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The Grey Falcon

The Life and Teaching of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

By

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the summer of 2007 while the rest of Baghdad was engulfed under the oppression of daily car bombings and unyielding sectarian violence, there was an area of the city where the pervasive ferocity of the aggressive mood seemed all but absent. This was an area where the local residents felt safe enough to venture out and about, relax at the local cafes, and mingle with other people, regardless of their sect or religious persuasion. The centrepiece of this area, the Gaylani Mosque, has stood in the same location for more than nine hundred years and houses the shrine of its patron, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, after whose epithet the entire area takes its name. Many of the residents of Bāb al-Shaykh put down this incredible blessing as a clear manifestation of the *baraka* of who, for them, was their pride and local saint. Their belief was further confirmed for them by the scores of pilgrims who arrived daily to visit this shrine, despite the dire political situation. For the visitors, as for the residents, the feeling of safety in the protection of their destiny was provided by their celebrated benefactor, the Ghawth al-Aʿẓam.[1]

The importance of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī to the Muslim world is unquestionable; not only is he esteemed and revered as the founder of the largest Sufi order in the world today, the Qādiriyya, but he is also hailed as a pious scholar and formidable preacher even by those not concerned with the Qādirī order or Sufism in general. While the average Muslim individual might not be familiar with a well-known Muslim scholar from the past such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), they are likely to be aware of Jīlānī. He is certainly better known in some regions than others, but the familiarity of his name may be compared to a figure such as St. Paul or St. Patrick in Europe. Furthermore, for many Muslims, Jīlānī is not just a historical personality but rather a figure of living importance whose spirit continues to provide spiritual sustenance and aid to those who request and require it. He is

1 See the article that highlights this phenomenon, Sabrina Tavernise and Karim Hilmi, 'In Mixed Slice of Baghdad, Old Bonds Defy War', *New York Times*, November 13 2007. Also see the online video by Karim Hilmi, http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/world/20071112_BABALSHEIKH_FEATURE/index.html last accessed 2 November 2017. The Ghawth al-Aʿẓam or 'the greatest helper' is a title given to Jīlānī by those who revere him. It is not meant to signify that he is the greatest helper there in existence—for that would be reserved for God—but rather to indicate that he is the greatest person to have been a *ghawth* and continues to be so. On the *ghawth* see chapter seven below.

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known by a variety of names and titles including, Sulṭān al-Awliyā' (King of the Saints), Muḥiyyiddīn (Reviver of the Faith), and Bāz al-Ashhab (The Grey Falcon).[2]

'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was a famous personality in Baghdad during his lifetime, as is clear from the chronicles of the era, and his fame had most likely spread outside the city too. Some of his sons after him continued in his work of guiding and teaching students and disciples, and moved beyond Baghdad. For example his son 'Īsā moved to Egypt and taught there, while his son 'Abd al-Wahhāb seems to have been at work in Damascus for a while. His mosque-complex where he was buried continued as a place of teaching and instruction, and his descendants (aside from some brief interruptions) continued through the centuries to hold possession of this sanctuary, and continue to do so until the present day. As can be seen by the reports of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Yūnus, Jīlānī's progeny were well known and well regarded in Baghdad a generation or two after him, and it seems that they, along with certain disciples of his, were pivotal in establishing and spreading the Qādirī order by spreading Sufism through his name. The figure and person of Jīlanī constitutes a central aspect of the order and this is highlighted by the important role of the Baghdad mosque-complex as the spiritual headquarters of the order. Over time, branches of the order established varying practices, but all gave and continue to give their professed allegiance to Baghdad.

With all of this in mind, it is not surprising to find a countless number of works on Jīlānī in virtually every traditional Muslim language. It is however surprising to find a complete lack of comparative academic work in Western languages on this same person, a lack that can be considered a lacuna in the study of Islamic Spirituality, Sufism and Islam in general. His name certainly turns up in many books and articles, especially on Sufism, yet he is usually mentioned only as the apparent founder of an order, and often with a remark about the fact that we have very limited accurate information on this particular individual.

This present work on Jīlānī does not claim to fill this hole, for that would certainly require more than a single study, but it nevertheless attempts to clarify certain basic facts concerning Jīlānī, as well as attempting to open up discus-

2 This latter name (sometimes Bāz Allāh al-Ashhab) is said to derive from the fact that the falcon is a loyal bird that does the bidding of its master without question, always faithfully returning to the master's hand, and that Jīlānī holds such a position with God. He is quoted as having said: "All the other birds talk and do not act, whereas the falcon acts without talking, and this is how the glove of kings came to be its perch." Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Tādifī, *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2005) 29.

sion on this subject and facilitate further study, that we may in time have a fuller and more accurate picture than currently exists; of Jīlānī himself, and of the role that he played in the development of his milieu and of Sufism in general. In the present study, the question of whether he was a Sufi at all is addressed through an analysis of his teaching as found in his works, with a specific emphasis on what can be found on his theological and mystical thought. Before moving onto an overview of what this study contains, it is necessary to survey the literature on Jīlānī as currently exists.

1 Literature Survey

This survey will take into consideration both works by Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī himself, and those associated with him, from biographies and hagiographies to commentaries on his texts. The second category contains a great many works in traditional Muslim languages, and very few in Western languages—all of which are of course modern. In view of this I will begin by mentioning the classical texts on Jīlānī that are available, before turning to the more modern works. I feel it is also important to distinguish between two types of classical text, a distinction that I believe is very important when evaluating Jīlānī.

All works associated with Jīlānī may firstly be divided into two categories, those that he produced and those that he did not. The former category, which we may term 'The Works of Jīlānī,' include his writings and recorded oratory, and of course any translations of these into other languages. The translations are many, perhaps because his works were meant for a general audience rather than a scholarly or elite one specifically. The latter category of works about Jīlānī is in the most part biographies of Jīlānī in one way or another, and it is here where it will become useful to divide them up into two further categories: hagiographies and biographies. This distinction is of course somewhat vague and difficult to implement strictly, but it is not meant to be exact and will nevertheless provide us with a very useful and important classifier. Hagiographies, here, are those works whose sole intention is to present Jīlānī as a saintly figure, and thus by definition recount his miracles and saint-like activities, often within a general biographical framework. Biographies, on the other hand, will hereon refer to those works whose intention is merely to recount the events of Jīlānī's life without any specific agenda in considering whether Jīlānī was a saint or somebody who performed miracles. This of course does not mean that they may not include such things in their account, but it is their initial intent that is most important here. These biographies are taken mostly from prospographical works such as the *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*

of Ibn al-ʿImād, and from the biographies that are included as a standard in most classical Arabic historical works such as the *Muntaẓam* of Ibn al-Jawzī.[3]

1.1 *Works of Jīlānī*

The following is a brief description of the commonly recognised works of Jīlānī. A more extensive list along with an evaluation and specification of the works to be utilised in this study follows below in the section entitled 'Primary Source Material.'

Probably the most widely available work of Jīlānī is the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*.[4] It has been translated into many languages and into English at least twice.[5] The book contains seventy-eight titled discourses that begin with "On the Essential Tasks of Every True Believer," continue through such wide ranging topics such as "On Promises," "On Abstinence," and "On a Kind of Inner Knowledge," and end with "On the People Devoted to Spiritual Struggle and Self Examination, and the Masters of Resolve." The content of each discourse seems to be taken from the speech of Jīlānī, for they always begin with "The Shaykh said …" However there is a definite order and organisation to the discourses, indicating that they were intentionally organised into the book's final format. Whether Jīlānī did this himself or whether it was done by one of his students is not clear.[6] It is claimed that it was dictated to his son ʿAbd al-Razzāq.[7] However in the introduction to the book, which is written by Jīlānī, he explains that the contents are "words that arose and emerged for me as openings from the unseen." Whether these words would have originally 'emerged' as speeches given to students or others is not completely clear. Nevertheless, he does clarify that "these words were then organised into the most fitting format for seekers of the truth and students," indicating that the work was already in the format of a book during the lifetime of Jīlānī.[8]

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3 ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* (10; Damascus & Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1995), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* (17; Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992).

4 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2003).

5 Shaikh ʾAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani, *Revelations of the Unseen*, trans. Muhtar Holland (Fort Lauderdale: al-Baz Publishing, 1992), Abdul Qadir Gilani, *Futuh al-Ghaib* (*Revelations of the Unseen*), trans. Muhammad Aftab-Ud-Din Ahmad (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1996).

6 ʿĀshiq Ilāhī Mīrṭī in the introduction to his Urdu translation of the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* claims that the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* was written for Jilānī's son ʿĪsā, see ʿĀshiq Ilāhī Mīrtī, *Fuyūḍ Yazdānī, Tarjama li-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* (Dehli: Rabbānī Book Depot, n.d.) 11.

7 ʿAbd al-Razzāk al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1994) 324.

8 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 9.

The book's core message is based around mastering the *nafs* or self, in order to bring oneself into line with the divine will. One of the primary methods advocated for this is through the promotion of a high level of *zuhd* or asceticism. The book also has a strong message of accepting *qadr* or destiny, whether this is in the form of blessings or tribulation. However it is not my intent to go into great detail here concerning the contents of this book, as that can be found in Part 2. It is worth briefly mentioning that Ibn Taymiyya has a commentary on the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, which can be found in the *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, and which has also been published as a separate text.[9] The commentary is not very extensive as it only covers discourses one, six, ten and eighteen; or only four discourses out of a possible seventy-eight. However the commentary on the discourses that he does interpret is quite long, and includes interesting discussions on such topics as *qadr*, the *nafs* and *fanā'*, as well as regularly demonstrating his reverence and awe of Jīlānī.

The *Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*, written by Jīlānī's own hand as a text and not as recorded speech, is a manual that takes its reader from the very basics of how to enter Islam, pray, fast, give charity and perform the pilgrimage to getting started on the Sufi path, with instruction on good manners and etiquette, correct theological beliefs, commendable practices and much else in between.[10] The book's intention is thus to act as a complete guide on *islām*, *īmān and iḥsān*, and in Jīlānī's own words was composed to "clarify the right way to proceed on the path to God."[11] The book does not really fit into any regular category of Islamic text, but may be compared to Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-Qulūb* or Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

The *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* is a collection of recorded sermons that were delivered between the years 545/1151 and 546/1152.[12] Each sermon is introduced with a note by the scribe or recorder mentioning the date it was given and whether it took place in the *ribāṭ* or the *madrasa*. The recorder also sometimes gives descriptions of Jīlānī's state and behaviour during particular sermons, and sometimes just general information such as how he would start or end each session. The sermons are supposed to have been collected and put together by his son ʿAbd al-Razzāq, but the last sermon found in the Arabic edition does not cite a date or location, and in addition to this is considerably longer than any

9 Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām Ibn Taymiyya, *Sharḥ Futūḥ al-Ghayb* (Damascus: Dār al-Qādirī, 2005).

10 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2001).

11 Ibid. 11.

12 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, n.d.).

of the previous ones.[13] It is also clear from a reading of this last sermon that it must actually be made up of the recordings of many different sessions. This may explain why it is often published as a separate text, sometimes under the title *Malfūẓāt*.[14] Nevertheless, aside from the lack of a date and location, it seems fit to be published with the rest of the text because it is otherwise also a recording of his speeches given to the public. Mention may also be made in this regard to the book titled *Jalāʾ al-Khawātir*, which is also a collection of sermons, some of them overlapping with ones already present in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*. However the work is not currently published in Arabic although it is available in English and Urdu, the translations having been done directly from an Arabic manuscript.[15]

The *Sirr al-Asrār* is another text that has clearly been written and not based upon recorded speech.[16] The introduction states that it was written for a seeker of the path who wanted to know generally about the *sharīʿa* (law), *ṭarīqa* (spiritual path) and *ḥaqīqa* (reality). It is divided into twenty-four short sections, covering all manner of things from cosmology to remembrance practices (*dhikr*) to the rightly guided Sufis. In essence it serves as a short guide to the spiritual path and in this way fits in very well as a sequel text to the *Ghunya*.

A work that is often claimed to be written by Jīlānī is the *Fuyuḍāt al-Rabbānī* of Ismāʿīl Ibn Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Qādirī.[17] The book does indeed contain many prayers that probably come from Jīlānī, but the text has clearly been compiled along with his own additions by Qādirī. The author aside from giving *awrād* and prayers that come from Jīlānī, also gives definitions and information on seven types of *nafs*, as well as some *qaṣīda* poetry and methods for doing *tawaṣṣul* (using a pious person in petition to God) through Jīlānī.

Finally, mention must be made of a Qurʾānic exegesis, attributed to Jīlānī, entitled *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī*, and published in five volumes in 2008.[18] Although it is published under this name, the title given to it by the author in the introduction is different and reads: *al-Fawātiḥ al-Ilāhiyya wa al-Mafātiḥ al-Ghayba al-*

13 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Malfūẓāt*, trans. Muhtar Holland (Fort Lauderdale: al-Baz Publishing, 1992) xiii.

14 See for example the English translation of this last sermon as a separate text, ibid.

15 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Jalāʾ al-Khwāṭir*, trans. Muhtar Holland (Fort Lauderdale: Al-Baz, 1997). This version is partly based on the Urdu translation in areas where the Arabic manuscript being used was deficient.

16 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005).

17 Ismaʿīl Ibn Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Qādirī, *Fuyuḍāt al-Rabbānī* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā Bābī Ḥalabī, n.d).

18 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī* (1; Istanbul: Markaz al-Jīlānī, 2009).

