

# The Problem of Periodization in Sufi Studies: The Struggle of Sufism to Become a Discipline Between the Religious Sciences and Metaphysics

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**Abstract:** The periodization of sciences is one of the essential devices of treating a field by specification and tracing the transformations in that field. Nonetheless, it would be hard to speak of robust periodization concerning religious sciences of Islam. What Ibn Khaldūn said retained its validity quite long for the mainstays of *kalām* (Islamic theology), and partially for Sufism. The basic reason was the methodological problems rather than the inadequacy of the studies in religious sciences. Yet there is no method that would also make the periodization of the religious sciences of Islam plausible, ergo the history of religious sciences has not been written scientifically. On the other hand, the history of science cannot be written solely from within; one may consider writing comparative –at least taking note of it– history of science that would take into account many internal and external factors. Sufi studies are fraught with serious challenges in the absence of that classification. We have no clear-cut opinion about which Sufi and which work should be handled in which framework. The periodization is one of the crucial tasks to be undertaken in order to obtain valid and scientific results in Sufi studies. Periodization would give us a point of view about the period independent from a Sufi and his text, and enable us to read the text from this perspective.

**Keywords:** the period of *zuhd*, the period of Sufism, philosophical Sufism, Sunnī Sufism, metaphysical Sufism.

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*The faith of the Sufis is the faith of the Ahl al-Sunnah.  
Al-Kalābādhi (4<sup>th</sup> century AH)*

*Muḥaqqiq Sufis have never agreed with the Ahl al-Kalām  
(the people of Islamic theology) in any respect.  
ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī (7<sup>th</sup> century AH)*

## Introduction: Determining the Problem

Sufism is called *‘ilm al-ḥāl* (the knowledge of states), a definition that precludes any agreement upon its reasons and content. In fact, this definition has only complicated Sufism’s struggle to be considered as a religious science. While constructing the understanding of Sufism on the grounds of the conception of a science, the subject matter, issues and method of which have been determined, Dāwūd al-Qaysarī (d. 751/1350), who is a Sufi from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, makes a crucial assessment - by following the path of al-Qūnawī-: “If we do not treat Sufism this way, it will be considered as poetic imaginations and subjective interpretations by everyone.”<sup>1</sup> According to al-Qaysarī, to avoid such a perception was only possible by constructing Sufism as a science. Even if he was talking about a probability, he was nevertheless correct in this regard, for when we look at the works of classification of sciences, Sufism has never been considered a discipline nor had any interest in becoming one. In this respect, mostly Sufis themselves approached the works on Sufism with a great deal of suspicion and it was always ambiguous to whom these works addressed.

The following question remains valid: How can such works by Sufis contribute to a person’s self-purification through the Sufi path? In his book on sects, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) criticizes his predecessors for not mentioning the Sufis in their works.<sup>2</sup> According to him, Sufis should have been mentioned as one of the sects. On the other hand, with the intention of exalting Sufism, Sufis claim in their own works that Sufism cannot be limited to being a discipline.<sup>3</sup> That is to say, Sufism encountered both an external resistance and internal indifference to be considered as a science.

1 Dāwūd al-Qaysarī, “Risālah fi ‘ilm al-tasawwuf,” in *al-Rasāil*, ed. Mehmet Bayraktar (Kayseri: Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1997), 111.

2 Al-Rāzī says that: “It should be known that those who wrote about the sects of Islamic community have not mentioned Sufis. This is an error because the aim of the word and the path of Sufis is *ma’rifatu’llāh*. And it means isolation and purification from bodily relations. And this is a beautiful path. It has different sects.” See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *‘Itiqādātu al-fīraq al-muslimin wa’l-mushrikīn*, ed. Ali Sami Nashshār (Cairo: Maktabat al-nahḍa al-Miṣriyyah, 1938), 72-73.

3 Abū Nasr Sarrāj al-Tūsī, *al-Luma’*, ed. Abdulhalim Mahmud, Tāhā Abdalbaki Surūr (Cairo: Dāru’l-kutubi’l-hadisa, 1960), 40, cf. Serrāc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, trns. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz (İstanbul: Altınoluk Yayınları, 1996), 21-22.

Even if Sufism was recognized as one of the religious sciences as from Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 297/909), this effort never convinced either Sufis or the others.

In this regard, the key role of the expression *‘ilm al-ḥāl*, used by the Sufis to exalt Sufism, should be mentioned here. *‘ilm al-ḥāl* and *‘ilm al-dhawq*, the latter of which is mentioned to confirm and expound upon the former, weakened Sufism’s struggle to be ranked among the sciences. Additionally, the concepts Sufis used while talking about their views on knowledge, such as *kashf* (unveiling), *ilhām* (inspiration), *mushāhadah* (witnessing), made the process more ineffective. At least one can reach the following judgment: *‘ilm al-ḥāl* rarely has the same connotation for a Sufi or a non-Sufi. As for the former, it is a definition to exalt and declare particularity, whereas for the latter, it means the expression of a subjective interest like a poem that moves one away from science.

Does *‘ilm al-ḥāl* need to be divided into historical periods? For those who consider the notion of “*ḥāl*” as subjectivity and distance from science, there is no need for such an undertaking. Instead, it is possible to discuss the internal transformation of a practical movement and mainly the distortion process of an authentic tradition. This is because Sufism is not a science which has a determined subject matter, issues, method, and goal. On the other hand, as long as Sufism is considered as a social fact that can undergo alterations, it is meaningful to talk about it and its periods. We can consider Ibn Khaldūn’s (d. 808/1406) account of the deterioration of the earliest Sufis’ *zuhd* and piety-minded understanding of Sufism as a consequence of their confronting with *bāṭinī* (esoteric) groups and teachings within this context.<sup>4</sup> Those Sufis who consider *‘ilm al-ḥāl* as an exalting definition face a more ambiguous situation, because talking about classification and periodization necessitates discussions about alterations or transformations and disputes among Sufi adherents – and maybe even some conflicts. However, Sufis considered *dhawq* and *ḥāl* as methods for abolishing such internal disputes. In this case, what kind of transformation and periodization can we discuss? The Sufi poet Yunus Emre (d. 1320) points out this continuousness and completeness: “One thousand dervishes are one. There is no need for strangers.”<sup>5</sup> In this case, talking about the periodization of Sufism, at least for Sufis, can be accepted as a criticism and doubt toward their method. Emergence of Sufism being in the first place, in many matters Sufis handle the issue of Sufism with the claim of that we cannot

4 Abū Zayd Waliyuddin Abdurrahman b. Muhammad Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, ed. Abdussālam al-Shaddadi (Dārulbeydhā: Baytu’l-funūn wa’l-ūlūm wa’l-ādāb, 2005), V, 221-222; cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Mukaddime*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ, 9<sup>th</sup> press. (İstanbul: Dergāh Yayınları, 2013), II, 858-860.

5 Yunus Emre, *Divan*, ed. Mustafa Tatçı (Ankara: MEB, 1997), II, 166 (= *yüz bini birdir dervişin, araya ağıyar gerekmez*).

talk about a science in the strict sense. We will specify some of these issues below, but here we say this for now: Even looking at the relevant works, it is hard to assess whether Sufism is a science or not. Even though we will talk about its historical process and periods, there is no consensus over this specific issue –whether it is a science or not- even among its adherents.

Classifying Sufism according to determined periods is a struggle due to both internal and external objections that are strong and partially persuasive. This reality may frustrate any attempt to do so right at the outset. As a matter of fact, the texts written after Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910) and still being used today contain a critical classification of the history. According to these early texts, it is not quite right to talk about the “emergence” of Sufism, rather its conspicuous spread among the Islamic community. And this spread should be interpreted as a response to the moral corruption in the Muslim society. The process in which Sufism spread in the Islamic community is nothing but the process in which the spiritual life that assimilated in the *selected ones*<sup>6</sup> who represented the middle path in the Islamic community since Prophet Muḥammad deteriorated towards a “question and answer” style and a science. For instance, such sentences as “Today Sufism is a name without a reality, but formerly it was a reality without a name”<sup>7</sup> are frequently quoted in the books written during this period. Such a sentence, undoubtedly, forces one to consider the struggle of periodization as an assessment of the history of regression and deterioration.

Al-Kalābādī (d. 380/990) says that Sufism started as *al-ḥāl* (i.e., a practical movement) and then deteriorated into the period of writing.<sup>8</sup> In any case, it is difficult to base any division and classification upon works written during this period. One of the things that we can dwell upon here is the assessment of the fractionalization. Al-Hujwīrī (d. 465/1072), a productive writer on this subject, discussed the important topic of deviant groups in this development. In this respect, even if one cannot determine the reasons for the periodization, devising classifications and assessing valid and deviant understandings of Sufism emerged as a topic of discussion in these works.

6 al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 108-122; cf. Serrāc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 73-83.

7 This statement belongs to one of the famous Sufis of early period Abū al-ḥasan Būshanjī (d. 348/960). See Abū Abd al-Raḥmān Sullamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Nuraddin Sharība, 2nd press (Aleppo: Dār al- kitābi al-nafs, 1986), 459; Ali b. Osman Jullābi Ḥujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, trans. Is'ād Abdulhādī Kandil (Beirut: Dār al-nahdati'l-Arabiyya, 1980), 239; cf. Hucvirī: *Hakikat Bilgisi: Keşfü'l-mahcûb*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1996), 123.

8 Abū Bakr al-Kalābādī, *al-Ta'arruf li madhhab ahl al-taşawwuf*, ed. Ahmad Shamsaddin (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ilmīyya, 2001), 6-7; cf. Kelābâzī, *Doğuş Devrinde Tasavvuf: Ta'arruf*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1992), 48.

