacred by the Mamluk forces.

Following these events, Ahmed Paşa assumed all the prerogatives of an independent ruler. Heavy taxes were levied against the local population in order to raise funds for the treasury. In addition, he put together his own administrative hierarchy and ap-

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<sup>288</sup> The allegedly drastic nature of these measures is overemphasized by Ottoman chronicles. For the most part, these measures overlapped with those which Çoban Mustafa Paşa had implemented upon his arrival in Egypt earlier.

<sup>289</sup> The choice of vocabulary in Peçevi’s *Tarih* is indicative in this regard. He stated that Ahmed Paşa’s actions were not void (*khālī*) of offense and insult to Sultan’s loyal slaves (*qulları*), which at the very least indicates that those two characteristics were not the predominant coloring of his acts, as Celalzade would have us believe. Peçevi appears to be much less enthusiastic and much more reserved. His account is much more carefully worded and that is the main difference between it and Celalzade’s account. While outwardly an understatement, Peçevi’s words can also be regarded as emphatic enough, because of the idiomatic use of the originally Persian construction “az...khālīnabūdan”, i.e. meaning “not to be entirely void of something”. See Peçevi’s *Tarih* p. 79.

pointed Kadizade Mehmed Bey as his grand vizier. Two traditional prerogatives of independent rule in the Muslim world, a Friday prayer sermon and minting currency in the ruler's name, were also fulfilled for Ahmed Paşa. Whether genuinely a traitor from the outset, as Celalzade implies in his narrative, or someone who was pushed to become one, victorious king Sultan Ahmed Han (*al-malik al-manşūr*) was now in control of Egypt and was headed for a full-scale confrontation with Süleyman. The length of time the Ottomans required to resolve the issue indicates the gravity of his challenge to Istanbul. It took the Ottomans six months before they could reclaim Egypt; furthermore, they were not able to accomplish the task through military action, but rather needed to gain the assistance of a member of Ahmed Paşa's inner circle, namely the aforementioned vizier Kadizade Mehmed Bey.

In the very same way that Ahmed's actions were depicted as stemming from his wretched character traits, Mehmed's accomplishment was presented as an outcome only to be expected given the details of his biography and main character traits. The account of Mehmed Bey's career is given in the histories of both Celalzade and Diyarbekri. By comparing the two, one can derive the basic information concerning Mehmed Kadizade. While Celalzade makes no mention of his origin, Diyarbekri states that he was born into a prominent '*ajami*', i.e. Iranian family of Kadizades, and while studying in Khurāsān came into contact with an envoy of Bayezid and migrated to Asia Minor (*bilād-i Rūm*). At the time of Selim, he first became a *sipahi*, after which he was promoted to the rank of sanjakbey. Celalzade's narrative is much more detailed. According to his narrative, we discover that Mehmed Bey, whom he alternatively refers to as Kadizade and Defterdar, was in the service of the khan of the Crimean Tatars, Giray Khan. In Celalzade's estimation, Mehmed Bey was an intelligent *amir* who appreciated the customs of royalty. The epithets contained in his carefully crafted description of Mehmed Bey are the antithesis of those employed in his description of Ahmed Paşa. At the time when Sultan Selim was preoccupied with the sedition (*fītna*) of the shah of the East (an apparent reference to the Ottoman battle at Chaldiran against the Safavid shah) and during his residence in Amasya he received an envoy from Giray Khan, who was dispatched with gifts to congratulate the Sultan on his splendid victory. The envoy was apparently Mehmed Bey himself, who, in the company of Selim, decided not to return to Crimea, but to enter the Ottoman service instead. In Istanbul, he served a number of functions and his administrative career took a turn for the better after he had distinguished himself in the Egypt campaign. Under Süleyman, he served as his *nişancı*, and later as the royal treasurer (*defterdār-ikhazāne-yi 'āmire*). Mehmed Bey was a principal agent in securing the dramatic end of Ahmed Paşa's political misadventure. Although he occupied the highest office of *şadaret* under Ahmed Paşa, his loyalty to the Ottoman sovereign prevailed, in a demonstration of a quality of his personality much praised by the Ottoman chroniclers. It was he, in conjunction with other *amirs* of Egypt, who first disclosed Ahmed Paşa's secrets and later helped to neutralize him and restore the province to the Ottomans. After an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Ahmed, apparently undertaken by

Mehmed Bey himself, the arch nemesis of the Ottomans was able to escape the Qal‘a and to take refuge with the Arab chieftain of Banū Bū Bakr tribe on the outskirts of Cairo. Before long, and under partly unclear circumstances, Ahmed Paşa was either handed over to the Ottomans or executed by members of the clan.

Thus, after a period of six months, Süleyman was able to restore and reintegrate the province his father had wrested from the Mamluks a decade earlier. Celalzade gives the chronogram of Ahmed Paşa’s death as 930/1523. The same author, in his *Ṭabaqāt*, records an important circumstance regarding Ahmed Ha’in Paşa that offers additional insight into the event under discussion. Celalzade levels the charge of sectarian deviation against him, indirectly accusing him of following the Kızılbaş, i.e. Shi’as. The key term in the sentence is the source of some confusion: the word *iqtidā*,<sup>290</sup> which leaves one in doubt as to exactly what Celalzade intended to say. Did he mean that by his actions Ahmed Paşa followed the example of the Kızılbaş in Anatolia, or that Ahmed Paşa in fact lined up with them? By all appearances it is a type of an overkill strategy whereby the image of the traitor is completed and sealed from all sides: he was not only a traitor to the Ottoman cause in political sense, but he also exhibited sectarian deviation as well. Ahmad Paşa’s treacherous actions were a natural outcome of his evil character, ignorance, ingratitude and sectarian distortion of the proper understanding of Islamic principles. The smokescreen generated by Celalzade and subsequent Ottoman historians, all of whom invariably detest and abhor Ahmed Paşa, makes it difficult to grasp the real reasons behind his rebellion.

### *The eastern front and the southern seas*

The events of Egypt remain at the forefront of *al-Shajara*. In the author’s own testimony, recorded in the introduction, they are the main objective reason for the composition of the work. On the other hand, the historical period of the first half of the XVI century which coincides with the reign of two *sīns*, namely Selim and Süleyman, was so replete with significant developments from the Ottoman perspective that it was impossible to overlook them, particularly given the prognostic nature of the work. Apart from Egypt, two other major themes are discernable from among the encrypted bulk of generalities (*kulliyāt*): the Ottoman struggle against the Safavids and their loyalists in eastern Anatolia and Iraq, and the Ottoman advance towards the eastern shores of the Arabian Peninsula and the subsequent confrontation with the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf. It should be noted, however, that the text of *al-Shajara*, in accordance with the methodology the author had laid down, only alludes to these events and does not elaborate on them.

Pseudo-Şafadī’s commentary on *the Shajara* contains a reference to the celebrated Kurdish historian and chieftain of the *Rüzgari* tribe, Sharaf Khan Bidlīsī.<sup>291</sup> The histo-

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<sup>290</sup>*Ṭabaqāt*, fol. 113b.

<sup>291</sup>PS, fol. 6. Next to his name, the scribe (?) identified him as Kurdi, a word that is written in red ink. For Bidlīsī see Erika Glassen, “Bedlīsī, Şaraf-al-dīn Khan”, *EIR*, vol. IV, fasc. 1, pp. 76-77.

ry of his family provides an excellent illustration of the vicissitudes of eastern Anatolia, and its political and military instability in the XVI century. His grandfather, Sharaf Bey, was a valuable asset for the Ottomans in their struggle against the Safavids, whereas his father, Shams al-dīn, defected to the Safavid camp. After a career under the Safavids, Sharaf Khan defected to the Ottomans in 985/1578 under the auspices of Husrev Paşa and this event triggered a series of violent encounters between the two neighboring empires. The text describes his march towards the city of Aleppo (*al-madina al-shahbā'*) and the eventual defeat suffered by a detachment (*fırqa*) of his army at the fort of Van at the hands of an unidentified force. While the exact facts concerning this episode remain unknown, the wider context of the Ottoman-Safavid conflicts in eastern Anatolia and Süleyman's campaign into two Iraqs is fully documented and well studied.<sup>292</sup> An important distinction of the *Shajara* with respect to other historical texts from the XVI century is the total lack of sectarian anti Safavid propaganda in the text. This is hardly surprising, however, for a number of reasons. Firstly, because of their pronounced sectarian identity in the form of a particular variety of Shi'ism, the Safavids could hardly compete with the Sunni Ottomans for the leadership of the Muslim world at large. From that point of view, they were never a serious menace to the Ottoman millenarian claims. Moreover, after the battle of Chaldiran and the crushing defeat that befell the Safavids, their messianic claims suffered irreparable damage and were indeed substantially invalidated. After the battle of Chaldiran in 920/1514, the Safavids could pose only a political and military menace to the Ottomans, and that mainly by proxy through subversive activities of the loyal population in Anatolia.

*Al-Shajara* repeatedly refers to the Ottoman campaign against *al-Jazīra*. The word is at times given in the singular, i.e. *al-jazīra*, and at times in the plural *jazā'ir*, making it somewhat difficult to identify the author's intended meaning. From the text it could be inferred that the word in its variants could point either to the geographical area close to the town of Kurna where the river Tigris and Euphrates flow together, or to Algeria or to Andalusia as well. In point of fact, in their respective contexts, all three references are observable in the text. The area of concern for us here is the first one, *al-Jazīra* in the south of Iraq. There, as in Anatolia, the politics of a borderland (*serhatt*) were in place; the area was plagued with instability and changed hands many times over between the Ottomans and the local rulers, most of whom were formal subjects of the Safavid shah. One of the main political figures was a certain Rashīd Ibn Magamis, who was in control of Basra under the formal domination of the Safavids. For reasons of political expediency, he switched allegiance between the Ottomans and the Safavids and a third political and military element in the area, the Portuguese. According to an anonymous Ottoman chronicle, during Süleyman's stay in Baghdad, Rashīd, together with other *amirs* from al-Jazīra, Garrāf, Luristan and Hu-

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<sup>292</sup> A detailed and even illustrated contemporary account of Süleyman's campaign to the East is found in Nasuh Silâhî Matrakçı, *Beyân-ı menâzil-i sefer-i 'Irakeyn-i Sultan Süleyman Han*, ed. H.G. Yurdaydın, Türk Tarih Kurumu, first edition, Ankara, 1976.

waiza, all of these areas of Shi'i provenance, pledged allegiance to the Sultan.<sup>293</sup> In the same period, the shaykhs of Bahrain and al-Qaṭīf visited the Sultan and assured him of their submission to the Ottomans. This episode offers additional evidence that the Ottoman campaign against the Safavids was not exclusively seen as a sectarian struggle. Their enemies in the East were never called Safavids. That would indicate a formal acceptance of their dynastic claim, something the Ottomans were not prepared to acknowledge, at least not before the Amasya peace treaty. They were most frequently referred to as Kızılbaş, which in the context of XVI century signified not really anything other than an armed force. Only later did it come to bear a certain sectarian coloring. In the Ottoman legal discourse, however, the word *rāfizi* was occasionally utilized, and out of necessity, to legitimize the Ottoman campaign against a neighboring Muslim polity. Seldom, though, has it crept into historiographical discourse. As a prognostic text with apocalyptic coloring that was at times quite pointed, *Al-Shajara* was free from sectarian tones, since its intention was to unite the totality of Muslims under the leadership of the promised Messiah. Otherwise, the conquest of a Muslim country would not have been as successful if the population were alienated by the wrong tone in a text that all knew would be influential. If anything, the Ottoman imperial discourse regularly differentiated between the population (*ra'āyā*) and the ruler, where only the latter constituted a real and acute danger. Even in the West, with Süleyman's encroachments into Hungary, the discourse was intact. This tendency towards unification under the command of the Messiah was probably why pseudo Şafadī identified Selim with the twelfth imam of the Prophet's household. That mysterious identification at once repudiated an equally invalid claim of messianism on the part of the Safavid shahs, and incorporated an important creedal aspect of Shi'ism into the Ottoman imperial ideology.

### *Concluding remarks*

There is little doubt that the wide campaign of the Ottoman conquest throughout the first half of the XVI century, in all directions and against all contenders for power at the time, had a tremendous and lasting effect on the Ottoman Empire, its politics, economy, administration and ideology. On the other hand, the directions of the Ottoman movements indicate that the ultimate goal could have been much more mundane than the ones postulated in apocalyptic literature. Despite a heavy screen of ideological propaganda, the Ottoman conquests were if nothing else at least partly motivated by economic considerations, namely the desire to gain complete control and access to the traditional important trade routes, particularly the so-called "silk route", which extended from Tabriz to Erzurum and further to Tokat and Bursa, as well as the "spice route" connecting the important port of Basra with the inland trade centers of Bagh-

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<sup>293</sup>Salih Özbaran, "The Ottoman Turks and the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf, 1534-1581", *Journal of Asian History*, volume VI, number 1, Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1971, pp. 45-87.

dad and Aleppo.<sup>294</sup> Even the campaign against Egypt might have had important economic aspirations, especially after the presence of the Portuguese disrupted the trade routes both in the Red Sea and in the wider area around the Persian Gulf. Another possible goal was to secure freedom of navigation. The Ottoman seizure of Egypt, the port of Suez and the Red Sea waterway in the west, as well as the port of Aden in Yemen, Basra and the coastal areas of eastern Arabia, extended the Ottoman naval prowess well beyond the Mediterranean Sea. Alongside these mundane goals, another, more ‘sacred’ purpose of the Ottomans naval expansion was to protect Hajj routes and to prevent the Portuguese from entering the Red Sea and endangering the sacred cities of Islam in Arabia. Although they were not primary goals, economic motivations served as a supplementary background for the building of a universal empire. Apocalyptic literature and messianic expectations dictated territorial acquisition, and the role of economic progress was to ensure its survival and prosperity in the world of the XVI century reality.

The inclusion into the empire of Syria and Egypt during Selim’s life, and subsequently (and as a logical continuation of that) the capture of Iraq, eastern Anatolia and Arabia at the time of Süleyman, to say nothing of Ottoman advances in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, transformed a frontier, regional polity into a major global powerhouse with clear aspirations for universal sovereignty. This territorial expansion also inevitably required solid ideological support and *al-Shajara* counts was among the category of texts designed to provide this support. In point of fact, depending on who their opponents were, the Ottomans produced three different types of discourses. For their non-Muslim enemies in the Balkans and Eastern Europe a standard *gazi* genre was sufficient. The subgroups of this genre comprise hundreds of works, both short and more elaborate ones, pertaining to the merits of jihad and armed struggle against infidels, replete with Qur’anic *ayas* and Prophetic traditions dictating jihad. Another genre was utilized for the Safavids: that of “sectarian literature” which was manifestly championed by some of the most consequential figures among the Ottoman learned class, such as Ebu Su‘ud Efendi, shaykh al-islam and chief Ottoman legislator of that period. The Safavids were never referred to in dynastic terms as descendants and successors of Şafī al-dīn Ardabīlī; the word Shi’a was likewise almost never used. The preferred nomenclature was either *Kızılbaş*, which is the most frequent denomination, or more infrequently *rāfizi*, the rejectionists who repudiated the legitimacy of the first three rightly guided caliphs. The rejection which was so proudly sanctioned by the ruling house in Iran through the notorious practices of *walā’* and *barā’* (pleading allegiance and disavowing) could have sufficed to legitimize an armed action against

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<sup>294</sup> See Salih Özbaran, “The Ottoman Turks and the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf, 1534-1581”, *Journal of Asian History*, volume VI, number 1, Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1971, pp. 45-87; Idem, *The Ottoman response to European expansion: Studies on Ottoman-Portuguese relations in the Indian Ocean and Ottoman administration in the Arab lands during the sixteenth century*, Analecta Isisiana: Isis Press, Istanbul, 1994; M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, “Arz ve raporlarına göre İbrahim Paşa'nın İrakeyn seferindeki ilk tedbirleri ve fütuhi”, *Belleten*, vol. XXI, number 83, Ankara, 1957, pp. 449-482.



them. In a limited number of legal texts, they were also called *mulhid* or *kāfir*. For the Mamluks and Arab masses of Sunni Muslims, the most important and numerous population to be incorporated into the Ottoman realm, there were composed works of prognostic and apocalyptic nature, which inaugurated a succession of Ottoman sultans (in the text of *al-Shajara* the two *sīns*) as the promised saviors, Messiah and revivifiers of religion, all based on a selection of Prophetic traditions and a number of Qur’anic *ayas*. *Al-Shajara* clearly falls into the latter category. The inevitable question, then, is why was Ibn ‘Arabī the author of *al-Shajara* and why at this particular time?

‘Abdullāh al-Bosnevī, a learned commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ* from the XVII century, in the introduction to his *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ*, offers an appealing clue. In his apologia for Ibn ‘Arabī, al-Bosnevī contended that the rejection of the Shaykh’s ideas was particularly pronounced among “Arab jurists” (*fuqahā’ ‘arab*), among whom he cites the case of al-Biqā’ī as a standard example.<sup>295</sup> It is not entirely clear which context the commentator had in mind, the Ottoman or the general one. In other words, does al-Bosnevī say that it was Arab jurists who were ill disposed towards Ibn ‘Arabī in a general sense, or that the rejection of Ibn ‘Arabī in the Ottoman context increased after the conquest of Arab lands? But this statement is worthy of attention in more ways than one, especially in that it contains a rare ethnic denotation, which is not usually encountered in relation to the social class of jurists. It was certainly not a linguistic label, because Arabic was the *lingua franca* of the *fuqahā’* regardless of their ethnic or regional identity. As an ethnic reference, it indicates that the Ottoman conquest of Arab countries and traditional centers of Islamic learning like Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad had certain repercussions on the spiritual life in of the Empire. The authority of Ibn ‘Arabī, whose ideas were by that time part of the mainstream current of Ottoman Islam, thanks to the first Ottoman medreses and scholars, seems to have been markedly challenged. However, one can only give circumstantial evidence in support of such a hypothesis. Selim’s conquest of Damascus represents an era of unusually dense activity in the interests of consolidating Ibn ‘Arabī’s authority. His tomb was miraculously discovered in the Ṣālihiyya quarter of the city, and Selim’s shaykh al-islam, the celebrated Ibn Kemal, issued a legal opinion in favor of Ibn ‘Arabī at the Sultan’s behest. Moreover, Selim also commissioned at this time Shaykh Makki’s famous apologetic work in Persian, *al-Jānib al-gharbī fī ḥall mushkilāt al-shaykh Muḥy al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī*.<sup>296</sup>

These efforts were too concentrated not to be regarded as having been undertaken as part of a generalized response to a certain counter-current. Could it be that the old debates about Ibn ‘Arabī were being reinvigorated? I suggest that this is exactly what happened. One perhaps should not look further than the case of the celebrated scholar and jurist whose name ‘Abdullāh al-Bosnevī mentions: Burhān al-dīn al-Biqā’ī (d. 884/1480). His career demonstrates plainly the extent to which the debate and contro-

<sup>295</sup> See ‘Abdullāh al-Bosnevī, *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ*, autograph manuscript in SK Carullah Efendi, no. 1032, fol. 2b.

<sup>296</sup> Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad Ibn al-Muzaffar Ibn Ḥamīd al-dīn Ibn ‘Abdullāh Shaykh Makkī, *al-Jānib al-gharbī fī ḥall mushkilāt Ibn ‘Arabī*, ed. Najīb Māyel Haravī, Tehran, 1364 Sh= 1985.

versy about Ibn ‘Arabī’s orthodoxy was well and alive in the Arab world, particularly in Mamluk Damascus and Cairo only a few decades before their capture by the Ottomans. These two cities represent the main geographical stations in the life and career of this famous Shāfi‘ī scholar. He was born in a hamlet in the valley of Biqā‘ and later moved to Damascus where he began his education in the Muslim curriculum with several prominent members of Damascene ulama at the time. One of them was Muḥammad Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1430), who issued a condemnatory fatwa against Ibn ‘Arabī and who was prominently involved in anti-Ibn ‘Arabī campaigns in both Damascus and later in Yemen, where he visited at the behest of the local ruler.<sup>297</sup> After a few years of peregrination throughout the Middle East he finally settled in Cairo where he became a disciple of Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī. Anti-Akbari sentiment must have run high in the inner circle of Ibn Ḥajar’s pupils, as the two most prominent of them, al-Biqā‘ī and al-Sakhawī, were both outspoken and bitter opponents of the doctrines usually associated with the school of Islamic monism, or *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Ibn Ḥajar’s opposition to Ibn ‘Arabī is likewise very well documented in his own writings.<sup>298</sup> The attack leveled against Ibn ‘Arabī was by proxy; this time the focus was on another significant representative of the school, the mystical poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ. The harshest criticism al-Biqā‘ī directed against the poet and his *Tā’iyya*, eventually resulted in his exile from Cairo.<sup>299</sup> However, before returning to Syria, most of al-Biqā‘ī’s activities were devoted to the destruction of the principles *waḥdat al-wujūd*. It is only to be expected that Ibn ‘Arabī would be the subject of almost every single work of denunciation of Islamic monism even though the actual motive for the composition could be someone else, such as Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Al-Biqā‘ī was a systematic and unrelenting critic and he composed a separate work entitled *Tanbīh al-ghabī ilā takfīr Ibn ‘Arabī* (Warning to the Heedless About the Unbelief of Ibn ‘Arabī). Apart from composing a treatise which amounts to nothing more than an enumeration of old critiques and grievances known from the time of Ibn Taymiyya, without any significant elaboration, al-Biqā‘ī was resolute in assuring that his stance in the debate revolving around Ibn ‘Arabī and other representative of *waḥdat al-wujūd* acquire practical application in Cairene circles and thus create a particular social atmosphere for the adherents of the Greatest Shaykh. His final departure from Cairo signified an ultimate failure in accomplishing that particular goal. Along the way, however, he was able to count several important successes. For instance, he succeeded in creating a unified front against Ibn ‘Arabī, enlisting support of such scholars as the chief Ḥanafī judge Ibn Shihna and his son ‘Abd al-Barr, the chief Ḥanbalī qāḍī in the city, ‘Izz al-dīn al-Kinānī, and the illustrious Shāfi‘ī jurist Ibn al-Imām Kāmiliyya. It is probably not so much his anti-Akbari campaign but his excessive personal fits and attacks on many

<sup>297</sup> On al-Biqā‘ī and his teacher al-Jazarī as well as their concentrated anti-Akbari activities see Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*, SUNY Press, 1999, p. 265.

<sup>298</sup> See *Lisān al-Mīzān*, Hyderabad, 1329, volume V, p. 312, quoted from Addas, p. 278.

<sup>299</sup> Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn Al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine*, American University in Cairo Press, 2001, pp. 55-75.

scholars, both his contemporaries and others, that led to his failure and exile from Cairo. Even Ibn Taymiyya, a founding father of the anti Ibn ‘Arabī intellectual tendency, was not spared from al-Biqā‘ī’s vitriolic attacks. The intellectual scene of Cairo appears to have been divided in a bitter dispute revolving around the orthodoxy of the representatives of the *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The primary focus was Ibn Fāriḍ, as the living embodiment of the doctrinal school, but the Greatest Master was never far behind, as is demonstrated by a separate work in his refutation by al-Biqā‘ī. The answer came in the form of a polemic work entitled *Tanbīh al-ghabī fī tabriya Ibn ‘Arabī* by the great al-Suyūṭī. Judging by the number of manuscripts of this work that have come down to us, the work evoked significant attention in Ottoman scholarly circles. It is much more frequently encountered in the catalogues of Istanbul collections than is the original work of al-Biqā‘ī.

Indeed, there was a particular chain of events highly favorable to Ibn ‘Arabī at the time of the Ottoman capture of the former Mamluk intellectual and cultural centers of Damascus and Cairo, which included the mysterious discovery of his tomb after many decades of conscious negligence, the very first Ottoman fatwa by the then Ottoman shaykh al-islam Ibn Kemal as well as the translation of *al-Jānib al-gharbī*, all of which were conducted upon direct initiative from Sultan Selim. All of this could be seen as a counterweight measure acting in opposition to the rising tide of criticism of him and his work that was prevalent in those traditional centers shortly before the advent of the Ottomans. In this context, therefore, the *Al-Shajara* ascribed to Ibn ‘Arabī, can be seen as a mutual exchange of support. The Ottomans needed support for their campaigns against the Mamluks and Safavids, and Ibn ‘Arabī needed support against his opponents. It appears that text of *al-Shajara* yielded both the desired results. There was a tacit agreement to question neither the authenticity and validity of Ottoman messianic claims, nor those of Ibn ‘Arabī ideas and the text of *al-Shajara* in any comprehensive manner.