Muwaḍḍaḥa lil-Kalim al-Qur'āniyya wa al-Ḥikm al-Furqāniyya, which roughly translates as, "the divine openings and illuminating revelations of the unseen concerning the words of the Qur'ān and the wisdom of the discerning criterion." This original title seems to bear resemblance to the titles of some of the other works of Jīlānī, which also indicate the contents to contain 'openings' and 'illuminating revelations' from the unseen. The editor of the work Muḥammad Fāḍil Geylānī also points out that the work is not a traditional *tafsīr* that relies upon knowledge and understanding in the way that most *tafsīrs* do, but is rather a work that relies upon inspirations, suggestions and impressions that form upon and awaken the spirit.[19] The work is thus an interesting *tafsīr* because it is not based on a rational understanding of the verses, but is rather an account of the effects that these inspirations had upon the author. In this regard it is clearly to be classified as an esoteric *tafsīr*. In the introduction the author writes,

> My brothers, may God keep you, do not blame me for what you find me upon … it is the way of God that he can manifest from his knowledge what is hidden, and can bring out what is concealed in the unseen … and do not look upon this (work) with the view of intellectualisation, but rather with an eye of contemplation, with personal experience and feeling, not with proofs and evidences, through exposure and witnessing, and not through assessment and calculation.[20]

This is very similar to what Jīlānī wrote in the introduction to the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* as we saw above. As regards to its format, the *Tafsīr* does not quote verses and then proceed to give an explanation, as some exegeses do, but rather weaves the commentary in with the verses to produce a single unified prose, from the beginning of each *sūra* or chapter until its end. Each *sūra* is also preceded with an introduction and followed by a conclusion, which provide a brief opening and closing to the particular *sūra* as a whole. Overall, and as mentioned above, the *Tafsīr* really is a unique work, and without a doubt merits its own study and analysis. However as already indicated, there is considerable doubt over the authorship of this work, and this will be dealt with below.[21]

19 Ibid. 28.
20 Ibid. 33–34.
21 See chapter 1.3.

2 Primary Source Material

The *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (GAL) of Carl Brockelmann mentions fifty-two works attributed to ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, deposited in various libraries and collections around the world.[22] In considering which of these works one should accept and utilise for analysis there arises the issue of authenticity and content. With regard to content, it can be ascertained that fifteen of the works are collections of poetry while another eighteen are collections of prayers in such varying forms as *ṣalawāt, aḥzāb ʿadʿiya* and *awrād*. Aside from the fact that it is a somewhat difficult task to ascertain if Jīlānī—whether in part of full—wrote or composed any of these is the fact that they do not really give us any significant contribution in clarifying the thought of Jīlānī as expressed in his writings. The remaining nineteen works are neither poetry nor prayers, the majority of them being short single subject tracts (*risālāt*) of one sort or another. One of the books, number 31 (*Durar al-Maʿānī*), is a commentary by Yusuf al-Dawsī on another previously numbered work (7. *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*) while number 24 (*Farīdat asnāʾ al-Daḥāʾir*) which concerns 'details of his drive to the highest sphere' seems to be *about* Jīlānī rather than by him. A work described by Brockelmann as a short Sufi treatise in the British Library India Office, when checked seems to be written by a different author and has no mention of Jīlānī anywhere.

Thus we end up with the following list of sixteen works to consider (the number in the bracket after the title indicating the number given to that work in the GAL):

1. *Ghunya lī Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (1)
2. *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* (2)
3. *Kitāb Maqāmāt al-Sulūk al-Ṭarīq ila Allāh Taʿālā* (3)
4. *Khawwās al-Fātiḥa* (4)
5. *Jalāʾ al-Khātir* (6)
6. *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* (7)
7. *Waṣiya* (8)
8. *Ḥikam al-Mawāʿiẓ* (9)
9. *Asmāʾ al-ʿAẓīma lī Ṭarīq ila Allāh Taʿālā* (10)
10. *Kibrīt al-Aḥmar* (26)
11. *Jawharat al-Kamāl* (27)

22 Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (1; Berlin: Brill, 1898–1949) 435–436, suppl. 1, 777–779. Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: Brill, 1967–2000) does not add any further works, and nor does Gūrgīs al-ʿAwwād, *Fahāris al-Makhṭuṭāt al-ʿArabiyya fī al-ʿĀlam* (Kuwait: Maʿhad al-Makhṭuṭāt al-ʿArabiyya, 1994).

12. *Mukhtaṣar fī ʿilm al-Dīn* (28)
13. *Jawāhir al-Raḥmān* (29)
14. *Sirr al-Asrār* (30)
15. *Risāla fī Ṭarīq Allāh al-Wadūd* (32)
16. *Risālat al-Ghawth* (33)

From these sixteen works only two (the *Ghunya* and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*) have more than twenty manuscripts extant while a third (the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*) has just over ten. The *Jalāʾ al-Khātir*, *Sirr al-Asrār*, *Asmāʾ al-ʿAẓīma* and *Khawwās al-Fātiḥa* have eight, four, three and two manuscripts respectively, while all the remaining works have only a single known manuscript. Maybe not surprisingly the works that have been published in Arabic and which are in wide distribution are the *Ghunya*, *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* and *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, although *Sirr al-Asrār*—with its fewer manuscripts—is also widely available and all these four works have also been translated into English, the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* and *Sirr al-Asrār* twice each. The *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and the *Jalāʾ al-Khātir* are both collections of sermons that Jīlānī gave and as such are different to the *Ghunya*, the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* and the *Sirr al-Asrār*, all three clearly put together as books. Thus although the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* would lend itself to be interpreted as having originated in sermons, one can discern a clear intent behind the organisation of the text, and it therefore reads very differently to the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* which, as a collection of sermons given over a few consecutive months, is in a more or less chronological order.

The work *Jalāʾ al-Khātir* has not, to my knowledge, been published in Arabic as a separate and standalone text, although it is sometimes added on to the end of *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* as a final and very long oration. The work has been directly translated into English from the manuscript, and as a collection of Jīlānī's orations is very similar to the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* if not a continuation or addition to it, and there are in fact entire sections that overlap. The English translator in his introduction points out that there were problems in trying to present a verified whole text, with parts of the manuscript missing, although he was able to fill in the gaps using an old published Urdu edition of the text.[23] As this text seems to imitate the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* in both style and content, it would seem prudent to rely on the sixty or so sermons in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* as enough oratory material to work with. This is not to question the authenticity of the *Jalāʾ al-Khātir*, but rather highlights the problem of obtaining a full and complete version of this work.

23 al-Jīlānī, *Jalāʾ al-Khwāṭir* xix. It is not clear which manuscript the published Urdu edition was based upon.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the *Sirr al-Asrār*. As previously mentioned, the text is in print in both Arabic and English and unlike the *Jalā' al-Khātir*, the printed editions have been able to rely on more than one full and complete manuscript. It would make sense then to include the work along with the *Ghunya*, *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* and the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* as a text worthy of analysis. This was indeed my original intent, but during the course of reading the *Sirr al-Asrār*, I came across some peculiarities in the actual content, which I wish to now highlight further.

To begin with there are one or two things in the text which seem at odds to what Jīlānī has written in his other works and although these cause a great deal of doubt in one's mind, it is possible to explain them away. There is however a greater problem and that is the quotation of other texts that were composed by authors that lived after the death of Jīlānī, and this occurs on a few occasions. The first of these is a mention of a *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic commentary) of al-Qāḍī regarding the interpretation of the fourth verse of the first *sura*: "You alone do we worship and of You alone do we seek help." Al-Qāḍī is said to have commented that this contains "an allusion to the spiritual state of one who learns by direct experience, and of his migration from the state of absence to the state of presence."[24] The first Qur'ān commentator who comes to mind when one thinks of the title al-Qāḍī is ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿUmar al-Bayḍāwī. On referral to the *tafsīr* of Bayḍāwī one finds within his commentary for this verse the above statement, said using exactly the same words and in exactly the same way.[25] However Bayḍāwī was born more than fifty years after Jīlānī had passed away and so could not have featured in any work that Jīlānī may have composed. Nevertheless it is a known fact that Bayḍāwī based his *tafsīr* on Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr*, known as the *Kashshāf*.[26] Zamakhsharī was an avid Muʿtazilī and his *tafsīr* is not free of Muʿtazilī ideas. It has been assumed that Bayḍāwī attempted to keep all the useful information from the *Kashshāf* in his own *tafsīr*, while at the same time cleansing it of Muʿtazilī ideas. Now Zamakhsharī was an older contemporary of Jīlānī and so it may have been this *tafsīr* that was originally referred to, but was exchanged in title by later copyists of the *Sirr al-Asrār* in order to distance the book and Jīlānī from a known Muʿtazilī text. Unfortunately the *Kashshāf* does not seem to provide the interpretation that Bayḍāwī offers, and it would seem that this was something original from Bayḍāwī.

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24 al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār* 41.

25 ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿUmar al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā, n.d.) 31.

26 On this work see, Andrew Lane, *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qur'ān Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

The second such occurrence is a mention of a *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, whose author we cannot be sure of.[27] Of course today virtually the only Qurʾānic work referred to as the *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* is the *Mafātīḥ al-Qurʾān* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and the work is even usually published under the title of *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*.[28] If this is the work that is being referred to then it is again problematic because although Rāzi was born before Jīlānī passed away, at the time of his death, he would have at most been only eighteen years of age and most definitely had not yet composed his *tafsīr*. However on surveying this *tafsīr* one does not find the relevant interpretation and this leads us to conclude that it must have been a different *tafsīr* that was being referred to. The other *tafsīrs* that may have been known as *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* prior to Jīlānī are that of Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī and Aḥmad al-Thaʿlabī, but neither of these brings up the required interpretation either.[29] This quote then remains unverified. The third occurrence is again less clear-cut than the first. It concerns a quote from a book referred to as '*al-Mirṣād*,' the quote explaining the point that saints with charismatic gifts (*karamāt*) are veiled from sight and that these gifts are a primary stage (*maqām*); whichever of them pass beyond it successfully can attain to further stages.[30] It seems to me that the book being referred to here is perhaps the *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād min al-Mabdaʾ ilā al-Maʿād* of Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī (573/1177–654/1256), but this author also lived after Jīlānī.[31] There are a few other references to texts such as *al-Majmaʿ*, *Bustān al-Sharīʿa*, and *al-Maẓhar* but I have not been able to conclusively find out which texts these extracts come from.[32]

None of this, however, conclusively proves that the *Sirr al-Asrār* was not originally composed by Jīlānī and in fact the majority may actually have been, but over time had certain additions creep into the text. There is also the fact that editions published in the Indian Subcontinent differ to those published in Arab countries by having certain extra paragraphs, such as the one detailing how

27 al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār* 19.

28 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 8 vols. (Bulaq: n.s, 1872).

29 Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 30 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1980), Aḥmad al-Thaʿlabī, *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2002).

30 al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār* 15.

31 This text has been translated and is available as Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *The path of God's bondsmen from origin to return* (*Mirṣād al-ʿIbād min al-Mabdaʾ ilā al-Maʿād*)*: a Sufi compendium*, trans. Hamid Algar (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1982) 537.

32 al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār* 19, 22, 26 and 53. Thus *al-Majmaʿ* may refer to the *Majmaʿ al-Baḥrayn* of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad (d. 440) and *al-Maẓhar* could refer to the *Maẓhar al-Athār fī ʿIlm al-Asrār* of Aḥmad Ibn Isḥāq al-Qayṣarī.

to pray the *salāt al-tasbīḥ* (a type of supererogatory prayer) according to the Ḥanafī rite and added as if written by the author himself. The language of the *Sirr al-Asrār* on the whole however, seems to me to clearly be that of Jīlānī, or otherwise forged by a very good imitator. With all these considerations in mind, and regardless of the fact that I personally believe the majority of this work to be the composition of Jīlānī, it seems only right not to utilise it in this study.

We may also here make mention of the *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī*, which was reviewed above in the literature survey. The editor and publisher of this work, Muḥammad Fāḍil Geylānī, has been able to ascertain the existence of six manuscripts of the *Tafsīr*. The published edition has relied mainly upon a single manuscript but has also benefited from crosschecking against another two manuscripts. A fourth manuscript, which one of these latter two was based upon, is known to be somewhere in Syria but as yet remains lost. A fifth Indian manuscript exists from the year 622/1225, a mere 61 years after the death of Jīlānī, but this copy has one of its volumes missing. I personally attempted to locate this manuscript in Hyderabad, and a search was conducted across a number of libraries and collections in that city. Unfortunately the manuscript was not found, and it could only be ascertained by word of mouth that it had once been in the collections of the Osmania University. Finally there is a manuscript in existence that was written by Jīlānī himself. The manuscript, as attested to by Sayyid ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib al-Kīlanī, the director of the Qādirī Library in Baghdad, was present in the Qadiri Library originally, but was lost a few hundred years ago. It then turned up in Syria some time later. However at present it is not known where in Syria the manuscript may be, perhaps having been moved out of the country entirely, and thus for now must be considered lost.[33] As was previously mentioned, there is considerable doubt over the authorship of this work. Both Ḥājī Khalīfa in *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* and Kaḥḥāla in *Muʿjam al-Muʾallifīn* list this work under the title *al-Fawātiḥ al-Ilāhiyya wa al-Mafātiḥ al-Ghayba al-Muwaḍḍaḥa lil-Kalim al-Qurʾāniyya wa al-Ḥikm al-Furqāniyya*, and as having been written by Niʿmatullāh al-Nakhjawānī, a Sufi Qādirī of the sixteenth century (d. 920/1514).[34] The availability of the autograph manuscript or the Indian manuscript would rule out Nakhjawānī as the author, as the work would then be known to have existed much earlier. However as neither manuscript is to be found, the situation remains unresolved. The available manuscripts in places do refer to the work as the *Tafsīr*

33 al-Jīlānī, *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī* 25–26.

34 Muṣṭafā Ibn ʿAbd Allāh, Kātib Celebī, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn ʿan Asmāʾ al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*, 2 vols, (2; Istanbul, Maarif Matbaasi, 1943) 1292, ʿUmar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-Muʾallifīn*, 7 vols, (4; Damascus: Maṭbaʿa al-Taraqqī, 1961) 37.

of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, but this is not enough evidence to base a conclusive verdict upon. It is interesting to note that many members of the Jīlānī family believe that the work is in some way connected to him, having long been aware that he did indeed write a *tafsīr*. Jamāl al-Dīn Fāliḥ al-Kīlānī, having compared it to Jīlānī's other writings, believes that the work in origin is that of Jīlānī, but that it has been later edited and revised by Nakhjawānī.[35] The work needs a more detailed and accurate assessment—something that is beyond the scope of this book—and has thus been ignored in the present study.