## Periodization of Sufism: Struggling between a Scientific Need and a Fact

One of the most complicated paradox in the Islamic scientific tradition is as follows: Meaning the knowledge of *ḥāl* and *dhawq*, Sufism has a huge volume of literature and various kinds of exercises –especially as regards the Sufi orders– with which we are not familiar in the other religious sciences. In such a type of literature, classifying a movement or a knowledge that expressed itself in periods on the basis of objective measurements is difficult, and it is almost impossible to develop a theory that will encompass the whole. Nevertheless, making a periodization, provided that we can find genuine justifications and a starting point, enables one to conduct sound and valid investigations. Thus the question is: Is it possible to find a starting point that can legalize and rationalize the classification of the history of Sufism? A convincing justification and evidence is required, because any classification without a definite principle would be subjective and void of any scientific value.

For this very reason, we intend to compare the opinions of two important Sufis. One of the best statements introducing the understanding of Sufism in texts written during fourth and fifth centuries is mentioned by al-Kalābādhi in *al-Ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al-tasawwuf*, which he wrote within the scope of this main idea and which therefore can be considered as one of the texts that provides an accurate reflection of the understanding of Sufism at that time. While he is introducing the opinions of Sufis on Sufism, he defends the following main idea throughout his work: The opinions of Sufis in every discussion comply with the *'aqidah* (religious doctrine) of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*.

According to al-Kalābādhi, the schools of *fiqh* (Islamic law) can be added to this. Furthermore, he does not confine himself to assert such a claim, he limits the first part of his famous work to the discussion of *'aqidah* and tries to show how much Sufis are attached to the one held by the *Ahl al-Sunnah*.<sup>9</sup> His contemporary Sufis, al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), Abū Ṭālib al-Makki (d. 386/996), al-Qushayri (d. 465/ 1072), and al-Hujwiri (d. 465/1072) share the same opinion.<sup>10</sup> While defending his opinions, al-Kalābādhi indicates that he compiled the opinions of those Sufis he could reach

9 Al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf*, 31-103; cf. Kelābāzī, *Doğuş Devrinde Tasavvuf*, 53,125

10 Al-Sarrāj, *Luma'*, 21-24; cf. Serrāc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 11-14; Abd al-karim al-Qushayri, *Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, ed. Abdulhalim Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. Sharif, ed. Waliyuddin Muḥammad Salih al-Farfūr (Damascus: Dār al-farfūr, 2002), 29-48; cf. Kuşeyri, *Kuşeyri Risālesi*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (İstanbul: Dergāh Yayınları, 1996), 83-91; al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, 453 ff.; 509 ff.; cf. Hucviri, *Hakikat Bilgisi*, 335 ff.; 397 ff.

by means of a “survey” method.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, we are presented with a claim that is binding all authentic Sufis! In this case, we can examine the understanding of Sufism as expressed in texts written during the fourth and fifth centuries of al-ḥijra (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries AD) in the same manner and on the same line, at least in the discussion of *‘aqidah* and, correspondingly, in the discussion of *fiqh*.

A great majority of the available works on Sufism, ranging from dictionaries to bibliographical literature and *tafsirs* (Qur’anic exegesis), agree with al-Kalābādhi on this issue, and all of them were written within the scope of the same main idea: separating the true and false understandings of Sufism. And, the criterion of *being true* is the compliance with *‘aqidah* and a *fiqhī* understanding of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. There is no harm in considering this claim as the basic one made in the Sufi literature that emerged during the third, fourth, and fifth centuries of al-ḥijra: A kind of Sufism that *accepted* the authorities of the sciences of *kalām* and *fiqh* for their fields and *complied with* them. When they looked back with this point of view, they traced their historical integrity back to Prophet Muhammad. This was especially true as regards to bibliographical literature. Al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038), and other Sufi writers used the bibliographical part of their works to provide this historical continuity.<sup>12</sup>

Sufi imams (founders) in different periods – we should bear in mind that the terms *Sufism* and *Sufi* had not emerged yet – have always been faithful to the *‘aqidah* of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* and believed *fiqh* was essential and binding. This approach not only brings historical continuity to a valid understanding of Sufism, but also brings historical depth to those schools in which this *‘aqidah* of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* was accepted: The science of *ḥāl* is an evidence for the authenticity of *aqidah* of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. If Yunus Emre’s claim that “One thousand of dervishes are one” were valid, any classification would be unnecessary and dating would be nothing but a matter of chronology. However, was his statement a claim or a desire? It seems that it was a desire and the reality did not correspond with his words. Şadraddīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), who lived nearly three centuries after al-Kalābādhi, says in one of his letters: “Sufis and theologians have never agreed with each other in any discussion. When we are talking about agreement, we mean the agreement between Sufis and philosophers.”<sup>13</sup>

11 Al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta’arruf*, 7; cf. Kelābāz isalah fi ‘ilm al-tasawwuf”, in First on is g to two ce to consistency. And that is e.? i, *Doğuş Devrinde Tasavvuf*, 49.

12 Abū Abdurrahman al-Sulamī, *Tabakāt al-şūfiyya*, ed. Nuraddin Shariba, 2<sup>nd</sup> press. (Aleppo: Dār al-kitābī’n-nafs, 1986); Abū Nu‘aym Ahmad b. Abdullah b. Işhāq al-Iṣfahānī, *Hilyat al-awliyā wa ṭabaqāt al-aşfiyā*, vol. I-X (Cairo: Matbaatu’s-saada, 1974); al-Qushayrī, *Risālat al-Qushayriyya*, 49-150; al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, 267-392.

13 *al-Murāsālāt bayna Şadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī wa Naşir al-dīn al-tūsī*, ed. Gudrun Schubert (Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995), 165-166; cf. Konevī, *Sadreddin Konevī ile Nasiredin Tūsī Arasında Yazışmalar: el-Murāsēlāt*, trans. Ekrem Demirli (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002), 189.

Along with Ibn al-‘Arabī, al-Qūnawī is the strongest representative of seventh-century Sufi understanding. In this respect, talking about al-Qūnawī means talking about the understanding of this specific period and this is a binding opinion. In other words, as much as al-Kalābādhi’s opinion represents a period, *al-Shayk al-kabīr* (“the great master” [a founder thinker]) al-Qūnawī’s statement also represents a period or at least an understanding of Sufism that puts forth a literature, even if we do not know its quantity. We cannot find a stronger reason to handle the problem of periodization in studies of Sufism because these two authors, both of whom were the best examples representing specific periods, completely contradicted each other. Furthermore, al-Qūnawī’s opinion leaves the impression that the leading criticism directed by theologians against Ibn al-‘Arabī and his followers is the accusation of being of the same mind with philosophers. Thus the question is: Can these two be considered as representatives of the same understanding of Sufism? In other words, can a science or a discipline contain two opposite opinions without being saddled with the question of *tahāfut* (incoherence). In fact, this is the most important question that one can raise in terms of Sufi studies.

### **The Problem of Periodization in Academic Researches: Being Confined to Superficiality in the Discussion of Legitimacy**

The discussions on the origin of Sufism determined the way the academic researches in Sufism –though it is hard to call it that way- were carried out. The question of origin faced by the researchers in Islamic world was inherited from the Orientalist works not only for Sufism but also for all the other religious studies. Especially some of the early Orientalists prioritized the question of what Islam transferred from whom rather than what it put forward itself.<sup>14</sup>

14 Here, it would be enough to mention some examples about Sufism in particular Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) who divided the early period of Sufi history into two as the period of *zuhd* and the period of Sufism in two articles he published, is one of the first orientalists who made division of the *zuhd* and Sufism as a subject of periodization. According to Goldziher, from a broader perspective the formation process of Sufism is a development process of Islam. From the very beginning, Islam had felt the absence of the thought of “*zuhd*” and as from the second century, the movement of *zuhd* completed the missing part of Islam through Muslim “monks.” In addition to this, dating from the fourth century after hijrah, the movement proceeded to a new stage by acquiring a mystic character. This process bore witness to the inclusion of ascetic-mystic elements seen in Arabian community before Islam in Islam through Sufi writers. See Ignaz Goldziher, “Materialien zur Entwicklungs-geschichte des Sūfismus,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 13 (1899): 35-56; “Asketismus und Sūfismus,” *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (Heidelberg, 1910), 139-200; *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras ve Ruth Hamori (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 116-167. Duncan B. Macdonald (d. 1943) both in *Aspects of Islam* and in *Development of Muslim Theology*, says that Sufism began as a *zuhd* movement and was affected from monasticism through its development. According to him, in the first period Sufis gave more importance to deeds. In time, this *zuhd*-minded practical Sufism was influenced by foreign effects more particularly by Neo-Platonism and gave its place to mysticism that

In time, “domestic research” took form within the scope of this question of origin.<sup>15</sup> Sufism was the most fruitful field in this discussion, because it had emerged in a wide area and also it was the movement most in contact with ancient religious-philosophical beliefs and cultures. That is to say, it has the strongest connection with the “field.” For this and other reasons, Sufism was considered as a *foreign element* or a *weak link* in Islam and was accepted by many to be the main reason for the deterioration of Islam after its spread beyond Hejaz. For example, Sufism was accused of having added various sources like Christian, Hindu, ancient Egyptian, and other local sources to Islam. In this respect, classifications of Sufism as *zuhd* (asceticism) or as philosophical Sufism in Sufi studies were offered to make the question of origin visible.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, another type of classification in the books written on Sufism is worth mentioning and the studies on Sufism in Turkey are the continuation of these studies.<sup>17</sup> It is possible to make an analysis by taking one of these studies into account.

is based on theological speculations. Therefore, Macdonald thinks that even if Sufism began as a *zuhd* movement, in time it divided into two branches as *zuhdi* (ascetical)-practical schools and philosophical-theoretical schools, and the latter may be considered as a deviation from Islam because it contains opinions up to pantheism. See Donald Black Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 172-185; *Aspects of Islam*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), 190-203. And Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (d. 1945) draws attention for being a researcher studying on the development of Sufism most among Orientalists. See Reynold A. Nicholson, “A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism, with a list of definitions of the terms ‘Sūfi’ and ‘tasawwuf’, Arranged chronologically,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 38 (1906): 303-348; *The Mystics of Islam* (Londra: Routledge, 1966); *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 224-235; *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). While he was explaining the development of Sufism, Swedish Orientalist Tor Andrae (d. 1947) mentions that it was influenced by foreign elements. See Tor Andrae, *In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Brigitta Sharpre (Albany: SUNY, 1987), 33-54. Margaret Smith emphasizes the similarities between Sufis and Christian monks on the basis of relation between Islam and Christianity. See Margaret Smith, *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and the Middle East* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1995), 125-152; *The Way of the Mystics: The Early Christian Mystics and the Rise of Sūfis* (Londra: The Sheldon Press, 1976). For a criticism of Orientalist attempts to periodize the history of Sufism, see Hacı Bayram Başer “Sünnî Tasavvufun Teşekkül Sürecinde Şeriat-Hakikat İlişkisi Sorunu (Hicrî III. ve IV. Yüzyıllar)” (PhD thesis, Istanbul University Institute of Social Sciences, 2015), 11-20.