## Chapter IV

### Ibn ‘Arabī in legal discourse: Akbari teachings in Ottoman *fatwas*

Quite apart from all its other lasting ramifications, Selim’s campaign against the Mamluks in Damascus also marked the beginning of concentrated and focused efforts towards the rehabilitation of Ibn ‘Arabī by a number of means.<sup>300</sup> One of these was the issuance of the first Ottoman fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī whereby the Akbari school of thought officially entered Ottoman legal discourse, where other aspects of Sufism where already fiercely debated.<sup>301</sup> In this chapter I will examine some pre-Ottoman and Ottoman fatwas referring to Ibn ‘Arabī, his writings, teachings and followers, including those issued by the highest judicial authority in the Empire, the Ottoman shaykh al-islams. Before examining the texts of the fatwas, I shall discuss the features of fatwa in general terms.

Ibn Kemal’s early sixteenth century fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī<sup>302</sup> was written during a time which witnessed an evolutionary shift in the Ottoman judicial structure. The historical backdrop of the fatwa itself marks a period in Ottoman development wherein the judicial structure attained full maturity. By that time the hierarchy was largely structured and the office of shaykh al-islam formalized.<sup>303</sup> As opposed to earlier times, the office of shaykh al-islam was now no longer socially constructed by the community of believers, as had been the case in the pre-Ottoman period when the title of shaykh al-islam, alongside a few others, was largely honorific and accorded to a meritorious and religiously learned individual by consensus or near consensus of the community in a defined geographical region, as was the case with ‘Abdullāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1088) the shaykh al-islam of Herat and Aḥmad-e Jām (d. 536/1141) in Turbat-e Jām.<sup>304</sup>

Partly as a consequence of the environment of the Ottoman judicial structure of the first half of the sixteenth century, those fatwas issued on Ibn ‘Arabī which are under

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<sup>300</sup> One of these was certainly the building of a mausoleum for Ibn ‘Arabī, as was Selim’s commission for the translation of a work by Shaykh al-Makki in defense of Ibn ‘Arabī entitled *al-Jānib al-gharbī fī ḥall mushkilāt Ibn ‘Arabī*. This work was translated from Persian into Turkish by Ahmed Neyli Efendi, and published as *Yavuz Sultan Selim’in emriyle hazırlanan Ibn Arabi Müdafaası*, ed. Halil Baltacı, Gelenek yayıncılık, Istanbul, 2004, 191 pp.

<sup>301</sup> Other aspects of Sufism such as ritual dance and music performance (*samā’* and *dawrān*) were already the topic of fierce debate among Ottoman scholars. The first legal verdict on Ibn ‘Arabī marked the entry into the debate of a conglomeration of real or attributed dogmatic points ascribed to Ibn ‘Arabī, such as the unity of existence, Perfect Man, Pharaoh’s faith, the nature of eschatological punishment, the status of prophets and awli-yā’ entered the debate.

<sup>302</sup> This famous fatwa was not issued by Ibn Kemal, but later on it became distinctly known as his. See below, p. 136.

<sup>303</sup> Among the host of modern works devoted to the study of the Ottoman ‘ulama hierarchy, that by Turkish scholar İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı devletinin ilmiye teşkilatı*, (Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1988), is still largely an unsurpassed reference.

<sup>304</sup> For a detailed discussion on the office of shaykh al-islam in pre-Ottoman times, precisely during the Timurid period, see Shiro Ando, “The Shaykh al-Islam as a Timurid Office: A Preliminary Study” in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 33, no. 2/3, special issue on Islam in Central Asia, (Summer-Autumn 1994), pp. 253-280.

question here were all delivered by the shaykh al-islams of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>305</sup> Although the office of shaykh al-islam, as well as the process of *iftā'* (fatwa issuing), began as an individual endeavor, both cornerstones of religious life in Muslim societies early on took first collective and then institutional manifestations. The latter development in the evolution of the fatwa was occasioned by a ruler's interest in the affair of fatwa, the occurrence of which was not surprising given the great potential for social influence that muftis possessed. Already in the time of Murad II (r. 824-855/1421-1451), the issuance of fatwa became an exclusive right of the shaykh al-islam who was nominally appointed by Sultan, but in whose selection other scholars and jurists were also involved and influential. With incremental institutional evolution, legal decisions of the shaykh al-islam, particularly in later periods, gradually lost his personal imprint and were instead categorized, drafted and even decided upon by employees of a distinctive Ottoman institution of *fetvahane*.<sup>306</sup>

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One reliable method for assessing the impact of fatwa in any society is an examination of importance of its issuer, i.e. mufti. As mentioned earlier, the fatwas issued on Ibn 'Arabī which are under question here were all delivered by shaykh al-islams of the Ottoman Empire, who were chiefs of the learned class. The office of shaykh al-islam, referred to in Turkish as *şeyhülislamlık*, began as an honorary post and it was largely through the activities of the first occupiers of the post, such as Molla Husrev (d. 885/1480), Molla Fenārī (d. 901/1495), Zenbilli 'Alī Cemali (d. 933/ 1526), and Ebu Su'ud Efendi (d. 982/1574), that the office developed into an influential institution of the Empire. This is hardly surprising because these individuals in their time almost single-handedly dominated Ottoman religious education and scholarship and remained its most illustrious champions. It is necessary to note the distinction between the power and influence of the office of shaykh al-islam on the one hand and the influence and power of an individual holder of the office on the other, and it is precisely the development of the office in the sixteenth century that unequivocally proves that those two concepts are not coterminous.

This brings us to the question of the shaykh al-islam's social influence and importance in the Empire. In examining the significance of the office, many authors follow what could provisionally called the 'pyramid approach' wherein the measure of importance is the degree to which a shaykh al-islam's opinions and positions were revered and reflected in the Ottoman administration. According to this approach, one of the most conclusive indicators of the development of the office during a certain shaykh al-islam's term was the gradual increase in the pay that he received, as well as

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<sup>305</sup> There were some more fatwas on the subject delivered by provincial muftis (in Ottoman: *kenar müftiler*) that have been omitted from this overview.

<sup>306</sup> See Fahrettin Atar, "Fetva", *TDV İA*, cilt X p. 490.

his inclusion in the affairs of the Empire. Judging solely on this basis, one could conclude that they enjoyed very little real authority. Nevertheless, the ‘pyramid approach’, which uses payment and bureaucratic favor as the criteria for measuring a shaykh al-islam’s influence, does not necessarily reflect how the ulama functioned and judged themselves or were judged by others.<sup>307</sup>

The authority of the ulama depended not so much on the amount of money they earned or the bureaucratic influence they commanded as on the internally developed fundamentals, such as scholarly credentials, examples of personal piety, and the ability to uphold and defend the religious law. Also under strict consideration were their teachers, disciples, their affiliations with Sufi masters, the medreses where they taught, and the works that they wrote. Scholars who successfully met those criteria were recipients of an honor and veneration that was acknowledged both in the community of believers and the learned class. The State could do little, if anything, to disrupt or rescind these autonomous credentials. For instance, the fact that the celebrated Ottoman scholar Mehmed Birgivi (d. 981/1573) spent most of his life teaching at a provincial medrese without any remarkable prestige and was even the subject of a negative fatwa on the part of Ebu Su‘ud for prohibiting the practice of cash endowments, did not prevent him in any way from becoming one of the most prominent religious scholars of the Empire.

Yet another example from the same century is the case of shaykh al-islam Çivizade (d. 954/1547). The dispute surrounding Çivizade appears to be internal to the ulama, and he was caught in the web of legal rivalries and personal animosity with two influential scholars, Ibn Kemal and Ebu Su‘ud Efendi, who were instrumental in persuading the Sultan to remove him from office. Even after his dismissal from the post by Süleyman, an action which introduced a dangerous precedent, he remained a major scholarly figure, respected without exception, and much in demand by hosts of disciples.<sup>308</sup> If anything, this event demonstrates how anxious Ottoman officials were to control and bring order to the activities of the mufti. The official tendency to organize and control reached great proportions. While in the XVI century only three shaykh al-islams were deposed from office, already in the following century (from 1008-1115/1599-1703) three quarters of all appointed muftis were removed by the head of state.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> See R.C. Repp, *The Mufti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy*, Ithaca Press, London, 1986, p. 28 (henceforth referred to as Repp).

<sup>308</sup> What followed his dismissal can hardly be described as isolation and exclusion from the Ottoman scholarly class. After performing pilgrimage, Çivizade resumed his career in an official capacity: he was first appointed professor at the most prestigious Ottoman school Sahn-i Saman, and then in 952/1545 appointed Rumeli qadiasker when that vacancy opened following Ebu Su‘ud’s advancement to the post of shaykh al-islam. It can be argued that only Çivizade’s death two years later, in 954/1547, prevented him from ascending the position of shaykh al-islam for the second time. See Mehmet İpşirli, “Çivizâde Muhyiddin Mehmed Efendi”, *TDV İA*, cilt 8, İstanbul 1993, p. 348.

<sup>309</sup> At least three of them were executed on power of royal decree. See İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı: *Osmanlı devletinin ilmiye teşkilatı*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1988, p. 223.

Ottoman biographical dictionaries contain anecdotal material whose main protagonists are celebrated scholars and Sufis who challenge the official authority and ultimately prevail. One of the anecdotes in circulation is from the time of Bayezid II (d. 918/1512) who allegedly placed his shaykh al-islam on his own throne as a testament to the superiority of religious authority over worldly power. Another famous story is of a confrontation between Sultan Selim and his appointee for the office of shaykh al-islam Zenbilli ‘Alī Çelebi Efendi. The confrontation took place after the latter learned of an incident wherein one hundred and fifty officials of the Royal Treasury were arrested and a decree issued for their execution in defiance of Sharī‘a law. The shaykh’s demand for the overruling of the order represented a clear example of meddling in the affairs of the State. Despite the angry response of the Sultan who had the traditional reputation of being an uncompromising ruler, Selim felt compelled to comply. Selim, sultan though he was, released the prisoners, as he was not in the position to risk a conflict with the highly respected religious figure.<sup>310</sup>

The shaykh al-islam’s authoritative status was to undergo many fundamental changes in the centuries to follow. In 1044/1634, 1066/1656 and 1115/1703, respectively, three shaykh al-islams were put death precisely for having been accused of having interfered (or so they were accused) in political matters. The unique independence of the office of the shaykh al-islam was inherent in the normative tradition of Islam: unlike the *qāḍī*, whose verdict was subject to appeal and petition to the Sultan if justice was not served, the shaykh al-islam was not answerable to anyone for his opinion.<sup>311</sup> Ideally, his fatwa was the result of his own judicial interpretation and was no more authoritative than those of his colleagues at lower levels of the religious hierarchy. In reality, however, it is understood that fatwas delivered by shaykh al-islam were regarded as the ultimate decision, far more consequential than those of his colleagues. Alongside his credentials that were firmly grounded in the scholastic tradition of Islam, the traditional Sunni – Ḥanafī advisory and the non-binding nature of his legal rulings were an internal check to his authority and reach of his social influence. Only if and when his opinion was enhanced through royal endorsement in the form of an official decree did his fatwa become obligatory, taking on the power of law. Such was the case with a royal decree issued by Süleyman regarding Ibn ‘Arabī, as we will see later.

### *Fatwa as text*

<sup>310</sup> Snježana Buzov, op.cit, p. 22. The story is found in Yaşar Yücel ed. *Osmanlı devlet teşkilatına dair kaynaklar*, Ankara Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988, p. 193, and *İlmiye salnamesi: Meşihat-ı celile-i islâmiyenin ceride-i resmîyesine mülhaktır*, Matbaai Amire, Darül Hilafet-i Aliye, 1334/1915, p. 312-313. See also Halil İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600*, Phoenix Press, 2001, p. 94, and Michael M. Pixley, “The Development and Role of Seyhulislam in Early Ottoman Empire”, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 96, no 1, 1976, p. 93.

<sup>311</sup> This privilege was in partial compensation for the difference between the *qāḍī*’s judgment, which was final and executable if not subject to an appeal and the mufti’s fatwa, which was simply legal advice.

Over its long history of maturation, the fatwa assumed different forms, linguistic features, and styles that were locally relevant to the place of its issuance. While the practice of oral fatwas was also a recorded and known format, the primary concern here is to examine the fatwa as a carefully structured text. Ottoman fatwas as texts exhibited considerable uniformity of composition with very little variation.<sup>312</sup> They largely consisted of an *invocatio* (*da‘vet*), the question, the response, and a signature closing section. Except in very few instances, we never deal with the original texts of fatwas but with their copies, which were selected, sorted, rewritten, and collected into separate volumes organized according to legal topics. Fatwa collections served as an advisory judicial history offering legal solutions. It was understood, however, that the historical context of a fatwa could never be fully reproduced. That is why every question, notwithstanding its old solutions, needed to be treated as a new inquiry and in new circumstances, at least theoretically, could yield a different response. At times, however, the mufti’s obligation consisted of no more than bringing an old solution to the attention of the inquirer.<sup>313</sup>

Arguably the most important section of a fatwa was the question. The mufti must answer the question he was asked. The question, which was usually the result of a concern or even research on the part of the questioner, is a way in which a particular issue was brought for the mufti’s legal deliberation and as such could highly predetermine the reply or at the very least heavily influence it. Contrary to the practice of the *qāḍī*, whose principal task was to examine the validity of the facts presented to him, the mufti was under no obligation to validate the facts presented to him in questions; they were taken at face value and were not treated as matters of contestation. In order to render a fatwa universally applicable and relevant in all time periods, the identity of the questioner, his name, occupation, place of residence, and other such circumstantial details were abstracted.<sup>314</sup> The inquirer was depersonalized<sup>315</sup> and represented by an assumed identity such as Zayd or Hind. At times, the sectarian affiliations of the inquirer (which could be Christian, Jew, or more generally *ahl al-Kitāb*, as well as a host of Islamic groups and sects rarely referred to, such as *rāfizi*,<sup>316</sup> Sufi, etc.) were also included in the question if deemed significant for the response.

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<sup>312</sup> A detailed description of Ottoman fatwas by Uriel Heyd remains to this day, in many aspects, the standard reference point. See Uriel Heyd, “Some Notes on the Ottoman Fatwa”, *BSOAS*, vol. XXXI, no. 1, 1969, pp. 35-56. See also *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas*, eds. M.K. Masud, B. Messick, and D. Powers, Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 24.

<sup>313</sup> In that case the mufti’s juridical effort was properly termed as “*tabyīn al-ḥukm*”, explanation of the ruling or reports of opinion, rather than “*iftā*”, delivering a rule. See Emue Tyan, “Fatwā”, *EI<sup>2</sup>*, vol. II, p. 866.

<sup>314</sup> This standard feature of the fatwa as text make it extremely difficult, if not totally impossible, to trace the debate more deeply and analyze the level of education, background, religious affiliation and possible causes that induced any one petitioner to raise the question at issue to the mufti.

<sup>315</sup> Originals of fatwas in some cases contained short notices on the back indicating the questioner’s name, occupation and place of residence. See Uriel Heyd, “Some Notes...”, p. 38.

<sup>316</sup> Since this is a derogatory name for Twelver Shi’as, it is hard to imagine that the questioner would refer to himself as a *rāfizi*. The sectarian denominations were generally provided by a third party, so that we frequently encounter formulaic questions like: ‘Zayd, a *rāfizi*’ or ‘Zayd, a Sufi...’.



In some instances, however, there were certain clues as to the real identity of the questioner. It is generally ascertained by scholars that the length of the response was suggestive in that regard. According to this view, answers given to non-specialists were often very short and succinct, whereas the questioner who was himself a religious scholar or a *qādī* was accorded an elaborate and detailed reply. The same was true for provincial muftis (in Ottoman called *kenar müftiler*) for whom the practice of elaboration on the issues raised in fatwas was part of their training for higher appointments. The question section of a fatwa was generally concluded with a formulaic sentence in which the petitioner expressly asked for a resolution by “*sādāt al-Hanafīyya*”, meaning in accordance with Ḥanafī *fiqh*.

Furthermore, the response to a question could be given by the mufti himself. This was the practice in the earlier formative stages of the development of the institution of *iftā'*, when fatwas carried the personal and authoritative mark of the individual, i.e. the mufti, or alternatively by his assistant in the *fetvahane* who was eligible to give answers on behalf of the mufti. Although the office of the *fetva emini*<sup>317</sup> is largely regarded as a later development, already in the sixteenth century the daily output of legal rulings reached staggering proportions: according to his disciple and biographer Aşık Çelebi, the celebrated Ebu Su‘ud was claimed to have written 1,412 fatwas in one day, and 1,413 on another.<sup>318</sup> Other Ottoman historians give figures that range from one hundred to two hundred fatwas a day. The enormous increase in the number of questions submitted for deliberation could be explained as a result of the mufti’s obligation as the head of the whole ulama hierarchy in the Empire. The rise in fatwas has also been attributed to the considerable territorial expansion which took place during the campaigns undertaken in the sixteenth century two successive Sultans, Selim and his son Süleyman. Handling the influx of legal inquiries was now the principal duty of the well-organized institution of *fetvahane*. The *fetva emini* was fully authorized to respond questions presented by the masses, whereas the mufti was generally to reply to so-called administrative fatwas raised by the Sultan, ministerial council, and other highly positioned dignitaries of the Empire. Notwithstanding this distribution of duties, no fatwa was considered valid unless signed and endorsed by the mufti.

### *Ibn ‘Arabī in fatwas*

Long before the Ottomans, Ibn ‘Arabī and his teachings had been the subject of legal contestation among both his followers and opponents. In his study of the bibliography of the shaykh, Osman Yahya lists some 200 fatwas solicited in regard to

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<sup>317</sup> An isolated remnant of the office of *fetva emini* is still present and functional in a former Ottoman frontier province of Bosnia. Within the structure of the Rijaset of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the *fetva emini* is solely responsible for answering legal questions posted by members of the Muslim community in Bosnia. The incumbent occupier of the office is Enes Ljevaković, a professor of Islamic Law at College for Islamic Studies in Sarajevo. See the web page of the Secretariat of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina at rijaset.ba under the heading *Pitanja i odgovori*. (Last time accessed on Oct 06 2011).

<sup>318</sup> Uriel Heyd, op.cit, p. 46.

the shaykh's orthodoxy, or lack thereof.<sup>319</sup> Fatwas issued on Ibn 'Arabī and doctrinal points generally associated with him fall into the category of dogmatic (*i'tiqādī*) questions. The principal goal of doctrinal questions was to obtain the mufti's opinion on the orthodoxy of Ibn 'Arabī's beliefs.<sup>320</sup> These fatwas are at times referred to as *takfīrī* fatwas, as their subject-matter was the condemnation of an individual, group, or a set of teachings deemed at variance with the predominant doctrinal framework.<sup>321</sup> No matter how abstract or private was the concern to clarify the Islamic or non-Islamic nature of Ibn 'Arabī's beliefs, it nevertheless had considerable and very broad legal ramifications. Of particular interest, judging by the text of some fatwas, was the question of whether it would be permissible to read and teach Ibn 'Arabī's works.

Regardless of whether Ibn 'Arabī's teachings were introduced into the academic curriculum there is little doubt that the study of his works constituted a daily routine for a great number of students and professors in the Ottoman religious environment. Apart from this pragmatic aspect, it is obvious that both Ibn 'Arabī's followers and his opponents were eager to secure endorsement from the highest judicial post for their beliefs with respect to Akbari teachings. Legal disputes over Ibn 'Arabī carried over to the Ottoman realm as well, even though there could be little hope that the argument would be settled by means of fatwas, the history of dissenting and conflicting replies by various Islamic scholars on the matter. All Ottoman fatwas on Ibn 'Arabī, dealt with here should be taken in the narrowest sense of the term: a legal opinion issued by the Ottoman shaykh al-islam.

It is important to note that a number of pre-Ottoman fatwas on Ibn 'Arabī were in considerable circulation Ottoman learned circles. Usually attached at the beginning of both pre-Ottoman and Ottoman codices containing his works, fatwas were, in principle, favorable legal opinions aimed at setting the reader at ease about the permissibility of studying the shaykh's works. Having become part and parcel of the Ottoman scholarly tradition, these fatwas merit a brief overview as the legal framework in which Ottoman fatwas emerged.

For the study of pre-Ottoman fatwas, of particular significance are two manuscripts in the Arabic language: SK Nâfiz Paşa no. 685 and SK Esad Efendi no. 1318, both found in the Süleymaniye Library. These two manuscripts, in conjunction with a couple of others, contain a dozen fatwas on Ibn 'Arabī delivered by such scholars as the author of the famous tafsīr work al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286), the lexicographer al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1414), al-Asqalānī (d. 852/1448), al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505), Abū Yahyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520), as well as a host of later scholars like al-'Imādī, Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī, Shihāb al-dīn al-Anṭākī and others. The compiler of these fatwas, who ar-

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<sup>319</sup> See Osman Yahya, *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn Arabi: Étude critique*, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Damas, 1964, tome I, pp. 122-135.

<sup>320</sup> It is interesting to note that some earlier muftis entertained serious reservations about, and in some cases flatly refused to address, any question that was not strictly legal in nature.

<sup>321</sup> See Hamid Algar, "Fatwā", *EIR*, vol. IX, fasc. 4, pp. 428-436.

ranged them under a separate heading as “fatāwā-yi sharīfa”, was an undisguised admirer of Ibn ‘Arabī; all the fatwas incorporated into the two manuscripts are without exception favorable to him. In spite of this selective uniformity, the questions and issues treated are not without weight: they range from more general dilemmas such as whether Ibn ‘Arabī’s beliefs were genuinely Islamic (*ṣahīh*), the legal status of his claims to be the Seal of Sainthood, the Pole of the Age, and his claim that the Pharaoh of Egypt died as a Muslim, to more specific and concentrated concerns such as whether it was permissible to read and teach his books *Fuṣūṣ* and *al-Futūḥāt*; what was the legal status of an individual who denounced Ibn ‘Arabī as an unbeliever and apostate and what was the legal opinion about the recorded practice of burning Ibn ‘Arabī’s books.

The earliest of these fatwas was issued by al-Baydāwī (d. 685/1286). In SK Nâfiz Paşa 685, we find a copy (*ṣūra*) of his decision:<sup>322</sup>

He was asked, and may Allah bestow His mercy upon him, what is the opinion of the respected ulama, may Allah fortify the foundations of His religion with them, on Muḥy al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī and the books attributed to him like *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, is it religiously permissible (*ḥalāl*) to read and teach them (*qirā’a* and *iqrā’*) and are they among the books that had been listened to and read or not? Deliver us an unambiguous fatwa, so that you attain a great reward from God. His reply was given in the form whose copy we bring here:

‘O Allah, make us proclaim nothing but what earns Your content in what I have to say I believe regarding the state of the individual asked about and the way I practice God’s *dīn*. Indeed, Ibn ‘Arabī was a shaykh of the Path both from the view point of his knowledge (*‘ilman*) and his spiritual state of being (*ḥālan*); he was an imam of spiritual realization both outwardly and inwardly, the one who acted as the rejuvenator (*muḥyi*) in practice and theory. The thought of one who meditates on his glory (*majd*) is paralyzed in inability to grasp it as pure and high as it is, without any impurity. He is a cloud that cannot be moved around by the power of winds. His prayers and calls enflames the seven heavenly abodes and they are like a volcano that fills up the horizons. I am only attempting to describe him, as he is indeed above what I can say and he is dictating what I had written.

Verses

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<sup>322</sup> These manuscripts and the fatwas contained in them were subject of a recent study by Abdurrezzak Tek, “İbnü’l-‘Arabî’yi müdâfaa amacıyla kaleme alınan fetvâlar”, *Tasavvuf - ilmî ve akademik araştırma dergisi*, İbnü’l-Arabî özel sayısı, vol. 9, no. 21, 2008, pp. 281-301. The original of the fatwa is in SK Nâfiz Paşa 685, fols. 2b-3a.