There remain then three texts that are relevant for our purpose, and that may be utilised with confidence: the *Ghunya*, the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* and the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*. A reassuring factor in the choice of these three texts is the earliest explicit mention of Jīlānī's works that can be found in any biographical work. Ibn Kathīr in his *Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* states that Jīlānī composed a book called the *Ghunya* and another called the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* while Ibn Rajab—writing around the same time—states that Jīlānī wrote the *Ghunya* and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, and that his students collected many of his sermons which were also available at the time.[36] We can rest assured then that by middle of the eighth Islamic century these three texts were known and in circulation.

2.1 *Biographical Works*

As mentioned above, what we have termed biographies for Jīlānī, are mainly to be found within prospograhical and historical works. The earliest of these is by Jīlānī's contemporary, Ibn al-Jawzī. Unfortunately his entry for Jīlānī does not exceed a very brief paragraph, for as Dhahabī would later comment, "the jealousy of Ibn al-Jawzī did not permit him to write any more about the life of Jīlānī than he did, because of the hatred that was in his heart for ʿAbd al-Qādir," but there is a more detailed discussion of that particular matter later on.[37] What is important here is what he did mention in that paragraph, which was the year of his birth and the date of his death, some of his teachers in Ḥadīth and *fiqh*, and the fact that his preaching attracted such a large crowd that his *madrasa*

35 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Kīlānī, *Jughrafiyya al-Bāz al-Ashhab* (Fes: al-Munaẓẓima al-Maghribiyya lil-Tarbiyya wa al-Thiqafa wa al-ʿUlūm, 2014).

36 Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya p. 270, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, 2 vols. (1; Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 198x) 296.

37 Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 277. For a fuller discussion of Ibn al-Jawzī's relationship with Jīlānī see chapter eight below.

had to be expanded.[38] Ibn al-Jawzī's grandson, Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī quoted from his grandfather and then added some of his own material to give us a somewhat longer biography.[39]

Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Rajab in the biographical entries of their respective history works both give us the very useful information that Jīlānī wrote the *Ghunya* and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, and that his students collected many of his sermons, some of which reach us as the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*.[40] They are important because they are early confirmations of the more famous works of Jīlānī that were clearly in circulation by that time. Although Ibn Kathīr's biography is not much longer than Ibn al-Jawzī's, Ibn Rajab's is a good twenty-five pages in modern print. Along with Dhababī's biography, these two are early accounts by authors that were very well trained in evaluating the credibility and veracity of transmitters of reports, and thus very critical in the reports they accepted and included in their biographies.[41] Both authors however, show an immense respect for Jīlānī, both for his intellectual as well as spiritual characteristics and qualities.

A somewhat later but still very useful biography is that of Ibn al-ʿImād.[42] Unlike the previous two authors, Ibn al-ʿImād does not give reports but rather simply writes on his own authority as well as quoting what other famous scholars have said about him. His biography gives us some information that we would nowadays expect as standard fare such as his physical appearance, but which is not found in the previously mentioned biographies. There are many other biographies, in virtually every historical book that covers Jīlānī's period as well as most general prosopographical works such as the *Kitāb al-Wāfī al-Wafayāt* of Ṣafadī, the *Tabaqāt al-Kubrā* of Shaʿrānī and the *Mirʾāt al-Jinān* of Yāfʿī.[43]

38 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam* 173.

39 Sibṭ Ibn al- Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, ed. James Richard Jewitt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907) 164–166.

40 Ismāʿīl Ibn ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, 11 vols. (1; Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988) 270, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2; Riyadh: Maktaba al-ʿUbaykān, 2004) 187–212.

41 Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan.

42 Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* 330–336.

43 Khalīl al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt* (19; Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2000) 26–28, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Aḥmad al-Shaʿrānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 2 vols. (1; s.l.: s.n., n.d.) 109–111, ʿAbdullāh b. Asad al-Yāfʿī, *Mirʾāt al-Janān* (1; Hyderabad Deccan: Oriental Publication, 1919) 347–366.

2.2 *Hagiographical Works*

There are too many works of this type for us to detail here, even if we were to consider only those in Arabic, and thus the works enumerated here are not exhaustive by any means. However it would appear that the majority—if not all—the works in this category are based upon two principal compositions. The other works for the most part repeat the information available in these two and sometimes sprinkle some further information or reports, but rarely anything that is of major significance. The first of these principal works is the *Bahjat al-Asrār* of ʿAlī Ibn Yūsuf al-Shaṭṭanawfī (d. 713/1314).[44] Its author, an Egyptian scholar who specialised in Qur'ān recitation (*qirā'a*), put together this work just over a hundred or so years after Jīlānī's death.

The book takes as its starting point Jīlānī's famous utterance during a crowded lecture that, "This foot of mine is on the neck of all the saints," a statement which it provides with full chains of narration (*isnād*) going back from the people that Shaṭṭanawfī heard it from, to the people that were present in Jīlānī's gathering that day. The author spends significant effort on this statement, giving reports as to the persons present, those who commented upon it, and those who claimed that it was uttered as an order from God. Beyond this the book gives excerpts from speeches and sayings of Jīlānī, as well as noting many of the miracles he performed, and the praise and respect that other scholars had for him. Everything that is reported in the book has a chain and often multiple chains of narration for it, perhaps in an attempt to make the reports verifiable by those scholars expert in chain verification. One such scholar who examined the book was Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), who in his own biographical entry on Jīlānī remarked that, "The Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Shaṭṭanawfī has put together a lengthy work in three volumes on his (Jīlānī's) life and work, where he has produced milk and cud in equal quantities, so to say, mixing true statements with false ones, these being given on the authority of persons with no standing or worth … In general however, his miracles are recorded by completely sound chains of narration (*tawātur*) and he (Jīlānī) left no-one after him like himself."[45] Thus in short Dhahabī's verdict on the book is that although many of the miracles and statements recorded there are verifiably sound, there are many others that, according to him, are

44 ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Shaṭṭanawfī, *Bahja al-Asrār* (Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya 1999).

45 The Arabic text and translation of Dhahabī's biography of Jīlānī from his *Sayr Aʿlām al-Nubalā'* along with its translation was prepared by Margoliouth as a journal article and can be found as D.S. Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan, *JRAS* (1907), 267–310, 287. It is to Margoliouth's text that I will refer to whenever making use of Dhahabī's biography.

false and narrated by unverifiable persons. This is an interesting conclusion from such a scholar to say the least. Nevertheless and regardless of the text's weak reports, it became one of the major sources for people writing about Jīlānī.

The other major hagiographical work is the *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir* of Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Tādifī (d. 963/1555).[46] Although this text was written a few hundred years after the *Bahja*, it seems to have become quite a popular book on Jīlānī soon after its writing. It is very similar to the *Bahja*, except that it is less concerned about the famous utterance of Jīlānī and in general gives far fewer chains of narration for its reports overall. It has a section on his attributes and miracles, a large section on the sons and grandsons of Jīlānī, which makes mention of them as well as giving some reports about them, a section on the sayings of Jīlānī on different topics and matters, some of which are taken directly from his works, and a section on great saints and scholars who have commented upon Jīlānī.

There are many other hagiographical works on Jīlānī; Mehmed Ali Aini in his work mentions more than forty, some of which are unfortunately unavailable and perhaps no longer extant.[47] An exact number of how many works must altogether have been written is obviously impossible to judge, but it would surely not be an overestimate to think that they must number in the hundreds. Some of the more famous and interesting authors that have written books on Jīlānī include ʿUmar Ibn ʿAlī Ibn al-Mulaqqin, the author of the *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyā'*, Jaʿfar al-Barzanjī, the author of the celebrated *mawlid* work *ʿIqd al-Jawhar fī Mawlid al-Nabī*, Muḥāmmad Ibn Yaʿqūb al-Fayrūzabādī, author of the *Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, author of the renowned commentary on *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, Aḥmad al-Qasṭāllānī, author of the famous biography on the Prophet, *Mawāhib al-Laduniyya*, al-ʿIzz Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, who wrote one in the form of *qaṣīda* poetry, the great multitalented scholar, Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī, the famous Indian traditionist, ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Dehlawī, the founder of the Sanussi order, Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī al-Sanussi, and the author of *Nūr al-Sāfir*, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Aydarūsī al-Yamanī.[48]

A book that somewhat stands out in this category is the *Sayf al-Rabbānī fī l-ʿUnuq al-Muʿtariḍ ʿalā al-Ghawth al-Jīlānī* of Muḥammad Ibn ʿAzūz of Tunis (d. 1334/1916). Aside from its interesting title, the book's one hundred pages in

46 Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Tādifī, *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005).

47 Mehmed Ali Aini, *Un Grand Saint De L'Islam: Abd-Al-Qadir Guilani* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1938).

48 See Ibid. 247–250, al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 305–316.

modern print are written in the form of a refutation against a forty-page booklet by ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad al-Qirmānī al-Ḥanafī entitled *al-Ḥaqq al-Dhahir fī Sharḥ Ḥāl Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir*, which criticises Jīlānī's lineage as being forged and his spiritual states and stations as being made-up. The booklet of criticism is difficult to find, but is interesting because it is one of the only examples of Jīlānī being criticised at any length, the other known but lost work with the same aim being the *Dhamm ʿalā ʿAbd al-Qādir* of Jīlānī's contemporary, Ibn al-Jawzī.[49] Ibn Azūz's book is divided into two parts, one that tackles the issue of Jīlānī's lineage and the other on his states and stations. He attempts to refute each criticism of Qirmānī point by point and is keen to show how Qirmānī often resorts to misquoting his sources to suit his argument. The book quotes many of the usual hagiographical stories except that many of them are now quoted with an intent to defend against the criticisms directed at many of the events and occurrences within these reports. So, for example, al-Qirmānī in his book apparently accused Jīlānī of having a lack of manners when dealing with other people, especially important persons of government and learning. Ibn Azūz is quick to challenge this, providing evidence of Jīlānī having been kind, merciful and caring towards all people, as well as giving explanations for reports which describe Jīlānī admonishing certain people. Thus the book is filled with the usual hagiographical reports, except that we get a commentary defending them against some of the more anti-Sufi criticisms that are usually levelled against them.

As one might expect there are many hagiographies in other traditional Muslim languages such as Persian, Urdu and Turkish, but they share their source material with their more famous Arabic counterparts. There are a few hagiographies that are available in various European languages, although the few I have come across have been translations of some or other Urdu work, or written as a simplified version of such. Mehmed Ali Aini wrote a book on Jīlānī that was translated into French as *Un grand saint de l'Islam: Abd-al-Kadir Guilani, 1077–1166*.[50] The book has an extensive biography section, which is heavily based on the *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir* and the *Bahjat al-Asrār*. The book also quotes passages from Jīlānī's works to give an idea of his creed and Sufism and contains nearly fifty pages of his poetry translated into French. In addition to this it has an extremely useful bibliography which, as mentioned above, enumerates more than forty hagiographies in Arabic.

49 See the chapter on 'The Figure of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī' below for a discussion of Ibn al-Jawzī's criticisms of Jīlānī.

50 Aini, *Un Grand Saint De L'Islam: Abd-Al-Qadir Guilani*.

In this section we may also add Ibrahim Boye's book, also in French entitled *Sayyidi Abdal Qadr Djīlānī*.[51] A large portion of this work is spent justifying Sufism as an orthodox Islamic phenomenon, after which we are presented with the life of Jīlānī based on the usual sources. The author, himself a Qādirī, peppers the work with his own interesting insights into Qādirī practices.

2.3 *Modern Works*

Amongst the modern works on Jīlānī in Arabic that stand out are the '*Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*' by *ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kīlānī*, a direct descendant of Jīlānī himself, and a book of the same title by Saʿīd Ibn Musfir al-Qaḥṭānī[52] The first book attempts to present a biography of Jīlānī as well as a look into some of his important concepts in Sufism. However the book's major strength lies in its invaluable resource as a compendium on the different sources on Jīlānī and his family.

The second book, by Qaḥṭānī, started off originally as a doctoral thesis in Saudi Arabia. Its aim was to survey Jīlānī's views on theology and Sufism, although the majority of the book concentrates on theology. It evaluates each theological doctrine by comparing it with the creed of what is accepted by the author to be the correct doctrine for 'Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa', which generally consists in them being checked against Ibn Taymiyya's writings. For the most part Qaḥṭānī finds Jīlānī to be in agreement, but on certain issues such as visiting the grave of the Prophet, praying through the Prophet as an intermediary, or on the acts recommended by Jīlānī for the month of Rajab, he concludes that Jīlānī's views contain 'innovation' (*bidʿa*).[53] The final third of the book is on the Sufism of Jīlānī—the vast majority being generally on what is acceptable within Sufism—and although the author clearly has his own doubts about Sufism, finding it to be "full of Shīʿī influences and general innovations," he still does not doubt that Jīlānī was a Sufi. In fact he concludes that although Jīlānī was on the 'correct creed,' and his Sufism also within the bounds of orthodoxy generally, yet he picked up many incorrect beliefs and innovative practices from some of his Sufi teachers such as Ḥammād al-Dabbās; a result to be expected considering that Sufism, in any good that it contains, is already in Islamic prac-

51 Ibrahim Boye, *Sayyidi Abdal Qadr Djilani: Imam Suprême de la "Walaya"* (Paris: Publisud, 1990).

52 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa*, Saʿīd Ibn Musfir al-Qaḥṭānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī wa Ārāʾuhu al-Iʿtiqādiyya wa al-Ṣūfiyya* (Riyadh: Muʿassasa al-Jarīsī, 1997).