- 15 For an example, see Abū al-Alā Afifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939); cf. A. E. Afifi, *Muhyiddin İbnu’l-Arabî’nin Tasavvuf Felsefesi*, trans. Mehmet Dağ (Ankara: AÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1975). Abū al-Alā Afifi, *al-Tasawwuf: al-Thawra al-rūhiyyah fî al-İslâm*, (İskenderiye, 1963); cf. Ebu’l-Alâ Afifi, *Tasavvuf: İslâm’da Manevi Hayat*, trans. Ekrem Demirli and Abdullah Kartal (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1996).
- 16 In addition to aforementioned Orientalist studies, see Abū al-Alā Afifi, *al-Tasawwuf: al-Thawra al-rūhiyyah fî’l-İslâm*, (İskenderiye, 1963); Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafa al-şūfiyyah fî al-İslâm* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1926); İbrahim Basyūni, *Nash’at al-tasawwuf al-İslâmi*, (Cairo: Dāru al-ma’arif, 1969); Qasim Ganî, *Ta’rikh al-tasawwuf fî al-İslâm* (Cairo: Maktabat al-naḥḍat al-Mişriyyah, 1970).
- 17 For some of these studies, see; Mehmed Ali Aynî, *Tasavvuf Tarihi* (İstanbul: Kitabhâne-i Südi, 1341); Erol Güngör, *İslam Tasavvufunun Meseleleri*, 2<sup>nd</sup> press. (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 1984); Mustafa Kara, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar Tarihi*, 6<sup>th</sup> press. (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2003), 77; Hasan Kâmil Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 10<sup>th</sup> press. (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2004), 84 ff.; Mustafa Aşkar, *Tasavvuf Tarihi Literatürü* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2006), 35, 36; Kadir Özköse (ed.), *Tasavvuf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> press. (Ankara: Grafiker Publications, 2015), 105-210.



In regard to this classification, Sufism can be divided into four distinct periods: *zuhd*, Sufism, dervish orders, and *al-waḥdat al-wujūd*.<sup>18</sup> But the basis of this classification is ambiguous. First of all, how can one mention within it an autonomous period of “Sufism”? How can the name of a discipline also be the name of a period? Besides, the justifications of this attempt are not obvious at all. The most important problem is the modern entitling as the period of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and the period of dervish orders. How can a division like the period of dervish orders and the period of Sufism be made with objective justifications? Is the former an alienation from the understanding the latter or what contributions did it make to the latter so that it was considered an independent period? In any case, the most serious problem in these classifications is the vagueness of the systematic method that will be followed by periodization. This vagueness manifests itself in the classifications of “the period of *zuhd*” and “the period of Sufism.” Considering a person as a *zāhid* (ascetic) or a Sufi does not depend upon a clear justification.

Along with this, the most important issue in this subject becomes clear in divisions like “philosophical Sufism” and the period of “*zuhd*” or “Sufism.” The expression *philosophical Sufism* has been used as an exclusionary and derogatory conceptualization.<sup>19</sup> The sayings and Sufi understandings of early-period Sufis that formed the basis for this have already been excluded by being classified as of “foreign origin.”<sup>20</sup> However, it is not clear what Sufism really is, from which components it emerged and most importantly what components it covers as a science. One of the critical problems in any periodization of Sufism is the issue of dervish orders. The proliferation of Sufism through these orders reaching to large masses is one of the most important issues in Sufi studies. Such a phenomenon occupies an important place in Sufi studies, especially in Turkey. Thus for many researchers, both of these components should be examined together. But any discussion about the authenticity and falsity of this particular approach is beyond the scope of this article however we should focus on why it is indefinite to mention dervish orders

18 Researchers mentioning this classification in Turkish do not give any information about the source of this classification and at the same time they do not treat it with a critical approach. The main reason of this is that these works are primarily written as a course book. After he mentioned the different classifications about the periods of Sufi history, only Mustafa Kara confines himself to stating that the aforementioned four-part classification is the most preferred one however it would be “weird” to mention a ‘period of Sufism’ among the periods of Sufi history. For some authors mentioning this classification see Kara, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar Tarihi*, 77-78; Osman Tüner, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf Tarihi* (Istanbul: Seha Publications, 1998), 76-77. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz makes a more visible preference with reference to a three-part classification as the period of *zuhd*, the period of Sufism and the period of dervish orders. See Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 84.

19 For an instance see Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafa al-ṣūfīyah*, 299-604.

20 al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 541 ff.

as a specific period. For instance, was there any alteration in their understanding of Sufism? Without answering this question, it would be unrealistic to talk about “the period of derwish order” as a Sufi period.

Consequently, a periodization has been made, even if on a limited scale. However, the primary reason why this periodization failed is the vagueness about how to handle the issue. What kind of a method should be followed? In my opinion, determining and discussing an issue from the relevant texts in connection with periodization would be a starting point, because it is quite difficult to form sentences that embrace Sufism as a whole – after all, it is a very wide field. In order to make this wideness clear, it is worth mentioning that a life style centered around deeds and morals of *zuhd* is not unique to Sufism. In fact, asceticism can be found in Salafiyyah, the *Ahl al-Hadith*, and other traditions and it is hard to distinguish Sufism from them. What we need to do is to assess the connections between and differentiations among the texts by taking into account those main texts that are available and have been accepted to be written on Sufism. In other words, the possibility of periodization should be investigated by taking into account the issues raised and the solutions proposed for these issues in those authoritative texts.

### The Difficult of Determining the Beginning: Searching Differentia in the Genus (*al-zuhd*)

No group of sciences has been so disputed as Sufism in regard to the definition of their science. Many definitions have emerged, and yet no consensus has been reached even on the word's root: *taṣawwuf*. This is true even of the early-period writers. Besides, going deeper into this field reveals the presence of critical discrepancies.<sup>21</sup> Two ways have been used to define Sufism. The first one deals with the word's root, of which there are many opinions. It seem that this might be due, as al-Sarrāj maintains, to its emergence primarily as a practical movement as opposed to a science.<sup>22</sup> And yet he does not call it a practical movement or a science, or a *ḥāl* (just a moral state); rather, he opines that it was something surrounding all of the sciences and comprising all spiritual states. The fact that he proposed this idea in order to exalt Sufism makes is irrelevant. In any case, Sufism did not emerge

21 For some definitions of Sufism in classical works see Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 45; al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf*, 103-107; Abū Sa'd al-Kharkūshī (d. 407/1016), *Tahdhīb al-asrār*, ed. Bassām Muhammad Bārūd (Abu Dhabi: al-Macmau al-Thaqāfi, 1999), 25-39; al-Qushayrī, *Risālat al-Qushayriyya*, 478-485; al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, 227-239. For a compilation work for definitions of Sufism see Nicholson, “A Historical Enquiry,” 303-348.

22 Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 40-43.

as a science, and thus the lack of an agreed-upon definition of the word's root is understandable. Al-Sarrāj also asserts that Sufism cannot be identified with any moral state or virtue. As it cannot be restricted to *zuhd*, *tawakkul* (perfect trust in God), or something else, the best thing to do is to identify Sufis in accordance with their clothes, which are made from *şûf* (wool).<sup>23</sup>

Thus the question becomes: What exactly is Sufism? Here we notice some discrepancies in al-Sarrāj's claims. First, why should clothing bring people, for whom we cannot find a comprehensive term for their science and moral-spiritual states, closer together? He attempts to explain this by saying that *taşawwuf* could have been derived from *şûf*<sup>24</sup> and that, therefore, *taşawwafa* means "wearing woolen clothing." This approach found only limited acceptance, even during his own time.

Furthermore, we can think about the relation between *taşawwuf* and *zuhd* on the basis of opinions asserted for the former term's root. However, the difficulty in handling *zuhd* becomes clear when we speak of this group as *zuhhād* (devotees). *Zuhd* is one of Islam's main characteristics and praised virtues, and many of those we consider as non-Sufis – *ḥadīth* scholars, theologians, or scholars of Islamic law – can be called *zāhid*. But presenting asceticism as some kind of a determined discipline and treating it as the starting point of a science is not realistic for imams and eminent people involved with the religious sciences of *kalām*, *fiqh*, and *ḥadīth* were also parts of such movements. Therefore, there are many reasons to handle *zuhd* as general and complementary movements.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, a correlation between such movements and Sufism can be established by other means as well. This can be correlated especially with emergent critical manner. Consequently, identifying *zuhd* with Sufism or at least treating it as a starting point in academic research can be considered a common mistake.