*Mine is but to say what I believe in  
And leave the ignorant in his ignorance and transgression  
I swear by God three times alongside everyone  
who established the proof of God, that  
whatever I said is only a fraction of his feats  
Did not elaborate in fear of falling short*

As regards his books and writings, those are bottomless seas full of treasures and pearls that have neither beginning nor end; nobody ever composed in such a manner. God will honor by the reading, knowing and recognizing the true power of his books only those who carefully study them; their bosoms God would expand [so that they will be able to] resolve the problems [within Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings] and dispel the contradictions. May God’s peace be with our honored prophet Muḥammad, his family and Companions.”

Following a rather neutral question, al-Bayḍāwī delivers a clear, if poetic, answer. In brief, the fatwa contains all the major points that would be worked out by subsequent muftis. Ibn ‘Arabī is clearly positioned within the mainstream of Islamic spirituality as one of the elders of the Path. More importantly, the text designates him as the leader of all those who reached the ultimate goal of attaining spiritual realization (*taḥqīq*), which is a possible affirmation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s claims to sainthood (*wilāya*) and his degree of *qutbiyya*. The author cites Ibn ‘Arabī’s knowledge (*‘ilm*) and his spiritual state of being (*ḥāl*) as proof positive of his state of spiritual realization (*taḥqīq*). Al-Bayḍāwī also suggests that the unique, inimitable style of Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing points to the divine as the source of his knowledge; a style no one was able to emulate before or after him. Following the same line of reasoning, al-Bayḍāwī holds that to read and study his works is not only permissible but a portent of a great honor bestowed on the careful student who is included among the privileged spiritual elite (*khawāṣṣ*, as in the text) capable, unlike the exoteric ulama, to overcome those aspects of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works which are outwardly and thus only seemingly contrary to the principles of Sharī‘a. Thus, the text gives Ibn ‘Arabī’s readers an academic and spiritual prestige and places him and them both on a pedestal. In this way, the fatwas are instrumental in shaping Ibn ‘Arabī’s reputation.

Next in chronological order, as well as in the SK Nâfiz Paşa manuscript,<sup>323</sup> is the fatwa delivered by Majd al-dīn al-Fīrūzābādī. The question posed in this fatwa is almost identical to that posed to al-Bayḍāwī, the only noticeable difference being that while the former examines the virtue of practicing Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings, the later also considers the virtue of studying and teaching them. In his response, al-Fīrūzābādī reiterates all the main points of al-Bayḍāwī’s fatwa, written a century before. In point of

<sup>323</sup> SK Nâfiz Paşa 685, fols. 3a-3b.

fact, the similarities are such that al-Fīrūzābādī's fatwa was routinely attributed in Ottoman manuscripts to al-Bayḍāwī and vice versa.

Unsurprisingly, his answer permits the transmission of Ibn 'Arabī's works and the practice of his teachings. The author explains that because Ibn 'Arabī was an imam of those who follow Sharī'a, he set an unparalleled example in both his knowledge and living practice (*'ilman wa rasman*). Al-Fīrūzābādī assures his audience that Ibn 'Arabī's Sharī'a credentials attained maturity through his experience as an educator and instructor (*murabbī*) of those who follow the Path. The only reservation al-Fīrūzābādī puts forward is that both the instruction and transmission of Ibn 'Arabī's works need to remain limited to those who are equal to their remarkable intellectual and spiritual standards; these individuals make up a select group whom he calls "*ahl*". A certain cycle must be maintained: Ibn 'Arabī's works are to be taught by those who are able to transfer their message to those who are able to grasp it, according to the standard that the works themselves establish.<sup>324</sup>

The question of the source and origin of Ibn 'Arabī's knowledge is also tackled in more detail in al-Fīrūzābādī's fatwa than it was in al-Bayḍāwī's. According to him, the key feature of Ibn 'Arabī's opus that largely goes unnoticed by other authors is Ibn 'Arabī's versatility in the field of Qur'anic exegesis, acquired in an unusual manner. He asserts:

Because Ibn 'Arabī commented upon the Noble Qur'an in more than seventy volumes, and when he reached the *aya* [in which it is said]: 'Then found they one of Our slaves, unto whom We had given mercy from Us, and had taught him knowledge from Our presence'<sup>325</sup>, while contemplating on the meaning of this *aya*, Almighty God took his spirit (*rūḥ*) to Himself. All of that is a great proof and support for the shaykh.<sup>326</sup>

This statement by al-Fīrūzābādī supports Ibn 'Arabī's claims of the supranatural origin of his opus, claims that were perceived as extravagant and excessive by many scholars.

A third fatwa found in SK Nâfiz Paşa 685,<sup>327</sup> that of Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, deals with a specific issue, the question of the Pharaoh's belief, which is one of the controversial doctrinal points of the shaykh. Indeed, Ibn 'Arabī's position on the Pharaoh's alleged faith<sup>328</sup> was outwardly at variance with the consensus of Muslim scholars. According

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<sup>324</sup> The exact Arabic wording in the original is: *min ahli-hā li ahli-hā bi-shurūṭi-hā*. SK Nâfiz Paşa 685, fol. 3a.

<sup>325</sup> The Koran, XVIII: 66.

<sup>326</sup> SK Nâfiz Paşa 685, fol. 3a; Abdurrezzak Tek, op.cit, p. 284.

<sup>327</sup> SK Nâfiz Paşa 685, fol. 5a.

<sup>328</sup> Based on Ibn 'Arabī's thoughts on the subject from Chapter 70 of the *Futūḥāt*, which seem to indicate that Pharaoh's faith was invalid, Sha'rānī says: "By God, those who say that Muḥy al-dīn Ibn al-'Arabī thinks that

to al-Asqalānī's fatwa, Ibn 'Arabī's opinion on this issue is not problematic in light of the Prophetic tradition which he quotes:

May God save us from making false statements and committing error. To become a believer was in the capacity and destiny of Pharaoh. Exalted God took his reason away from him and left him to live in error and fallacy; however, since believing was his ultimate destiny as prescribed by the Almighty, He the Most High at the moment of Pharaoh's death gave him back his reason, accepted his repentance and returning unto Him and took his believing soul. [It is for these cases] that the Prophet, peace be with him said:

*'When God wishes to fulfill his qadar, he takes away reason from those who possess it; after His determination is realized He gives them back their intellect and this is [a matter which] merits consideration and noticing ('ibra).'*

There is no doubt that Ibn 'Arabī was a bottomless sea; he is similar to a vast ocean the sound of whose waves never ceases.

The following and concluding sentence in al-Asqalānī's fatwa is a curious departure from the opinion of his colleagues.<sup>329</sup> Asqalānī took the question of Ibn 'Arabī's sophistication to an entirely different direction:

Whosoever claims and says: 'I have understood the shaykh', let it be known that he is an ignorant person who possesses no insight or knowledge.

It is routinely argued in the pro-Akbari camp that the shaykh's detractors did not understand his ideas and that misunderstanding is at the root of their criticism and rejection of Ibn 'Arabī. With al-Asqalānī's fatwa the point is further developed in such a

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Pharaoh's faith is valid tell a lie and slander." Sha'rānī, *Yawāqūt*, vol. II, p. 134, cited from Şükrü Özen, "Ottoman ulama debating Sufism: Settling the conflict on the Ibn al-Arabi's legacy by fatwas" in *El sufismo y las normas del Islam: Trabajos del IV Congreso Internacional de Estudios Jurídicos Islámicos, Derecho y Sufismo*, Murcia, 7-10 mayo 2003, ed. by Alfonso Carmona Gonzalez, p. 330, footnote 90. For a full elaboration on the question of Pharaoh's faith with a spectrum of different opinions on the issue, see Eric Ormsby, "The Faith of Pharaoh: A Disputed Question in Islamic Theology", *Studia Islamica*, no. 98/99, 2004, pp. 5-28; Denis Gril, "Le personnage coranique de Pharaon d'après l'interprétation d'Ibn Arabi", *Annales islamologiques*, vol. XIV, 1978, pp. 37-57; Carl W. Ernst, "Controversies over Ibn 'Arabī's Fuṣūṣ: The Faith of Pharaoh", *Islamic Culture*, LIX, 1985, pp. 259-66.

<sup>329</sup> Some doubts have been recorded regarding the authenticity of al-Asqalānī's fatwa in favor of Ibn 'Arabī. In fact, he is presented as a fierce opponent of the shaykh and traces of his opposition are scattered in his works. See Özen, p. 313, footnote 15.

way that the very possibility of understanding Ibn ‘Arabī is effectively denied, not only for those who reject him but also his supporters. In such a hyperbolic fashion, all critics of Ibn ‘Arabī are disarmed: whatever could be pointed to in his thought as controversial or problematic will be rejected as groundless criticism and labeled a misapprehension.<sup>330</sup>

There is, however, another category of legal opinions delivered on Ibn ‘Arabī that that can be differentiated from other opinions based on the style and legal methodology they employ. Three noteworthy authors in this category are Muḥammad b. Bilāl al-Ḥanafī, Shihāb al-dīn al-Anṭākī, and Ḥusayn b. al-Naṭībī. Almost nothing certain is known about them. The modern researcher and scholar Yūsuf ‘Abd al-Raḥmān<sup>331</sup> refers to a certain Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān b. ‘Umar b. Bilāl al-Ḥanafī, a native of Aleppo, as an expert in *ḥadīth* and a Ḥanafī scholar of law. Whether or not the individual in question is the author of the fatwa pertaining to Ibn ‘Arabī is not entirely clear. The second author whose fatwa is registered in the Esad Efendi codex is possibly al-Anṭākī, who served as khaṭīb and imam at Bursa Ulu Cami.<sup>332</sup> His invariably favorable opinion on Ibn ‘Arabī is quoted from a work attributed to him under the title *Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*. In fact, nothing is known about al-Naṭībī.

As a whole, the quoted opinions of these scholars about the shaykh exhibit a set of common features, which has led to their fatwas being classified as a separate category. Alongside the early fatwas, favorable fatwas on Ibn ‘Arabī by such authors are extracted from their works and utilized separately as excerpts to serve the purpose of a fatwa. The length of the passages quoted by the authors suggests that the so-called fatwas were in fact part of longer works. There is no question directed to them, a standard feature of a fatwa, and the fact that the beginning and the end of the quotation are cited generally suggests that there was a larger context within which the opinion was given. The defining feature of this category is the thorough Ottomanization of questions concerning Ibn ‘Arabī’s orthodoxy or lack thereof; the matter of Ibn ‘Arabī’s orthodoxy had obviously become an internal debate with internal consequences, relevant for the dynasty and scholars of the Empire. The line of reasoning employed in these ‘fatwas’, rightly or wrongly, connects the doctrinal orthodoxy of Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers with that of the Ottoman sultans and scholars who were, in the new context, beyond any criticism. Unsurprisingly, the two most frequently mentioned names in this regard are the Sultans Selim and Süleyman. Besides the two Sultans, supporters of this outlook also cited a host of Ottoman dignitaries, scholars, and Sufis who could be with little doubt listed among the shaykh’s followers and admirers.

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<sup>330</sup> Another topic of inquiry that would appear almost simultaneously with the defensive teaching of misunderstanding was the question of integrity. Pro-Akbari scholars would argue that all problematic points in the shaykh’s opus were indeed later interpolations. See below, p. 157.

<sup>331</sup> Yūsuf ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar‘ashli, *Mu‘jam al-Ma‘ājim wa al-Mashīkhāt wa al-Fahāris wa al-Barāmij wa al-Aṭhbāt*, Maktaba al-Rushd, Riyadh, 2002, vol. 1, p. 130.

<sup>332</sup> Abdurrezak Tek, op.cit, p. 290.

In this connection, the first author, Muḥammad b. Bilāl al-Ḥanafī, asserted:

Moreover, this individual who declares Ibn ‘Arabī as an unbeliever at the same time does the same thing to Sultan Selim; because Sultan Selim Khan believed in Ibn ‘Arabī, adopted his views and build a magnificent complex [*kulliyye*] at the place where his [Ibn ‘Arabī’s] tomb was found in Sham. Likewise, one who considers Ibn ‘Arabī an unbeliever [*takfīr*], in the same manner accuses qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī, shaykh al-islam Ibn Ḥajar, qāḍī Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī and other great scholars of unbelief.

Al-Ḥanafī’s fatwa established two main justifications for Ibn ‘Arabī’s spiritual and scholarly standing that would subsequently be referenced by other Ottoman ‘ulama: the aforementioned link between Ibn ‘Arabī and the untouchable authorities in the Empire, both political and religious; and in a similar fashion, a retrospective invocation of the illustrious scholars<sup>333</sup> who had a positive view about the shaykh and his legacy. In this manner, an attempt was made to create the impression that a favorable consensus existed among the ‘ulama regarding Ibn ‘Arabī, or at least a semblance thereof. To counter this claim, those who voiced negative opinions used the same strategy, namely trying to create the impression that an unfavorable consensus existed.

This group of legal opinions spells out the fate of those who would deny and defame Ibn ‘Arabī in some detail. According to al-Ḥanafī, al-Anṭākī, and al-Naṭībī, the *takfīr* of Ibn ‘Arabī constitutes an act of rebellion against Islam and the Ottoman Empire, which entails grave consequences. Drawing upon a number of *ayas*, *ḥadīth*, and *ḥadīth qudsī*, they argued that any individual who proclaimed Ibn ‘Arabī an unbeliever was an unbeliever himself. For such persons, the sternest of judgments was made: they were proclaimed to be transgressors who had stepped outside the bounds of Islam proper and needed to repent if they desired admittance back into the community of believers. The texts assert that criticizers of Ibn ‘Arabī need to be strongly censured and are liable for officially sanctioned religious punishment (*ta‘zīr*).<sup>334</sup>

Moreover, al-Ḥanafī elevates the issue to a new level, offering a series of practical measures for punishing detractors of the shaykh:

Everyone who sees or hear about such an individual should learn the lesson. The person [who asserts the unbelief of Ibn ‘Arabī] should not

<sup>333</sup> It will be noticed in al-Ḥanafī’s text that the honorific titles of both Sultan Selim (*khan*), and the scholars (*qāḍī*, *shaykh al-islam* etc.) are included, their significance in the Ottoman and Islamic contexts.

<sup>334</sup> See al-Ḥanafī, SK Esad Efendi 3365, fol. 205b; Abdurrezzak Tek, op.cit, p. 290.



be only punished and left alone; measures need to be taken so that he cannot access the pulpit to deliver sermons and lectures, he must be driven out of his place of residence and never be permitted to return again.

On his part, al-Anṭākī takes the same standpoint. He places great emphasis on the fact that scholars belonging to different schools of Islamic law had come together in their defense of Ibn ‘Arabī,<sup>335</sup> averring that Ibn ‘Arabī’s ability to unite them across the spectra of legal opinions irrespective of their madhhabs was one aspect of his miraculous character and works. He mentions by name al-Suyūṭī, Mālikī imam Tāj al-dīn b. ‘Atāullah, and Shāfi‘ī scholar ‘Afīf al-dīn al-Yāfi‘ī.

On the question of condemnation of Ibn ‘Arabī he states:

Whosoever accuses Ibn ‘Arabī, as well as those who love and follow him, of unbelief, he has most certainly gone out of the sphere of Islam and distanced himself from Allah and His Messenger. [That act] in itself is falling back into unbelief; his soul is poisoned and he becomes included in the meaning of the *ḥadīth qudsī* wherein God says: ‘Whoever demonstrates hostility towards My *walī*, I will declare war on him’. How low are they and how elevated are those who follow the shaykh! A great difference is separating them. In brief, those who defame the shaykh need to be reported and held accountable in front of the ruler. The ruler, in turn, must deal with the transgressors in a foresighted manner and take whatever measures are necessary against them.<sup>336</sup>

The third author, a Shāfi‘ī scholar al-Naṭībī, adds very little. The logic of his argument is identical to al-Anṭākī’s. He first embarks on establishing that Ibn ‘Arabī was a *walī* so that the host of advantageous *ayas* and *ḥadīth* bearing upon the exalted position, as well as the importance of *awliyā’*, could be attributed to him. His definition of *walī* is noteworthy for its undisguised Akbari terminology. Moreover, conceptually, it goes well with the fundamentals of Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of the *awliyā’* as loci of divine manifestation (*majlā*):

Awliyā’ are God’s brides (*‘arā’is*), places of manifestation of the Most Merciful and sources of the revelations of the Most Exalted; they are lo-

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<sup>335</sup> This eagerness to recruit many scholars as possible and from as many different schools of thought reaches extraordinary proportions with another author, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Maqābirsī, who speaks not only of four but rather six legal schools of Islam whose doctors supported Ibn ‘Arabī. See SK Esad Efendi 3365, fol. 211a.

<sup>336</sup> SK Esad Efendi 1318, fol. 208a.

ci of realization of divine love and persons who embody the truths and realities of belief. Amongst those described in this manner, the highest and the most perfect is shaykh Muḥy al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī. His supernatural deeds are countless; the degree of his *wilāya* unattainable.

Al-Naṭībī’s text is unique in that he ends with a *bad-du‘a*: a curse against those who defame the greatest shaykh, markedly adding emotional charge, which is rarely encountered in proper fatwas.<sup>337</sup>

### *Ottoman shaykh al-islams and the shaykh*

Comparatively speaking, there is another set of fatwas and opinions regarding Ibn ‘Arabī which is far more consequential than the previous category of texts; and these are the fatwas which were issued by Ottoman shaykh al-islams. The importance of these fatwas, as well as their influence, is obvious since they were delivered by the highest judicial official of the Empire. Unlike the select, favorable fatwas which circulated in Ottoman religious literature, those issued by shaykh al-islams disclosed the vigorous debate on Ibn ‘Arabī’s orthodoxy, representing both sides of the dispute with equal weight.

### *Ibn Kemal*

While the fatwas of earlier religious authorities that were in considerable circulation in the Ottoman period were of great importance as legal precedents, setting up the framework for the legal debate that would ensue, fatwas delivered by Ottoman scholars were of greater prestige and impact. The traditional view holds that the first genuinely Ottoman fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī was written by arguably one of the most prestigious Ottoman scholars, Molla Shams al-dīn Aḥmad b. Sulaymān b. Kamāl, better known as Ibn Kemal or Ibn-i Kemal. The fact that no Ottoman mufti before the time of Ibn Kemal gave a fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī is generally attributed to the predominantly positive attitude of Ottoman scholars towards the *shaykh al-akbar* and his school of thought, something that was soon bound to be considerably modified.<sup>338</sup>

Ibn Kemal’s fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī marks the outset of a legal battle over the legacy of Ibn ‘Arabī in an Ottoman context, and is therefore one of the most frequently invoked and most comprehensively studied legal texts on the subject. Born in 873/1468 in Edirne or Tokat, into a family of Ottoman military officers of high ranking (*amīr*), Ibn Kemal early in his career changed course in a manner rarely encountered in the biographies of Ottoman scholars. Despite the military tradition of his family, and the fact that both his grandfather and his father were *amīrs* of the Ottomans, Ibn Kemal

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<sup>337</sup> Abdurrezzak Tek, op.cit, p. 292.

<sup>338</sup> Özen, p. 320.

demonstrated an early interest in religious scholarship, which led him to study the introductory levels of various religious disciplines (*mukhtaşarāt*) before embarking on a military career. Before long, he advanced enough to become a *sipahi*, enjoying a fiefdom until a momentous episode induced him to revert permanently to his scholarly interests.

The most detailed and direct account of this episode is found in the *al-Shaqā'iq al-Nu'māniyye* of Taşköprüzade as told to him by the mufti himself. According to the story, he was impressed by the privilege and precedence accorded a poorly dressed 'ālim over Ahmed Bey b. Evrenos, a highly positioned military commander, the presence of Sultan Bayezid II. The revered scholar was Molla Lütfi, who was at the time of this episode a müderris at a 40 akçe medrese in Filipe called Dār al-ḥadīs<sup>339</sup>. When Ibn Kemal inquired in awe about how such an individual could sit right next to the Sultan when his position was so low, he was told that the ulama are revered for their knowledge ('ilm) rather than their official ranks. Disheartened by the fact that such a highly appointed military commander as Ahmed Bey would be overshadowed by a provincial müderris, Ibn Kemal decided to abandon his military career and enter the service of Molla Lütfi. While no date for this episode is given anywhere, it is clear that Molla Lütfi was not this highly esteemed for long: during the reign of the same sultan, Bayezid II (r. from 886-918/1481-1512), Ibn Kemal's first teacher Molla Lütfi was tried and executed, on heresy charges, at the behest of Molla 'Arab, who served as shaykh al-islam at the time.<sup>340</sup>

At that point, Ibn Kemal's career took another turn when an old family friend, Molla 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī Mu'eyyetzade, the qāḍī of Edirne and later Anadolu *qadiasker*, accepted him as his protégé and client (*mulāzim*). It was with his help and through his intervention that Ibn Kemal received his first noteworthy appointment in the scholarly hierarchy: a professorship at Taşlık Medrese and a commission to write a history of the Ottoman dynasty, which proved especially propitious for his future career. Ibn Kemal's rise through the ranks of the scholarly hierarchy was tied to the advancement of Mu'eyyetzade who soon rose to the post of Rumeli *qadiasker*. After having served in a number of prestigious schools in Üsküp and Edirne (Üç Şerefeli Madrasa, Sultan Bayezid II Medrese), Ibn Kemal was appointed *qāḍī* of Edirne in 921/1515. Shortly afterwards, he was promoted to the office of *qadiasker* of Anatolia, in which capacity he allegedly accompanied Sultan Selim on his campaign against Egypt. This trip formed the historical background to Ibn Kemal's fatwa on Ibn 'Arabī.

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<sup>339</sup> Taşköprüzade, *Al-Shaqā'iq al-Nu'māniyya fī 'Ulamā' al-Dawla al-'Uthmāniyya*, Dār al-kutub al-'arabiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 1395/1975, p. 378.

<sup>340</sup> Most Ottoman biographers agree that the execution of Molla Lütfi was the result of an intrigue on the part of his enemies and rivals and that the charges of heresy and irreligion were simple fabrications. This no doubt explains the complete absence of any detailed description of his heresy, which would seem necessary given his prominence in the ulama hierarchy of the time. For an account of his execution see Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı toplumunda zındıklar ve mülhidler (15-17 yüzyıllar)*, Türk Vakfı Yurt yayınları, İstanbul, 1998, pp. 205-221.

### *The fatwa*

The traditional narrative of the circumstances and causes leading up to Ibn Kemal's fatwa is both elaborate and epic. According to the well-established story, Ibn Kemal witnessed the miraculous recovery of Ibn 'Arabī's tomb in the Damascene quarter of Şālihiyya while he was in the company of Sultan Selim on his victorious march against the Mamluks of Egypt. At the behest of the Sultan, Ibn Kemal instantly delivered an unwaveringly affirmative fatwa on Ibn 'Arabī. Ibn Kemal's fatwa on Ibn 'Arabī was at the root of Selim's decision to rebuild a complex of buildings upon the unsightly ruins of the tomb in tribute to the shaykh. Upon completion of the construction, Ibn Kemal's fatwa was engraved in stone above the main entrance to the mausoleum.<sup>341</sup>

Viewed against the background of these unusual historical circumstances, the fatwa on Ibn 'Arabī emerges as an extraordinary text. Not only is its impact made manifest in an exceptionally palpable manner, but in its effect it also far exceeds the scope of what a fatwa as a text is by definition: a non-binding legal opinion given in an advisory capacity. Among its other peculiarities, the fatwa does not formally exhibit the usual set of structural features. The question portion is absent and its opening line addresses a much wider audience, with the consequence that it is more like a proclamation than a legal opinion directed at an individual petitioner. Accordingly, it is often referred to as a *Risāla* rather than a fatwa, and in some existing copies it has a separate title.<sup>342</sup>

Unsurprisingly, a cursory overview of this popular story demonstrates that each element of it is historically highly questionable. Although later copies of the fatwa include the title of shaykh al-islam before Ibn Kemal's name, it is plainly a later addition. At the time of Sultan Selim's campaign, he occupied the post of Anadolu kadiasker, which was the third most senior scholarly position following that of the shaykh al-islam<sup>343</sup> and Rumeli kadiasker. Although it is not impossible, it is still highly unusual that a third ranking scholar would have been commissioned by the Sultan to issue a fatwa on such an important matter, especially when it would have meant circumventing officials senior to him in the hierarchy. Furthermore, both of the documents which describe the retinue accompanying Sultan Selim at the time of his journey to Damascus fail altogether to mention Ibn Kemal. Certain passages in a report in *Münşeāt* Feridun-Bey suggest that the future shaykh al-islam did not enjoy particular-

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<sup>341</sup> This traditional narration is also part of modern scholarship. It is related in all its main elements in Ahmet Ateş, "Ibn 'Arabī", *EP*, vol. III, p. 708; quoted from Özen, p. 319. See also İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, "Kemâl Paşazâde", *İA* (EI: Turkish edition), vol. VI, pp. 561-566.