53 See al-Qaḥṭānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī wa Ārāʾuhu al-Iʿtiqādiyya wa al-Ṣūfiyya* 440, 447, 451.

tice, the remainder being misguidance and deviation.[54] The conclusion of this author is very significant, because although he clearly wishes to defend Jīlānī as a completely 'orthodox' and acceptable scholar, and would rather wish that Jīlānī had no connection with Sufism, yet he does not in any way attempt to deny that Jīlānī was a Sufi, because his research simply could not lead him to such a conclusion.

Two modern books in European languages of interest are the *Die Futuh al-Ghaib Des Abd al-Qadir* of Walther Braune, and the *Nouveau regard sur la voie spirituelle d'ʿAbd al-Qâdir al-Jīlānī et sa tradition* of Andre Demeerseman.[55] The former book, as its title suggests, is a translation into German of the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* of Jīlānī. However the book has an interesting introductory forty-seven pages where the author spends half going through the biography of Jīlānī and half giving an introduction to the text in question. The first part of the introduction tries to separate the life of Jīlānī from the legends surrounding him. Braune goes through some of the miraculous events in Jīlānī's life and has a small section summarising his own view that Jīlānī must have had "an outstanding human quality which justified this appreciation on the part of his fellow men." Braune concludes that the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, being Jīlānī's most widely read work, may shed light on this great personality and from this standpoint deserves our full attention and study. The second part merely elaborates on some basic ideas of Sufism that would aid the reader in understanding the text.

The latter work aims to examine the link between the Qādirī order and Jīlānī himself. Demeerseman finds that Jīlānī's work is full of the mention of all the famous Sufi personalities that went before him, and this alongside a general reading of his works lead him to believe that Jīlānī might indeed have founded the order. In addition to this he sees no reason why the *madrasa* might not have been used as a Sufi hospice, and after his death, in time, becoming exclusively used for that.

Jacqueline Chabbi in her article *ʿAbd al-Kādir al-Djilāni Personnage Historique* concludes exactly the opposite.[56] She finds that there is no *ribāṭ* that Jīlānī can ever have been the head of, and furthermore that there is no mention by Ibn al-Jawzī that he ever associated with Ḥammād al-Dabbās, this being something that was added later on by authors such as Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn

54 Ibid. 660–661.

55 Walther Braune, *Die Futuh al-Ghaib Des Abd al-Qadir* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1933), Andre Demeersemen, *Nouveau regard sur la voie spirituelle d'ʿAbd al-Qâdir al-Jilânî et sa tradition* (Paris: Vrin, 1988).

56 Jacqueline Chabbi, 'Abd al-Ḳādir al-Djīlānī Personnage Historique: Quelques Éléments de Biographie, *Studia Islamica* 38 (1973), 75–106.

Rajab. This alongside a few other strange assertions lead her to believe that Jīlānī as a mystic was something that was invented later on and used by those wanting to legitimate mysticism—Jīlānī being a perfect candidate of orthodoxy. She overlooks the fact that Ibn al-Jawzī was a known rival of Jīlānī and though a perfect contemporary, left us nothing in his history on Jīlānī except a short and near useless paragraph, as was oft-commented by later biographers and historians. Thus relying on his lack of information as evidence to the non-existence of something cannot be considered a strong argument. The relationship of Ibn al-Jawzī and Jīlānī is discussed in further detail below.[57] In addition to this, why persons such as Ibn Rajab and Ibn al-Athīr would decide to be such major players in this endeavour of creating and spreading mis-information is not addressed, and perhaps never occurred to Chabbi. The issue of the missing *ribāṭ* of Chabbi is addressed in the biography part of this study. Thus although having had some influence on those scholars that assume Jīlānī's Sufism to be a later added phenomenon, her assertions rest on confused evidence, and the article does not really add concrete depth to the argument against Jīlānī as the founder of an order or as a Sufi.

Finally I would like to look at works that, although have not featured Jīlānī as their primary concern, and in fact may only have devoted a few pages or less to him, have nevertheless been highly influential on the academic picture. The most important of these without doubt is John Trimingham's *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, which seems to have had more influence on academic writers after him than any of the other previously mentioned works.[58] He begins his section on the Qādiriyya by stating that,

> It is difficult to penetrate through the mists of legend which formed even during the lifetime of ʿAbd al-Qādir Ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ Jangīdost and thickened rapidly after his death, and to discern why he, out of the hundreds of saintly figures of the period, survived in a unique way to become the inspirer of millions, a heavenly receiver of petitions and bestower of benefits, right up to the present day.[59]

Trimingham can see that this status cannot have been solely due to his scholarship or preaching for "he is acclaimed as a great preacher, but his reputation was certainly not gained from the content of his sermons," yet he concludes that his name was used by later Sufis as "it seems likely that his reputation for

57 See chapter eight below.

58 John Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders In Islam* (Oxford OUP, 1998).

59 Ibid. 40–41.

soundness was used by others who were responsible for such developments as paved the way for ordinary people to participate in the insights and experiences of Sufis."[60] Thus for Trimingham it cannot have been anything other than that, and especially was not Jīlānī's own Sufism because, Trimingham writes, "as for his Sufi reputation there is not the slightest indication that he was a Sufi at all or that he struck any new note."[61]

As will become clear in the course this study, Trimingham can only have looked at Jīlānī's works in the most cursory fashion, if indeed at all. He relies heavily on ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Wāsiṭī, whose work, *Tiryāq al-Muḥibbīn*, is a completely biased source. Wāsiṭī—as becomes clear on reading the section on Jīlānī and the Qādirīs—is very bitter at the claims of the superiority of Jīlānī, not only by Qādirīs, but by other Sufis, and is intent on proving that in fact his own Shaykh, Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī—founder of the Rifāʿī order—is far superior to Jīlānī. He thus proceeds to discredit and belittle Jīlānī as much as possible. To rely on such a source is somewhat unfortunate, although ironically even Wāsiṭī does not dispute the fact that Jīlānī was a Sufi, as is clear throughout the particular section.[62] Further to this Trimingham makes some miscalculated judgements such as when he writes that Jīlānī refused "to study at the Niẓāmiyya where the Sufi, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, had succeeded his brother Abū Ḥāmid," perhaps attempting to show Jīlānī's disagreement with a well known Sufi in charge of the institution, when in fact, as has been shown by Makdisi, the issue for a Ḥanbalī with the Niẓāmiyya would have been the fact that it was a Shāfʿī school.[63]

Annemarie Schimmel writes in her book, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, that "the traditional idea that Ḥanbalite rigourism and mystical emotion are mutually exclusive can no longer be maintained—not only was Anṣārī (ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī d. 481/1089) an energetic representative of the (Ḥanbalī) school, but ʿAbdu'l-Qādir Gīlānī, the founder of the most widespread mystical fraternity, also belonged to this *madhab*," and that "perhaps it was precisely the strict adherence to the outward letter of the God-given law and the deep respect for the divine word that enabled Anṣārī and his fellow Ḥanbalites to reach a deeper understanding of the secrets of the revelation."[64] Yet she too finds his name "surrounded by innumerable legends that scarcely fit the image of the

60 Ibid. 41.

61 Ibid.

62 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Wāsiṭī, *Tiryāq al-Muḥibbīn* (Cairo: n.s., 1888) 49–58.

63 George Makdisi, The Sunni Revival, *History and Politics in Eleventh Century Baghdad* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1990), art. VI (155–168), John Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders In Islam* (Oxford OUP, 1998) 41.

64 Annmarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975) 89.

stern, sober representative of contrition and mystical fear." Thus her reading of the matter leads her to wish for "a satisfactory explanation of the transition from the sober Ḥanbalite preacher (that he was not a pure ascetic is clear from the fact that he had forty-nine sons!) to the prototype of saintliness venerated all over the Muslim world."[65]

3 Scope and Aims

As briefly highlighted at the start, this study takes as its catalyst the discrepancy between how Jīlānī on the one hand is venerated all over the Muslim world—as the *sultān al-awliyā'* (the greatest saint), the *ghawth al-aʿẓam* (the Greatest Help), and the *pīr-i dast-gīr* (the saint who keeps one's hand for support)—along with the vast spread of 'his' order, and on the other hand how the person of Jīlānī is understood in Western academic scholarship. This is not to say that his Sufism there is always denied, but rather that even amongst those who accept that he was a Sufi, there remains the confused picture of how he, an 'austere Ḥanbalī,' became the most venerated saint in Islam.[66] The situation leads one to question why there is a discrepancy in the first place. A few reasons for why this might be the case are identified here, although there may of course be causes other than these.

We may begin with the understanding of the Ḥanbalī School and Ḥanbalīs. The scholar who was most influential in creating a misunderstanding of this school, especially in regard to its relationship with Sufism was Ignaz Goldziher, although in fairness it would seem that his understanding of the Ḥanbalīs was greatly affected by the published Arabic sources available at the turn of the twentieth century, much of which contained an anti-Ḥanbalī bias. However, as George Makdisi has highlighted, although other sources have become available, the impressions resulting from these first studies have lingered on.[67] The school and its adherents are often represented as ultra-conservative, rigid, and uncompromising, who consistently fought against Sufism, even after the 5th/11th century when it became an accepted part of the Islamic milieu. Goldziher himself viewed ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣāri and Jīlānī—both of whom he considered Sufis—as anomalies within the Ḥanbalī tradition, who had only ended

65 Ibid. 247–248.

66 Such is the view, for example, of Annemarie Schimmel as highlighted above.

67 George Makdisi, The Hanbali School and Sufism, *Actas, IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e Islâmicos, Coimbra-Lisboa, 1 a 8 de setembro de 1968* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 71–84, 72.

up there due to their rejection of *kalām* (speculative theology).[68] Makdisi has done much work in an attempt to correct and clarify this picture (as did Henri Laoust and Louis Massignon before him) and has shown that according to his own analysis, over one-sixth of the Ḥanbalīs mentioned in the *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* of Ibn Rajab—a book attempting to document all Ḥanbalī scholars and persons of repute—are Sufis, with there being perhaps many more if one looks to the hints of Sufism noticeable in the entries of other Ḥanbalīs provided by Ibn Rajab.[69] Thus the idea of the Ḥanbalīs as a near homogenous faction that fought Sufism cannot really be maintained. With regard to Jīlānī, all this leads to a preconceived bias before one has even approached the subject, and he ends up being categorised often as a Ḥanbalī who was not really Sufi, or sometimes a Sufi anomalously in the Ḥanbalī camp, but never comfortably as both.

Another source of much of the confusion is the hagiographic material. To begin with there is the problem of their content. These works portray Jīlānī as a saint with lofty miracles and have often concentrated on these miracles over and above anything else. On reflection this is not surprising considering that the aim of these works is usually to highlight Jīlānī's saintly aspect, and is as much as should be expected from any hagiography. However, as William Chittick highlights, "the main problem for Western scholarship in general seems to be "the mists of legend which formed even during the lifetime of ʿAbd al-Qādir." " He comments further that, "what makes the accounts misty and legendary is their supernatural tenor and the fact that historical scholarship is forced by its own premises to reject them out of hand."[70] The result is that the Jīlānī of the hagiographies is softly rejected by most scholars who suppose that the narrations found therein are mere legends and additions to the original facts, most of which must have been conjured up afterwards.

Secondly, with regard to the hagiographies, there has been an overreliance upon them, something that may be viewed as a distraction, and this has resulted in a neglect of Jīlānī's own works. This is not to say that a mere examination of Jīlānī's works will solve the issue of how to evaluate the hagiographies, but rather that it will allow a picture of Jīlānī to emerge based on what *he* wrote and said, rather than on persons who came after him. A better assessment may then perhaps be made in re-evaluating the hagiographies.

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68 Ignaz Goldziher, *Le dogme et la loi de l'Islam; histoire du développement dogmatique et juridique de la religion musulmane* (Paris: Paul Guethner, 1958) 144–145.

69 Makdisi, The Hanbali School and Sufism 74.

70 William Chittick, *The Self-disclourure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʾArabi's Cosmology* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1997) 376.

There is also another distraction when looking at Jīlānī, namely that of 'his' order, where the evaluation of him seems often to be in light of this Qādirī order. The link between him and the order is often stated to be 'tenuous,' where the beliefs and practices that are known of the order seem at odds with what Jīlānī the Ḥanbalī would have approved of, let alone enacted. Of course this again partly comes from preconceived ideas and expectations of what a Ḥanbalī should be, and understandably leads to the conclusion that he was an 'orthodox' preacher whose name was appropriated to give credence to the order. However a proper answer concerning the question of whether there was a real link between the two, and if so to what degree, still remains wanting. A simple argument—as is often done—of citing practices and beliefs that go contrary to the alleged founders' claimed or assumed beliefs and practices cannot constitute a valid proof for the disunity between founder and order, for this would require an order to remain perfectly static, a situation that does not exist for any Sufi order. With the case of Jīlānī, this becomes even more absurd because Jīlānī's own works are not even examined carefully and so without this information, how can any accurate assessment of the link be made?

Finally there is the fact that scholarship and study on the subject remains heavily based upon textual evidence. This heavy reliance on literature has its obvious drawbacks, and the problems inherent in the skewed picture that ends up being presented as history have been alluded to in other works.[71] Thus for example, the importance of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī on the revival of the 6th/12th century may have been overplayed especially when looking at the effect through the lens of a specific scholarly and literary class.[72] The effect of Jīlānī on the masses might have been much greater, which would explain some of the reverence given to him. The evaluation of a figure who left behind no literature, nor raised the interests of the scholarly and literate class might indeed be problematic. In the case of Jīlānī, we do at least have works that were composed by him, and he did indeed raise the interests of the writing classes, but this overall problem must at least be kept in mind when making a final assessment.

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71 See for example Steven Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework For Inquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995). especially 187–208.

72 The overplay on Ghazālī and the Niẓāmiyya has already been shown by George Makdisi. See Makdisi, The Sunni Revival. On Ghazālī generally see, Frank Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam. Die Entwicklung zu al-Gazalis Urteil gegen die Philosophie und die Reaktionen der Philosophen* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), Frank Griffel, *al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), Montgomery Watt, *Muslim intellectual: a study of al-Ghazali* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971).