Assessing the early period of any science is difficult, for the answers given to the question of "When did it begin?" are always inadequate. The main point is how one science differs from another or from similar movements. In terms of Sufism, determining a starting point without answering this question is impossible. Thus we can consider its early period as the *first tendencies* or *pre-institutional Sufism*. While we say "pre-institutional," we will mention some of its manners and main functions later on. Before anything else, Sufism spread far and wide as a countermovement to the

23 Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 40; cf. Serrâc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 21-22.

24 Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 40-43.

25 About the issue see Hacı Bayram Başer, "Sünnî Tasavvufun Teşekkül Sürecinde Şeriat-Hakikat İlişkisi Sorunu," 20-44.

social life and a community that was growing wealthy due to its military conquests. In this regard, there are some striking classifications in the available works. For example, the names of Sufi imams of different periods became prominent due to their perpetual *zuhd*, worship, and, above all, their devotion to religiosity at a time when people inclined toward wealth and a social life determined by the realities of city life. However, in order to identify this manner with Sufism or consider it as the early period of Sufism, other components needed to arise, among them coming into prominence of certain *zāhids* because of their “critical” attitude and stands against new city life. We can follow these manners in later works and emerging debates. For instance, one of the most significant components in this regard are the opinions about *kasb* (trading, earning). When some of representatives of *zuhd* started to see a contradiction between *tawakkul* (perfect trust in God) and *kasb*, a “separation” came into view. The fact that this discussion is a serious matter shows up in every phase of Sufism. We cannot say that the discussion is confined to Sufi movements, for the contradiction between *tawakkul* and *sa’y* (working) was also found in the schools of *kalām* in the form free will versus faith. But this changed nothing, for whether *kasb* annihilates *tawakkul* or not was a topic of popular discussion familiar to all Muslims. However, when some *zāhids* adopted a specific opinion on the matter, a separation among them must have occurred.

We can actually follow this separation: Sufis were called *masākin* (destitute ones) due to their anti-*kasb* attitude. In this respect they were people of *miskin tawakkul*, whereas other Muslims embraced *kasb*-centered *tawakkul*. The separation must have started there. We can follow this anti-*kasb* attitude in opinions asserted for the root of the word *Sufism*, such as it being based upon *sūfānah* (desert plants), which indicates eating little and poor-quality food.<sup>26</sup> The contradiction of *tawakkul* and *sa’y* caused multilateral discussions. Here we should mention that the *Kitāb al-Kasb*, attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa’s pupil Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybānī (d.189/805), seeks to defend *kasb* against to Sufis. This is worth noting in terms of the ongoing debate within the Islamic community.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the Sufis themselves had a great deal to say about the aspects and characteristics of *kasb*

26 One of the earliest information about word *sūfānah* was mentioned in Abū Nu’aym’s *Hilya*. See al-Ḥafāhānī, *Hilyat al-awliyā*, I, 17. For other opinions asserted about root of the word *Sūfism* see Rafiq al-‘Ajam, *Mawsū‘at al-muṣṭalahāt al-tasawwuf al-Islāmī* (Beirut, 1999), 177-184.

27 The work attributed to Imam Muḥammad have reached to present day within *al-Mabsūt* of Sarakhsi and published independently. al-Sarakhsi, *al-Mabsūt*, (Beirut: Dāru al-Ma’rifa, 1986), XXX; Imam Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, *al-Iktisāb fi al-rizq al-mustetāb*, ed. Mahmud Arnus (Beirut: Dārū al-kutub al-ilmīyya, 1986). For a study about the work see Michael Bonner, “The Kitāb al-Kasb attributed to al-Shaybānī: Poverty, surplus, and the circulation of wealth,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001): 410-427.

and the *tawakkul-kasb* relation.<sup>28</sup> The essential part of the issue is as follows: The question of this relation is a result of the discussion of will in *kalām*; however, the practical aspect of Sufism manifests itself in this matter.

By assigning the issue to a technical and practical subject, Muslims added a new component to their discussions about faith and deeds. We can express this as the *practical aspect of Sufism*, which we will consistently see in the later processes through which Sufism would pass. Importantly, the critique of *zāhids* was not limited to this only, for they also criticized married life and, in the general sense, about city life. Some of these criticisms can be found in the general understanding of religion; the condemn of love of fame and glory, having *ikhlas* (sincerity), and so on. Such approaches led some people to embrace seclusion and moving away from the city. In fact, as long as seclusion remains an individual movement, no questions can be asked. However, when these movements start to become collective group manners, this fact opened the gate of the organization of reactions toward the “new city” life. And thus the separation between *zāhids* acquired a second dimension: leaving the city to live in seclusion. Traces of this are seen in opinions asserted for the root of word Sufism. For example, *zāhids* were named according to where they lived (e.g., a cave or along a secluded coast): Those who live in cave.<sup>29</sup> This anti-city approach, when added to celibacy or, more precisely, the permissibility of considering celibacy a virtue, accelerated the separation among *zāhids* and the separation of some *zāhids* from the community. One can view this as a second and important point.

The third issue deals with criticisms derived from the knowledge-deed relation. This was a general criticism, for the Qur’an and prophetic *ḥadīths* had already informed Muslims that knowledge, if it was not transformed into deeds, was useless. But when some *zāhids* started to criticize this view severely – then again, those who voiced this criticism were people deprived of any scientific authority – the separation among the *zāhids* increased. This criticism is repeated continuously, in terms of ‘people of knowledge’, ‘people of ceremonial worship’, ‘people of apparency’, and weakened such religious sciences as *fiqh* and *kalām*. The potential root words for *taṣawwuf*, in this case *taṣfiya* (purification) and *al-ṣaff al-awwal* (being in the first

28 Some classical works about the issue are: Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Makāsib*, ed. Sa’d Karim al-Faki (Alexandria: Dairatu Ibn Khaldūn, undated); Hakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-kasb*, and *Adābu al-muridīn*, ed. Abdulfettah Abdullah Baraka, (Cairo: Matbaat al-sa’āda, 1977); al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma’*, 259-262, 523-525. For the importance of discussions about *tawakkul* and *kasb* relation in terms of formation process of Sufism see Hacı Bayram Başer, “Sünni Tasavvufun Teşekkül Sürecinde Şeriat-Hakikat İlişkisi Sorunu,” 44-68.

29 Sufis mostly cite the zahids who moved away from city and living in a cave namely “Shikuft” in the province of Khorasan and call them “Shikuftiyya”. For the instance see Abū Ḥafis Omar al-Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-ma’ārif*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-allāmiyya, 1939), 48.

rank), indicate this meaning<sup>30</sup> because knowledge has nothing to do with purifying the heart. Thus, one does not enter the first rank through knowledge, but through purifying the heart.

These ideas can be added to other issues, but for us these criticisms are enough. By this means, devotion would have acquired a nature that could form the basis of Sufism by diverging from the general understanding of piety and the general trends of *zuhd*, at least as regards these three components. This new and harsh devotion was the lifestyle of those people who refused *kasb* by adopting *tawakkul*, whose preference for seclusion prevented them from adopting the married life and living in a city, and who placed purification of the heart above knowledge. However, we do not yet know the content. We use the phrase “tendency toward Sufism” for this understanding.

### The Formation of Sunni Sufism: The Struggle of Sufism to Become One of the Religious Sciences or Returning to the City

We can determine what problems the uncontrolled movement *out of the city* caused, from discussions in Sufi works that began to emerge, at least partially, during the third, and then more fully during the fourth and fifth, Islamic centuries. In other words, we learn about the problems and discussions of this *unnamed* period from texts written during that very same period. These texts can also be considered a criticism of the former period; however, they rather consist of an uncontrolled movement’s *discipline*. Consequently, this period should be considered as a time of solving the problems inherited from the previous period and “naming” an unnamed movement. In this regard, the central issue was the relation between the *shari’a* (divine law) and the divine truth.<sup>31</sup> Determining when this discussion started is difficult, because whether it stemmed from the *zāhids* or from fractionalization movements within the Muslim community is a complicated issue. However, the knowledge-action relation and the faith-deed discussions mentioned above can be considered the most important elements of this period.

30 Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma’*, 45-49; al-Qushayrī, *Risālat al-Qushayriyya*, 478-485; al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, 227-239.

31 Ekrem Demirli, *Sadreddin Konevi’de Bilgi ve Varlık* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2004), 29-62; Ekrem Demirli, “Zahiri İlimlerin Otoritesi Karşısında Tasavvufun Meşruiyet Arayışı,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 15 (2007). For a new study handling the formation process of Sufism in the context of question of sharia-divine truth relation see Hacı Bayram Başer, “Sünni Tasavvufun Teşekkül Sürecinde Şariat-Hakikat İlişkisi Sorunu.” Also see Abdullah Kartal, *Tasavvufun Oluşumu: Şariat-Hakikat İlişkisi* (Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2015).

In this respect, given that the most important factor behind the emergence of the various schools of legal thought in Islam as regards the faith-deed issue, discussions on faith became the principle of all subtopics. Therefore, along with the continued spreading of Sufism, the majority of theological discussions within Islam can be traced back to earlier discussions about who is a believer and what is true faith, both of which are present in the Qur'an and, especially, in the prophetic *ḥadīths*. In this regard, one should remember that both of these sources mention people who are outwardly Muslim but inwardly unbelievers and, in particular, hypocrisy.<sup>32</sup> In addition to criticizing "outwardly" Muslims, they also explained true faith as an ideal, but did not determine it precisely. Indeed, opinions about the nature of faith held by scholars of *kalām* can be considered within this context.