<sup>342</sup> This unusual circumstance is no doubt explained by the fact that the *fatwa* was written by Qādirī Çelebi, who was authorized to deliver fatwas by Sultan Süleyman because of his immense knowledge in legal matters. Because of the unusual circumstances of his appointment and office, fatwas produced by Qādirī Çelebi, who enjoyed a reputation of a saintly figure in Istanbul, did not exhibit the usual set of features and were counted among exceptions in terms of their format and even the language. See Uriel Heyd, *op.cit.*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>343</sup> At the time shaykh al-islam was Zenbilli 'Alī Cemali Efendi and Rumeli kadiasker was Zeyrekzade Rukn al-dīn Efendi.

ly warm relations with Sultan Selim, who dismissed him from his post in Egypt shortly before the Egypt campaign.<sup>344</sup> The fact that Ibn Kemal was not appointed shaykh al-islam until the time of Sultan Süleyman speaks in favor of the accuracy of Feridun's report.<sup>345</sup>

What subsequently has become known as Ibn Kemal's fatwa on Ibn 'Arabī originally emerged as his endorsement of a fatwa on the subject delivered by another scholar, Molla 'Abd al-Karīm Qādirī Efendi, known as *shaykh müfti*. The process of endorsement was a standard procedure in the issuing of a fatwa whereby the same question or legal dilemma was posed to a number of religious authorities in order to acquire additional approval or to challenge the opinion of the original authority who issued the fatwa.

A few versions of the Ibn 'Arabī fatwa contain crucial information concerning its original deliverer and petitioner.<sup>346</sup> The question was posed to Qādirī Efendi, who served as mufti of Istanbul before becoming shaykh al-islam, by his close associate Muṣṭafā b. Idrīs, also known as Maṣḍar Muṣliḥ al-dīn, who was himself a professor at the Sahn Saman. It is unclear what exactly prompted the dilemma concerning Ibn 'Arabī, since there is no inclusion of it in the text itself. It is unlikely that the question originated with them or was a result of their personal dilemma, because it has been suggested that both scholars were admirers of Ibn 'Arabī's school of thought.<sup>347</sup> The resulting legal opinion of Qādirī Çelebi was subsequently brought by the petitioner Muṣliḥ al-dīn to Ibn Kemal for review and he added one closing line, confirming with his signature that the content thereof was in congruity with Sharī'a.<sup>348</sup>

Despite the historical reality evidenced by numerous textual sources, the fatwa was, nonetheless, unequivocally attributed to Ibn Kemal. It was in this manner that the fatwa was received and continued to be perceived in communal memory. Although the original author of the fatwa, Qādirī Çelebi, ascended to the post of shaykh al-islam a few short years after Ibn Kemal,<sup>349</sup> he never achieved the fame and influence com-

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<sup>344</sup> See Feridun Bey, *Mecmua-yı münşeat-ı Feridun Bey*, Takvimhane-yi Âmire, İstanbul, 1265-1274 (1848-1858), p. 45; Özen, p. 320; Repp, p. 232.

<sup>345</sup> Ibn Kemal became mufti upon the death of 'Alī Cemali Efendi in 932/1525. See Repp, p. 233.

<sup>346</sup> Both are given in Özen, p. 321. The printed version of the fatwa that also contain the signature line is given in Aladdin Bakri, *Al-Wujud al-haqq du cheikh Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (XVII<sup>e</sup> s.)*, Institut français de Damas, Damascus, 1995, pp. 81-82.

<sup>347</sup> Özen, p. 321. Unfortunately the author gives no source for this statement.

<sup>348</sup> See SK Nâfiz Paşa 685, fol. 5b. This manuscript, which appears to be a later collection of Ibn 'Arabī's treatises, contains Ibn Kemal's signature, which reads: "I am being asked and only God leads to Right Path and we all return unto Him; penned by the humble Aḥmad b. Sulaymān Ibn Kamāl, may the Lord forgive his sins." (Ar. "Mas'ulan wa Allāh al-Hādī ilā sabīl al-ṣawāb wa ilay-hi al-marja' wa al-ma'āb. Ḥarrara-hu al-faqr Aḥmad b. Sulaymān Ibn Kamāl 'afā 'an-hu al-Malik al-Muta'al"). The sentence does not explicitly state that the content of the fatwa was in conformity with the religious law. His ratification of the fatwa, however, serves precisely that purpose. The only place where the actual sentence is given is in SK Esad Efendi 3365, fol. 2b, the last line of which reads: "what is in this *ṣahīfa* is confirmed by and in accordance with the noble Sharī'a".

<sup>349</sup> Precisely, he was hurriedly appointed immediately following the dismissal of Çivizade from the office in 948/1541.

manded by the latter.<sup>350</sup> In fact, some contemporary sources voice reservations about the eligibility and effectiveness of all the shaykh al-Islams who were appointed between the time of Ibn Kemal and that of Ebu Su‘ud.<sup>351</sup>

Apart from the question of omitting the closing line containing Ibn Kemal’s signature, the fatwa demonstrates very little textual variance in the numerous extant copies and printed editions. It reads as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Merciful the Compassionate

Praise be to Allah who among His bondsmen placed honest and honorable scholars and made them legatees of the prophets and messengers, and may God’s blessings and peace be upon Muḥammad who was dispatched to guide those who were led astray and those who lead astray, and may peace be with his family and his Companions who strove to implement the noble Sharī‘a, and then:

O you people, may it be known to you that the greatest shaykh, the noble one who follows the Right Path, who is the Pole of all ‘*arif*s and imam of all monotheists, Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ṭā’ī, al-Ḥātāmī, al-Andalusī, is a perfect *mujtahid* and virtuous guide to the Right Path; he has many and wondrous feats and many supernatural powers; his students and disciples are numerous and acknowledged by the ulama. Whosoever defamed him, he erred and if he persists in his denial he has let himself be led astray; the Sultan’s duty is to correct him and dissuade him from this belief, because the Sultan has been ordered to command the good and forbid the wrong. He [Ibn ‘Arabī] has many writings, among them: *al-Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikmiyya* and *al-Futūḥāt al-makiyya*. Some points in them are familiar in expression and meaning, and in accord with the divine command and prophetic law code, while some other points are hidden from the comprehension of those who outwardly follow and are reserved for those who follow the pathway of *kashf* and inward interpretation. Whosoever is not confident he has attained the intended meaning in them, he should remain silent in this regard, as Almighty asserts: ‘O man, follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart – of each of these it will be asked.’ (XVII: 36).

Only God is who guides towards the Right Way of Truth and the final return of all of us is unto Him, Exalted.

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<sup>350</sup> This is one plausible reason why the fatwa continued to be attributed to Ibn Kemal. As such, the text possessed considerably more social weight than it would otherwise.

<sup>351</sup> See below, p. 155.

What is in this *ṣahīfa* is confirmed by and in accordance with the noble Sharī‘a.

Written by the needy Aḥmad b. Sulaymān b. Kamāl, may God forgive him.<sup>352</sup>

The text presents us with a number of important points. The fatwa unequivocally upholds Ibn ‘Arabī’s authority in the realm of Sharī‘a (*al-mujtahid al-kāmil*), as well as in the realm of Sufism (*qutb al-‘arīfin*), presenting him as a symbol of perfect synthesis between two aspects of Islam: legal (*sharī‘a*) and spiritual (*ṭarīqa*).

Significantly, the fatwa accepts the existence of ‘problematic spots’<sup>353</sup> in the opus of the shaykh, offering a standard set of guidelines for treating them. At a later point, another mufti dealing with the same problem would offer forgery as the explanation for inconsistencies in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī. Perhaps the most significant aspect of Ibn Kemal’s fatwa concerns his exhortations on the obligation of a ruler to his community. Ibn Kemal highlights the responsibility of a ruler to effect spiritual and social harmony in the community by enjoining good and forbidding evil. It can be argued that the royal decree<sup>354</sup> issued by Sultan Süleyman, which prohibited the dissemination of uncorroborated reports about Ibn ‘Arabī’s real or alleged heresy, had its origin in the open call endorsed by the shaykh al-islam who served the sultan.

It should be borne in mind that Ibn Kemal did not prepare the text of this fatwa, but simply confirmed it. Apart from this text, there are several other fatwas on issues pertinent to the Akbari school of thought written by Ibn Kemal himself. In light of those fatwas, any preconceived impressions that the mufti was an ardent subscriber to Akbari beliefs without any qualms or reservations, impressions no doubt emerging from his signature fatwa, are questionable, considering the nature of his other works.

One issue wherein Ibn Kemal clearly dissents from the standard Akbari opinion relates to the faith of Pharaoh. Ibn Kemal delivered a fatwa on the subject and composed a separate treatise entitled *Risāla fī radd īmān fir‘awn*.<sup>355</sup> His opinion is evident from the title and is more explicitly stated in the fatwa:

Question: What is the legal status of a person who claims that Pharaoh died in faith (*imaniyla*)?

Answer: Repentance is necessary.<sup>356</sup>

<sup>352</sup> See SK Esad Efendi 3365, fol. 2b.

<sup>353</sup> In this text termed *ba‘d masā’il* whereas in Ebu Su‘ud’s fatwa they are called *kalimāt* (i.e. words).

<sup>354</sup> See Ebu Su‘ud’s fatwa below, p. 158.

<sup>355</sup> See Özen, p. 320, footnote 62. The manuscript of this work is found in SK Halet Efendi, number 810, fols. 82b-84a.

<sup>356</sup> See GHB R-8364, *Majmū‘a-yi fatawi Kemalpaşa-zade*, fol.19. Much more damning is his verdict against affirmers of this belief recorded in the *Risāla*: they become infidels and heretics. See Özen, *ibid*.

This same collection of Ibn Kemal's legal decisions contains an intriguing fatwa wherein Ibn Kemal, in a somewhat poetic tone, warns against the downplaying of the significance of formal knowledge ('*ilm-i zāhir*), effectively rejecting the possibility that esoteric knowledge ('*ilm-i bāṭin*) could be a sufficient source of religious authority.

Question: If a shaykh says what am I to do? God Almighty has not bestowed exoteric knowledge on me; if He did, I would display the heavens of this ocean to the sun as long as I live. The speech of the qāḍī and the mufti derives from esoteric knowledge.

Answer: A strong condemnation is required and renewal of faith.<sup>357</sup>

Besides Selim's campaign against the Mamluks and the Safavids,<sup>358</sup> there is another historical context in which fatwas of Ibn Kemal, particularly those of doctrinal nature, need to be viewed: a series of heresy trials in which Ibn Kemal was closely involved. In addition to the orchestrated propaganda campaign aimed at legalizing Selim's march against neighboring Muslim polities, there are other, more important internal doctrinal disputes that resulted in trials and, in many cases, the execution of the defendants.

The first of these trials is that of a certain Molla Qābiḍ. Not much is known about him. Apparently of Persian descent, he migrated to the Ottoman realm where he continued his scholarly studies and activities. The main charge brought against Molla Qābiḍ was his heterodox belief, the grounds of which he insisted that the stature of the prophet Isa was superior to that of the Prophet of Islam.<sup>359</sup> After being observed disseminating this belief and warned against his corrupt views, he was, according to Peçevi, initially brought to the Imperial Council for a scholarly debate on the issue.<sup>360</sup> The debate would include Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi and Molla Qādirī Çelebi,

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<sup>357</sup> In light of Ibn 'Arabī's extravagant claims that some of his works were in their entirety the immediate result of divine inspiration, Ibn Kemal's fatwa presents its author as someone who does not allow for such a possibility.

<sup>358</sup> Ibn Kemal was also instrumental in legalizing Selim's campaign against the Safavids. For the text of Ibn Kemal's *Risāla* on the topic and analysis see M.C. Şihabeddin Tekindağ, "Yeni kaynak ve vesikaları ışığı altında Yavuz Sultan Selim'in İran seferi", *Tarih dergisi*, March 1967, number 22, pp. 56-86. Efforts at legalizing Selim's war on Iran were led by the shaykh al-islam of the time, 'Alī Cemalī Efendi. His relevant fatwas are found in many collections of legal decisions. See, for instance, manuscript number GHB R-2649, fols. 49a-b.

<sup>359</sup> On this obscure heretical movement see Hamid Algar, "Khūbmesīhis", *EP*, vol. V, p. 41. Accounts of Molla Qābiḍ's execution are given in Peçevi, *Tarih*, pp. 124-6; Celalzade, *Ṭabaqāt*, fols. 172b-175a. See also Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, op.cit, pp. 230-238. Ibn Kemal wrote a refutation of Molla Qābiḍ's arguments in *Risāla fī afdaliyyat Muḥammad 'alayhi al-salām*, SK Carullah 2062, fols. 13b-20a.

<sup>360</sup> This high profile reaction shows that Molla Qābiḍ's teachings, no matter how obscure and odd they may appear, were becoming an important social and religious issue in the society. See also Mehmet İpşirli, "Sādī çelebi", *TDV İA*, cilt 35, p. 404.



qadiaskers of Rumeli and Anatolia, respectively, who were both to become shaykh al-islams later. Molla Qābiḍ was able to ensure his freedom by means of a well-argued defense, to the great frustration of Süleyman and his Grand Vizier Ibrahim Paşa, who attended the debate. The episode turned into a colossal humiliation, based on Mustafa Çelebi's account: a heretic was able to walk into the Imperial Court, denigrate the Prophet and depart having defeated the two highest religious scholars in the Empire. At that point, the Sultan resorted to two other scholars: Ibn Kemal, who was the shaykh al-islam at the time, and Sa'dī Efendi Çelebi, the qāḍī of Istanbul who was to succeed Ibn Kemal as shaykh al-islam. Another session was then organized. Molla Qābiḍ was now challenged primarily by Ibn Kemal and finally routed. After that, it was Sa'dī Efendi who issued the verdict for Molla Qābiḍ's execution after the latter repeatedly rejected calls to renew his faith. The nature of Molla Qābiḍ's heresy and the social reach thereof are largely unknown. The foremost charge of denigrating the Prophet of Islam was only recorded in the accounts of official historians, and Molla Qābiḍ did not appear to have left an account of his theory. In light of the presently available evidence, it is impossible to identify all the possible sources for his ideas. While the same charge of diminishing the status of the Prophet is at times advanced against Ibn 'Arabī by his opponents, it is unlikely that Molla Qābiḍ's heterodox stance on the issue was inspired by Ibn 'Arabī or his works.

A much more prominent figure, and one with a theological outlook comparatively closer to the doctrines attributed to Ibn 'Arabī, is another remarkable religious man, Bayrāmī shaykh Ismā'īl Ma'shūqī, also known as Oğlan Şeyh. His trial was the second affair in which Ibn Kemal served in the capacity of shaykh al-islam. Oğlan Shaykh was executed in 935/1529, based on Ibn Kemal's fatwa. Some thirty years later, another prominent shaykh from the Bayrāmiye order, Bosnalı Hamza Bali, executed at the behest of Ebu Su'ud on the authority of the same fatwa issued by Ibn Kemal.<sup>361</sup>

In contrast to Molla Qābiḍ, Shaykh Ismā'īl was a scion of the well-established Bayrāmī-Melāmī tradition, which by the time of his execution had already attained a remarkable place in the Ottoman religious spectrum. This social influence stemmed from the crystallized redefinition of the notion of asceticism (*zuhd*) that became predominant in the XVI century. Melāmī shaykh Pir 'Alī Aqsarayı (d. 944/1537), the successor of Binyāmīn 'Ayyāshī and Shaykh Ismā'īl's father, elaborated on this new definition of *zuhd*, saying:

If Ibrāhīm Adham had lived in my time and come to this wretched slave  
of God for advice I would not have been content with his abandoning

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<sup>361</sup> This is just one of the many points of connection between the two great muftis. For more details of Ebu Su'ud's career as the mufti and his relation with Ibn Kemal, see M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislām Ebussuud Efendi fetvaları ışığında 16. asır Türk hayatı*, Gonca Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2009, sixth edition, especially pp. 109-117 where a detailed discussion of Ebu Su'ud and Ibn Kemal's activities against apostates and Kızılbaş is given.

the sultanship of this world; he would instead have become the sultan of both worlds, this and the next.<sup>362</sup>

All Ottoman chronicles and Melāmī biographical dictionaries record the cordial relationship between shaykh Pir ‘Alī and Sultan Süleyman. That, however, did not save him from intrigues; on the contrary, it could have incited them instead. *Sergüzešt* recounts the story of the royal inquisition emissaries (*teftiṣ*) who visited shaykh Pir ‘Alī Aqсарay following his claims to be the awaited Mahdi. According to his account, the delegation that visited the shaykh consisted of such high dignitaries as Çuhadar Pertev Paşa, whom the Melāmī tradition identifies as one of the shaykh’s disciples, as well as the sultan himself. In highly symbolic language, shaykh Pir ‘Alī denied having made such claims and confirmed that Sultan Süleyman was Mahdi of the time. During the same event, Süleyman invited the shaykh to Istanbul, an invitation which he declined. He did, however, promise to dispatch his then eighteen-year-old son Ismā‘īl instead. Ironically, a few years later Shaykh Ismā‘īl would be executed at the behest of the sultan himself. The Melāmī tradition hypothesized that this event was the ultimate act of sacrifice on the part of both Pir ‘Alī Aqсарay and his son Ismā‘īl, drawing parallels with the Qur’anic story of the prophet Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā‘īl. Through their sacrifice they were rehabilitated and reestablished into the mainstream of the Ottoman religious milieu.<sup>363</sup>

Ibn Kemal’s fatwas formed an integral part of his notable anti-heresy activities. Collections on other prominent muftis of the sixteenth century, primarily Mu’ayyad-zade, Sa’dī Çelebi, Çivizade, and Ebu Su‘ud, show that questions related to heresy ranked highly on their agenda. Qādirī Çelebi’s fatwa endorsed by Ibn Kemal, which later became attached primarily to the latter’s name,<sup>364</sup> overshadowed all other fatwas issued by Ibn Kemal wherein, as we have seen, he takes some Akbari teachings to task. The fatwa is juxtaposed as a counterweight to Ibn Kemal’s anti-heresy activities which were in some cases, such as the one we have seen with Oğlan Şeyh, directed at persons whose religious worldview was much closer to that of the Akbari school.

### *Reaction to Ibn Kemal’s ruling*

There is little doubt that one reliable method for assessing the social depth of a fatwa in any given society is to trace its echoes in the public sphere and within the ranks of

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<sup>362</sup> See Abdūlbaki La‘fızade, *Sergüzešt*, Istanbul: s. n, p. 24; Öngören, op.cit, p. 411

<sup>363</sup> The sacrifice of Oğlan Şeyh perpetuated the Malāmī tradition and the activities of the *tarikāt* continued unabated, even in Üsküdar where the execution was carried out. For a selection of original Ottoman documents pertinent to various heterodox teachings with the Ottoman Empire in XVI century see Ahmet Refik, *Osmanlı devrinde raftızılık ve beктаşılık (1558-1591)*, Istanbul, 1932, p. 41. An excerpt from what appears to be Mühimme defteri regarding the activities of Oğlan Şeyh’s disciplines in the “misleading” (*iḍlāl*) of people in Üsküdar after his death can be found on p. 17.

<sup>364</sup> His opponents especially attributed the fatwa to Ibn Kemal.

the scholarly class. Considering the number of legal rulings that were written in response to Ibn Kemal's fatwa, and taking into account the prominence of the individuals who issued them, one cannot but conclude that Ibn Kemal's fatwa was a remarkably influential text. Heresy trials in which Ibn Kemal participated, particularly the trial of Oğlan Şeyh, suggest the social context in which his endorsement had taken place. Equally remarkable was the reaction of the ulama that ensued.

### *Al-Sīnūbī*

The first reaction to Ibn Kemal's fatwa came from an unlikely source: a close associate and scholarly protégé of Ibn Kemal, a certain Nābī b. Turkhan al-Sīnūbī. His name is alternatively given as 'Abd al-Bārī' b. Turkhan b. Turmush. Almost nothing certain is known about his biography or career. The only two short remarks on him are found in Ḥājī Halife's *Kashf al-zunūn* and al-Baghdādī's *Hadiya al-ārifīn*. From them we know that he was a preacher who lived in Edirne where he finished his magnum opus, *Ḥayāt al-qulūb*, in 936/1526, relying on the most authentic and reliable sources. This work falls within the genre of 'stimulate and deter' literature (*targhīb wa tarhīb*). Indeed, judging from the list of sources which the author includes in the introduction,<sup>365</sup> it appears that he must have had an extensive education with a particular emphasis on *ḥadīth*. It is unclear, however, whether he occupied any judicial position of consequence.

In Ottoman sources, he is referred to as Ibn Kemal's *muzakereci* and *muid*,<sup>366</sup> both terms indicating his proximity to the mufti, a proximity which renders his dissenting opinion on the orthodoxy of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines and writings even more significant. He issued his dissenting opinion in the form of a short *risāla*, which was in fact an excerpt from his voluminous work *Ḥayāt al-qulūb*. The text exists in a number of manuscript copies and is also printed in a separate, markedly anti-Akbari volume alongside the treatises of Sa'd al-dīn Taftāzānī<sup>367</sup> and 'Alī al-Qārī', both entitled *Risāla fī waḥdat al-wujūd*.<sup>368</sup>

After a solemn opening in which the author accentuates the truthfulness of the prophetic mission of Islam and the role the Prophet's companions played in preserving the message unchanged, a mission with which he identifies himself in the *Risāla*, he

<sup>365</sup> Nābī b. Turkhan al-Sīnūbī: *Ḥayāt al-qulūb fī al-maw'iza*, GHB: R – 3771, fols. 1a-2a.

<sup>366</sup> *Muid* was a type of academic 'rehearser' and teaching assistant in the Ottoman medrese. For more details on the term, see Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, M.E.B., Istanbul, 1993, p. 573; Mustafa Bilge, *İlk Osmanlı Medreseleri*, Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, Istanbul, 1984, pp. 34-38.

<sup>367</sup> As Aladdin Bakri convincingly showed, the real author of the *risale* named *Risāla fī radd al-fuṣūṣ* is 'Alā' al-dīn Bukhārī and not the more famous Taftāzānī. This conclusion is in line with the information Ḥājī Khalīfa gives in his *Kashf al-zunūn*, (Vol. II, col. 1215): *Faḍīḥa al-mulḥidīn*: a *risāla* by Shaykh 'Alā' al-dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, d. 841; he wrote it in Damascus and in it he set forth the absurdities (*zakhārīf*) of Ibn 'Arabī.

<sup>368</sup> The volume has no proper title but rather simply an explanatory notice, which reads: 'This is a collection of treatises on *waḥda al-wujūd* by Sa'd al-dīn al-Taftāzānī and 'Alī al-Qārī'; published in Istanbul, 1294/1877, Ali Bey Matba'asi, 163 p. Al-Sīnūbī's *Risāla* is on pp. 48-49.

mounts an outright and harshly worded attack: against Sufism in general and the Greatest Master and his teachings in particular.<sup>369</sup> The clarity and directness of his words does not leave any doubt as to his position on Ibn ‘Arabī. On Sufism he says:

O you who believe, you should know that the path of tasawwuf is a false and misleading path (*madhhab*), and their misguidance is worse than that of all other seventy and two groups. We are obliged to distinguish their school from the pure teaching of Islam so that believers can keep away from it and all those who associate with it: to shun from meeting them and following them because they [i.e. Sufis] are misguided and misguiding.