This study then begins from the assumption that an attempted clarification of the thought and practice of Jīlānī is the first step in the attempt to gain a correct picture of this person, which in turn will then allow a better evaluation of the relationship between him and the order that came into existence carrying his name. Jīlānī may be studied, amongst other means, through the biographies and hagiographies that have been written about him, as well as through his own works. However there seems to have already been too much attention given to the hagiographies and biographies with a resulting lack of attention given to his works. This study therefore aims to attempt to rectify that by analysing his works.

In looking at his works which questions do we hope to answer? The most important one, and in fact the primary aim of the present work, is to look at whether Jīlānī was a Sufi or not. This study will argue that he was and that his reputation as the greatest saint amongst the Muslims is not an inexplicable phenomenon. Chapters six and seven reveal his Sufi thought, as may be extracted from his works, as well as assessing what type of authorities and persons he relied upon that we may see what tradition he identifies himself with. In order to evaluate the definition of a Sufi as understood by Western academic scholarship, this introduction ends with a brief assessment of what constitutes a Sufi in the understanding of this scholarly tradition. It will therefore be shown that with regards to Jīlānī, there does not need to be a re-evaluation of the understanding of a Sufi, because he clearly comes under the term as understood and defined in this tradition.

Jīlānī is also known to have been a Ḥanbalī, and although there is no dispute in the matter, what is meant by this exactly will be shown through an evaluation of his theology. Chapter four will detail his theology as can be found in his works, as well as evaluating it in comparison to another Ḥanbalī theology of his time, that of Ibn Baṭṭā al-ʿUkbarī, in addition to a creed of the famous theologian Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, which was claimed to represent the theology of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal himself. In addition to this, chapter five will analyse the persons he relies upon as authorities in theology, as well as his consideration of various groups and sects existent at the time.

Finally there is the fascinating issue of the personality and character of Jīlānī. So far everything on this particular topic that we have comes obviously from biographies and hagiographies written about him, but what, if anything, can be discerned about his character from his own works? Chapter eight shows that contrary to the assumed picture of the 'sober Ḥanbalite,' to whom the extravagances and claims 'ascribed' later on would have appeared strange, there emerges a picture of a far more colourful character, one that in fact may not be so far off from the Jīlānī as understood and venerated by so many Mus-

lims. All of this forms Part 2 of the book, which is based upon the utilised works of Jīlānī as identified below. Part 1 begins with a chapter on the background of the milieu of Baghdad, just before and at the time of Jīlānī, and is followed by a chapter consisting of an attempted construction of the biography of Jīlānī that tries to make some sense as to the chronological order of his life.

4 Sufism and Sufis

Amongst Muslims, as amongst students of Islam, Sufism and who qualifies as a Sufi is a very wide ranging idea indeed. However there seems to be a clear consensus amongst Muslim scholars that Jīlānī was most certainly a Sufi; from mystics as diverse as Ibn ʿArabī—who regards Jīlānī not only as the *quṭb* of his time, but as one with a special and specific rank accorded only to him—and Aḥmad Sirhindī—who regards him to have held the special office (*manṣib*) from where all spiritual emanations (*fayḍ*) manifest—to scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya who regards him as one of the "Imams of the Sufis."[73] How Jīlānī himself considers these terms and what they entail will become clear in the relevant sections below, but what will be useful here is to mention how it is

73 The *quṭb* or the pole or axis of the universe, is the person who holds the singular position of the highest spiritual level on earth. For more on the *quṭb* see chapter seven. Also see Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, *al-Ḥāwī lil-Fatāwī fī l-Fiqh wa- ʿUlūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ḥadīth wa al-Uṣūl wa al-Naḥw wa al-ʿIʿrāb wa-Sāʾir al-Funūn*, 2 vols. (2; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000), Muḥammad Ibn ʿĀbidīn, 'Ijābat al-Ghawth: Bayān Ḥāl al-Nuqabāʾ wa al-Nujabāʾ wa al-Abdāl wa al-Awtād wa al-Ghawth', *Majmūʿat Rasāʾil* (2; Damascus: Maktaba al-Hāshimiyya, 1907), 263–281. For Ibn ʿArabī's views see for example, Chittick, *The Self-disclourure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabi's Cosmology* 376–377. Aḥmad Sirhindī in his Maktūb number 122 explains that there are two methods of reaching God. One is that of *nubuwwa* or 'prophethood' and the other is that of *wilāya*, which is the standard method of the Sufi path. This second method of *wilāya* requires an intermediary along the path, and the ultimate source of spiritual emanation (*manbaʿ fayḍ*) for this method is the person of ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib. After the lifetime of ʿAlī, this office (*manṣib*) of being the *manbaʿ fayḍ* was passed onto his sons, first Ḥasan and then Ḥusayn, after whom it passed onto the remainder of the twelve *imāms*, beginning with ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn. After them this special office passed onto ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī without anyone else having held it in the intervening period. This and the fact that after the death of Jīlānī, the office did not pass to anyone else but rather remained with him, indicates that it is not something that requires its holder to be alive. Aḥmad Sirhindī, *al-Muntakhabāt min al-Maktūbāt* (Istanbul: Maktaba Īshīq, 1974) 224–226. For Ibn Taymiyya's view see, Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmuʿ al-Fatāwā* (5; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000) 183.

understood in Western orientalist and academic scholarship, especially considering that it is in this scholarship that we find a regular denial or doubt of Jīlānī being a Sufi.

In the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Louis Massignon, John Hunwick et al write that:

> The Sufi … renounced the world as a *zāhid* and devoted himself to the ardent service of God.[74] However, he was not only contending with the world and its seductions, but also with himself, his own base self (*nafs*), experienced as the seat of all evil lusts, which impeded real renunciation of the world and exclusive surrender to God. It was therefore his task to look into himself and exercise self training, with the aim of doing away with the self and all the impulses of the will emanating from it. For as long as the self was enduring, true Islam, true surrender to God's will was not possible. The finer obliteration of personal activity was experienced as an absorption, a cessation of being, in God (*fanā'*). A road (*ṭarīq* or *ṭarīqa*) along which the mystic travelled (*sulūk*), led to this. In the internal experience it led across a number of way stations (*manāzil*), locations (*maqāmāt*) and situations (*aḥwāl*), for which in later times classification systems were established in the handbooks.[75]

Nicholson in his *The Mystics of Islam*, after claiming that "the essence of Sufism is best displayed in its extreme type, which is pantheistic and speculative rather than ascetic or devotional," and that "this type I have purposefully placed in the foreground," warns that "in order to form a fair judgment of Mohammedan mysticism, the following chapters should be supplemented by a companion

74 It will be useful here to keep in mind the difference between a pure *zāhid* or ascetic and a Sufi. Although the majority of Sufis also practice asceticism as part of their Sufism, there are those ascetics who do not practice Sufism. Leah Kinberg finds the best definition of *zuhd* to be "abstinence at first from sin, from what is superfluous, from all that estranges from God … then abstinence from all perishable things by detachment of the heart … complete asceticism, renunciation of all that is created". See Leah Kinberg, What is Meant by Zuhd, *Studia Islamcia* 61 (1985), 27–44. The difference to Sufism can be seen by a comparison of this with the definition of Sufism given later in this chapter.

On this subject see also, Christopher Melchert, The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E., *Studia Islamcia* 83 (1996), 51–70, Christopher Melchert, The Piety of The Hadith Folk, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002), 425–439, Harith Bin Ramli, The Rise of Early Sufism: A Survey of Recent Scholarship on its Social Dimensions, *History Compass* 8/11 (2010), 1299–1315.

75 Louis Massignon et al John Hunwick, Taṣawwuf, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 10; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004), 313–340, 314.

picture drawn especially from those moderate types which, for want of space, I have duly neglected." Following this he writes: "The Sufi who sets out to seek God calls himself a 'traveller' (*sālik*); he advances by slow 'stages' (*maqāmāt*) along a 'path' (*tarīqat*) to the goal of union with Reality (*fanā' fī l-haqq*)."[76]

Marshall Hodgson, in his seminal *Venture of Islam*, remarks that "both the popular appeal of Sufism in this period (945–1273) and its social role in the Earlier Middle period (945–1258) were most enduringly based on the particular form which the ministry of the Sufis took, *pīr-murīdī*, the relationship of master (*pīr*) and disciple (*murīd*)."[77]

For John Trimingham a Sufi is "anyone who believes that it is possible to have direct experience of God and who is prepared to go out of his way to put himself in a state whereby he may be enabled to do this," and Sufism "embraces those tendencies in Islam which aim at a direct communion between God and man." Mystics claim "knowledge of the real (*al-ḥaqq*) that could not be gained through revealed religion." Mysticism is for Trimingham, "a particular method of approach to Reality (*ḥaqīqa*), making use of intuitive and emotional spiritual faculties which are generally dormant and latent unless called into play through training and guidance. This training, thought of as 'travelling the path' (*salak al-ṭarīq*), aims at dispersing the veils which hide the self from the Real and thereby become transformed or absorbed into undifferentiated Unity."[78] In all of this there is a teacher-disciple relationship, especially in the period prior to the founding of the orders, which allows the master who has already traversed the path to guide the aspirant.[79]

Within all of these writers, we are able to identify a few common and key ideas on what constitutes a Sufi and Sufism:

– The idea of 'direct experience' of God and the spiritual world.
– Traversing a path of 'stages' and 'states' in order to attain to this.
– Being guided by a teacher or master in this venture.
– The path leading to *fanā'*.

To this list we may perhaps add the identification with past Sufi masters and their literature—although this is of course just an historical phenomenon—

76 Reynold Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1963) 27–28.

77 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 209.

78 Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders In Islam* 1.

79 Ibid. 166. See also 166–217, which covers the organisation, rituals and ceremonies of the Sufis, though it is mostly concerned with the Sufism subsequent to the founding of the orders. Also for another work that notes these same ideas as being integral to Sufism, see Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism, A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 1999) 300–311.

and which we may simply call "an identification with the Sufi tradition." These five ideas, then, if found in the thought and practice of a Muslim figure, should result in them being identified as a Sufi, at least, as has been shown, according to Western academic scholarship. This of course does not mean that a person cannot be considered a Sufi if they have one or more of these elements missing. As such, these five ideas may be considered sufficient but not necessary conditions.

PART 1

Time, Place and Person

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CHAPTER 2

Setting the Scene: Baghdad Around The Time of Jīlānī

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was born in 470/1077 and died in 561/1166. Although he was born in the province of Jīlān (or Gīlān) on the Caspian Sea, he moved to Baghdad during his teenage years and was to spend the rest of his life there. This period was one of great change in the Muslim lands, especially for Baghdad and the surrounding country. It saw the rise to power of the Seljuks, with a period of stability and then a return to instability as had been the case during the end of the Buwayhid period (447/1055). This chapter aims to give an outline of the situation in Baghdad during this period. It begins with a brief overview of the political situation between 400/1000 and 500/1200, and an examination of the power relationship between the Sultan and the Caliph. The discussion then moves onto the various groups and sects that were present in Baghdad, highlighting their activities and any political backing or support they may have received as well as any restrictions or persecution they may have faced. It will become clear as this section progresses that there was never any group that was always persecuted or supported but rather the situation was in constant flux with various factors in play, such as whether it was the Caliph, Sultan, vizier, or some other person who had the most power in Baghdad at any particular time. This part will also highlight the political support received by notable scholars. The third part will focus on education in Baghdad during this period that saw the set-up of a great number of different schools. The influence and importance of these various schools, the backing they received, as well as the famous scholars who were associated with certain schools will all be examined. This chapter will hopefully provide an understanding of the milieu that Jīlānī entered into and became a part of, something which I believe to be a crucial component for any attempt at understanding his thought and writings. We begin however with a brief overview of the city itself.

1 The City of Baghdad

The city of Baghdad, from its foundation until the end of the period that concerns us here, had undergone profound change. Founded in 145/762 by the Caliph al-Manṣūr near the site of an earlier settlement, the city had seen its

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prime during the middle Abbasid period (200–300/800–900).[1] The famous geographer al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 275/889), writing in the middle of the ninth century and starting his geographical treatise with Iraq, described the city thus:

> I begin with Iraq only because it is the centre of this world, the navel of the earth, and I mention Baghdad first because it is the centre of Iraq, the greatest city, which has no peer in the east nor west of the world in extent, size, prosperity, abundance of water, or health of climate, and because it is inhabited by all kinds of people, town-dwellers and country-dwellers.[2]

The city was at the centre of trade, caravan trails running overland as well as goods coming in from east and west by river. It was known as a centre of learning due to the amount of scholars that would come to Baghdad from around the Islamic lands. However only a hundred years after al-Yaʿqūbī was writing, another geographer, al-Muqaddasī (d. 374/985), when discussing the best of the various cities in the Islamic lands, failed to give alongside Damascus, Basra, Rayy, Bukhara and Balkh, even a mention to Baghdad. Rather, he wrote, "Know that Baghdad was great in the past but is now falling into ruins. It is full of troubles, and its glory is gone. I neither approve nor admire it, and if I praise it, it is mere convention."[3]

During the early part of the tenth century, the rule of the Abbasids had become weaker and weaker and had ended in all but name with the coming of the Buwayhids in 334/945. The city had thus lost its honour of being the real capital of the Islamic world, for though it still was the city of the Caliph, the Islamic lands had by now been divided and were controlled by various autonomous rulers. It had to compete with the capitals of these autonomous regions; cities such as Cairo, Damascus, Cordova and Shiraz all laid a claim to

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1 A brief topography of the city is provided below. For a more extensive topography and history of the city see Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate* (London: OUP, 1924). Le Strange provides a brilliant and detailed survey of every quarter and area and place of interest in the city Also see Gaston Weit, *Baghdad: Metropolis of the Abbasid State*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); Jacob Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages: text and studies*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970); Abd al-Aziz Duri, Baghdad, *EI 2nd edition*, vol. 1, 899–900.