Later on, two important matters in the *kalām* scholars' discussion of faith affected Sufis deeply: the requirements of the faith and the relation between faith and deeds. As Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/936) stated, this relation grew out of the first disputes among Muslims,<sup>33</sup> namely, that between the followers of Alī and of Mu'āwiya. This time the question was no longer one of the caliphate, but what was the status of a believer who shed blood or referred a case to an arbitrator (i.e., the incident of *tahkim*). In this case, political issues formed the basis for theological debates. As a result, Muslims entered an approximately three-century period of discussion on such matters. It seems that two of these tendencies would have affected the Sufis. First, the chaotic environment itself turned some believers away from city life. Even during the earlier period, some of the Companions did not want to enter such political-religious debates and thus inclined toward seclusion. These debates continued over time, and fractionalization among Muslims could be identified clearly. This development weakened the mainstream, and criticism appeared as a right. Everybody could have asked: "What is true faith? Who is a true believer?" Accordingly, later on we considered this criticism of religious thought as one of the reasons why *zuhd* might have spread. In the new period, these debates were handled within the framework of what we can call the "*problem of the relation between shari'a-ḥaqīqah*." Even if the criticisms against the *shari'a* sciences weakened the area of the sciences, in time the *zāhids* would not be pleased with this weakness because such a weakened knowledge would render them unable to discern between "valid" and "deviant." In the circumstances, this distinction would have been provided with *knowledge*. In other words, this distinction forced Sufis to establish a new relation with the understanding of knowledge that they had weakened in the beginning.

32 For some Qur'anic verses see Qur'an 2: 8-14; 4: 72-73, 137; 5: 52-53; 9: 42-103.

33 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb al-ʾIbāna*, 2<sup>nd</sup> press. (Haydarabat, 1948), 1-13; *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyin wa ikhtilāf al-muṣallin*, ed. Muhammad Muhyiddin Abdulhamid (Cairo: Maktabat al-nahda al-Miṣriyya, 1950), 6-20.

In this regard, one must pay attention to al-Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-mahjūb*, which opens with a chapter entitled "*Ithbāt al-'ilm*" and in which he dwells, along with some contradictory matters, ultimately upon the problems of Sufism being a "science."<sup>34</sup> *Ithbāt al-'ilm* is defined as making the principle of "*ḥaqīqah* (truth) is constant and knowledge is possible" the main point of thought. The author enters this discussion by explaining the type and value of knowledge, a style that, in general, can be expected from a book of Sufism.

Nevertheless, in the advancing chapters of the discussion we encounter the main problem found in the history of thought: Is knowledge possible or not? In his discussion, al-Hujwīrī directs our attention toward a problem caused by early Sufis, namely, those *zāhids* who had diverged from the general understanding of *zuhd*. This is the result of Sufis being perceived as anti-knowledge due to the intricacies originating from the connection between *bāṭiniyya* (esotericism) and the Sufis. Here, we are not exactly sure what al-Hujwīrī means. But by consulting some other references, we can think that he is talking about the intricacies between *bāṭiniyya* and the Sufis. For example, we can evaluate Ibn Khaldūn's words within this context.<sup>35</sup> First al-Hujwīrī refers to an ancient discussion by indicating that a non-Muslim group, namely, the Sophists, claim that knowledge is not possible. Considering this an inauthentic sentence, he states: "May Allah curse them."<sup>36</sup> This cursing is regarded as significant when it comes to comprehending the understanding of the new period: At this time, Sufism would curse every movement by ignoring the knowledge and even weakening it.

While on the one hand al-Hujwīrī refers to the problem of groups mixing with Sufism, on the other hand he declares the opinion adopted by Sufis in the discussion of the demonstration of knowledge.<sup>37</sup> His approach is closely related with another principle that was mentioned as having been started by Junayd al-Baghdādī. More properly, al-Baghdādī's sentence and al-Hujwīrī's approach should be considered in the same context. The former declared that Sufism is a science bound with the Qur'an and Sunnah (deeds and saying of the Prophet). Based upon this viewpoint, he produced a new conception, witness/proof, and considered confirming Sufi knowledge with *witness* as necessary.<sup>38</sup> The sole pillar of a valid Sufi understanding

34 Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, 203-213; cf. Hucvīrī, *Hakikat Bilgisi*, 89-98.

35 Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, V, 221-222.

36 Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, 203-213; cf. Hucvīrī, *Hakikat Bilgisi*, 94.

37 Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, 203-213; cf. Hucvīrī, *Hakikat Bilgisi*, 94-98.

38 In this sense two different sentences narrated from Junayd. First one is as follows: "Our knowledge depends on hadith of the Messenger of God." see al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 144; cf. Serrāc, *Īslām Tasavvufu*, 104. And the second one is "Those who do not memorize Qur'an and write hadiths will not be depended



was the evidence found in the Qur'an's verses and prophetic *ḥadīths*. In other words, Sufism was to be regarded as a religious type of knowledge.

The fact that Sufism was confronted with a serious problem after its criticism of *zuhd* can be seen in the discussions initiated by al-Baghdādī. Despite the fact that Sufis, before taking this name, criticized religious sciences and many other matters, the distinction of valid and deviant Sufism forced upon them the question of which method would they follow? Who are the true and deviant Sufis? And so appeared the inner conflicts over which method would enable them to reach the truth. Al-Baghdādī's sentence meant that a new period had begun in Sufism. As a matter of fact this process, which would end up with Sufism's struggle to be ranked among the religious sciences, Sufis moved away from their previous claims, or at least from a part of them. By this we mean that whereas they had once pushed knowledge into the background by focusing upon their deeds and purifying the soul, they no longer did so. We can see in al-Kalābādhi's work that knowledge had been very criticized during the spread of Sufism: "Sufism deteriorated when it transformed into question and answer."<sup>39</sup> Therefore, we can see this new stage as the Sufis' dropping one of their initial claims, which would enable it to be perceived as a religious science with a developing systematic structure, as was the case with the other sciences.

The main problem now became which science would Sufism replace, or how would it become a science in its own right? The most appropriate name we have in this regard is al-Sarrāj who, along al-Kalābādhi, al-Qushayrī, and others, focused on these very issues. The crucial point was now what would be the relation between Sufism and other sciences and what kind of relation would it establish with them? In al-Sarrāj's works we find an answer. The most obvious characteristic of his book is the claim that we can interpret as "taming" the Sufism that exit out of the city.

on the way of Sufism. Because our knowledge is bounded with the Book and sunnah." see al-Qushayrī, *Risālat al-Qushayriyya*, 96; cf. Qushayrī, *Kuṣeyrī Risālesi*, 117. Besides, here we can refer to statements of some other Sūfis about inevitableness of two evidences for correction and investigation of knowledge. Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d.215/830) says: "Sometimes knowledge with regard to truth encircles my heart for forty days. I cannot let them to reside in my heart without two witnesses. These two witnesses are Qur'an and the sunnah." see al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 146; cf. Serrāc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 105; al-Qushayrī, *Risālat al-Qushayriyya*, 80; cf. Kuṣeyrī, *Kuṣeyrī Risālesi*, 109. Dhunnūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859) says: "Wise person does not believe in inward knowledge contradicting with outward judgments." see al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 61; cf. Serrāc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 37. Abū Ḥafis al-Haddād (d. 260/883) says: "If a person does not deliberate his states and actions with the Book and sunnah and does not evaluate his incoming thoughts with these, his name is crossed out from the list of God's men." see al-Qushayrī, *Risālat al-Qushayriyya*, 88; cf. Qushayrī, *Kuṣeyrī Risālesi*, 113. Sahl b. Abdullah al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) says: "Every *wajd* (ecstasy) having no witness from the Book and Sunnah is invalid." see al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 146; cf. Serrāc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 105, 294. And Abū Saïd al-ḥarrāz (d. 286/899) says: "Every inward contradicting with outward is deviant." see al-Qushayrī, *Risālat al-Qushayriyya*, 111; cf. Qushayrī, *Kuṣeyrī Risālesi*, 125.

39 Al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf*, 6-7; cf. Kalābādhi, *Doğuş Devrinde Tasavvuf*, 48.

In addition to this, he considers Sufis a traditional-conventional group of scholars who can make mistakes just like all other people of knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, his work enables us to comprehend as a whole this new phase through which Sufism passed. In al-Sarrāj's opinion, the thing that should come to mind upon hearing the phrase "religious sciences" is the people of *fiqh*, *kalām*, and *hadīth*, all of whom deduce the creed and practical rules of Islam from the Qur'anic verses and prophetic *ḥadīths* (*istinbāt*). The scopes of these sciences can be determined as creed and deed.

Third, al-Sarrāj mentions and praises Sufis with exaggerated sentences.<sup>41</sup> Earlier, he had used this praise to claim that Sufism and Sufis were the *selected group* within the Islamic community. Here he refers to the superiority of their knowledge; however, what is more important is his intention to consider Sufism a science along with *fiqh* and *kalām*. Here he is emphasizing the separation of knowledge. Sufism has a field, one that has the right of deduction as do the other sciences. Certainly this field can be accepted as one dealing with 'morality', even on a limited scale, because of their claim that '*ḥāl*' is a movement related to practical and moral education.

But this claim, in and of itself, is not enough, for what makes this effort meaningful is the careful *authority sharing* with other sciences. Al-Sarrāj believes that the theologians have authority as regards theology and that the *fuqahā'* have authority in *fiqh*. In other words, Sufis must depend upon the scholars of Islamic law and theologians in such fields. On the other hand, they have the right to make deductions in their own field.<sup>42</sup> In addition to al-Sarrāj, al-Kalābādhi establishes the relation between the creed of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* and Sufism along the same lines and declares that the Sufis must depend completely upon that group's creedal principles.<sup>43</sup>

This approach clarifies that Sufism is bounded by the Qur'an and Sunnah, one that we encountered with al-Baghdādī. At this point another boundary emerges: the "boundary of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*." If we accept al-Baghdādī's sentence as a principle, then we can think that al-Sarrāj and his followers introduced a new framework via this principle and made it 'applicable'. Both bibliographical literature books were written on the basis of this frame, and the emergent technical terms and language used took form within the scope of this principle. This frame enabled Sufism's struggle to define itself within Sunni knowledge. Sufis like al-Qushayrī and al-Hujwīrī involved themselves in this process from different viewpoints. In any case, we can say that Sufism established itself as a religious science within the tradition of Sunni knowledge.