After this general condemnation of Sufism, the author then proceeds to criticize Ibn ‘Arabī, whose teachings informed a large part of the Sufi teachings of the time:

That is the madhhab of the author of the *Fuṣūṣ*; indeed his madhhab is a great calamity. O you who believe, hold fast to the Sharī‘a so that you avoid being misled...The author of the *Fuṣūṣ* was in the beginning one of the greatest scholars and the leader among shaykhs, and then at the end of his life he became the leader of unbelievers like the devil himself, who was at the beginning the leader and the first among angels and then became the first among unbelievers.

What follows is a summary explanation of the alleged causes for the prohibition of Ibn ‘Arabī and the reasons for his rejection. The list of accusations contains no surprises; it is a stock list of the allegations put forward by the Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Taymiyya, reworded and advanced without any additions:

In his [i.e. Ibn ‘Arabī’s] teachings there is no difference between worshipping idols and One God, as he said that whosoever worships any contingent being, he indeed worships none but Allah. He also said in the *Fuṣūṣ*: ‘The transcendent God is the creation for which a similarity exists (*mushabbah*).’ Moreover he states that whosoever does prostration to an idol is in his view more virtuous and knowledgeable than one who

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<sup>369</sup> The tendency to equate Sufism with the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī is visible in most anti-Akbari writings. One other notable example is Çivizade, whose fatwas contain references to some prominent Sufi figures of his time, particularly Ibrahim Gülşeni (1423- 1534 CE). See Ali Ahmed Efendi b. Mustafa es-Saruhani, *Mecmueu’l-Mesaili’ ş-Ser’iyye fi Ulumi’d-Diniyye*, a facsimile copy of the manuscript from the library collection of Islam Araştırmalar Merkezi in Istanbul, fol. 8a. (henceforth Saruhani).

disbelieves in idols, concluding that the discontinuation of the worship of idols is ignorance. In the *Fuṣūṣ*, while discussing the problem of Nūḥ's people he says that their ignorance of the Truth corresponds to their abandonment of worshipping idols like Wadd, Lawā'a, Ya'ghūth, Yā'ūq and Naṣr... He said in his *Fuṣūṣ* that whosoever claims to be divine, his claim should not be rejected. All of these and many other statements of his that are at variance with Sharī'a point to his doctrine that the being of the Necessary Being, that is God's essence is identical to the being of all contingents; otherwise his claim that the worship of idols is indeed the worship of God would not be true. It is clear, however, that divine effusion in contingent beings cannot be an object of worship, may God protect us from such misguidance and these beliefs.

In the next paragraph, the author points to what he considers to be the only logical and legal outcome of such misguided beliefs:

That is why the people of Sharī'a condemned him as an unbeliever and atheist. In his own times his neck was struck (?), and likewise the mufti of his time, the most learned among the ulama Sa'dī Çelebi condemned him as unbeliever and atheist; after him the mufti of the time and the most learned among the ulama of his time, Çivizade denounced him as unbeliever and atheist, including all those who share his [Ibn 'Arabī's] opinions and beliefs because they demolish the foundation of Islam and God is his enemy in this world and the hereafter. As regards his punishment in this world, indeed he was destroyed by a blow to his neck, and in the hereafter a painful punishment awaits him and all of his followers and sympathizers.

He founded the school of *wujūdiyya* and said that the reality of being is the Absolute Being that is identical with God's essence. God's essence is the being of outwardly manifest contingents. This claim necessitates the conclusion that all beings are necessary indeed and not contingent as can be inferred from his repeated statements on the *Fuṣūṣ* that had it not been for the permeating (*sarayān*) of God in them, they would not be. Another consequence of these doctrines is that the Necessary Being has no influence on the contingent beings as they are in his opinion identical with it. The absurdity of the influence of something on itself is obvious. The [ultimate] consequence of this belief is the removal of the Creator, Exalted and High be He from all of this, as well as negation of all prophets and messengers, and denial of all revealed books.

Be aware and keep distance from the school of the Sufis who adhere to

the *wujūdī* beliefs and incarnation like the *madhhab* of the author of the *Fuṣūṣ* because he is one of their leaders.<sup>370</sup>

Although the author of this pamphlet showed little originality, as both the accusations and the inflammatory rhetoric he uses were part of the mainstream anti-Akbari discourse, a number of significant points can be inferred from his statements. There is little doubt that Nābī b. Turkhan represented the voice of many high-ranking Ottoman scholars who were bitterly opposed to Ibn ‘Arabī and his teachings in an Ottoman ‘*ilmi* milieu. Noteworthy in his expose is the reference to a fateful switch which took place in the life and career of Ibn ‘Arabī: at first he was acknowledged as not only one of the ulama but as their leader. Equally significant is the author's acceptance of Ibn ‘Arabī as the leader of *mashāyikh*, a term with unmistakable Sufī coloring which appears contrary to Nābī's overall rejection of Sufism at large. Shortly afterwards, in Nābī's view, Ibn ‘Arabī fell on evil ways. One can only regret the lack of elaboration on the part of Ibn Kemal's *muid*: we are left to speculate at what point and in what circumstances this change of orientation towards Ibn ‘Arabī took place and what could be the probable causes thereof. Given that all the references Nābī offers for Ibn ‘Arabī's alleged or real unorthodox beliefs are to his *Fuṣūṣ*, could it be that the composition of the *Fuṣūṣ* marks the turning point for Ibn ‘Arabī and his reception? Although it is tempting to accept this interpretation, one cannot neglect the fact that most of the doctrines Nābī cites were included in Ibn ‘Arabī's earlier writings, albeit in a less refined and rudimentary form. Whatever the case may be, it is obvious that the perception of a shift happened long before the Ottoman times, in the author's own testimony already during Ibn ‘Arabī's life. By citing instances of the Ottoman legal opinions issued by such high luminaries as Çivizade and Sa’dī Çelebi, Ibn Kemal's *muid* manifestly demonstrated that the positive view of Ibn ‘Arabī exposed by his scholarly patron was by no means predominant in his time. In fact, quite the opposite is the case: Ibn Kemal's fatwa remains isolated in comparison with multiple dissenting opinions arguably occasioned by his fatwa and issued by his closest associates: Sa’dī Çelebi, Nābī b. Turkhan and Çivizade. While in case of Sa’dī Çelebi and Çivizade one could possibly attribute the difference to overall scholarly rivalry frequently encountered among high positioned officials and scholars, such a characterization would hardly be possible in the case of Ibn Turkhan, who was Ibn Kemal's client and whose scholarly career largely depended on his patronage.

A much more detailed discussion of Sufism, and Akbari teachings viewed (as the backbone thereof, is to be found in the thirty-eighth chapter of Ibn Turkhan's *Hayāt*

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<sup>370</sup> Gazi Husrev-beg Library in Sarajevo possesses an intriguing manuscript copy of the anti-Akbari volume that was in possession of a certain Abdullatif Đulbija, a provincial mufti born in Nova Varoš in 1869 and died in Ulcinj, Montenegro, in 1939. The manuscript is neatly copied in a notebook and extensively annotated by the mufti's hand. All indicates that the mufti used the volume as a handy manual. See GHB R-5114. Al-Sīnūbī's *Risāla* in this manuscript is on fols. 63-65.

*al-qulūb*.<sup>371</sup>

### *Sa‘dī Çelebi*

Another great Ottoman scholarly figure to issue a fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī was Sa‘dī Çelebi. His scholarly career developed almost simultaneously with that of Ibn Kemal, and both scholars occupied two of the highest judiciary posts at the same time as each other. While Ibn Kemal was the mufti, Sa‘dī Çelebi acted as the mufti of Istanbul in which capacity he joined the mufti in investigating Oğlan Şeyh. Sa‘dī Çelebi succeeded Ibn Kemal as the shaykh al-islam the day he died. Ottoman chronicles offer differing information on Sa‘dī Çelebi's biography. He has been identified as a native of three different regions (Samsun, Kastamonu and Sinop) by three different Ottoman biographers. Most of them, however, agree that he was originally from Kastamonu. His career resembles that of many other Ottoman ulama: he moved to Istanbul with his father at an early age, studied the preliminaries (*mukhtaşarāt*) with his father, and then moved to study with "the ulama of his time". His main teacher, whose name is mentioned in *al-Shaqā‘iq al-Nu‘māniyya*, and through whom Sa‘dī Çelebi appears to have obtained the status of *mulāzim*, was Molla Muḥy al-dīn al-Samsūnī.

Müstakīmzade is alone in his claims that Sa‘dī Çelebi studied under Ibn Kemal and that he had acted as *fetva emini* during the latter's tenure as the mufti. As was customary, before being appointed to higher ranks, Sa‘dī Çelebi taught at a number of important scholarly centers in the Empire.

On the subject of Ibn ‘Arabī and his teachings, Sa‘dī Çelebi delivered a fatwa, copies of which can be found in a number of manuscripts.<sup>372</sup> The foremost peculiarity of the text is its unusual length: the question part is in essence a list of familiar accusations against the Greatest Master and his followers, and the answer, offered by Sa‘dī Çelebi, is equally elaborate and detailed. The text reads:

What do the honorable ulama and the leaders of believers say about these problems [contained in a] book that is in people's hands and whose author fancies that he had composed it and delivered it to the people with the permission of our Prophet, peace be with him, in a vision; he moreover fancies that he saw him and talked with him. His book runs contrary to what has been revealed in the revealed scriptures and is at variance with messages brought by His messengers, may God's peace and greetings be with all of them. Among the things he said is that Adam, peace be with him, was named *insān* (man) for the reason of being

<sup>371</sup> See *Ḥayāt al-qulūb*, GHB R – 3771, fols. 45a-126b. Ibn ‘Arabī's doctrine is specifically discussed under the heading of the *Halvetiye* and *Wujūdiyye* on fols. 153b-154b; the issue of Pharaoh's faith, a clear reference to the shaykh is a separate discussion on fols. 155b-156b.

<sup>372</sup> The Arabic text of the fatwa is quoted here from SK Hacı Mahmud 2680, fols. 69-72.

to God what the pupil (*insān*) is to the eye, through which He sees and is called vision and sight. In another instance he says that the Transcendent God is the creature for which a similarity existed (*mushabbah*). On topic of Nūh's people, he said that had they abandoned the worship of idols like Wadd, Sawa', Yaghuth, Ya'un and Naṣr they would be in ignorance of God, in proportion to their abandonment of the idols. Moreover, he said that True One has a face (*wajh*) in every worshipped object and that the face will be recognized by people of spiritual ability whereas those who lack it will be ignorant thereof. One who knows is aware of whom he worshiped and in what image it [i.e. the worshiped object] emerged. Distinction and multiplicity are but an illusion. Later, on Hud's people he says that they attained the status of ultimate proximity and the distance was removed for them. The notion of Hell ceased to exist for them, and they obtained that proximity through merit and deserving. Their intuitive and joyful experience of proximity to God was not an undeserved gift He offered them but an accomplishment they deserved by way of their value and observance, because they were on the right path leading to their Lord. The author also denied in it [i.e. his book, presumably the *Fuṣūṣ*] the divine threat of hellfire for all those who deserve punishment. Is the one who accepts these doctrines an unbeliever (f. 69b) or not? Is the one who is satisfied with these statements unbeliever or not? Is the one who is of full age and sound mind and who hears these words and did not react to them in any way, by his tongue or condemn them in his heart, a sinner or not? Deliver us a clear fatwa in plain wording, may God reward you as He promised to and as you committed yourselves to the truth and its clarification, because the atheists by way of this book portray rejection as belief, ignorance as knowledge, *shirk* as monotheism and rebellion as obedience. In their eyes neither transgressor deserves punishment nor there is any difference between worshipping idols and God. The negligence and overlooking [of this situation] harms the weak and those who are not vested in knowledge. We seek help from God and on Him we rely to defeat atheists and reform our condition as well as to prevent misguidance from spreading. Allah knows best.

The response:

May Allah have mercy on you. Indeed, the Almighty speaks truth and He guides to the Right Path. Whatever that *ṣahīfa* contained of horrendous and low words is rejected by both rational and traditional teachings of Islam. For some of them it is but empty philosophizing, for others it is outright misguidance and rejection, apostasy from Islam and falling from it. This is the consensus of all Muslims. [These ideas are] negation of the foundational principles of Islam and rejection of the unambiguous



speech of Almighty Creator. Every person who believed in these, was in dilemma or suspected [that the aforesaid is truth] has disbelieved in Allah, Exalted be He. If he persists in his disbelief and repents not, he should be executed with the sword of Sharī‘a. It is obligatory for every Muslim who hears these wicked words to combat them by negation and exposing their corruption. That will be considered a good deed that brings divine reward on the Day of judgment. That is equivalent to removing obstacles and harm from Muslims' pathway. I seek help from God and on Him I rely.

The poor Sa’dī wrote it, might his sins be forgiven.

Nothing in the text indicates the capacity in which Sa’dī Çelebi issued his legal opinion on Ibn ‘Arabī; in particular, it is uncertain whether he is answering as Istanbul’s mufti or as the shaykh al-islam. The text of the fatwa, however, reveals an eagerness to maximize its social impact by emphasizing the collective obligation of Muslims to enjoin good and forbid evil.<sup>373</sup>

As is generally the case, the most important part of this fatwa is the question. That section is demonstrably and carefully crafted in a number of ways that prepare the ground for the mufti's response. The terminological subtlety of the Arabic language is mobilized to disqualify Ibn ‘Arabī: his ideas are presented as the result of *za‘m*, an unfounded personal opinion without any grounding in the sources of Islam (*manqūl*) or rational tradition of scholarship (*maqūl*). It is a conjecture and guesswork and those who practise it are not counted among scholars whose opinions merit any serious consideration or scholarly treatment. In addition, serious doubt is cast upon the claim of the supranatural origin for his books that contained ideas contrary to Scripture. It is difficult to ignore the fact that the question, or more precisely the series of questions, contained in this fatwa do not reveal an individual or a group who are seeking a resolution to their doubts or dilemma. What is normally the question is in this case nothing but a veiled suggestion. In point of fact, there exists no dilemma or doubt. The inquirer presented a case against Ibn ‘Arabī and his teachings and delivered a verdict himself before the mufti: that Ibn ‘Arabī was an apostate and an unbeliever and that his works are freely disseminated in society despite their corrupt ideas and harmful effects. The only purpose of this fatwa appears to be to gain an official endorsement from the highest judicial official on a series of firmly formed ideas concerning Ibn ‘Arabī and his doctrines. Another possibility, less likely but still a possibility, is that the mufti used a methodological trick to express his own view on Ibn ‘Arabī in the form of a supposedly solicited fatwa. The absence of any information

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<sup>373</sup> This social obligation of the ulama class and Muslims at large comes precisely in response to the situation described by the inquirer: ‘the negligence and overlooking [of this situation] harms the weak and those who are not vested in knowledge’. One of the most important duties of the scholarly class was to establish and maintain social order by protecting the weakest members of the society from being led astray.

about the petitioners as well as a number of pointed similarities between the question and the answer section of the text leave that option open.

The scarce information that is available on the mufti's education and teachers makes it challenging to trace the source and origin of his pronounced anti-Akbari ideas. 'Atā'ī quotes the text of an *ijāzatname*, allegedly penned by the mufti himself, which contains the names of some of his shaykhs. The only name mentioned in the document that can be related in any way to the debate surrounding Ibn 'Arabī is that of a Shāfi'ī magistrate and scholar from Egypt, Abū Yaḥyā Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1519), who gave Sa'dī Efendi his authorization to teach. Because none of the mufti's biographers mention a journey and a stay in Egypt, it appears that he obtained al-Anṣārī's authorization through correspondence and never met his teacher. This circumstance would have explained the stark difference between Sa'dī Efendi, a bitter opponent of Ibn 'Arabī judging by his fatwa, and his teacher Abū Yaḥyā al-Anṣārī, an enthusiastic supporter of the Greatest Master, as manifested by his opinion on Ibn 'Arabī, which is often taken to have the strength of a fatwa.

In his work entitled *Asnā al-maṭālib fī sharḥ rawḍ al-ṭālib*<sup>374</sup> on Shāfi'ī *fiqh*, shaykh al-Islam al-Anṣārī, commenting on the question of apostasy, touched upon the controversy on Ibn 'Arabī. There al-Anṣārī says:

Ibn 'Arabī and his group (*tā'ifa*) are good Muslims, and their expressions follow the traditional terminology of other Sufis who lived before them, and what is meant by their words is true and correct. Ibn 'Arabī's status as a *walī* was confirmed by a number of scholars who themselves attained the ultimate level of knowledge and amongst them are shaykh Tāj al-dīn b. 'Ataullāh, shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Yāfi'ī and many others. When an *'arif* is submerged in the ocean of *tawḥīd* and *'irfān* so that his own being becomes annihilated in God's being and his attributes disappear in God's attributes, and when he becomes utterly unaware of anything but Him, it happens that he utters some words that resemble expressions of incarnation and unity (*ittiḥād*) and that is because of a lack of appropriate words to describe his experience and his state of being. That, however, is not the case. And then he said: I swear by God three times. The Shaykh [Ibn 'Arabī] wrote only what he discovered and came to know and he discovered only that which he experienced and witnessed: the images of realities as they are. Minds are perplexed when faced with them and that is because human reasoning does not reach there. What is more appropriate is to surrender and submit to shaykh Ibn 'Arabī, may God sanctify his noble secret.

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374 The original work *Rawḍ al-ṭālib* is a compendium of Shāfi'ī law by Imām Ibn Abī Bakr al-Maqarrī al-Yamānī, and is in fact an abbreviated version of Imam Nawawī's work called *Rawḍ al-ṭālibīn*, on *ḥadīth* commentary.

The mufti of Arabs was asked about Ibn ‘Arabī and he said: 'He is more knowledgeable in every branch of knowledge than those who belong to it.' Then they said: 'What do you think about his knowledge?' and he replied: 'Submission'.<sup>375</sup>

In light of this unequivocally positive view of Abū Yaḥyā al-Anṣārī, an alternative cause for Sa‘dī Efendi’s vehement opposition to Ibn ‘Arabī and his ideas must clearly be sought. The source of Sa‘dī Efendi’s enmity and opposition to Ibn ‘Arabī and his ideas is usually recognized in the works of another scholar, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī al-Ḥanafī (d. 956/1549), who was on very close terms with the mufti and was himself a staunch opponent of Ibn ‘Arabī. After receiving his education in the main centers of Muslim scholarship in Damascus and Cairo, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī came to Istanbul in 905/1500 where he served as imam for Fatih Mosque and simultaneously taught at Dār al-Qurrā’ medrese, established by Sa‘dī Çelebi. He is the author of two manifestly anti-Akbari texts; first *Ni‘ma al-dharī‘a fī nuṣra al-sharī‘a*<sup>376</sup> and second *Tasfīh al-ghabī fī tanzīh Ibn ‘Arabī*,<sup>377</sup> in response to al-Suyūṭī’s treatise. The first treatise was signed in endorsement by both Sa‘dī Çelebi and his successor Çivizade.<sup>378</sup>

### *Çivizade*

Sa‘dī Efendi’s successor for the post of shaykh al-islam, Molla Muḥy al-dīn Muḥammad b. Ilyās, nicknamed Çivizade, is yet another in a series of Ottoman chief muftis after Ibn Kemal and Sa‘dī Efendi who issued official fatwas in regard to Ibn ‘Arabī. His life and scholarly career exhibited a set of rather unusual circumstances, which caused Ottoman biographers to devote much attention to the vicissitudes of his life. Because the biographical materials on Çivizade are abundant, it is possible to establish a firm chronology for his scholarly and official activities. Originally from the region of Menteşe,<sup>379</sup> Çivizade was a scion of a family with a reputable scholarly tradition.

He began his fundamental studies with his father, Molla Çivi, who was a renowned müderris. Immediately after his father’s death, which came early in Çivizade’s career, he embarked on the next level of his religious studies with a host of prominent Ottoman scholars whose number and names vary according to different sources. The list which emerges from a compilation of the names mentioned in all the sources includes

<sup>375</sup> Very clearly, one is required to unquestionably submit to the veracity of Akbari teachings, another of the prerogatives of the Qur’an claimed for Ibn ‘Arabī’s corpus. SK Nâfiz Paşa 685, fol. 5b; Abdurrezzak Tek, op.cit, p. 283.

<sup>376</sup> GHB R-924/2, fols. 53b-84a; throughout the text the two main accusations against Ibn ‘Arabī are repeated: *kufr* and *ilhād*, and substantiated by extensive quotes from Ibn ‘Arabī’s works.

<sup>377</sup> GHB R-924/3, fols. 84b-162a.

<sup>378</sup> For more details see Özen, p. 326. Çivizade’s endorsement of the text is below, p. 153.

<sup>379</sup> Süleyman Saadeddin Efendi Müstakımzade, *Devhat ül-meşayih*, Çağrı yayınlari, Istanbul, 1979, p. 19 (henceforth Müstakımzade).

Sarı Görez, whose real name was Nūr al-dīn Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Qarasuwī, Tacibeyzade Sa'dī Çelebi; Molla Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi, in whose service Çivizade was while at Hadim 'Alī Paşa medrese; and Molla Mehmed Paşa, at Kalenderhane medrese. The two most important names in the chain are undoubtedly Molla Sa'dī Çelebi, through whom Çivizade attained the status of *mulāzim*, and Molla Qara Bali, whose *muid* the shaykh was to become.

Another name, however, is more important in light of our task: that of Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi. That the future shaykh al-islam, issuer of a multitude of anti-Akbari fatwas, should have studied under the grandson of a celebrated member of the Ibn 'Arabī textual community, Molla Fenārī, is a rather strange coincidence. It can hardly account for the exceedingly pronounced anti-Akbari stance that is observable throughout the shaykh's career. There are, however, repeated indications in the sources that the relationship between Çivizade and Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi took a wrong turn almost at the very outset. Tamīmīzade offers insight into an event that not only triggered animosity but also turned the relationship between the two scholars into open hostility. According to him, Çivizade went to study under Fenārīzade at Hadim 'Alī Paşa medrese, but before he commenced his studies with him, the young Çivizade experienced a sudden change of mind and went to study with Molla Mehmed Paşa instead.<sup>380</sup> The sudden shift inevitably dishonored Fenārīzade who became so outraged by this move that he allegedly never forgave Çivizade and from then on did not miss any opportunity to condemn him in public and in his writings.

This ill-fated relationship was to sustain another blow. When a vacancy opened at the prestigious Sahn medrese in 935/1528, Çivizade was involved in a weighty dispute with two other contenders for the office, Kılıçzade Ishāq Çelebi and Isrāfīlzade, in front of a committee consisting of the two kadiasker of the time, Fenārīzade Muḥy al-dīn and Qādirī Çelebi. According to Mecdi, the applicants were to compose a short treatise on a given topic within three months and these works were then to be examined by an unnamed committee of scholars. In this competitive examination, Çivizade, with his treatise on the critiques of *ḥadīth* narrators, had the upper hand over the other applicants. However, Çivizade was not appointed to the post thanks largely to an intervention on the part of Fenārīzade.<sup>381</sup> It is difficult to ascertain whether this personal and scholarly animus boiled over to encompass the field of Sufism in a more general manner, or Akbari teachings more specifically, but it is the uncontestable truth that the two had diametrically opposite stances towards them.

Çivizade's opposition to Ibn 'Arabī is presented as so prominent and aggressive that, according to some versions of his biography, it might well have accounted for his dismissal from the office of shaykh al-islam at the hands of Sultan Süleyman,<sup>382</sup> in-

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<sup>380</sup> See Repp, p. 246.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Peçeви, *Tarih*, p. 49; Müstakimzade, p. 20.

variably portrayed as an ardent follower of the Greatest Master. Nevertheless, it is hard to accept this interpretation at face value for a number of reasons.<sup>383</sup> A positive or negative view of Ibn ‘Arabī could hardly be a sufficient reason for such a radical action and it would falsely indicate that Çivizade was unique or even prominent in his criticism of Ibn ‘Arabī. This was clearly not the case, as we have seen with his predecessors, most notably his equal in rank Sa‘dī Çelebi. As is the case with other Ottoman critics of Ibn ‘Arabī, the critique of the latter by Çivizade took on different forms and permeated most of his writings, his fatwas on the subject being only the most radical examples of this scholarly attitude.