2 Aḥmad Ibn Yaʿqūb al-Yaʿqūbi, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, M.J. de Goeje ed., (Leiden, 1892), 233. Translation taken from Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni "ulama' of Eleventh-Century Baghdad*, (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2000) 21.

3 Muḥammad Ibn al-Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Maʿrifat al-ʾAqālīm*, M.J. De Goeje ed., (Leiden, 1906), v. 1 p. 70. Translation taken from Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition* 22.

being the greatest. Baghdad had also by this time declined economically, partly due to the loss of tax revenue after the split-up of the empire, but also due to a move in the trade routes from the East, which instead of going through the Persian Gulf now ran through the Red Sea.[4]

The later ninth and earlier tenth century is often referred to as the 'Shīʿī century,' due to the growth in power of the Shīʿīs in Baghdad, especially after the arrival of the Buwayhids. However by the middle of the tenth century, the fortunes for the Shīʿīs were changing and the following period, from the arrival of the Seljuks in Baghdad until the sacking of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, is often termed the 'Sunni revival.' This was in part due to the growth of Sunni power politically, and in part due to the increase in scholastic output by the Sunni community, something that had partly been driven by a greater feeling of awareness after witnessing their earlier decline in power.

1.1 *The Urban Topography*

The original city that was built as the Abbasid capital in 145/762 by al-Manṣūr was called Madīnat al-Salām; a circular walled city that is nowadays often referred to the original Round City. The site of this city was at the confluence of the Tigris and Ṣarāt Canal (of pre-Islamic Persian construction); this latter canal connecting the Tigris to the Euphrates. However it seems that from very early on the area within the Round City was not large enough to contain the markets and general population, and this, as well as factors concerning the security of the Caliph, led to urban districts appearing outside the walls of the Round City. The area of al-Karkh, to the south-east of the Round City, was already inhabited prior to the building of the Round City, but seems to have been redeveloped in 157/774, while to the west and north of the Round City there also emerged other urban districts. The urban area of the greater city was thus originally more to the west of the Round city and along the Ṣarāt Canal rather than the Tigris.

The popular name for this metropolis, Baghdad, might have come from an earlier dwelling around this location, and may perhaps be derived from the Persian *bāgh-e-dādh*, meaning 'founded by God,' and used originally to refer to the entire metropolis rather than the just the Round City.[5] On the upper east side of the Tigris, the area of al-Ruṣāfa was built beginning in the year 151/769, while approximately two miles south, on the lower east side, a Caliphal palace was built, which became known as Dār al-Khilāfa.[6] The Dār al-Khilāfa was built

4 Ephrat, *Learned Society* 22.

5 Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate* 11.

6 Jacob Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970) 64–65.

after the Caliphs returned to Baghdad following an interlude of a half century between 227/842 and 279/892 when the capital of the empire was based at Samarra.[7] The area to the east of the Dār al-Khilafa soon became urbanised and a wall was built around this area in 488/1095—the year Jīlānī entered Baghdad. The vastness of the land area covered by Baghdad, especially as a medieval metropolis, cannot be overlooked and although the city was indeed vast, one must not assume that it was a uniform urban sprawl as there existed whole areas that had never been built up, as well as areas of emptiness and of depopulation or 'ruins' (*kharābāt*). Still, it has been estimated that the city at various periods might have supported a population of over 500,000; a truly staggering figure for a medieval city.[8]

Every town or city in the Abbasid Empire had a principal or *jāmiʿ* mosque where all the residents of the surrounding areas could gather for the communal Friday prayers. Over time there seem to have been seven *jāmīʿ* mosques in Baghdad—further highlighting its size and importance—but only three of them will concern us here. The *jāmīʿ* of al-Manṣūr was the original mosque of the Round City, and by the time of Jīlānī was still an important place, though the walls of the Round city had fallen to ruin during the reign of al-Qāhir (322–320/932–934). The *jāmīʿ* of the Caliphal palace (Dār al-Khilāfa) was constructed in 289/902, there having previously been dungeons in the same location, and the mosque of Ruṣāfā became a *jāmīʿ* in 329/941.[9] These *jāmīʿ* mosques, the important quarters of the city and the general localities and sites of Baghdad that are referred to in this book are all marked on the map of Baghdad provided below.[10]

2 The Political Situation

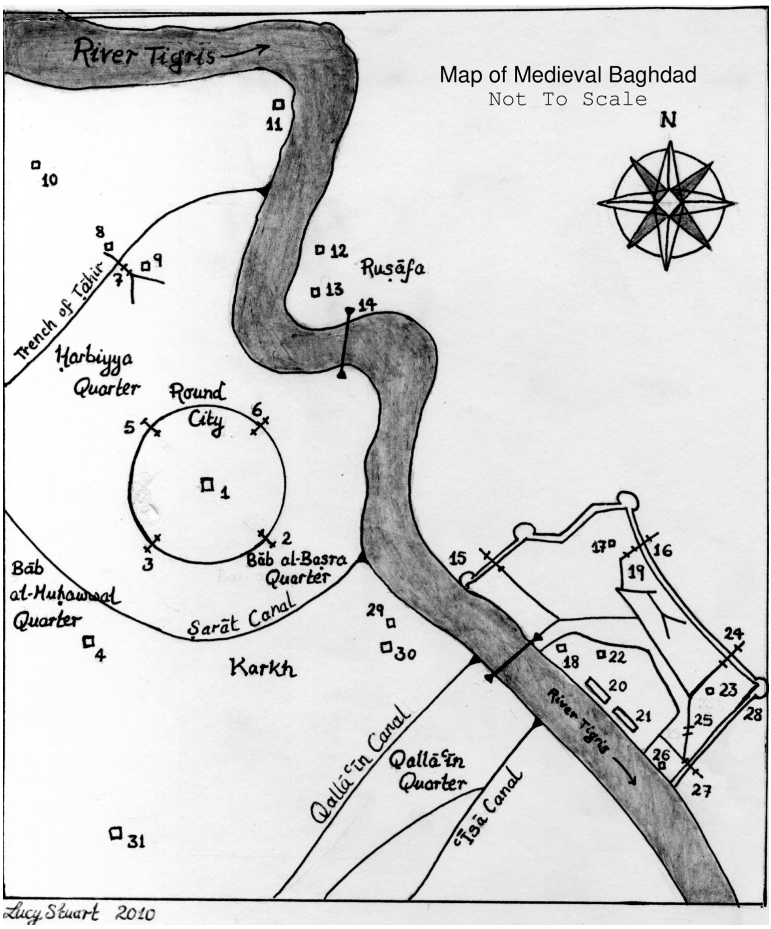
The political situation just prior to as well as during Jīlānī's time in Baghdad, was very volatile and constantly changing. Although the major change had been from the ruling Buwayhids to the Seljuks, there were also regular changes between different Seljuq rulers, leading to disputes in succession. In

7 Ibid. 85–91.

8 Less conservative estimates have put the population at over a million for various periods. The only other city to compare to Baghdad in this respect in the entire medieval world was the other Abbasid capital of Samarra. Ibid. 160.

9 The other *jāmiʿs* were that of Barātha, Umm Jaʿfar, Ḥarbiyya and Karkh. Ibid. 97–98.

10 This map was produced by Lucy Stuart and is based upon maps and information found in ibid, Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*.



1. Mosque of Manṣūr
2. Baṣra Gate
3. Kūfa Gate
4. Muḥawwal Gate
5. Syria Gate
6. Khurasan Gate
7. Ḥarb Gate
8. Shrine of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal
9. Ḥarbiyya Mosque
10. Kāẓimayn Shrine
11. Shrine of ʿAbdullāh Ibn Aḥmad
12. Shrine of Abū Ḥanīfa
13. Ruṣāfa Mosque
14. Ṭāq Gate
15. Gate of the Sultan (Modern Bāb al-Muʿaẓẓam)
16. Gate of Khurasan or Ẓafariyya (Modern Bāb al-Wuṣṭānī)
17. Tājiyya College
18. Mustanṣiriyya College
19. Ẓafariyya Quarter
20. Ḥasanī Palace in the Dār al-Khilāfa
21. Tāj Palace in the Dār al-Khilāfa
22. Mosque of the Caliphal Palace in the Dār al-Khilāfa
23. Madrasa and Shrine of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī
24. Ḥalaba Gate (Modern Bāb al-Ṭalsim)
25. Azaj Gate and Quarter
26. Niẓāmiyya College
27. Kalwadha Gate or Bāb al-Baṣaliyya later Bāb al-Khalaj (Modern Bāb al-Sharqī)
28. Persian Bastion
29. Shrine of ʿAlī called Mashhad al-Minṭaqa
30. Shrine of Maʿrūf al-Karkhī
31. Shrine of Junayd and Sarī al-Saqaṭī

addition to this, during long periods, the Sultans would be away fighting wars and thus the reins of power in the city would be in constant flux with various *amīrs* or viziers always vying with each other, and then often punishing their opponents. It was a precarious business to get involved in. The period in general seems to portray a picture of constant instability, at variance with the more stable period that had preceded it, as was mentioned above.

2.1 *The Buwayhid Period (334–446/945–1055)*

In 334/945 Aḥmed Muʿizz al-Dawla (334–356/945–967) entered Baghdad establishing Buwayhid rule in Iraq.[11] The Abbasid Caliphate had by this time been in a period of stagnation with the Arab Caliphs fighting to keep their empire together. The arrival of the Buwayhids finally put an end to de facto Abbasid rule. The Buwayhids were Shīʿī, and it may have been expected from them to remove the Sunni Caliphs from their position, but they did no such thing. They left the Caliphs as titular heads of state, as the leaders of Sunni Muslims everywhere and even legitimised their own rule by acknowledging that their right to rule was based on Caliphal recognition.[12] Although the previous Caliph, al-Rāḍī, had more or less given up all of his power by creating the post of *amīr al-umarā'* (chief commander) for one of his ministers, Ibn Rāʿik (who had then become the de facto ruler of what remained of the empire), the Buwayhids made it open and clear from the start that they were the real rulers.[13] There are many reasons why it may have been advantageous for them not to destroy the Caliphate and maybe even replace it with a Shīʿī version. To start with, the Shīʿīs were a minority in Baghdad and in the empire as a whole, and destroying or radically altering the Caliphate could have unwanted consequences in the form of a Sunni revolt. Then there was the worry that a Sunni Caliph might crop up somewhere else such as in Spain or Eastern Iran. On the other hand, keeping the Caliphate allowed the new rulers a means of legal authority over all Sunnis in the Islamic world. It also allowed the Buwayhids a means of strengthening diplomatic ties with the outside world through the moral authority possessed by the Caliphs.[14] Thus a system was set up where the Caliph was left to choose

11 On the Buwayhids, see, John Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 945–1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), Mafizullah Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* (Calcutta: Iran Society, 1964).

12 Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988) 139.

13 David Waines, The Pre-Buyid Amirate: Two Views from the Past, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 8 (1977), 339.

14 Claude Cahen, Buwayhids, *EI* 2nd edition VI, p. 1351; Wilfred Madelung, The Assumption of the Title Shāhanshāh by the Būyids, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28.2 (1969), 98.

who to appoint to religious offices while the Buwayhids dealt with all other political affairs. The Abbasid Caliph was now in the position of the Exilarch among the Jews, as a religious leader but not a ruler.[15]

It is not known for certain which branch of Shīʿī Islam the Buwayhids belonged to, although Cahen suggests that they were perhaps Zaydīs because of the sheer number of Zaydīs in Daylām, their place of origin. Madelung gives further credit to this hypothesis and is quite sure of the fact, because of the patronisation of Zaydī Alids in Baghdad and Daylām. e.g. Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Mahdī was honoured by Muʿizz al-Dawla and appointed Naqīb or syndic of the Alids in Baghdad.[16] Muʿizz al-Dawla is also said to have privately referred to him as his own imam.[17] It has also been suggested that they may have been Ismāʿīlīs.[18] In the Buwayhid army both Sunnis and Shīʿīs were represented and it does not seem that the Buwayhids ever planned the persecution of the Sunnis, which adds weight to the fact that they were politically rather than religiously motivated.[19] However their Shīʿism led them to form strong links with rich Shīʿī *sharīfs*, and through patronage of Shīʿī scholars were responsible to an extent for the emergence of a more concrete Twelver theology.[20] The inclusion of Sunnis within the army would in time lead to the weakening of their position, especially due to the later added Turkish element which made up the cavalry as opposed to the original army of Daylāmīs, who remained no more than foot soldiers or infantrymen throughout Buwayhid rule.[21]

The Buwayhid period (334–447/945–1055) saw four new Caliphs came to the throne. The first, al-Mustakfī (332–334/944–946), lasted little more than a year, for although he initially complied with Muʿizz al-Dawla and was left as Caliph, Muʿizz feared him to be too loyal to the Turks and so deposed him and put al-Mutīʿ (334–363/946–974) on the throne. Al-Mutīʿ lasted nearly twenty years under the rule of Muʿizz al-Dawla, but after the latter's death, during the turmoil of succession between Muʿizz's heirs, al-Mutīʿ backed the wrong side. Muʿizz had chosen his son Bakhtiyar ('Izz al-Dawla) (356–367/967–978) to take over after his death and in 350/961 left him with a vizier al-Muḥallabī

15 Madelung, The Assumption of the Title Shāhanshāh by the Būyids 98.

16 Cahen, 'Buwayhids' 1352, Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* 31–34.

17 Wilfred Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988) 89.

18 See Clifford Bosworth, Military Organisation under the Buyids of Persia and Iraq, *Oriens* 18 (1965), 143–167.

19 Cahen, Buwayhids 1352.

20 See coming section on 'Groups and Sects' for further details.

21 Cahen, Buwayhids 1353.

(d. 352/963) and commander in chief Subektekin.[22] However Bakhtiyar's entire rule was mired with problems. He constantly had to fight other family members who felt that they were the rightful heirs of Muʿizz and furthermore ran into dire fiscal problems. During the latter part of his reign the government's finances became so serious that he had no way to pay his Turkish troops. He thus decided to get rid of them by going to the nearby town of Wasīṭ, gathering loyal troops and landing an attack on the Turkish army in Baghdad from there. This attempt failed and Subektekin took power. Subektekin, ethinically Turkish and therefore Sunni, gave a glimmer of hope to the Caliphate and the Sunni populace of Baghdad at large. He deposed al-Mutīʿ, who was by now suffering from paralysis, and had his son al-Ṭāʾiʿ (363/974–381/991) put on the throne. The Sunni populace of Baghdad rose in Subektekins favour and burned the Karkh Quarter, the area of the city with the largest Shīʿī population.[23]

Bakhtiyar now called on his next most powerful family member ʿAḍūd al-Dawla (367–372/978–983), who came to his aid but with his own ambitions in mind, and ended up taking control of Baghdad.[24] Bakhtiyar's weak and troubled twelve year rule had led to a state of near anarchy in Baghdad. However under ʿAḍūd al-Dawla order was returned to the city and the sectarian violence, which was mainly between the Sunnis and Shīʿīs, was controlled by a policy of neutrality and intolerance.[25] An edict was released banning any show of sectarianism that may lead to violence: "No one is to preach or tell stories either in the public mosque or in the streets. None is permitted to seek favour of God in the name of any companion of the Prophet. He who seeks favour from God should simply read the Qurʾān."[26]

ʿAḍūd al-Dawla therefore did not openly support the Sunnis as the Abbasids had done previously, pronouncing Sunni tenets as orthodox, nor the Shīʿīs as his predecessors Muʿizz al-Dawla and Bakhtiyar had done, giving them free reign to celebrate religious ceremonies, and thereby causing friction with the Sunni majority. There were thus fewer sectarian troubles during his reign.[27]

After the death of ʿAḍūd al-Dawla, the city once again returned to a state of lawlessness and anarchy, due to fighting between the various Buwayhid princes

22 Donohue, *The Buwayhid dynasty in Iraq* 50–51, Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 16.

23 Donohue, *The Buwayhid dynasty in Iraq* 56–57, Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 27–29.

24 Donohue, *The Buwayhid dynasty in Iraq* 58, Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 32.

25 Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* 46–52.