40 Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 31-38; cf. Serrâc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 16-21.

41 Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 21-30; cf. Serrâc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 9-13.

42 Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 31-97; cf. Serrâc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 109-123.

43 Al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf*, 31-97; cf. Kalābādhi, *Doğuş Devrinde Tasavvuf*, 61-125.

When we pay attention to the problems found in books written during this period, it also becomes possible from this aspect to handle the process systematically, even to consider different phases as one period by piecing them together. The most important matter of these works is the *shari'a-haqiqah* relation, which resulted from the claims of superficiality and aridness emerging in criticising the Sufis' view towards the religious sciences. These discussions caused *ibāhi tendencies* to increase, which meant that the matter had to be handled in a different way. This is when the question of this relation became the key criterion for determining the valid and deviant understandings of Sufism.

The above-mentioned scholars sought to solve the question of this relation by regarding the former and its representative sciences as an irreplaceable frame. In this sense the principle of "*haqiqah* (divine truth) is in *shari'a* (divine law)" became the foremost principle of the period. This is what al-Hujwiri means when he says: "Information about Allah is knowledge and *hāl*; knowledge is the basis of everything."<sup>44</sup>

The process emerging to describe this relation should be classified as "Sunni Sufism" primarily because the solution offered is located within the tradition of *Sunni knowledge*, meaning that a solution had been found by returning to the city in a way that invalidated the claims that lead the *zāhids* to separate themselves from it. In other words, the "*zāhids* had returned to the city that they had left." Accordingly, all of their issues (e.g., *kasb*, marriage, seclusion from social life, and producing knowledge) needed to be reconciled with this new reality. Naturally, words and thoughts that did not fit into this frame were left in suspense and known as *shatahāt* (words of ecstasy), which may have meant that the solution carries a 'secret' within itself. At least in later periods they were intended to be included in the solution and the claim of Sufism preserved by way of these words of ecstasy. In any case, authority was now being shared with *kalām* and *fiqh* of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. During this process, the Sufis constantly interpreted the thoughts expressed as miracle (*karāma*)/extraordinary favor, *nabī* (prophet)-*walī* (eminent friend of God) in favor of the first one. Through this, they sought to transform Sufism into a *dependent science* as regards *kalām* and *fiqh* in the basic domains of religion, namely, creed and deeds, without contradicting them. Other discussions of Sufi life can be added to this.

At this point, in order to explain term of *Sunni* some further discussions are necessary. Before anything else, Sufism has major and minor 'opponents'. In the

44 Al-Hujwiri, *Kashfu al-mahjūb*, 509; cf. Hucviri, *Hakikat Bilgisi*, 398.

new period, the former are owners of the attitudes underestimating religious sciences with every kind of *ibāhī* tendencies. If we remember what al-Hujwīri said about *sofastāiyya*, we can call this group the “opponents of knowledge.”<sup>45</sup> When a connection between some of them and *bāṭiniyya* are taken into consideration – we see the opposition of *bāṭiniyya* and understanding of *Sunni* knowledge also in al-Ghazālī – <sup>46</sup> *bāṭinī* movements can be mentioned among these opponents.

Sufis intended to answer such movements, particularly the *ibāhī* ones, with a Sufi understanding of the tradition of *Sunni* knowledge. On the other hand, there are inner opponents of this understanding. For instance, even if we consider it only a limited opposition, the Mu‘tazila are one opponent of this understanding. Their freedom and will theory, as far as we understand from al-Hujwīri’s criticism about the Sahliyya school, is one of the inner opponents. In terms of their theory of *walāya* (guardianship), we see that schools like the Mu‘tazila and Ḥashawiyya also opposed them. In almost every concept, Sufis intentionally handled the issues by reflecting the *Ahl al-Sunnah*’s opinions about *kasb*, will, Allah’s absolute power, the indeterminist world, and so on.

In essence, some of the Sufis’ *shataḥāt* expressions or their understanding of *tawakkul* can be accorded with the *Ahl al-Sunnah* creed; however, they neither practiced nor reconciled themselves to the term *shataḥāt*. In that case, describing this new understanding as *Sunni* is a result of its persistence in being accorded with the tradition of knowledge in which it takes part. At this point, a remarkable problem arises: Quantitatively, how much of Sufism does this type of Sufism represent? Or, as these books declared, had valid or deviant understandings of Sufism really been separated? We do not have complete answers to these questions, but in time we will see Sufism undergo a dual struggle as a consequence of this new period. The first problem was the relation between Sufism and other sciences. Over time, these problems continued within the framework of the *takka* (Sufi lodge)-*madrassa* (Muslim theological school) dilemma. However, the main conflict here was the internal one. This new understanding of Sufism persistently defended its doctrinal structure and strictly criticized other possible Sufi perspectives with attributions like deviant, perverse, and heretic. What enabled such a conflict was this *Sunni* attribution. Until Imam Rabbānī in the seventeenth century, we can see severe traces of this struggle during different periods.

45 Al-Hujwīri, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, 209; cf. Hucvīri, *Hakikat Bilgisi*, 94.

46 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Faḍāih al-Bāṭiniyya*, ed. Abdurrahman Badawī (Kuwait, Cairp: Dāru al-kutubi al-thaqāfi, 1964), 131-173; cf. Ghazālī, *Fedāihu’l-Bāṭiniyye: Bātmiligin İç Yüzü*, trans. Avni İlhan (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 1993), 45-80.

One consequence of this reconciliation was al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) mentioning of Sufism as a savior knowledge in his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*.<sup>47</sup> This claim is rather hard to explain. At least al-Ghazālī's expectation for Sufism exceeded the opinions of Sufi writers like al-Sarrāj and al-Qushayrī. What did he actually intend to say? From which misguidance would Sufism save humanity? Before anything else, al-Ghazālī's giving that kind of function within Sufism indicates that Sufism had gained its final form. In his eyes, Sufism's method is apparent, its main problems and subjects have been determined, its concepts have been settled, and the Sufis had become a recognized and accepted group.

His mentioning of Sufism, in its current form at that time, can be evaluated within the scope of the knowledge-action relation. This was one of the primary reasons for Sufism's spread within the Islamic community. In this respect, his reference to it signifies the acceptance that acquainting oneself with knowledge or performing deeds are not sufficient in and of themselves. On the other hand, people can only attain perfection by turning their knowledge into deeds.

But one more important matter we should see in al-Ghazālī is the insufficient knowledge of Islamic theology. He raised the expectation by considering it insufficient, which means that he partially moved away from previous Sufis (e.g., al-Kalābādhī and al-Qushayrī) and left the door open for new developments. On the other hand, *Sunni Sufism* intended to have a part in the religious sciences as *fiqh al-bāṭin*. In fact, one must say that al-Ghazālī contributed to this understanding, for his view of Islamic theology as insufficient and the philosophers as incoherent, as well as separating *bāṭiniyya* and Sufism with certain lines, helped people understand the latter's place among the religious sciences.

From this point onward, we will mention a new period of Sufism. Under which factors this process occurred is not our concern for now, for what is important here is the difference that emerged in the works of a dominant group known as *sūfī*. We have referred to this difference by comparing the statements made by al-Qūnawī and al-Kalābādhī. Now the question becomes: We perceived the latter's understanding of Sufism as *fiqh al-bāṭin* and as sharing the authority with *Sunni* theology and *fiqh*. Thus, where does al-Qūnawī's understanding of Sufism stand?

47 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, ed. Mahmud Bayjū, 2<sup>nd</sup> press (Damascus: Matbaat al-ṣabāḥ, 1992), 64-71.

## Ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Qūnawī: The Reconstruction of Sufism and Metaphysics during the Period of Maturity

Describing metaphysics as a discipline and a specialization, even regarding it as a phase of a science – could this be a scientific attitude? In the traditional understanding of metaphysics, such an attempt is both meaningless and completely contradicts the claims of metaphysics, which has been accepted as a universal science in a way that cannot be bound by a discipline. All studies on it revolve around one particular claim: By which process can a science be turned into a *universal* science? From this aspect, using the terms “metaphysics of *kalām*” or “Sufi metaphysics” to is open to objection.

However, can one confine metaphysics to another sect or group that does not belong to these two theoretical disciplines? For instance, must metaphysics inevitably be regarded as a science peculiar to philosophers or as a science done by them? When we look at this question in historical terms, metaphysics constitutes the aim of the philosophical sciences and is regarded as the foundation for all of the sciences. This is true, but considering metaphysics as belonging to just one group would not be inevitable. When we consider al-Qūnawī in this respect, we can see that this is how he approaches metaphysics. Thus he and Ibn al-‘Arabī before him thought that metaphysics could not accomplish its claims and thus was “incomplete,” for they held that its ultimate purpose is *to comprehend the objects according to their current hāl (state)*. In this respect, the philosophers could not attain the ultimate and competent information about objects through the ‘rationalist’ method. Then, leaving aside the rightfulness or wrongness of the discussion, we should say that: When metaphysics became a subject of discussion, Ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Qūnawī saw an “incomplete” science before them. We cannot become aware of the nature of objects by means of any science. In other words, the famous saying “Truths are constant and knowledge is possible” have not yet been put forward precisely.