Çivizade issued more than one fatwa on Ibn ‘Arabī. Instead of one itemized fatwa like that of Sa‘dī Çelebi, he treated the usual controversies attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī in three shorter texts scattered throughout different collections of fatwas. His fatwas are all in Turkish.

First text:

Question: From the point of view of Sharī‘a, what is the status of a person who claims that he knows what shaykh Muḥy al-dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī stated in his work *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* to the effect that the seal of saints is above the seal of the Prophets, and also what he said in his other work *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* that ‘I am the seal of saints’? What is the status of a person who says that these words are truth and is he permitted to do so?

Answer: He becomes a *kāfir*, may God save us from that!

Second text:

Question: Could a person who adheres to Ibn ‘Arabī’s views lead the prayer for Muslims? Is the prayer of such a congregation valid?

Answer: A person who understands the meaning of the *Fuṣūṣ*, a work by Ibn ‘Arabī, who adheres to it and claims that it is truth, is undoubtedly an apostate and he cannot save himself even with repentance. Shaykh Mehmed.

Third text:

Question: What is the status of a Zayd who claims that the Pharaoh died as a believer?

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<sup>383</sup> Two other possible causes for his dismissal are usually mentioned. The first is Çivizade’s dissenting opinion on the permissibility of performing ritual ablution over footwear (*mash*), and the second is his dissenting scholarly judgment on the permissibility of cash waqfs (*waqf al-nuqūd*), both of which practices he forbade. See Repp, p. 250.

Answer: Repentance is required. Shaykh Mehmed.

Not only the Greatest Shaykh, but also his followers and admirers, are thereby summarily condemned in the most damning terms as infidels and apostates. The fatwas on Ibn ‘Arabī issued by shaykh al-islam Çivizade fall into two main categories: doctrinal (the first and third texts) and practical (the second text). The mufti was, however, keen to express his anti-Akbari views not only in these legal briefs, but also elsewhere, and even when his opinions were not strictly solicited as is the case with these fatwas.

One such remarkable instance is Çivizade’s endorsement of a relatively well known treatise with markedly anti-Akbari coloring entitled *Ni‘ma al-dharī‘a fī nuṣra al-sharī‘a*, which, judging by the number of available manuscript copies, enjoyed considerable circulation in the Ottoman intellectual milieu. A copy of the work from the Yeni Cami collection contains an endorsement (*taqriz*) on the first page by the shaykh al-islam, which reads as follows:

This is a copy of the signature by shaykh al-islam and the mufti of mankind, the late Çivizade ‘Alī Efendi.

This book [i.e. the *Ni‘ma al-dharī‘a* ...] is superb, well respected and received among the ‘ulama and it deals with refutation of the invalid doctrine of the wujūdiyya, particularly with Ibn ‘Arabī al-Ṭā’ī who strayed from the Right Path. Be it known, my brothers, that whosoever knew what Ibn ‘Arabī stated and thereupon abstained from proclaiming him an infidel indeed became an infidel himself, in the same manner as when someone refrains from proclaiming the unbelief of the Jews and Christians becomes an infidel himself. Written by the wretched ‘Alī, also known as Çivizade.

The celebrated mufti is referred to in an unusual manner as ‘Alī Efendi, but the honorific titles bestowed upon him undoubtedly point to the identity of Muḥy al-dīn Mehmed Çivizade, usually mentioned as Muḥy al-dīn, shaykh Mehmed, or simply Çivizade. His opposition to the doctrines attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī is fully integrated into his works, excerpts from which are frequently invoked in the debate.

In the SK Kılıç Ali Paşa manuscript,<sup>384</sup> there is one such excerpt from an unnamed work by Çivizade in which he discusses the terms of ‘unbelief’ and ‘apostasy’. Drawing a curious line of differentiation, the shaykh states:

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<sup>384</sup> SK Kılıç Ali Paşa – 496, fol. 143b.

Chapter on the words of *kufir*: whosoever says that I am upon the belief of the Pharaoh or Iblīs, or said my belief is like the belief of the Pharaoh or Iblīs has certainly become an infidel. If he says I am the Pharaoh or Iblīs he does not commit the act of rejection.

The catalogue of condemnatory terms remains unchanged: Ibn ‘Arabī and all those who adhere to his views are invariably labeled as *kāfir*, *mulhid* and *zindīq*. It is therefore significant to examine these terms and explore their ultimate legal consequences. We are fortunate to possess a separate treatise on the meaning of the term *zindīq* and the differences between it and all other corresponding terminology used by Muslim jurists in the Ottoman realm, a treatise written by no lesser an authority than Ibn Kamāl. His prominent role in a number of heresy trials that took place during the course of his career places greater importance on the treatise which unveils his understanding of these terms, an understanding that is likely to have been common for his scholarly colleagues in the sixteenth century.

At the beginning of this work entitled *Risāla fī taṣḥīḥ lafẓ zindīq wa tawdīḥ ma‘nā-hi al-daḡīq*, while citing earlier sources, the author traces the etymological origin of the term *zindīq*, and offers two solutions: it is either the Arabized version of the Persian word *zindah* (alive) or *Zandi* (meaning a follower of Zand Avesta); Kemal registers his preference for the former. Some authors consider the first meaning coterminous with the word *dahrī*, a generic name for materialists in Islamic heresiographical vocabulary.

While the etymological background of the term as presented by the author appears to be a bit unclear, he summarizes its usage in the Muslim context as follows:

*Zindīq* is everyone who has left the heavenly [i.e. revealed] religions negating one or more of its principles agreed upon by all of them.

Because all heavenly religious traditions are included, there is no direct semantic correlation between *zindīq* and all other similar terms like *kāfir* (infidel) and *murtadd* (apostate). Instead, there is an additional division between Muslim *zindīqs* and *zindīqs* in general. Only the former ones, Muslims, could be deemed apostates because they rejected Islam. A scale of graded deviation from the Right Path includes a host of terms: *kāfir* is one who has no *īmān*, belief in Islam; *munāfiq* is a person who manifestly proclaims belief unsubstantiated by his actions; *murtadd* (apostate) is a term reserved for a person who abandons any of the fundamental principles of Islam. Depending on which principle is in question, the wretched one could be termed a *mushrik* (polytheist, one who attributes a partner to the Almighty); *kitābī* (followers of earlier scriptures whose rejection of the prophethood of the Last Prophet relegates them to the group of non-believers); *dahrī* (materialist) if a person professed belief in the

eternity of the world of creature; *mu‘atṭil* if a person rejected the creation of the world by One God; or *zindīq* if a person abandoned a principle of common principles shared between the revealed religions (*adyān samāwiyya*), even if he or she believed in the prophethood of Muḥammad.<sup>385</sup> As regards the last category, that of *zindīq*, its legal consequences vary according to the situation. Ibn Kemal in the treatise quotes the work of a certain Muslim jurist, Abū al-Layth, *‘Uyūn al-masā’il*, which mentions three possible modes of a *zindīq*. He may either be an original *zindīq* (such as, for instance, a polytheist), a Muslim who became a *zindīq*, or a *dhimmī* who became a *zindīq*. As expected, Islamic religious law sanctioned certain measures to be implemented only in the second case, where the person in question was once manifestly Muslim and then through his actions or sayings became a *zindīq*.

As we have seen with fatwas issued by Çivizade, the ultimate status of a person could be contingent upon subtle nuances that differentiated several qualifications. The characterization of a person thus depends on a number of elements and it remains highly questionable whether the mufti could account for all of them. Because of the very nature of the fatwa, the mufti’s perception of the situation, his verdict and the final legal status of his opinion could have been carefully directed by the petitioner depending on the way the question was posed or even worded. In the most extreme cases, as in the third fatwa by Çivizade, not even an opportunity to repent was offered to avoid the tragic resolution.

### *Ebu Su‘ud*

The last in a succession of Ottoman shaykh al-Islams who issued legal verdicts on Ibn ‘Arabī is an individual who is arguably the most famous Ottoman mufti, Molla Abū al-Su‘ud Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā al-‘Imādī. He is traditionally credited with the overall classification and codification of Ottoman law. His tenure as shaykh al-Islam is portrayed by all his biographers as the most illustrious reign in the history of the office. According to them, he assumed the office in 952/1545 after the matter of the fatwa<sup>386</sup> was in a state of confusion and disarray, having been passed from one hand to another until it settled in the hand of Ebu Su‘ud. This observation is a clear reference to the period immediately following the unprecedented dismissal of Çivizade as well as a value judgment on the competence, or the lack thereof, of the Muftis who occupied the office in the meantime: Qādirī Çelebi and Fenārī Muḥy al-dīn Çelebi.

Ebu Su‘ud was the chief mufti of the Empire for thirty years, from 952/1545 to 982/1574, i.e. until his death. His biographer Mınık ‘Alī refers to the period following his death as a time when the fatwa returned once more into a state of disarray, and clearly distinguishes the period of his tenure as extraordinary. Extraordinary it was: he gave fatwas in all three languages (‘Arab, ‘Ajam and Rūm), “his doorway witnessed a

<sup>385</sup> SK Esad Efendi 3646, fol. 159b

<sup>386</sup> The matter of fatwa (*amr-i fatwā*) here refers to the practice of fatwa. See ‘Alī Mınık, *Al-‘Iqd al-Manzūm fī dhikr afādil al-Rūm*, Dār al-kutub al-‘arabiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 1395/1975, p. 441.



succession of delegations of notables from all lands and corners” and “his answers were scattered throughout the world, and across all horizons like stars”.<sup>387</sup> The incredible number of extant fatwas ascribed to him, and their broad geographical dissemination, are a testimony to his phenomenal influence. This great prestige and his efforts in the highest judicial office, no doubt coupled with his admirable personal qualities, secured him an important role in the decision-making process in the Empire. There are at least three episodes of unique significance which fully attest to his great influence: the execution of Şehzade Mustafa, his legal characterization of Şehzade Bayezid as a rebel and apostate, and his decision to go to war with the Venetians.<sup>388</sup>

Apart from that, there is an internal circumstance relevant to the process of *iftā'* itself which lies at the root of his unquestioned authority. He is the first mufti to have formally been allowed by the Sultan to give fatwas based on his personal legal reasoning (*ra'y*).<sup>389</sup> This official sanction and his exercising of *ra'y* can account for the increase in the authority of his fatwas and his authority in general.<sup>390</sup> In light of this information it is clear that his fatwas, while remaining non-binding, should be approached differently than those issued by other muftis before and after him.

By the time of his tenure as shaykh al-islam, the debate concerning Ibn 'Arabī had reached its peak in a very heated argument between the two camps. The fatwa Ebu Su'ud delivered on the question of Ibn 'Arabī's orthodoxy is one where the shaykh al-islam is very clearly exercising his personal opinion.

Text of Ebu Su'ud's fatwa:

Question. What is legally required of a Zayd who states: 'hazreti shaykh Muḥy al-dīn 'Arabī's work entitled *Fuṣūṣ* is contrary to the Sharī'a. In

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> See Repp, p. 284.

<sup>389</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 282. See also: Snježana Buzov, *op.cit.*, p. 162. Buzov eloquently summarized the achievements and principles of Ebu Su'ud's tenure as the highest judicial scholar of the Ottoman Empire. For more details see Chapter VI: "Ebu Su'ud and the position of the shaykh al-islam" in the afore-mentioned dissertation, pp. 161-172.

<sup>390</sup> Apart from these examples, there is enough circumstantial evidence to point to the extraordinary importance of the office of shaykh al-islam and its holder at the time of Ebu Su'ud. One such indication is the considerable increase in state salaries, which should be taken as a result of the increased significance and charisma and not its cause. Most biographical sources narrate that Ebu Su'ud was appointed shaykh al-islam with the salary of 250 akçe per day, the salary of his predecessor in the office. During the course of his long tenure, which in itself partly explains the increase, his salary was raised first by 300 akçe and then an additional one hundred akçe towards the end of his career, raising his pay to the total of 650 akçe per diem, which was the highest salary in the ulama hierarchy. While there is no doubt that part of that increase was connected with the incremental raise in pay for the office, it is clear that it was mostly due to the esteem he enjoyed. The first raise is thought to be related to Ebu Su'ud's famous tafsīr work entitled *Irshād al-'aql al-salīm ilā mazāyā al-kitāb al-karīm* which was dedicated and submitted to Sultan Süleyman. Apparently, he was so delighted with it that he allotted 300 akçe a day to Ebu Su'ud. The second increase was paid out to the Mufti upon the completion of the same work. Although earned through personal efforts and charisma of Ebu Su'ud, the salary of 650 akçe a day remained valid for his successors in the office. For a discussion on the financial aspects of the mufti's office see Repp, pp. 289-290.

fact it has been composed with the aim of leading people astray from Right Path. Whosoever reads it is an atheist (*mulhid*)’?

Answer: It is known that in that book there are some words that are not congruent with the Noble Sharī‘a and true, valid Path. Some ignorant persons who are entirely unaware of the purpose of Sharī‘a and its methods attempted to disrupt the synthesis (*tawfīq*) of the two [i.e. problematic places in Ibn ‘Arabī’s works and the Sharī‘a], writing their treatises based upon invalid hear-say. Their works have no value. There is no doubt that some of the words and statements contained in their claims truly are to be found in hazret-i Shaykh’s books. However, those words that are not compatible in any way or form with the Noble Sharī‘a are but a calumny (*iftirā*) against him; his clear and unequivocal statements in his other famous works are the best testimony to that. The insertion (*ihlāl*) of those [problematic] words is known to be an intentional distortion [of his corpus]. When reading and studying those words, it is one of the requirements of Islamic comportment to exert the utmost vigilance and care. Royal prohibition has also been issued. In any case, it is necessary to avoid [discussing] those points. Written by Abū Su‘ud, may his sins be forgiven.

The fatwa clearly presents us with a number of points. The text readily admits that Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ* indeed contains a number of unsubstantiated statements that are in conflict with the Sharī‘a and the genuine fundamental theories and practices of Sufism, what the mufti termed as *ṭarīq-i ṣahīḥ*. Moreover, he refers to attempts at the hands of some scholars, clearly Ibn ‘Arabī’s detractors, to oppose the establishment of compatibility between Sharī‘a and Ibn ‘Arabī. One would assume that the attainment of that desirable synthesis (*tawfīq*) was one of Ebu Su‘ud’s goals, or at least a general goal of the Ottoman learned. Problematic places in the *Fuṣūṣ* that do not correspond with the religious law, thus, ought to be a slander against the shaykh and a “Jewish-like”<sup>391</sup> interpolation (*ilhāq*) in the original text of the work in question.<sup>392</sup> According to the mufti, the best and, in this case, and in this case, only proof for that fact is a corpus of known statements and doctrines that Ibn ‘Arabī expressed in his other works. The truth is exactly the opposite: there is nothing Ibn ‘Arabī stated in the *Fuṣūṣ* that does not exist in most of his earlier works. Relying on very little, if any, evidence, Ebu Su‘ud confirmed the opinion of the petitioner and outlawed all of Ibn ‘Arabī’s opponents on the grounds of a royal decree issued by Sultan Süleyman.

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<sup>391</sup> This is a likely reference to the generally held belief about the propensity of members of other religious traditions to distort their sacral texts. Some Qur’anic chapters contain explicit references to that propensity. In addition, one whole genre of the so-called “Isrā‘iliyyāt”, containing semi-legendary and mythic accounts of lives of prophets, is identified as a corrosive element within the genuine tradition of Prophetic *ḥadīth*.

<sup>392</sup> Maḥmūd Ghurāb, a modern scholar of Ibn ‘Arabī, is also a proponent of the distortion theory.

The above-mentioned signature fatwa by Ebu Su'ud is not the only one delivered by him regarding Ibn 'Arabī. There are a number of other fatwas pertinent to the greatest shaykh and his teachings that are usually included under the same heading as the cited fatwa. All these fatwas demonstrate keen interest in the debate and an attempt on the part of the questioners to further analyze, compartmentalize and evolve the discussion by means of a number of supporting questions, all of them concerned with the overarching dilemma about the acceptability of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines. It is impossible to date these fatwas or place them into a temporal sequence, as such information is generally almost never given in fatwas. Therefore it remains unclear whether those additional fatwas were solicited after the main fatwa and the Sultan's decree, or after its deliverance by Süleyman. What is clearly seen, however, is the strategy and methodology which Ebu Su'ud employs in his answers. Contrary to the petitioner's tendency to further elaborate and analyze the debate point by point by supplying additional questions in order to unfold it, the mufti strove to broaden the context to the point of total de-contextualization. When that was not possible, another methodology which he utilized in both questions and answers was to link the case of Ibn Arabī with that of some other seminal Sufi figures who were the subject of criticism in the Ottoman intellectual milieu, in spite of the fact that the nature of criticism differed widely in the case of Ibn 'Arabī and Mawlānā Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī, 'Attār, Jāmī, al-Ghazālī and others. The ultimate result was a shift of focus away from Ibn 'Arabī due to the fact that muftis were broadening the context and presenting his case in similar terms with that of other criticized Sufis.

Ebu Su'ud's supporting fatwas on Ibn 'Arabī linked in a row, read as follows:

Question: If a Zayd says that the words contained in the *Fuṣūṣ* are contrary to the Sharī'a [to the point that those words] constitute unbelief, what is legally required in his regard?

Answer: It is the obligation of every Muslim to uphold and say that any words contradictory with the Sharī'a are *kufr*.

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Question: In that case, if an 'Amr is reluctant to accept that proposition of Zayd in his presence, what is legally required from 'Amr?

Answer: If he hesitates to uphold that any words contradictory with the Sharī'a do constitute *kufr*, he should renew his faith.

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Question: In that case, after 'Amr leaves Zayd behind and then he says to himself and others: 'I have seen shaykh Muḥy al-dīn's miraculous deeds, [therefore] I cannot say that any words [contrary to the Sharī'a] in the *Fuṣūṣ* amount to unbelief, what is legally required from him?

Answer: In the similar fashion, should he persist in not accepting the notion that any words contradictory with the Sharī‘a are unbelief, he should be considered *kāfir* himself.

The petitioner and the mufti clearly move in different directions. While Ibn ‘Arabī and his *Fuṣūṣ* remain in the focus of the questioner, the mufti resists the limiting context, judging that there is nothing specific about Ibn ‘Arabī and his works in that regard. Any words in any book that are contrary<sup>393</sup> to the Sharī‘a are equivalent with *kufr*.

Undoubtedly, the greatest contribution of Ebu Su‘ud was his securing of the royal decree, which not only endorsed his fatwas but also transfigured them into a binding authority. Süleyman’s letter is directed to the *qāḍī* of Manisa, where the alleged transgression of the saintly figure of Ibn ‘Arabī and other Sufī saints took place. The text reads as follows:

To the attention of the tutor of my glorious, auspicious son Mustafa, may he live long, and to the attention of the *qāḍī* of Manisa, [who is] the judge and leader of Muslims and all believers, the mine of virtue and knowledge. When this esteemed decree reaches you, may it be known that it had been heard at the high court where I rule the world that some individuals from among the official functionaries and other groups because of their failing reason and perfect ignorance censure and curse shaykh Muḥy al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī who is the center of the circle of *wilāya* and the axis of the right guidance and shaykh Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī, may Allah sanctify their hearts. [It has also been heard] that they do the same with some other shaykhs and figures from earlier rightful generations, by doing so causing sedition and discord among the ordinary people.

If what has been heard is true, when my binding order arrives, do not waste one moment and immediately proceed in bringing those individuals in, make sure to warn and rebuke them in the strongest possible terms, and command them not to transgress their allowed boundaries. Should they decide to ignore your warnings, make sure to chastise them strongly and publicly (*ta‘zīr ve ta’dīb*) as much as is needed in order for them to desist from their caprice. If they continue and insist [on doing that], dispatch to my sublime Porte a report with their origin and names, clearly written and described. My decree is issued in order to

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<sup>393</sup> It is interesting to note that the questioner and mufti consistently use different vocabulary as well; while the petitioner talks about words contrary to the Sharī‘a [ṣeri’ate muhalif kelimat], the mufti responses using the term ‘words contradictory with the Shari’a [ṣeri’ate mutenakiz kelimat].

conclude this matter. As the judge you should record my decree with all the details in your court records so that the succeeding judges could act according to this order. In that manner you should receive my decree and act on it; rest assured that the noble engrave is genuinely mine. Written in Constantinople in the last third of Rajab of 940 [1534].

The royal decree on the question of Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Qūnawī issued by Süleyman shows that the debate reached its peak during the tenure of Ebu Su’ud. While it addresses the question of censuring of Ibn ‘Arabī in a limited geographical area, it is clear that the social context is much broader and that this decree was in fact solicited by the shaykh al-islam Ebu Su’ud, whose collection is tellingly entitled *Ma‘rūdāt*, i.e. the points brought to the attention of the sultan in the form of petition (*ard*, or more often *arduhal*). Süleyman’s decree is a favorable response to the proclaimed duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil, a religious office often referred to in fatwas on Ibn ‘Arabī, by both pre-Ottoman and Ottoman muftis, including the first Ottoman fatwa issued by an Ottoman mufti and later ascribed to Ibn Kemal.<sup>394</sup>

This anxiety to assure that social order be maintained is evidently present in the decree which shuns every reference to doctrinal points involved in the debate. In spite of that, Süleyman made sure to position Ibn ‘Arabī and his school of thought, by a reference to al-Qūnawī as well, in the right place: they are both at the center and axis of *wilāya* and sanctity and as such beyond any criticism. While the long term purpose of the decree was to ensure the inviolability of Ibn ‘Arabī, his privileged position among the Ottoman learned continued to be challenged by some consequential members of the same class.

### *Concluding remarks*

In the course of XVI century, starting from Ibn Kemal and ending with Ebu Su’ud Efendi, every single shaykh al-islam issued a legal opinion, and frequently several of them, either directly on Ibn ‘Arabī and his works or concerning some Sufi doctrines generally associated with him. Only the first and the last of them Ibn Kemal and Ebu Su’ud, issued positive rulings on the orthodoxy of Ibn ‘Arabī and his teachings, the latter more moderately positive than the former. The remainder were negative: a fatwa that is traditionally ascribed to Ibn Kamāl and was in fact penned by Qādirī Efendi, who would subsequently become the mufti himself, appears to have prompted multiple reactions from equally high-ranking judicial figures. The first dissenting opinion was issued by his *muid*, Nābī b Turkhan, and subsequent ones were issued by the succeeding occupants of the office, Sa’dī Çelebi and Çivizade. It is striking that none of those fatwas, either positive or negative, betray a thorough familiarity with the works of Ibn ‘Arabī. Instead, only the *Fuṣūṣ* is invoked in the arguments of both sides. The

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<sup>394</sup> See above, p. 137.

accusations put forward against the school of Ibn ‘Arabī demonstrate very little difference from those formulated a few centuries earlier by the Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Taymiyya, whose works and ideas undoubtedly influenced the general stance of a number of ulama on Sufism, including the Akbari ideas of *wahdat al-wujūd*, Perfect Man, the sealhood of *wilāya* and others.

On the methodological plane, like the pre-Ottoman fatwas that were frequently mustered up in debates, the Ottoman fatwas show demonstrably few variations: the central argument pro and contra is almost exclusively built around the attempts of both sides to show that their respective positions were supported by consensus of the most prestigious ulama in Islamic history, from the time of the Greatest Master himself onward. When juxtaposed with each other, their arguments, which relied on the authority of the same influential scholars to achieve their points, had a mutually negating effect; and this inconclusiveness allowed the debate on Ibn ‘Arabī to continue indefinitely. In that regard, not even the legal genre of fatwa, through which inherently decisive and direct, if non-binding, legal opinions were delivered by the highest authorities of the Empire, could bring a resolution to the dispute. Quite the opposite: if anything, the prestige these fatwas and their issuers commanded in the community of believers further vouchsafed its prolongation.