26 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 67.

27 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 68.

contending for control of Iraq. It wasn't until Bahā' al-Dawla (379–402/989–1012) took control in 378/989 and appointed a leader of the army, ʿAmīd al-Juyūsh, to control Baghdad, that some order was restored. ʿAmīd al-Juyūsh, like ʿAḍud al-Dawla, banned all Sunni/Shīʿī public observance of religious ceremonies. He started off by capturing an Alid 'bandit' and publicly drowning him with an Abbasid to set an example to the populace. By this time, the Caliph al-Ṭā'iʿ had been deposed (380/991), and al-Qādir put on the throne.[28]

Al-Qādir from the start longed for a Sunni revival and may even have been a Ḥanbalī.[29] It was during this same period that the Caliphate saw a rise in its fortunes. Caliphal power increased in the period 389–447/999–1055 under al-Qādir and his successor al-Qā'im who also seems to have been a Ḥanbalī.[30] Bahā' al-Dawla had left the city for good in 384/995, for it seems that he preferred to reside in other cities of his empire rather than in Baghdad. The dwindling resources of the city, the encroachment on urban areas by the bedouins, and endless strife amongst the various factions all contributed to him holding court elsewhere.[31] In addition to this, in the East, Maḥmūd of Ghazna (388–421/998–1030), a staunch Sunni, took power and gave full allegiance to the Caliph and even started a regular correspondence with him.[32] This emboldened the Caliph who published a creed in line with Ḥanbalī theology.[33] In 408/1017 he arranged a recantation of the beliefs of the Muʿtazilīs and other innovators.[34] Al-Qādir was also the first Caliph since the arrival of the Buwayhids who died naturally while still on the throne. His son al-Qā'im took over from him in 432/1041 and continued in his fathers' policies. The death of al-Qādir coincided with the death of Maḥmūd of Ghazna, and al-Qā'im was now further emboldened by the rise of the Seljuks under Tughril Beg (447–455/1055–1063).[35] He appointed his own vizier—a first for a Caliph under the Buwayhids—by the name of Ibn al-Maslama (d. 458/1058), who wielded much

28 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 85–87, Donohue, *The Buwayhid dynasty in Iraq* 103.

29 See coming section on Ḥanbalīs.

30 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 189, 195.

31 Donohue, *The Buwayhid dynasty in Iraq* 107–109, 279.

32 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 196.

33 The Qādirī Creed is available in Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam* vol. 7, 109–111. English translation by Salah al-Din Khuda Buhksh in *The Renaissance of Islam*, (New York: AMS Press, 1975) 206–209; German translation by Adam Mez, *Renaissance* 198–201; French translation by George Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqil et la résurgence de l'Islam traditionaliste au XIe siècle*, (Damascus: Insituit Francais de Damas, 1963) 303–310. Donohue believes that the creed may have been forced on him by circumstances, 283–287.

34 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 197.

35 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 198.

influence in the capital. After fifteen years on the throne, al-Qā'im saw the fall of the Buwayhids and the taking of Baghdad by the Seljuk leader Tughril Beg. This was the end of a century of Shī'ī rule in Baghdad and the period continued with an increase in power for the Sunnis.

2.2 *The Seljuk Period (446–596/1055–1200)*

The Seljuks that had now come to power across Iraq and Iran, like most Turkish tribes, were staunch Sunnis and virtually all belonged to the Ḥanafī School of law. Tughril Beg was no exception; he was a staunch Ḥanafī and was a Mu'tazilī in theology.[36] He appointed a Ḥanafī vizier, Kundurī, and wherever he conquered, appointed Ḥanafī judges, replacing judges belonging to any other school.[37] He also had the Friday prayers performed according to Ḥanafī rite and in the major cities had separate Friday mosques built for the Ḥanafīs. The other major school of law in the lands east of Baghdad at this time was the Shāfi'ī School, the Mālikī School having hardly any adherents in the East, while the Ḥanbalīs were mostly concentrated in and around Baghdad itself.[38] On entering Baghdad the position of chief judge, which had been vacant for a while, was given to a Ḥanafī, Muḥammad al-Damaghāni. Tughril Beg also had a dome erected over Abu Hanīfa's grave (d. 150/767), while in 458/1066 he had a *madrasa* built adjacent to the tomb, both events being witnessed by Ibn 'Aqīl.[39] A free reign was given to preachers to have the Shī'īs and Ash'arīs cursed from the pulpits.[40] Tughril Beg also tried to unite the Caliphate and Sultanate by marrying one of the Caliph al-Qā'im's daughters. The Caliph was not in favour of the marriage and used all his power to have it delayed. It finally went ahead not long before the death of Tughril and lasted only seven months without issue.[41]

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36 Syafiq Mughni, *Hanbali Movements in Baghdad from al-Barbahāri to al-Hāshimi*, (PhD: UCLA, 1990) 43. Many of the Ḥanafīs were Mu'tazilīs as this was the law school that they had infiltrated most. For more on Mu'tazilīs see below.

37 Wilfred Madelung, The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks, in *Actas do IV Congressio de Estudos Arabes e Islamicos*, (Coimbra, Lisboa, Leiden: Brill, 1968) 128.

38 On the interplay of Sunni scholarly society, institutions and political rulers in Baghdad during this period see, Daphna Ephrat, Religious Leadership and Associations in the Public Sphere of Seljuk Baghdad, in Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel Eisenstadt, and Nehmia Levitzion (eds.), *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002) 31–48.

39 Madelung, *Spread of Māturīdism*, 130; George Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqīl: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) 18.

40 Mughni, *Hanbali Movements* 44. Although Ibn Athīr, Ibn 'Asākir and al-Subki blame this policy not on Tughril Beg but his vizier Kundurī.

41 See George Makdisi, The Marriage of Tughril Beg, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1970), 259–275.

In 451/1059 Tughril Beg appointed al-Muẓaffar as the provincial governor to rebuild Baghdad. The Karkh market was restored and many new buildings in the east and west of Baghdad were constructed. The famous library of Sabūr was restored after having been looted and burned many times, and the remaining books that had been removed to the city of Nishapur were returned to the library.[42] In addition to this al-Muẓaffar was able to break the powerbase of the semi-nomadic tribes northwest of Baghdad who had taken advantage of the weak government in that city and had interfered with the grain trade.[43] Factional strife was also reduced and an agreement between the Sunnis of Bāb al-Basra Quarter and the Shīʿīs of the Karkh Quarter in 488/1095 meant that clashes between the two groups stopped. During this period clashes between schools of law also became rare.

Tughril Beg died in 455/1063, having actually spent very little time in Baghdad. The next Sultan Alp Arslān, in contrast to Tughril Beg, appointed a Shāfiʿī vizier, the famous Niẓām al-Mulk. Under Niẓām al-Mulk the Shāfiʿī's were recompensed for what they had lost; new mosques were built for them where they could hold congressional prayers in accordance with the Shāfiʿī School, but at the same time none of the privileges of the Ḥanafīs were removed.[44] However Alp Arslān was never happy with the patronage that Niẓām al-Mulk gave to the Shāfiʿīs and Ashʿarīs, and Niẓām al-Mulk writes in his *siyāsat-nāma* that he lived in constant fear of the Seljuk Sultan's displeasure at having a Shāfiʿī vizier.[45]

By the time of Alp Arslān then, there was a situation whereby the Sultan was a Ḥanafī, the vizier a Shāfiʿī, and the Caliph a Ḥanbalī. The new situation of Sunni state control led to a new relationship between Sultan and Caliph. Ghazālī wrote on the theoretical underpinnings of this new situation, stating that the Caliph upheld institutional authority and was chosen by the Sultan who in turn gave allegiance to the Caliph and upheld law and order. Without the Sultan the institutions could not be maintained, while the Sultan recognized the *sharīʿa* as the organizing principle of the community.[46]

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42 Muḥammad Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Taʾrīkh al-Muluk wa al-Umam* (6; Hyderabad, 1940) 215.

43 Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974), v. 2, 36 and Charles Bosworth, The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World, in *Cambridge History of Iran*, (5; Cambridge: CUP, 1991) 97–98.

44 Ephrat, *Learned Society* 130.

45 Written in Persian, this was a book of fifty chapters concerning religion, politics and various other issues of the day. Charles Schefer, *Siyasatnamah* (Paris: Sinbad, 1984) 88.

46 See Leonard Binder, al-Ghazali's Theory on Islamic Government, *The Muslim World* (1955), 229–241, Carole Hillenbrand, Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik? Al-Ghazali's Views On Government, *Journal of Persian Studies* (1988), 81–94.

The economic situation in Baghdad was greatly affected by the arrival of the Seljuks. To begin with the incoming troops pillaged certain areas of the city such as the Bāb al-Ṭāq quarter with an aparent disregard as to the sectarian affiliation of their victims.[47] They were preceeded by people from all over Iraq fleeing to Baghdad in fear of the approaching Turks.[48] The cities of Basra and Wāsiṭ were of great importance to Baghdad as food suppliers and their depopulation, coupled with an increase in the consumer population of Baghdad, cannot have been a good situation. In addition to this, once the Seljuks actually entered Baghdad, it is reported that 50,000 soldiers camped in the city.[49] Food prices rose five fold and led to epidemic and death. Ibn al-Jawzī reports that "every day a great number of people died, and if one were to walk through the streets, they would encounter only one or two people."[50] Natural disasters worsened the situation; in 450/1058 snow destroyed crops in the surrounding countryside and Baghdad was hit by an earthquake that destroyed many houses. The city nevertheless had a good administrator in Niẓām al-Mulk (455–485/1063–1092), who was effective at keeping the city secure and provided medical welfare for the masses.[51] An example of his effective administration was a period during the later 460's (1070s) when, in addition to the great flood of 466/1073, which is said to have destroyed 100,000 homes, there was a locust problem in the countryside and a great amount of crops were destroyed. However, the fact that security was not affected allowed the city to recover quite quickly.[52]

The twelfth century saw relative stability in the economic situation of Baghdad, and this is the period that Jīlānī would have been resident in the city. However there were still brief periods of instability that were caused by fighting between rival Seljuk princes in or near the city, such as the wars of 528–530/1133–1135, where the fatalities included two Caliphs.[53] It is also reported by Ibn al-Athīr that in 531/1136, 200 people died everyday due to the devastating activities of the ʿAyyārūn (lit. vagabond or rascal) as well as the ruthless policies of al-Baqsh, the military governor.[54]

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47 Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl* 21–22.

48 Khidr al-Duri, *Society and Economy of Iraq Under the Seljuqs (1055–1160) With Special Reference to Baghdad*, (Phd: University of Pennsylvania, 1970) 99.

49 Ibid. 99.

50 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, v. 8, 179.

51 Duri, *Society and Economy* 101.

52 Ibid. 103.

53 ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963), v. 11, 35. Taef El-Azhari, *Zengi and the Muslim Response to the Crusades: The Politics of Jihad* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016) 32.