Therefore al-Qūnawī reinterpreted this as metaphysics *that will be completed*, an approach that can be regarded as a far more realistic and convincing criticism than al-Ghazālī’s “incoherent metaphysicians.” For this very reason, al-Qūnawī sought to establish metaphysics in terms of its subject, matters, and first principles. While doing this, he criticizes the metaphysics inherited from the philosophers and relatively ignores the discussion of theology. Ibn al-‘Arabī reveals his opinions through a complicated theoretical comparison that criticizes both philosophers and the theories of all theologians, particularly the Mu‘tazilī and Ash‘arī traditions, and the Sufis themselves. In that case, taking al-Qūnawī’s works into consideration raises a significant interpretation of metaphysics: What did he intend to do while he was introducing metaphysics to us in terms of its subject, matters, and method?

But first, what shall we call it? And before that, while it is true that Sufism reached a new phase under al-Ghazālī, this period would not be decided on metaphysics because the Sufism that it follows had reached a sufficiency within itself. Indeed, the very same Sufi understanding, independently of Ibn al-‘Arabī, would continue after al-Ghazālī. Therefore, al-Ghazālī was not the founding name of the period, and here talking about a consistency is beyond the bounds of possibility. In other words, establishing any consistency between al-Ghazālī, who considers *Sunni Sufism* as ‘savior knowledge’, and Ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Qūnawī is out of question. Given these circumstances, to whom we attribute this new understanding of Sufism is a crucial matter. It appears that both Ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Qūnawī were aware of that. But there is another area in which we can refer to consistency: the language of *shataḥāt* that Sufism hid in during its previous phase and the “founder Sufi” period of Sufism that hid their opinions by way of this language.

Ibn al-‘Arabī refers to names within this period and establishes a consistency. From this aspect, even though the opinion of ‘period of maturity’ about his period clearly takes part in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s thought the relation of that period – on main themes – with “founder Sufis” period is obvious. Ibn al-‘Arabī sought to handle Sufism as a whole. Despite the claim that “Sufis are in alliance” was one of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s fundamental claims, grounding this opinion is difficult. More precisely, there is a literature that belongs to two traditions of interpretation: One is emergent in the works of *Sunni Sufism* beginning with Junayd al-Baghdādī; the other one is the works of Ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Qūnawī, both of whom interpreted the “founder Sufis” period and sought to make all founding names of Sufism in agreement. Nevertheless, al-Sarrāj discussed the *shataḥāt* and, accordingly, the discussion of stumbling of Sufis were handled in reconciliation with the *Ahl al-Sunnah* theology. Ibn al-‘Arabī goes beyond this reconciliation and handles the issue on a broader ground. In this respect on the question of *shataḥāt*, evaluating the approaches of two periods as defensive-contradictory (al-Sarrāj) approach and a free approach leading to metaphysics is possible.

Determining this period’s name is challenging. One of the primary reasons for this is Ibn al-‘Arabī’s style in his texts, in which we can find some nicknames and attributions rather than proper names that can be applied to the period. Some of the leading concepts in this regard are *muḥaqqiqs*, *‘ilm al-taḥqīq*, and *‘ilm al-asrār*. *Taḥqīq* and *muḥaqqiq*, both of which are derived from *ḥaqq*, are among the most appropriate terms used to explain the period. However, the most important opinions of Ibn al-‘Arabī that can help us in this matter are to be found in the approaches that he put forward while determining his rivals. By criticizing both philosophers and theologians, he determined the scope of Sufism’s new period: To fill the gap

that could not be filled by theology due to its incoherence, and philosophy (i.e., metaphysics) by remaining insufficient.

This approach was completed by al-Qūnawī, who deduced what Ibn al-‘Arabī actually intended to say. And thus al-Qūnawī’s claims and style shaped our viewpoint about Sufism’s new period. First, he separates theology and Sufism and points out the conflict between them. He spoke of this conflict in his correspondence with Naşır al-dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274). While al-Ṭūsī was referring to the consensus of the rationalists, al-Qūnawī wrote that the Sufis had never allied themselves with the theologians in any respect. According to him we can mention about alliance only between *muḥaqqiq* Sufis and philosophers.”<sup>48</sup> This claim enables us to understand the criticisms launched against Sufism. In their works, Sufis pointed out the relation between Sufism and philosophy. Ibn al-‘Arabī stressed this and indicated that they should not be confused with philosophers. Al-Qūnawī makes similar claims. Consequently, from this period onward the Sufism-philosophy relation started to be discussed and ‘philosopher’ criticism toward Sufis became widespread. Al-Taftazānī’s (d.792/1390) sentence that the “philosophers and Sufis agreed on the matter that God’s truth is necessary existence” referred to the deterioration of agreement that occurred during the process of *Sunni Sufism*.<sup>49</sup> Because God’s being absolute existence was the primary principle of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and, together with this principle, Sufis separated their opinions about existence from those of the theologians. It seems like this sentence, as much as it represents Sufism, was a disengagement from the understanding of Sufism represented by al-Kalābādhi.

In the first place, al-Qūnawī was talking about *al-‘ilm al-ilāhī* (metaphysics) and was trying to establish this knowledge in terms of its subject, matters, and first principles (viz., the classification of knowledge). He opined that the subject of this knowledge is God’s existence,<sup>50</sup> an approach that is a crucial matter in the new understanding of Sufism, for by this particular claim al-Qūnawī moved Sufism forward to a new point. If the subject of metaphysics is God’s existence, then demonstrating His existence is unnecessary. This approach was previously found in

48 Al-Qūnawī, *al-Murāsālāt*, 165-166; cf. Konevī, *Yazışmalar*, 189.

49 For this sentence of al-Taftazānī and his other criticisms of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and their evaluations see Abd al-Ghānī al-Nāblusī (d. 1143/1731), *al-Wujūd al-ḥaqq wa’l-khitāb al-şidq*, ed. Bakrī Alāaddin (Damascus: L’Institut Français D’Études Arabes de Damas, 1995), 117 also 117-148; cf. Abdūlganī en-Nāblusī, *Gerçek Varlık, Vahdet-i Vücūd’un Müdafaası*, trans. Ekrem Demirli (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2003), 147, also 147-183.

50 Sadreddin Konevī, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği: Miftāhu’l-gaybi’l-cem ve’l-vücūd*, trans. Ekrem Demirli, 2nd press (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2004), 9.



some currents of the Mu'tazila<sup>51</sup>; however, instead of reaching this opinion through the same way, al-Qūnawī and Ibn al-'Arabī reached it through the philosophers' theory of existence<sup>52</sup> because this is the conclusion reached by this approach. Yet the philosophers accepted the very same statement as the subject of metaphysics as "absolute existence."

In broad terms, at this point the Sufis intended to establish metaphysics by way of philosophical, instead of theological, reasoning and thus regarded His existence as the subject of metaphysics. Although this attitude at least means a breaking away from the theologians' understanding of God and existence, we cannot mention a total harmony with the philosophers' understanding of existence. In this regard, the Sufis apparently developed an attitude *in between*. But when we look more carefully at texts, this state of "betweenness" appears as a fundamental claim rather than a synthesis. Here again we can bear in mind 'the chosen generation' thought of al-Sarrāj.<sup>53</sup>

In other respects, the philosophers' explanations about God are limited. After he considered demonstrating God's existence as a *maṭlab* (purpose) in metaphysics, Ibn Sīnā refers to the Prophet's given limited information about God; otherwise, people would have been directed to an action *mā-lā-yuṭaq* (beyond bearing). In this way we can say that in their explanations about God, apart from His existence, the philosophers embraced a kind of agnosticism. Probably this approach will be the reason for Ibn Arabī considering them the *ahl al-ta'ṭil/mu'aṭṭila*. After regarding God's existence as taken for granted, Ibn al-'Arabī and al-Qūnawī handle the God-world and human relation as a matter of knowledge. Afterward, this talking about God means that talking about Him and His actions and knowing Him will be the purpose of doing metaphysics. By means of this approach, Sufism is joined to the previous one because one purpose that the previous Sufism also adopted was to make the ethical values taught by God its true morality. However, they would make it within the knowledge of theology.

The thing that turns this new period of Sufism into metaphysics was its systematical method, which made God a subject-matter (*mawḍū'*) and thereby moved it away from the traditional philosophical attitude which accepts God as

51 Qāḍi 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, trans. İlyas Çelebi (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2013), I, 64 vd.

52 About the claim see Ekrem Demirli, *Sadreddin Konevi'de Bilgi ve Varlık*, (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2015), 68-141; *İslam Metafiziğinde Tanrı ve İnsan: İbnü'l-Arabî ve Vahdet-i Vücûd Geleneği*, (İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınları, 2009), 118-143, 169-203; *İbnü'l-Arabî Metafiziği* (İstanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2013), 11-107.

53 Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, 108-112; cf. Serrâc, *İslam Tasavvufu*, 73-83.

one of the problems (*masā'il*) of metaphysics. In other respects, the principles of this metaphysics were divine names, which was the most crucial matter of Sufism because according to the thought of Ibn al-'Arabī and al-Qūnawī, all of our information will emanate from those names. Additionally, we are faced with a serious problem here, for handling the divine names as a means of knowledge leads us to reckon with the opinions of both theologians and philosophers. We should indicate here that both Ibn al-'Arabī and al-Qūnawī were aware of this fact. In this discussion, they consider philosophers and even the Mu'tazila as being within the *Ahl al-ta'īl* (deist) group and therefore ignore them. They therefore criticize the theologians' theory of attributes and put forward a new theory of divine names. We need to mention that this approach, due to its relation with theology, diverges from the understanding of early-period Sufism. Besides, Ibn al-'Arabī uses this viewpoint to approach the philosophers paradoxically. In any respect, the *mabādī* (principles) of understanding this new period of Sufism deserve to be handled as an autonomous thought.