In the period in question here, the sixteenth century, the debate legally ended with the fatwa of Ebu Su‘ud, which introduced a new perspective into the debate: the distortion of original texts (*tahrīf*). Although the mufti accepted the authority of Ibn ‘Arabī, at the same time he created a window of opportunity for Ibn ‘Arabī’s opponents by admitting the existence of problematic points in his corpus, even though they might be attributable to foreign influence.

There is no doubt that by merely stopping it for further development and elaboration, at least for a period of time the royal decree changed the debate immensely. However, the attitude towards Ibn ‘Arabī and his corpus remained intuitive and largely a matter of temperament: those who accepted him were ready to defend him at any cost and the opposite was true of his opponents. Even today, not much has changed. The inclusion of both sides into a single intellectual tradition, even without the desired synthesis, is very much in accordance with the Ottoman aspiration for achieving universality, a desire particularly pronounced in the sixteenth century.

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## Supplement A

Overview of the available manuscripts of *al-Shajara al-nu‘māniyya* and its commentaries

One significant aspect and real measure of influence of any work in the pre-printing world is undoubtedly the scope of its distribution represented by the number of existent manuscripts. In that regard, *al-Shajara* in conjunction with its commentaries boasts a remarkable currency in the Muslim world. Geographically, the distribution of *al-Shajara* corresponds to the regions that were for a shorter or longer period of time under the sovereignty of the Ottomans, primarily nowadays Turkey and important centers of Islamic learning like Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad. The survey of the manuscripts that came down to us, which follows is conducted entirely on secondary sources, articles, books and catalogues and is not result of a field research. The principal sources of information are the indispensable studies by Osman Yahya, Brockelmann, as well as articles by ‘Afif, ‘Awwaḍ, and most recently Denis Gril.

A: *The original Arabic text of al-Shajara al-nu‘māniyya fi al-dawla al-‘uthmāniyya*

a). Osman Yahya

1. Veliyuddin no 2292
2. Bayazid no. 4609
3. Istanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi (IÜK) no. 4884
4. Pere Sbath, Birmingham no. 663
5. Pere Sbath, no. 682
6. Pere Sbath no. 683
7. Alexandria no. 3682
8. Vatikan V, no. 1419
9. Petersburg AMK 1134
10. Beyrouth 278
11. Zahiriyya, Damascus
12. Zahiriyya Damascus

b). Additional copies identified:

13. Ali Emiri Efendi no. 2801, Istanbul Millet Kütüphanesi  
Title: *Al-Shajara al-nu‘māniyya*. No data available on the copyist, date or place of the composition.

Total for *al-Shajara*: 13

B: *Pseudo-Şafadī’s commentary*

a). Osman Yahia

1. Berlin no. 4216
2. Veliyuddin no. 2294
3. Carullah 2057
4. Alexandria 2112
5. Alexandria 5209
6. IUK no. 3652
7. IUK no. 1205
8. IUK no. 2513
9. Ali Emiri Efendi no. 2800
10. Ali Emiri Efendi no. 2804
11. National Library in Ankara, Ismail Sa'ib Collection, no. 566/1
12. Berlin no. 4218 711

b). Brokelmann

1. Paris no. 2678
2. Garret Collection 2103
3. 3 Alexandria (?)
4. Cairo, 155
5. Land b. Br. 468
6. Mosul, no. 214

c). Malih

Five manuscripts of the commentary preserved in Zāhiriya Library in Damascus, no additional information available.

d). Gril

1. Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya, microfilm no. 45675
2. Princeton collection, no. 4497
3. Princeton collection, no. 4535

e). Additional manuscripts identified:

1. Ali Emiri Efendi, no. 2279/1; copied by Ahmed b. Osman al-Futūhī in 1650.
2. National Library in Ankara, no. 60 HK 29/3 from Tokat
3. Kastamonu Manuscript Library, no. 37 HK 329/1
4. Çorum Manuscript Library, no. 19 HK 1253
5. Ankara National Library, no. 06 HK 1253; copied by Ahmed Khalid Çorumi Alizade in 1931.

6. Gazi Husrev-beg Library in Sarajevo, no. 287/1, ff. 1-12b; copied in (1)169/1755<sup>395</sup>

Total for pseudo-Şafadī: 34

C. *Pseudo – Qūnawī's commentary*

a). Osman Yahia

1. Berlin no. 4214
2. Berlin no. 4215
3. Esad Efendi no. 3738
4. Sehit Ali no. 1814
5. IUK no. 25/3
6. Ali Emiri no. 2799
7. Carullah no. 2057
8. Laleli no. 3663
9. Hamidiyye no. 657

b). Brokelmann

1. Garret Collection no. 2103
2. Alexandria, Ḥurūf wa awrāq no. 8
3. Cairo VII, no. 552
4. Bresl. Un. no. 191
5. Landb. Br. No. 467
6. Uppsala, II, no. 201
7. Mosul, no. 214

c). Malih

Seven manuscripts in Zāhiriyya Library in Damascus

d). Gril

1. Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya, microfilm no. 52874
2. Princeton no. 4497
3. Princeton no. 4535

e). Additional copies identified:

1. Millet Kütüphanesi, no. 06 Mil Yz A 2279/2; copied by Ahmed b. Osman al-Futūḥī in 1650.
2. Ankara National Library, no. 06 HK 29/1, DVD no. 1699, from Tokat

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<sup>395</sup> I examined this codex and apart from the two commentaries of the Shajara, that by pseudo-Şafadī and pseudo-Qūnawī, it contains also two other works worth attention. The first one is Kitāb al-jafr al-jami' wa al-nūr al-lami' by Ibn Arabī and the other is *al-Jafr al-kabir* by Abū al-Abbas Ahmed b. Abū Bakr Kamal al-dīn Salim Muhammad Ibn al-Hallal al-Himsi, who died sometime after 1334. The entire codex no. 287 in Gazi Husrev-begova library is ja'fri in nature, like the one I utilized from Ali Emiri Collection.

3. Köprülü Kütüphanesi, Hafız Ahmed Paşa collection, no. 34 Ha 132
4. Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka in Sarajevo, no. 287/2, ff. 13-35b; copied in (1)169/1755

Total for pseudo-Qūnawī: 30

*D. al-Maqarrī's commentary*

a). Yahya Osman

1. Veliyuddin no. 2292
2. Veliyuddin no. 2294

b). Brokelmann

1. Landb. Br. no. 469

Total for al-Maqarri: 3

*E. Shahrab's commentary*

a). Osman Yahia

1. Kutahya Manuscript Library no. 795/1
2. Alexandria, Huruf wa awraq no. 12

b). Gril

1. Dār al-kutub al- mişriyya, Hurūf wa awrāq no. 17-452269
2. Dār al-kutub al- mişriyya, Magami microfilm no. 62-52874

Total for Shahrab: 4

*F. Shahrafi's commentary of the Shajara*

a). Osman Yahya

1. Veliyuddin no. 2294
2. Landb.Br. no.465
3. Bayazid no. 4608
4. Berlin no. 4215-538
5. Berlin no. 4215-733
6. Berlin no. 4217 – 490
7. Halet Efendi no. 241
8. Alexandria no. 2809
9. Carullah Efendi no. 1494
10. Landb.Br. no. 466
11. Mosul no. 214,85,4

b). Gril

1. Princeton no. 4497

c). Toufic Fahd mentions another manuscript of Shahrafi's commentary in his work *La Divination Arabe*, pp. 226.

Total for Shahrafi: 13

#### G. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī's commentary

One work is ascribed to 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī which allegedly is a commentary upon *al-Shajara*. The work in question is entitled as *Al-Da'ira al-jafriyya 'ala al-Shajara al-nu'māniyya fi al-dawla al-'uthmāniyya*, and is kept in Ankara National Library, DVD no. 4.

#### H. *Al-Muwaqqit al-Miṣrī*

Another work entitled *Sharḥ al-shajara al-nu'māniyya li al-dawla al-'uthmāniyya* is attributed to al-Muwaqqit al-Miṣrī. The manuscript is in Çorum Hasan Paşa II Halk Kütüphanesi, no. 19 Hk 648/3. Although it can be concluded from the title of the work that it is a commentary of the *Shajara*, the work is listed in the thematic category of rhetoric, which casts some doubt about the actual topic of the manuscript.

#### I. Anonymous authors

1. Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, 2675
2. Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya, Ḥurūf wa awrāq microfilm no. 26-45717
3. Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya, Ḥurūf wa awrāq microfilm no. 145 – 45675
4. Ankara National Library no. 60 Hk 29/2; from Tokat, entitled: *Sharḥ al-Shajara al-nu'māniyya*
5. Nuruosmaniye Library, Hafiz Ahmed Paşa collection (Köprülü Kütüphanesi?), no. 34 Nk 2819/3, entitled: *Rumūz al-Shajara al-nu'māniyya*
6. Millet Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi Collection, no. 34 Fe 1310/1, entitled: *Sharḥ al-Shajara al-nu'māniyya li shaykh al-Akbar*
7. Ali Emiri Efendi, no. 34 Ae Arabi 2800/1, entitled: *Sharḥ al-Shajara al-nu'māniyya*, copied in Mecca in 1100 AH
8. Ali Emiri Efendi, no. 34 Ae Arabi 2804, entitled: *Sharḥ al-Shajara al-nu'māniyya*

Pseudo-Şafadī in his commentary refers to another author and his work, apparently a commentary of al-Shajara. His name is Abdullah al-Baghdadi and his commentary is entitled *Sharḥ rumūz al-Shajara al-nu'māniyya*, as quoted by the author. It seems that



no manuscript of this work came down to us. It is, however, possible that one of the manuscripts listed under anonymous authors could be in fact his work.

Not a single translation of the Shajara is identified. Both the original text and its commentaries by various authors remain principally in Arabic. The oldest available copy is that from Berlin from 1640.

Final Recapitulation:

1. The original: 12 manuscripts
2. Pseudo-Şafadī: 34 manuscripts
3. Pseudo-Qūnawī: 30 manuscripts
4. Al-Maqarri: 3 manuscripts
5. Sahrab: 4 manuscripts
6. Shahrafi: 13 manuscripts
7. Al-Biṣṭāmī: one manuscript
8. Al-Muwaqqit al-Miṣrī: one manuscript
9. Anonymous authors: 8 manuscripts

The text: 12 (5 of them in Turkey)

Commentaries: 94 (37 of them in Turkey)

Supplement B

A selection of the original fatwas<sup>396</sup>

SK: Esad Efendi 1318, fols. 205-213.



<sup>396</sup> All fatwas are from Suleymaniye Library in Istanbul.

لما قلنا ولانه قد يصدر عن العارف بالله تعالى اذا استغرق في نحو  
التوحيد والعرفان بحيث تفصل ذاته في ذاته وصفاته في صفا  
وتعيب عن كل ما سواه عبارات تشع بالحلول والاتحاد لم تصور  
للعبارة عن بيان حاله التي ترقى اليها فليس فيها شيء منها كما قاله  
العلامة سعد الدين الفتا زاني وغيره انتهى كلامه ومن جملة  
هو الشيخ ضياء الدين صاحب القاموس حيث قال في حق الشيخ <sup>عليه السلام</sup>  
بن عزي حين سأل عن حاله بقوله هو امام العارفين وقطب دار  
المحققين وقد طبقت كراماته الافاق وخرقت دعواته السبع  
الطبايق المصمرا نفعنا ببركاته محمد واله فالواصل ان كثر هذه  
الجماعة كثر وضلال وخرج عن دابة الاسلام والعياذ بالله  
سجانه وتعالى فيجب ان يعز هذا للكثير من بابنا بحيث يصير  
كل من يراه ويسمع بذلك ويمنع عن الخرف على الكويك من غرض الله  
بالكلية بحيث لا يرا له ولا يسع له خبر والحالة هذه والله اعلم وهو الحق  
الحق وبه العصمة وعليه التكلان والاحول ولا ترق الا بالله العلي العظيم  
انتهى **وابواب سيدنا ومولانا شيخ الاسلام الشيخ بن هان**

العمادي

العمادي السانفي المهدى للموتق للصواب اذ اثبت ذلك عنه عز  
الحاكم ايده الله تعالى ولين يرضى بذلك ويسع له ويكثر سواده  
فانهم ينظرون محصورهم واستماعهم الفت عا فاننا الله تعالى من  
فيجب عليهم التوبة فقد قيل لحوم العالاسوم من شهما مرض ومن ذاقها  
مات واما كنيته للولي الرباني الذي قد توارث ولايته وصلاحه  
وصحته حتى قال الشيخ عبد القادر الابار حجه الله تعالى انه انفته  
الكبر في الجامع العموي في الصلوات الخمس وكل من اخذت عن  
من علماء الاسلام في الممالك الاسلامية يعتقد ويبنى عليه فالمكفر كافر  
ومن استمع له ورضي بقوله او ستر عليه كافر فيجب عليهم تجديد اسلامهم  
والاقتلوا كفرا واغري على جيفهم الكلاب وكانت اموالهم الجيدة فياء  
ليت مال المسلمين ولا يتقبل منه ما ويل بعد طول النضل ولا ينفعه  
النفسك بقول قيل مالم تثبت وعلى تقدر الموت اذ احتمل التاويل  
وان كان ظاهره عند غير اهل التصوف الاتحاد وغيره فانه رحمه الله  
تعالى له في ذلك سلف من العلماء المتقدمين والمتأخرين كسيد  
عمر بن الفارض والامام حجة الاسلام الغزالي وغيرهما وجاني كتاب الله

تعالى والحديث القدسي واوّل النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ما يجب التاويل  
فيه او الايمان بظواهره وكلامه اه الى الله تعالى كما هو مذ السلف  
قال شيخنا القاضي زكريا رحمه الله تعالى في شرح الرض وانما هم <sup>من</sup>  
اخيار وكلامهم جاز على اصطلاحهم كساير الصوفية وهو حقيقة عند  
ويروا معتقد ظاهره عند كثر واحتاج الى تاويل اذ اللفظ المصطلح  
عليه حقيقة في معناه الاصطلاحي مجاز في غيره فالمعتمد منهم المعناه  
معتقد لحي صحيح وقد نص على ولا يتجماعه علماء عارفون بالله تعالى  
منهم الشيخ تاج الدين زعنا الله والشيخ عبد الله الهافني  
يتدخ فيه ولا في طائفة ظاهر كلامهم المذكور وعند غير الصوفية لما قلنا  
ولانه قد يصدر عن العارف بالله تعالى اذا استغرق في نحو  
والعرفان بحيث تفصل ذاته في ذاته لوصفات في صفاته وتعيب  
عن كل ما سواه عبارات تشع بالحلول والاتحاد لم تصور العبارة  
عن بيان حاله الذي ترقى اليه وليس في شيء منها كما قاله الشافعي  
التقاراني وغيره وبالجملة مجالس من ذكر اذ اثبت عنه ذلك  
مجالس معصية لا تسقط بالتوبة لانها حقوق عباد وغيره اهل التوا

من الكبار

من الكبار فضلا عن اهل العلم وقد يحس حال من حضر الجديده  
وسماع الاوتار على حاله وحال السامعين له لان اهل الجديده اتوا  
في صورة المعصية ومجملها ويعلمون انها معصية هم وعجزهم حتى الاولاد  
الصغار واليهود والنصارى وكل منهم من عجزهم يطلب لهم من الله تعالى  
التوفيق الى التوبة والمجئ في الجامع على هذه الصفة معصية في صورة  
الطاعة ومجملها وغالب الناس الا النليل يعتقد انهم في طاعة ويترك  
الواحد منهم صنعته ذلك اليوم ويحضر من محله بعيد ويظن انه في طاعة  
ويستمع القران والحديث ولا يعلم له من عجزه ولا مبدله من عجز  
مبدله ولا يصح من ضعيفه من موضوعه من وكلياته المترفة <sup>المكثف</sup>  
ولا يطلب من الله تعالى التوبة من العجبة واستماعا ودم اهل التوا  
والعلم والصلاح ولا يطيب له ذلك غير الاناد والفتا ذلك على العوم  
وكثير من الناس الامن فرح الله تعالى بصيرته بل يطلب الرياء من ذلك  
وقد علمت ما فيه من المعصية والفضلال نسال الله العاقبة بحسبهم  
من راحهم ومعهم والحال ان الفضة للماسدين حيث لرخص وافهم  
الابواب الجزيل والنا الحسن الجليل نسال الله تعالى ان يوقنا

لمرضاة بجاه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ولا تجعل في قلبنا غلا ويحب علي و  
الامور ابد الله تعالى بهم الاسلام مع مثل هؤلاء وعدم تمكن احد من  
احضار الناس باستماعهم الكفر والظلم حتى يمرضواك ذلك عليهم  
فمن كان احلاذ نواله ولا يمنع ولا من استند من عنده شيئا ادبوع  
تشييد القواعد الاسلام وتصبح لامة النبي عليه الصلاة والسلام النبي  
**واجاب** مولانا الشيخ شهاب الدين احمد الانطاكي خطيب الجامع  
الكبير اجد الله على نعمة الاسلام قال الشيخ الامام العالم العلامة  
السيوطي رحمه الله تعالى فرقة من العلم تستقد ولا يته وهي المصيبة من  
هذه الفرقة الشيخ تاج الدين بن عطاء الله من ائمة المالكية والشيخ  
عفيف الدين الياقوبي من ائمة الشافعية فانها بالغا في الشاغلية ووصفه  
بالمرقة ومن طعن فيه مستكرا بما في كتبه فانه يظن ان مراده وذلك ان  
الصوفية توطئوا على الفاظ اصطلاحية اعلمها واراها ومعاني غير المعاني  
المشرفة منها وقال الشيخ الامام الفاروق صفي الدين ابن ابي منصور  
في رسالته رابت دمشق الشيخ الامام الوحيد العالم العالم محي الدين  
بن عربي وكان من اكبر علم الطريق جمع بين ساير العلوم الكسبية

واما

وما قرله من العلوم الوهية وشهرته عظيمة ونصارين كثيرين وكان  
غلب عليه التوحيد علما وخلقا ولا يكثر بالوجود معتدلا كان  
او معرضا وله اتباع على ارياب تواجد وتصانيف وكان بيته زين  
سيدي ابي المباس الحوا ورفقه في السياحات رضي الله عنه  
الي هنا لنظفه وله حكايات عجيبة واحوال غريبة فمن اطعم عليها المتجا  
عليه بما لا يليق به فمن الكفر واكثر هولا العلم والا وليا وجميع المعتقد  
فيه المحيين له واحرجهم عن داية الاسلام وابعدهم من الله ورسوله  
فقد اهلك نفسه وكفر ودخل تحت قوله تعالى من عادي لي وليا  
فقد اذنته بالحرب وادي ماصد منه الى ابطال الاحكام الشرعية  
والعياذ بالله من ذلك ارب هذا العاقل من هولا العلم والا وليا فان  
يرجع الى الاحكام يجب عليه ان يتصغر في امره ويعامل بها شيت عند  
القاضي للمصواب والحفاظ عن الظلم والاضطراب وبه المستعان  
وعليه التكلان انتهى **واجاب** مولانا الشيخ عبد الهادي العتيبي  
الشافعي الحمد لله يهدي الحق انا لله وانا اليه راجعون لقد نحس  
واشنع واشنع هذا الواعظ وايق بما يتقني الكفر من وجوه شتى

الاستخفاف بالعلم اناك تعالى قل ابا لله وداياته ورسوله كنتم تستهزؤن  
وبالصلى والا وليا قال عليه السلام من ادي لي وليا فقد اذنته بالحرب  
وتوله الامور وقضاة الاسلام قال عليه السلام من اهان سلطانا اهان الله  
وتكفير الشيخ محي الدين بن عربي حيث شهد بولاية جماعة من العلماء الصلي  
والاوليا منهم شيخنا القاضي زكريا باذن من اوليا جامع الزهر والابن محمد  
حيث رعت اليروصية لانه الناس فاشا رها الي الشيخ محي الدين ومنهم السيوطي  
وشيخنا الشيخ حسن بن السيوطي وزاره ويترك به والياقوبي وجماعة من السلفين  
العلماء ونحو الاوليا واکابر الفضلاء وذكر والله مناقب اكثر من ان تحصى  
واسهر من ان تذكر فحينئذ تكفيره كفى وسبه فسق وبفضه بعد والاعمال  
به رده نران احد علي رده فاحكام الرده مشهوره مذکور من ضرب  
عنته وانظر الكلاب على خيفته وغير ذلك وان باءه ورتاب فلولي الامر وفقه  
تعالى النظر في امره ويرب عليه ما يراه من شهره وضرب وطرح وبعد و  
وعينه لك حسب ما يراه سدد الله احكامه وانا راياه وضرب باحزاب اعماله  
وانه يعلم المنسدين المصلح ونفوذ بالله من شره وانفسا وسنات  
اعمالنا حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل ولا حول ولا قوة الا بالله العالم العظيم

واما

**واجاب** سيدنا ومولانا الشيخ حسين بن الضبي الشافعي الحمد لله  
قامع المتبدعين وضاد الكفرة المتمردين ورائع الوبة المجد الاسني للعلم العا  
وانصت ادلة القبول لاهل السلوك من العارفين وخافض مقام المنكر الجار  
للسادة المقربين والصلاة والسلام على اشرف المرسلين وعلى اهل بيته  
وبعد فتايل هذا الكلام لا شك واسمه ولا مريم في كره ومعتقد به  
قد با بعض من الله ورسوله لما تخلم من عظيم وزره والناج في جهل الاغنيا  
والسادة الكبرار قد عرض نفسه للهلاك باطلاق نفسه وصار هديا  
لسهام التضامع جفوه واعوانه وتسبب في فخره ووبده وحرمانه وك  
خليفة للشيخ طاهر الرحيم بهيداع الرضا للمستقيم محققا عند الله  
وعند الناس متصفا بالانوار والافلاس مستقدا عند الخاص العام  
مستبجعا عند ذوي الافرمان سيما وقد ترفى الي قلب اعراض الاوليا  
الساداتين وتكفير السادة الاطهار والتاسكين الذين هم عراس الحضرة الربانية  
ومظهر التجليات الرحمانية ومنع التفرجات الصمدانية ومنع التفرقات  
الاحسانية ومع الحقائق الالهائية هذا ومن اجل هذه السادة والاحسان  
التاذه الشيخ الامام العالم الرباني والبحر المواجه الفيض الصمداني  
شيخ الطريقة وامام الحقيقة علما وعملا وزهدا وطمحا من ينزل

الاكل عبي الشيخ محي الدين بن عربي رضي الله عنه وارضاه قال كراماته  
اجل من ان يحصى ولايته اوفر من ان تستقصى كيف وقد اشبه عليه غير واحد  
من العلماء وشهد بولايته الاكابر من العظام كالشيخ تاج الدين بن عطاء  
والشيخ عفيف الدين الباقبي والتاجي زكريا الانصاري وجميع  
من اخذ ناعته العلم في الممالك الاسلاميه من مسايحتنا كالشيخ  
اسماعيل الشرايبي العجزي بل ملة المشرفه والشيخ شهاب الدين احمد بن  
عبد الغفار المصري تلميذ الحرمين الشريفين والشيخ الاجل ابى بكر العمري  
العجزي ولو نسع في عصرنا الامن ليعتقد ولايته ويثبت فضله وديانته وصبا  
حتى ان الامام الاعظم والحافظان الاكبر السلطان سليمان والملك  
السلطان سليم يفتقدونه واعتقاد اجازتها ويمسكون به تمسكا لا يرا  
ويعظون جنابا للرفع ويعرفون مقامه البديع وقد عمر عليه السلطان  
سليم عمر عظيمه سارت بها الركاك في تكبيره شريفه تكلمت بانواع المراتب  
والاحسان فمن تجاسر عليه وعلى معتقديه بما ذكره فقد تجاسر على السلطان  
الاعظم والعباده بالله تعالى واستحق ما يتب على الكرم واهل ارجه  
من الحد وفي الدنيا عقاب الله ولا يتفوق مثل هذا الكلام الا  
من ذهل عقله وبناع الحكمة سمه وسقط في مهادي الخذلان ووقع