We can consider *ahl al-ta'īl* as great opponents of Sufism who were formed under the guidance of Ibn al-'Arabī and al-Qūnawī. As opposed to a passive and unknowable understanding of God by grounding it upon revelation, they intended to present how metaphysics will be grounded, whereas *ibāhī tendencies* could be used to oppose *Sunnī Sufism*. The goal of this understanding is our ultimate knowledge about God, and a person can attain this knowledge via his or her maturation as a moral being. Here a question of periodization occurs in emergent conceptions. We can see this conceptualization in matters of *walāya* (guardianship) and *nubuwwa* (prophethood), even though Ibn al-'Arabī takes many notions from *Sunnī Sufism* and, as regards the thought of *al-insān al-kāmil* (the perfect human being) and guardianship, reinterprets them. Al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī is one of the leading figures of Ibn al-'Arabī in this matter, as are the great Sufis of the early period, some of whom are among his *imāms*.<sup>54</sup> While all of these move the two periods closer, the theoretical aspect of the issue is what separates them.

In this respect, we saw that beginning with the seventh Islamic century, Sufism entered a new period and why this period cannot be called *philosophical Sufism*. Another matter that needs to be underlined is the future of this understanding of Sufism. This new understanding continued its existence by means of the

54 In this matter related chapters of two following works can be studied comparatively. see al-hakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-awliyā*, ed. Abd al-waris Muhammad Ali (Beirut: Dār al-kütüb al-ilmiyya, 1999), 14-22; Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabī, *Futūhāt al-Mekkiyya* (Beirut, n.d.), II, 40-139; cf. Ibn Arabī, *Fütühāt-ı Mekkiyye*, trans. Ekrem Demirli, (İstanbul: Litera Yayınları, 2006-2012), VI, 207-429 ve VII, 15-89.

commentaries written in its main texts and shaped the emerging Sufi thought by developing a unique language and style. Particularly, the commentators of the *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam* and the *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* can be considered representatives of this period.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, this new period's works continued to exist because of these commentaries, which caused some problems. The foremost problem of this new period was the dominant tendency commentary tradition toward preferring a reconciliation. Due to this reconciliation new period of Sufism and *Sunnī Sufism* became closer; however, and more importantly, a partial diversion from the opinions of Ibn al-'Arabī and al-Qūnawī have been observed. In any respect, this new-period Sufism was established systematically, Sufis took part in the traditional struggle between philosophy and theology, and they caused some new problems and conceptions to arise within Islamic thought. Expressing this period's Sufism as "metaphysical Sufism" is a consequence that grew out of al-Qūnawī's works.

## Conclusion

Even though evaluating the science of *ḥāl* is a tough job, we attempted to divide it into three parts, or at least into 'two-and-a-half' parts. Most importantly, we indicated that in Sufi studies the central issue is the difficulty of determining a classification method. In our opinion, one can determine this method by establishing a correlation between the problems within the main texts. But for this effort to

55 Especially Arabic, Persian and Turkish commentaries written on these two works spread to an extended period of time and geographic regions in a way justifying the naming of "*waḥdat al-wujūd tradition*" – sometimes called as *Akbariyya*-. *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam* has more than one hundred commentaries written on it from this aspect it is in the position of book on which most commentaries have written in legacy of Islamic thought. Beginning with thirteenth century Sufis like Ismail b. Sawdakīn, Afif al-din al-Tilimsānī, Fakhr al-dīn al-'Irāqī and particularly Ṣadr al-dīn al-Qūnawī constituted the first link of this commentary tradition by means of explanatory books they wrote on *Fuṣūs*. In real sense the very first commentary is accepted to belong Muayyid al-dīn al-Jandī (d. 691/1292). Then al-Jandī's pupil Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1335) and al-Kāshānī's pupil Dāwūd al-Qaysarī wrote commentaries on *Fuṣūs*. Especially for al-Qaysarī's commentary many *ta'liqāt* have been written in Persian basin. And again in this period Alā al-dawla al-Simnānī, Rukn al-din Mas'ūd al-Shirāzī, Ibn Abbād al-Rundi, Ḥaydār al-Amulī are the prominent commentators of the period, and prominent names of Sūfī life in Anatolia like Yazıcıoğlu Kardeşler and Shaykh Badraddin Simāvi (d. 823/1420) have been considered as followers of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. *Fuṣūs* commentaries continued to be written after fourteenth century and commentaries of following names draw attention in this period Molla Jāmī, Sofyali Bālī Afandi, Ismail Anqarawī, Abdullah Bosnawī and Abd al-Ghanī al-Nabluṣī. And in the modern period Ahmed Avni Konuk (d. 1938) and Ekrem Demirli's *Fuṣūs* commentaries in Turkish constitute the last samples of this tradition. And again al-Qūnawī's work *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* which act as a key to understand Ibn al-'Arabī's thought constituted a commentary tradition. Names like Molla al-Fanāri, Kutb al-Din zāde al-Izniki, Molla Ahmed-i Ilāhi, Atpazāri Osman Fadhl-i Ilāhi, Abdurrahman Raḥimī, Ahmad b. Adbullah al-Kirimī and Malkoçzāde Mustafa Afendi wrote commentaries on *Miftāḥ*. For opinions of *waḥdat al-wujūd* tradition in discussions of metaphysics see Ekrem Demirli, *İslam Metafizisinde Tanrı ve İnsan: İbnü'l-Arabî ve Vahdet-i Vücūd Geleneği* (İstanbul: Kabalıcı Yayınları, 2009).

succeed, determining a hierarchy of texts and accepting the distinction between primary and secondary texts in Sufi thought are inevitable. After accepting this, the possibility of formulating a periodization upon the basis of the problems within the primary texts should be investigated. It appears that in this discussion, the easiest part is to place the texts that emerged beginning with Junayd al-Baghdādi to ground Sufi history.

At least in the case of studies conducted in Turkey, these texts are regarded as representing early-period of Sufism, and on this matter there is a general consensus. However, the main point is determining the place of Sufi understanding, which is represented by these texts between previous and next periods of Sufism. While assessing the early tendencies is difficult, this danger is not unique to Sufism. On the whole, writing the history of the process related with social life and city values as they emerged during Islam's transition from the Hejaz to the Eastern Mediterranean is a really tough job. Besides, at the present time the vagueness about early-period Sufism is valid for all of the religious sciences. As our knowledge about the issue increases, the vagueness surrounding Sufism will decrease.

Islam's encounter with the Eastern Mediterranean region's ancient legacy generated great conflicts in all areas. Relatively victorious people were shaken, and the Hejaz was turned into a longing. Muslims could settle there only if they could devise new understandings of knowledge and develop new opinions. At this point, movements constituting a basis for Sufism mostly developed as *secluded* individuals' movements – at least there are many reasons to regard the issue in this way. In time, the critical discourses of these individuals increased and thus they attracted attention to themselves. As a result, they started to turn into a religious community, which caused the movement to gain a more significant identity as a critical and strict type of *zuhd*, which separated itself from general *zuhd* movements, emerged.

As explained above, this was primarily a criticism of *kasb* (trade and wealth), marriage, participating in social life, and scientific production. All of these facts turned *zāhids* into irreconcilable people who broke away from city life. Afterwards people called them 'indolent' and took the city people as representative of the understanding of 'normative religion'. When these unrestrained movements inclined toward *ibāhi* tendencies, disengagements started to occur. In fact, after this all valid and deviant understandings of Sufism would be a matter of discussion. During this period, Sufism also began the process by which it gained an identity after its *zuhd* tendencies. We named this phase *Sunni Sufism* because during this time Sufism was striving to distinguish itself from deviant Sufism by trying to

attain a rank among the *Sunnī* sciences. Furthermore, it consciously identified the ‘opponent’ movements and, by criticizing their opinions, tried to develop an understanding that corresponded with the ‘*Sunnī* creed and practical life’. We called this the *Sunnī Sufism* phase of reconciling with *fiqh*, theology, and other religious sciences. We need to indicate that this understanding of Sufism is widely accepted by Sufi dervish orders and preserved until today. Nevertheless, we can not say that this period has surpassed and completely superseded by a new period, but rather it can be said that a new and broader phase of Sufism, known as the ‘metaphysical period’ or the ‘period of maturity’ has emerged. Ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Qūnawī regard this period as the ‘period of maturity’ and the ‘period of spiritual knowledge’ for all religious sciences. They interpret history up to this period and mention the periods of the Islamic community as the generation of companions, the generation of successors, and then the generation of their own period. According to them, this is the period during which the “tree starts to bear fruit.” The religious sciences attained their aim, and realize their purpose. What comes next is to be expected: regression. Besides by going backward from this time, Ibn Arabī and Qunawī intend to reconcile at least the great Sufis on the same opinions, and consider this as the accurate criterion of the method. However, after Imām al-Rabbānī and other Sufis came another interpretation, one that consolidated the disconnection between *Sunnī Sufism* and the metaphysical period.

Nevertheless, what matters for us is not who tells the truth, but rather the historical consistency of this classification. There are two obvious periods, namely, the *Sunnī Sufism* period’ and the ‘metaphysical period’, and their reconciliation is not easy. Besides, along with the second period the reconciliation between *Sunnī Sufism* and other religious sciences deteriorated again. If Ibn al-‘Arabī and al-Qūnawī, in other words the thought of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, did not exist, Sufism’s place among the religious sciences would be consolidated as *fiqh al-bāṭin*, but its authority in the field of religious knowledge would be weakened. Even though Sufism’s place among the religious sciences of theology and *fiqh* weakened along with Ibn al-‘Arabī, it did gain a theory of knowledge and existence. Even if it partially moved away from the religious sciences, it strengthening itself during a new area: metaphysics.

The most significant characteristic of such a classification is reading the relevant texts in the context of determined problems and its consistency in terms of finding answers to those questions. Beyond any doubt some other classifications can also be found in Sufi studies; in fact, they should be found. But this classification is considered as the closest one to comprehending the whole.

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