في

في جناب الشيطان وكيف تجاسر الشخص على تكفير بعض العوام فضلا عن السادة  
الكرام وقد ثبت في صحيح الاخبار ما نقلته رواة الاحاديث والاشارة  
وتضمنته بطون للدقاتر ونقلته الاصاغر عن الاكابر ما رواه الامام  
الاجمده والمجاهد الا وحد ابو الحسين مسلم بن الحجاج القشيري رضي الله عنه  
ان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال اذا كفر الرجل اخاه فقد باهنا احدكما  
وفي الرواية الاخرى ايما رجل قال لا حيه ياكافر فقد باهنا احدكما كان  
كما قال والارحمت عليه وفي الرواية الاخرى ليس من رجل ادعى الى غيره  
وهو يعلم الاكفر ومن ادعى ما ليس له فليس منا وليتوا مقعد من النار  
ومن دعى جلا بالكفر او قال عدوا لله وليس كذلك الاجار عليه وعبي  
عليه اي رجع عليه الكفر وقد نقل الشيخ محي الدين النواوي رضي الله عنه  
في متن الروضة في كتاب المردة نياضه ولوقال المسلم ياكافر بلا تاويل كمن  
لان سبب الاسلام كمن اذ قال في الانوار مثله وكلم النواوي يوافق لما قاله  
الرافعي في العروة النصوص متوافقة على ذلك هذا اذا كان التكفير لاحاد  
الناس فكيف اذا كان للحراس الكياس وكيف اذا كثر اوليا الله وتكفير  
واخذ في التدين منهم والتكفير فله الوبيل في الدنيا والاخرى في الاخرى

جله على ذلك وما الذي اوقفه في هذه الممالك وما اظنه ارتكبه الا للشيخ  
سلطنته واظهار كلفه والتوصل الى حبيبه السادة الصوفية هذا الزمان  
وجعل تكفير الشيخ محي الدين ومعتقديه وسيله للتدح في السادة الاعليين  
فاذله الله واغواه واتخذ انفاسه وارزاه واخفى ذكوه وحط قدح محقق  
واخرج صدره وقصم ظهره وما حصل له وما عي ان يحصل من الخزي والذل  
ببركة الشيخ محي الدين بن عربي ومعتقديه الذين هم من الاكابر العظام وال  
الصلحا العظام نعمنا الله بهم وبعلمهم الزاهر وفضل العمل بالارهم  
الطاهر والبسنا جميل الخلال من انوارهم الباهر وجعلنا في زميرهم  
تحت لو اسيد المرسلين في الاخرى هذا والراجح على قضاة الاسلام وولاة  
الاحكام ايدهم الله تعالى على الدوام معاملة هذا المذكور بما يستحقه  
شرعا وما يتب عليه من عقوبته وويله الحادي الي الصواب والبلالرج واليا  
انتهى **والجواب** الشيخ عبد الرحمن المتاجر السافعي الحمد لله الحميمي  
شوايع الاسلام اعلم يا اخي وقني الله واياك الى مرضاته والوقوف  
على سوا سوارك وباتته ان مما خضع له الرقاب وسار فضله الكرام  
وشاع وزاع في سائر الانصار والبلدان من علماء العرب والجم والافتق

والكلم بيد ليل قوله من اذ لي وليا فقد اذنته بالطوب وكيف تجري على  
اعراض اوليا الله من اشم راحة التقوي ومن لا يتمسك له بالسبب الاقوي  
وما الحسن قول بعضهم شعر اذا كنت من كوما فليس بلانق مقالك ان  
المسك ليس لناعج وقول الاخر واذا كنت بالمدار كغرا ثم ائتمرت جادا قالا  
واذ التري لاله لا سلم لاناس وان بالانصار وتري الواحد من  
الوعاظ المتشدقين المتشتمين بما ليس لهم ساقط في التجاسات  
وهو مشغل بعب الناس وقد استولى عليه المت والوسوس بحسبة الضمان  
وقد زين له سوءه وعجز عن عبه وزله كلابس بوي زور متفهم  
من الكبر والفز وجاهل بمادي العلوم فضلا عن مناصدها منطرح  
عن مواردها ومصادرها ينقل الاحاديث الموضوعه ويفترى الحكايات  
المصنوعة ويدعي التفسير بحمله ويصحفها فيجعلها تجري على الخرف  
في كتاب الله والاحاديث النبوية بغيره له فيدخل في عموم قوله عليه  
الصلوة والسلام من كذب علي متعمدا فليتبوا مقعدهم من النار وليس  
الحاله فالواقع هذا البليد وما استنع هذا الطريد وما كناه ما اركبه  
من الامام حتى خاض في اعراض السادة الكرام وليت شعري ما الذي

هله

عليه رحمه وعلمه ولايته من المتسكين من المذاهب الاربعة بل الستة من  
اهل الاجتهاد والاحوال والاوقال الحق لو اتقد واحد منهم كان قوله بمفرده  
كيف وقد اعتقد به رجالهم مصابيح الهدى وقولهم لمن اهتدى بان الامام  
الهمام صاحب الزمان وقام الليل ذو النور العالي والشرف العالي  
والجمال العالي فطبعه وزمانه المفضل على قرانه والمرني لآخره  
اعني مولانا شيخ الاسلام علي التقي العلامة محيي الدين ابو عبدالله محمد بن  
بن العربي الطي الحاشي حملنا الله قبالي والمسلمين في ركابته حتى محمد  
صلي الله عليه وسلم واياته هذا فقد كبح بجم العقل والنقل من ذمه  
او نسبته الى نقص او شايبه نقص وقد اجم بجم من نادم جعله من الخار  
بل هو من الاخير لا ابرار صاحب الاسرار ولوامع الانوار وقد اخبرني محي  
واستادي العلامة الشيخ احمد بن كلين خنير بن علي المقدس برده الله ثراه  
وجعل اخنه منواه ان قطب الزمان الشيخ محي الدين استبحر بمدينة  
ونوي لما قاله السلطان هل في هذا الزمان من يكون قدومه  
كندم الخليل ابراهيم عليه الصلاة والسلام ومتصف بصفته حيث  
له النار برده او سلمنا قاله الشيخ نعم فقال السلطان ان كان ثمة

حار

فانت منهم فارني اية ذلك فقال له اجمع الخطب بالخير او قد هانارا  
حتى اريك مجمان اسوار الله تعالى فاوقدنا وعظيم وخرج اهل ملكته  
جميعا وجلسوا بعيدا من النار خوفا من الاحقاد واتفق ان السلطان جا  
بولد له حسن الوجه واجلسه معه ثم جا الشيخ وتواجد وهو لا يقيضا  
شر يا غطفت ولدا السلطان والقي بنفسه مع الولد في النار فما استطاع  
احد ينقذ منه فتاب في النار ساعة ثم خرج منها والولد معه قابضا  
علي ورد في غير وقته واوانه ولوريض الولد شيئا من النار فضلا ان يرض  
الشيخ وصار النار برده او سلمنا ما وجدت لهم بها كانا بالركن شيئا ومصدرا  
ذلك ان جمعهم تقول للمومن خزبا مومن في نورك الطيفي وهذه الحكاية  
عن الشيخ بهذه الكرامة اخبرني بها العلامة شيخ الاسلام احمد بن كلف  
عن مساجد بديار الجبل التي اوترت على السنة قوم يمكن توالم على الكذب  
لعول شانهم وعظيم برهانهم ومن اخبرني شيخنا العلامة الحسن بن السبيعي  
انه من مند اربعين سنة ما فات الشيخ تكبير الاحرام في صلاة الصبح  
الامام وقد اخبرني ايضا انه تزوج اربع نسوة من نساء ملوك الجان  
من حوي درجة القطبية حكم على طواب الجان وكان الشيخ كذلك

احمد بن كلف تزبل بيت المقدس وشيخنا العلامة شمس الدين الجوزي  
والكمال السويدي وشيخ شيخنا شيخ الدار المصرية القاضي زكريا العار  
بالله احمد بن عظام الله الاسكندراني والامام الفاضل الباقر شيخنا  
العلامة القطب الزباني جو الفوائد سيدي الشيخ علوان بن عطية الحموي  
وشيخنا العلامة الشريف نادر الزمان وترجمان القرآن السيد  
بن ميمون المغربي وشيخ شيخنا بديار الفريزية الامام الهمام صاحب الاحوال  
والاقوال القطب مطلقا سيدي عبد الزهراء الهندي وسيدي احمد  
السبائي والتبائي وسيدي عرفه وراس الزاهدين بن سيدي محمد  
بن عواق وغيرهم من اهل العلم والاجتهاد بل كان من محقق ولايته  
فوجب الموشح الاضطر محي الدين بن عربي ومن هو من اهل وداره  
والتابيلين مذهبهم في حقه والمتسكين بطريقته فاذا اتقد هذا  
فيلزم من قول هذا الجاهل عديم العقل كفره هو لا يمة الدين وصاحب  
الهدى وسوس الاسلام والتقابل كفره هو لا يمة الكافر المتفق المبعوث  
الملعون فيجب الاستتابة فان تاب ورجع وندم فان الله يقبل توبته وا  
اصرف قد خرق الدين انا لله والوالد ارجعون فيحكي على اكم الرده والله اعلم انبي

وهذه الافعال تدل على كمال علمه ولايته وفضله وقد صنف كتابه مشهور  
في سائر الامم وعوامض النون من كتب اهل التحقيق والتدقيق  
خصوصا كتابه السمي بعنقا مغرب وسماه بالوعاء المحموم على السر المكتوم  
الذي لا يبلغ على جانيته ودقائمه واسرار الامن كشف الله عن قلبه  
جباب الغفلة وقره الى حضيا قدسه والنسب حله اليها والكمال خنيا  
انسه هذا والمحجوب عن هذه العاني محروم في الدنيا والاخرة عن  
كالات الاوصاف ولا يبلغ منازل الاشواق فصوره كالانعام بل هم اضل  
سبيلا فيجب على من حكمه منصف علي بن عربي ان يتوب الى الله تعالى فان  
اصبر عز وسقطت شهادته وعدا الله له لقبيل روايته وان اطال اللسا  
وارجى عنان الجدل في سببه وسبب العلم المتمسكين بطريقته وسببهم  
الي كفن وضلال فقد كره ذلك والقابلون به من اهل العلم والمتمسكون بطريقته  
جم غفيرا لا يحصي عددهم من العلماء في زمانه وزمن غيره الى يومنا  
هذا في جملة التابيلين بفضل شيخنا العلامة شيخ الاسلام محمد بن اود  
البارزلي الحموي وشيخنا العلامة الحافظ الحسن بن علي بن جمال الدين  
بن المختار الشهير بابن السبيعي الحلبي وشيخنا الامام شيخ الاسلام

احمد

صورة فتوت افتاه انفس الفضلاء ومخبر العلماء ابو القاسم  
 عبد الدين حسن البضاوت صاحب التقدير ومفن الطواع  
 في شان الشيخ الاكبر محمد الدين العربي الطائي رحمه الله  
 سئل رحمه الله تعالى ما تقول سادة العلماء شيد الله بهم  
 از الدين ولم الله بهم شفت قسدين في محراب الدين العربي  
 وفي القنب النسوية اليه كالمعتاد المكية وقصص الحكم ال تحمل  
 قوائنها واقربها وبل من القنب المسرعة والمقربة ام لا  
 اقونا نجا باش فيا لخر زواجرع الثواب من اللرم الرهاب  
 فاعاب بما صورته هذا اللهم انطقنا بما فيه رضاك الذي  
 اعتقده في حال السؤل عنه وادين الله تعالى به انه كان شيخ  
 الطريقة طالا وعلى امام التحقيق حقيقته رسما ومجر رسوم المعارف  
 فعلا رسما اذا تاملت فكر المراد في طرف من مجده خفت فيه بنوا لوه  
 عابا لا يتدبره الاله وسكب بشاعر عنه لا نوا كانت دعوه  
 تحرق السبع الطباق وتفرق بر لانه فعلا الافاق وانما اصفه  
 وهو يقينا فوق ما اصفه وناطق بما كتبه وما يظن ما اصفه

وما على اذا ما قلت معتقد مع الجول لظن الجول عدوانا  
 والله والله واللاه العظيم ومن اقامه حجة لله برهانا  
 ان الذي قلت بعضا من مناقبه ما زدت الا على زدت نقصا

وانا

واما كتبه ومصنفاته فالحجار الزواجر والشيخ كوا بهر با كثرتها لا  
 يعرف لها اول ولا آخر وما وضع الا مصنوع منها وانما خص  
 الله معرفة قدرها اهلها ومن نوا من كتبه انه من والطبع على  
 والنظر فيها الشيخ صدره على حق المشكلات وكف المضلات  
 وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى اله وصحبه وسلم

صورة فتوت افتاه الشيخ الاعلم الامير محمد الملة والدين  
 الغيور زابا رسه مالف قاموس رحمه الله عليه وقد سسر  
 صورة السؤل الحمد لله ما قولكم مضرة فتالي عنكم  
 في الشيخ محمد الدين العربي وكتبه النسوية اليه كالفتوحا  
 لكلية والتدبيرات الالوية والقصص وما جاهد ولم موت  
 المغلقات بل تجوز قرائتها واقربها وهوم النظر فيها والعمل  
 بمقتضاها ام لا اقونا ما جويرين ويتوا باش فيا  
 انما بكم الله الجنة الجواب الحمد لله وسلام على عباده  
 الذين اصطفى الذي اعتقده وادين الله تعالى به ان الشيخ  
 محي الدين ابن العربي امام اهل الشريعة علما رسما وسر به اهل  
 الطريقة عملا وعلى شيخ شيخ اهل الطريقة ذوقا و  
 قويا واما كتبه النسوية اليه المودرة انفا فيجوز قرائتها و  
 واقربتها والعمل بمقتضاها من اهلها لا يهر با بشرها وانا

مكتبة  
 دارنا

هوام النظر فيها مع سلامة الاعتقاد فارجوا ان يكون ذلك  
 مما يورث فكف المضلات وحل المشكلات وكيف لا  
 يكون كذلك وهو الذي فسره القرآن العظيم في نيف  
 وسبعين مجلدا حتى يتبع قوله جل وعلا وعلمنا من لنا على  
 ثم استأثر الله سبحانه وتعالى لبعض روجه عندهم  
 الكلمة الشريفة هذا اعظم برهان واتم وليس وانوت حجة  
 لا يكره الامانة او جاجيد شمس  
 وما على اذا ما قلت معتقد مع الجول لظن العدل عدوانا  
 والله والله واللاه العظيم ومن اقامه حجة لله برهانا  
 ان الذي قلت بعضا من مناقبه ما زدت الا على زدت نقصا  
 قال ذلك وكتبه محمد الدين الغيور زابا رسه تجاور الله عنه  
 وعقله واللاه وملت يخه والسلمين  
 ومحمد لله وحده

اعلم انه صاحب الدر المختار عبد الرحمة نسب القندر المحر اولاً  
 بهرنا الا الشيخ محمد الدين صاحب قاموس وهو ليس بصحيح  
 فانه لقا من الرضاوي يقينا وقندر المحر الدين هو المرقم بعده بهرنا  
 والمطوية انه مقتبس من قندر الرضاوي ويدفع قولا في  
 حق كتب الشيخ قول صاحب الدر المختار لمن قال عن قصص الحكم

انه

انه عارض عن الشريعة وقد صنفه للاضلال ومن لم له لمحا ما  
 يترجم العلم في كلمات تباين الشريعة وتكلف بعض المتصنفين  
 لا راعوا الا الشيخ كفت يتقنا ان بعض اليهود اقتراوا على  
 قدس سره فيجب الاحسان بترك مطالعة تلك الكلمات اتمتر  
 ولا يخفى لذو العظامة ماني قوله وتكلف بعض المتصنفين من  
 عدم الاجماع على لغوب العاية لشرايح ذلك الكتاب وكيفية  
 تصحح المعبرة عندهم ولا سيما الشيخ الكبيد صده الملة والدين  
 قدس سره وهو قرا ذلك الكتاب على الشيخ الثاني وبعض  
 است جهين قروا عليه وطفر واحد النسخ بجمل الشيخ وقوله  
 كفت يتقنا ان بعض اليهود اقتراوا من اعجاب بالسمع من قول  
 مشد وقال ابن العايدن لعل يتيقنه بذلك بدل ليثبت عنده  
 او بسبب عدم الطلاوع على مراد الشيخ والاعتراف الثاني  
 بهرنا وعدم الوقوف على احوال كتب الشيخ رضاه عنه  
 خصوصها احوال ذلك الكتاب وشراعه وعدم المعرفة اصول  
 العلم للبحث عنه قويا وقواعده المتخصصة له واصطلاح الفتوا  
 والحق طاهر عند اهل

صورة فتوت  
 الحمد لله جعل من عباده الخالصين ورثة الانبياء والمرسلين

قال الشيخ الاسلام ابو بكر زكريا الانصاري في باب الردة في شرح كتاب الروض في الفقه والفتوى ونحن ان طائفه ابن العربي مستعملون لغيره وكلامهم جار على اصطلاحهم كسائر الصوفية وهو متفق على عنتهم في مزاعم وقد نص على ولاية ابن العربي جماعة علماء عارفين بالله منهم الشيخ تاج الدين بن عطاء الله و الشيخ عبد الياقوبي وقد صدر عن العارف بالله اذا استغرق في بحر التوحيد والعرفان يمشي ليعني ذاته في ذاته وصفاته في صفاته ويغيب عن كل ما سواه عبادات تشعبها بلكول والاتحاد لقصور العبادات عنه بان حاله الترتيقي اليها وليس شيء منها قائم قال والله والله والله ما كتب الشيخ الامام علم واعلم الا ما شهد من صدور المخلوقات على ما في عليه واضطربت العقول فيه لاضطراب افكارها وبأجده فالتسليم اول خصوصها الشيخ وسره العزيز وسئل الامام العالم مفتي العرب ما تقول في ابن العربي قال هو اعلم في كل فن من اهل كل فن قالوا ما سئلتك عنه علمه قال التسليم

فله رده

اعلم ان العلماء عليهم الرحمه قالوا كما كانت المشبهات في الكتاب والسنة كانت في كلمات الكمل من الصحابة وغيرهم والواجب في مشبهات الكتاب والسنة التوقف مطلقا واما في مشبهات الكمل من الامة التوقف الى ان تجرد عالمها لا يعذر بالتوقف فيها بتأخير الطلب

ان

لان العالم بها موجود الى زمان وجوده في الولاية قال الضعيف ابو عبد الله محمد بن محمد بن الحسن الكوفي في شرح العائنه للامام الطحاوي والزمرد بعد بيان كمال مشبهات الكتاب والسنة واما المشبهات في كلام الكمل من الصحابة وغيرهم فان كملها ليس باعتقاد حقيقة للزاد بها لانهم لم يكونوا معصومين عن كمالها ولا معصومين عن القرار على الكمال مع انهم ورثة الانبياء فوجب ان لا يكمل كلامهم على ظاهره فنسار عليهم او يقبل فيضيق بين كيفية الشريعة فروع الهالك كما قال الشيخ جمال الاسلام احمد بن محمد محمد الزكي في كتابه المسمى بالتجويد فان كيفية على وزن الشريعة والتقديف بين الشريعة وكيفية كفر وزندقه ولا على حقيقة مرادهم فيحط فيما لا زال الواجب على كل احد ان يعتقد ويقول ان ما هو الصواب عند الله في هذه المسئلة حتى كما قال الامام الاعظم في الفقه الاكبر واذا اشكل على الانسان شيء من دقائق علم التوحيد فانه ينبغي له ان يعتقد في كمال ما هو الصواب عند الله تعالى الى ان يجد علما له ولا يسعه تأخير الطلب ولا يعذر بالتوقف فيه وما قران وقف

قال بعض اهل الحق اعلم ان ما وضع في كتب الشيخ وامثاله من السادات الصوفية والحققين قد سهرت عليه اسرهم ونفعنا بقصدهم الا وهو مؤيد بالكتاب والسنة اذا لاح لنا نظر فيها شيء من الكمال



صورة فتوى كمال باشا زاده ورجحان شيخ الدين  
العزفي قدس سره

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم المجلدين جعل عباده من العلماء المخلصين ورثة الانبياء والمرسلين  
والصلوة على محمد المبعوث باصلاح الصّالين والمصلين واحبابه المجزين باجراء الشرع البين  
وبعد ايها الناس اعلموا ان الشيخ الاعظم والمتدي للكم قطب العارفين وامام المؤمنين  
شيخ الشيوخ محمد بن العزفي الطائي القمي لانه شيخ مجتهد كامل ورشد فاضل لمناقب محبته وخارق  
عادة وتلامذة كثيرة مقبوله عند الفضلاء والعلماء ومن انكر فقد اخطأ وان اصر في انكاره فقد ضل  
يجب على السلطان تاديبه وعن هذا الاعتقاد تحبذ اذ السلطان تامر بالامر المعروف والنهي عن المنكر  
وله مصنفات كثيرة منها فصول الحكم وقنوات ملكية وبعض مسائلها معلوم والغير وموافق للشرع  
النسوي وبعضها خفي عن ادراك اهل الظاهر وادراك الكسوف والباطن فمن لم يطلع على المعنى اللام يجب  
عليه لتكوير في هذا المقام لعموم تعاقب ولا تقف السرك به علم ان السمع والبصر والعقول اولئك كان  
عنه سؤالا والله الهادي الى صواب السبل والرجوع والاب

الحجرت في هذه المحكمة اللطيفة  
مقر في وقت الشريعة الشريفة  
صاحب القدير اجتهاد ليمان  
بن كمال عن نعمتهم الملك الشجاع

قال في النقيبات الاربعة اقول كان الظاهر استاذا من الاربعة لان الموصوف يوتن اذ ان التحقيق  
على ما ذكر في شرح الكتاب من ان اعتبار حقوق الناس هذه الامداد وعدم حقوقها ان يكون بالنظر الواحد  
المعروف لا باللفظ المعهود فان كان المعهود جمعا واحدا مؤثرا غير العلم جزفا انا منه كقولك اذ لا يكون  
وان كان مذكرا اذ ثبتت التاء سواء كان في لفظ الجمع علامة التانيث كما ربيعة جامات في جمع جام اولم يكن  
هذا ويظهر تيقن ان الشارح لم يصب في استقامت التاء عن الاربعة في قوله بيان النقيبات الاربعة كما ذكرتم  
ان الصراخ في انبائها ولم يرد ان الخفي نفسه لابن الكمال وسرته

قال في المشاحة في الاصطلاح اقول اخطأ المصنف في مخرج هذا الكلام فان القوم لم يريدوا بالارخصة العامة  
حتى يجوز لكل احد ان يتعمل مصطلحات القوم على غايرة الاصطلاحية المشهورة فيما بينهم ويقول اني  
اصطليحت على هذا ولا مشاحة فيه كيف فان تلك الرخصة تؤدى الى اختلال على بما لا يخفى وان ذلك قال  
بعض المحققين ان مخالفة الاصطلاح بلا ضرورة في قوة الخطأ عند المحصلين قال الناضل الشريف في بحث  
المتباين في حاشية الخريدة ان مخالفة المشهور من غير ضرورة مستحقة جزا عند المحصلين بل ارادوا  
الرخصة في الجملة يعني يجوز للاختلاف اجازات ومصطلحات غير مصطلحات القوم ولا تجز فيه  
لاية كمال باشا زاده

ينبغي نقل مضارع من باب الانفعال وثلاثية بني يبغي بمعنى طلب فعني ينبغي المصلا ان يفعل ان يطلع على  
ذلك الفعل ويؤثر جوبه واما حاشية ملايكاد يستعمل وقد استعمل الامام الشافعي حقه فمجرد عليه ان العرب  
لم يستعمل ذلك قال يستعمل ما يورد ويزر واجاب الحظاي وغيره بان يستعمل ما ضا ومضارعا ان يبغي ينبغي  
حكاية تغلب عن سلة عن القراء عن الكسائي عن العرب وعن تغلب عن الاحمر قال قراء على الكسائي في التلاد  
النبوي كذا ذكر النووي في شرح ديوان المتنبي اقول ان كان الرواية بمنزلة بالانصاحه لكونه غيا وشبها  
لا يندفع باذكر فتدبر لابن الكمال رحمه الله