54 See section on *ʿayyarūn* below.

During the Buwayhid period, Baghdad had witnessed a great many transient scholars who came from outside Baghdad and would only stay in the city for a few years. However by the end of the eleventh century more scholars started to immigrate and settle in Baghdad due to the general improvement of the economic situation as well as the constant opening of new institutions of learning where the scholars could find work.[55] The situation took a turn once again as the twelfth century wore on and again fewer scholars settled in Baghdad, preferring to move on to other cities. This was in part due to more political instability, as well as a new wave of natural disasters that hit the city. In addition to this there was the rise of many new centers of learning to the west of Baghdad where similar institutions had been founded in cities such as Damascus and Cairo.[56]

The political situation in Baghdad remained stable under the first three Seljuk Sultans. However after the death of the third Sultan Malik-Shāh (465–485/1072–1092), internal confusion and warfare across the Seljuk Empire broke out. This did not have a great effect on Baghdad as the Seljuks had never made the city their capital and in addition to this the situation allowed the Caliphs to play a greater role. Unlike the weak and powerless Caliphs of the Buwayhid period, the later Seljuk period produced some very capable Caliphs.[57] Whenever a dispute arose between successors to the Sultanate, the Caliphs would first strengthen their hold on Baghdad and then join the fighting on one or the other side.[58] After the year 547/1152 no Seljuk prince was allowed in Baghdad. The peak of Caliphal power was reached under al-Nāṣir (575–622/1180–1225), who was able to create diplomatic links with other dynasties such as the Ayyubids, and had under him a controlled force made up of *futuwwa* (from the ʿAyyarūn).[59] One of the most impressive achievements of al-Nāṣir was getting the Nizāri Ismāʿīlīs to return to orthodoxy and cease their subversive activities. The leader of the Ismāʿīlīs in Alamūt at the time was Jalal al-Dīn Ḥasan III, who in 608/1212 ordered the practices of Sunnism to be established in his areas of control. He built mosques, burnt heretical books and received titles of honor from the Caliph.[60]

55 Ephrat, *Learned Society* 55.
56 Ibid. 56–57.
57 Charles Bosworth, The political and dynastic history of the Iranian world (AD 1000–1217), in *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991) 201.
58 Ibid. 201.
59 See section on *ʿayyarūn* below.
60 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, v. 12, 195.

3 Groups and Sects in Baghdad

Baghdad was ethnically composed of Arabs, Persians, Turks and Kurds, and there were, aside from the Muslim majority population, Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians. In such a milieu certain groups viewed themselves as the upholders of religion and morality and in this respect, the Ḥanbalīs, (followers of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal in law) were one of the largest and most important groups to play an active role in the city. This is the group most important to this study and will thus be elaborated upon most.[61]

The easiest way to gain an understanding of the various Muslim groups and sects in Baghdad is to start with the main division: Sunni and Shīʿī. This division was further reinforced by the political support that was gained by one side or the other, in addition to the fact that they mostly lived in separate quarters within Baghdad.[62] The Shīʿīs in the early part of this period (fifth/tenth century) were still developing a distinct theology, and in Baghdad were partially identified with the Ḥanafī School, most probably due to the common Muʿtazilī theology. We may divide them into three main sects; the Zaydis, the Imāmiyya (or 'Ithna 'Ashariyya/Twelvers'), and the Ismāʿīlīs, with the Imāmiyya being the largest and most significant in Baghdad. There were, in addition to this, small groupings of *ghulāt* or 'extreme' Shīʿīs, but their activities are of no significance to our present survey, as they do not seem to have played any major role in Baghdad.

3.1 *The Zaydīs*

The Zaydis were divided into four sub-sects: the Jārūdiyya, the Jarīriyya, the Batriyya and the Yaʿqūbiyya.[63] The Jārūdiyya were followers of Abū al-Jārūd, a contemporary of Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 112/731) (considered by Ismāʿīlīs and Twelvers as the fifth imam), who had considered al-Baqir to be a hypocrite. They considered the three Caliphs before ʿAlī to be unbelievers and that the Imamate was always transmitted explicitly by the previous imam.[64] The Jarirīya or Sulaimāniyya considered the first two Caliphs, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, to be sinners but not unbelievers, while ʿUthmān, the third Caliph, was considered

61 See Ḥanbalıs below.

62 Donnahue, *Buwayhid Dynasty* 316.

63 On the Zaydiyya, see, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (1; Cairo: Maktaba Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1950) 132–155, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq Bayna al-Firaq* (Cairo, 1920) 16–17, ʿAlī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal* (5; Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1985) 35–50.

64 Alessandro Bausani, Religion in the Seljuk Period, in *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991) 290.

an unbeliever due to the many innovations he had introduced during his time. They also believed that the imamate was passed by *shūrā* or a consultative body just like the Sunnis.[65] The Batriyya and the Yaʿqūbiyya were even more similar to Sunnis, believing that although ʿAlī was the most noble person after the Prophet, the Caliphates of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar were still to be considered legitimate.

Theologically the Zaydis were all Muʿtazilī, and in law they operated with the same general *uṣūl* (principles for deriving law) as the Sunnis.[66] Out of all the Shīʿī groupings, the Zaydis were the closest to the Sunnis due to their generally lenient position on the Caliphs before ʿAlī. It is often supposed that the Buwayhids were Zaydī, and Donnohue has written that there were actually more Zaydīs in Baghdad than Twelvers, with the former more associated with the study of law and the latter working more on theology.[67] However although there is no doubt that Zaydīs at times held important positions in Baghdad, such as Naqīb of the Ṭālibids or leader of the pilgrimage, this claim seems to exaggerate their numbers and contradict the general picture of the Zaydis only being prevalent in any significant numbers in northeastern Iran and the Yemen.[68]

3.2 *The Ismāʿīlīs*

The Ismāʿīlīs were a group of Shīʿī origin that split off from the main body believing that Ismāʿīl, the elder son of the sixth imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (148/765) was the seventh imam.[69] Ismāʿīl had however died before his father, leaving no heirs and the Ismāʿīlīs took up the belief that he himself would return as the Mahdī. The Nizāri branch of the Ismāʿīlīs was the most widespread during the period 400–500/1000–1200 and they were made famous by their spectacular assassinations, which seem to have given them a reputation amongst the populace far exceeding their actual significance in the city.[70] These assassina-

65 Ibid. 291.

66 Ann Lampton, Internal Structure of The Seljuk Empire, in *The Cambridge History of Iran* 291.

67 Donnohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty* 329.

68 Mughni also writes that there were very few Zaydis in Baghdad during the 10th and 12th centuries.

69 See Farhad (ed.) Daftary, *Medieval Ismaili History and Thought* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), Wilferd Madelung, Ismāʿīliyya, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 4; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004a) 198–206. On the Ismāʿīliyya generally see, al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* v. 1, 98–100, al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq Bayna al-Firaq* 264–299, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Niḥal* (2; Cairo: Muʾassasa al-Jallī, 1968) 5–35, Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwāʾ wa al-Niḥal* v. 5, 35–50.

70 See Farhad Daftary, *The Assasin Legends: Myths of the Ismailis* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994) 33–36. Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Phoenix, 2003);

tions were aimed at military or civilian persons that were seen in some way as threatening to the Nizāri propaganda and their communities.[71]

The reaction of the Seljuk state was the massacring of Ismāʿīlīs, which in turn led to further assassinations, the most famous of them being the assassination of the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk. Most of the efforts of the Nizāris were concentrated around Isfahān, which was the real seat of power for the Seljuks. By 483/1090 the Nizāris under Ḥasan al-Sabāḥ had seized the fortress in Alamūt in the Daylām Mountains, and they were also successful in seizing other forts in this region.[72] Barkyārūq, the fourth Seljuk Sultan, was unable to stop the Nizāris or root them out while Muhammad Tapash, after becoming undisputed ruler (490–511/1105–1118), immediately started a campaign to put an end to the Nizāri revolt.[73] This came to a conclusion in 608/1212 when, as previously mentioned, the leader of the Ismāʿīlīs in Alamūt, Jalal al-Dīn Ḥasan III, ordered the practices of Sunnism to be established in his areas of control.[74]

There were not many Ismāʿīlīs in Baghdad, and aside from the occasional spectacular assassination, their activities as a group on a day-to-day basis in the city are insignificant enough not to be mentioned in the history books. However it is possible that the Buwayhids were originally Ismāʿīlī, and even if this was not the case then certainly some of their ideas were present in the beliefs of certain members of this dynasty.[75]

3.3 *The Imāmiyya*

This group later came to be commonly known as the Ithnā ʿAshariyya (Twelvers).[76] The majority of the Shīʿīs of Baghdad belonged to this sect; their stronghold was the quarter of Karkh west of the Tigris, which was an area with consid-

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Joseph Hammer-Purgstall, *The History of The Assassins Derrived from Oriental Sources* (London: Smith and Elder, 1835).

71 Daftary, *Isma'ilis* 354. It seems that many assassinations were ascribed to them, perhaps in order to give the state good justification for persecuting them; see Farhad Daftary, *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies: Collected Studies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005) 135–136. In Baghdad they were feared for these assassinations, but their ideas were also well known, hence we will see Jīlānī later mentioning them, as did Ghazālī before him.

72 See Peter Willey, The Castles of The Assassins (London: Harrap, 1963).

73 Daftary, *Isma'ilis* 361.

74 Bosworth, *Political History* 168.

75 Ibid. 157.

76 On the Imāmiyya see al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* v. 1, 98–100, al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq Bayna al-Firaq* 38–54, al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Niḥal* v. 1, 195–224, Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal* v. 5, 35–50. Also see Heinz Halm, *Shi'ism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), Arzina Lalani, *Early Shi'ī Thought* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

erable markets. There were often riots between the Sunnis and Shīʿīs, beginning in 338/949, a few years after the arrival of the Buwayhids, and often centered on the flashpoint between the Karkh and Bāb al-Baṣra Quarter.[77] This was most likely due to the Shīʿīs' feeling more confident in expressing themselves and expecting greater rights as a result of the patronage of the Buwayhid rulers. The Buwayhids, for their part, may have been favourable towards Twelver doctrine because, although they themselves were not Alid and Shīʿī belief would require them to install an Alid ruler, the Twelver doctrine of the disappearance of the last imam would have suited them politically, giving their rule legitimacy amongst Shīʿīs.[78] However, it seems that the disturbances between the Shīʿīs and Sunnis were often based more on neighbourhood rivalry rather than theological or religious disagreements, as both groups were often quick to change the religious points that they were apparently fighting about, such as the format of the call to prayer or what was acceptable to be written on the outside of a mosque.[79]

The first Buwayhid ruler of Baghdad, Muʿizz al-Dawla, put the Shīʿīs under their own Alid *naqīb* as separate from the already existing Abbasid Naqīb.[80] Muʿizz al-Dawla was also responsible in 353/964 for establishing for the first time the ceremonies of Āshūrāʾ and Ghadīr Khum. The first was a ceremony of mourning for the martyrdom of Ḥusayn at the hands of the Umayyads, and the second was a celebration of the appointment of ʿAlī as successor to the Prophet.[81] The celebrations were done in the Daylāmī way; Daylām being the origin of the new rulers. For example, the mourning for Ḥusayn involved the Daylāmī mourning tradition of the women blackening their faces and men beating their chests.[82]

The Shīʿīs also used *manāqibīs* during their processions; these were singers who would praise ʿAlī and his descendents. They became popular during the Buwayhid period but continued their activities even after the fall of that dynas-

77 Ibn al-Athīr, *Annals* 75, 79, 80–81, 235, 238, 242–244.

78 Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985) 75, Etan Kohlberg, From Imāmiyya to Ithnā ʿAshariyya, *BSOAS* 39 (1976), 521–534.

79 See for eg. Ibn al-Athīr, *Annals* 75, 242–244.

80 The role of the *Naqīb* was to take care of the *ashrāf* or noble descendents of the Prophet. Their role partly overlapped that of the judge with regard to the *ashrāf* and they were also responsible for keeping records of births and deaths of the *ashrāf* and to stop false claimants. See Axel Havemann, Naḳīb al-Ashrāf, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 7; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 926–927. Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 35.

81 Ibid. 36.

82 Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad* 28.

ty. This resulted in the Sunnis bringing to the fore their own poets in retaliation, who sang the praises of the Companions and cursed the poets of the Shīʿīs.[83] The Sunni poets also began singing praises of the old Zoroastrian kings and heroes, much to the disgust of the Shīʿīs.[84] It is interesting to note here that during this period the Shīʿīs were very much against bringing in any ideas from the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian culture, and in fact cursed the Sunnis for doing so.[85]

During most of the Buwayhid period, riots broke out every year on ʿĀshūrāʾ and Ghadīr Khum, which involved the burning of houses and much plundering. However, with the coming of the Seljuks, the Shīʿīs in 441/1049, realizing their loss of power, built a wall around Karkh. The Sunnis of the neighboring quarter of al-Qallāʿīn did the same and this activity itself led to rioting between the two groups. The police chief was sent in to settle the matter but both parties joined forces at this point and started rioting against the authorities. This led to a mutual agreement between the two groups, which led to cordial relations between them for a while, where they adapted each others' customs such as in the call to prayer.[86]

Initially, with the arrival of the Sunni Seljuks, the Shīʿīs were left out of the political fold. However in 479/1086, the third Seljuk Sultan, Malik Shāh, after having visited the Shīʿī holy sites in Karbalā and Najaf, appointed a Shīʿī finance minister.[87] After this it became normal for Shīʿīs to take up government positions and Shīʿī viziers were no rarity. For example, six viziers served during the reign of Sultan Sanjar (511–552/1118–1157) and two of these were Shīʿī.[88] They were thus able to work in the highest levels of government and from these positions were able to patronise the Shīʿīs of Baghdad. They built *madrasas* for Shīʿīs—albeit mostly in cities other than Baghdad—and also spent money on building shrines at the graves of imams and other venerated Shīʿī personalities.[89]

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83 Ibid. 39 and Momen, *Introduction* 293.

84 Alessandro Bausani, Religion in the Seljuk Period, in *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991) 294.

85 See Jalāl al-Qazwīnī's famous book from this period the *Kitāb al-Naqd* (Tehran: Chapkhanah-i Sipihr, 1952).

86 Ibn al-Athīr, *Annals* 75.

87 Heinz Halm, *Shi'ism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991) 61.

88 Jean Calmard, Le Chiisme Imamite en Iran a l'Epoque Seldjoukide d'apres le Kitāb al-Naqd, *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam* 54 (1971), 65.

89 Halm, *Shi'ism* 61.

3.4 *The Muʿtazilīs*

This was a rationalist school of theology spread mostly amongst the Ḥanafīs and Shīʿīs, whose adherents referred to themselves as *ahl-al-tawḥīd wa al-ʿadl*.[90] In Baghdad they were favoured by the Buwayhids probably due to the fact that most Shīʿīs were Muʿtazilīs. Over time the school exhibited different branches, perhaps the most famous being the Baghdadian and Basran.[91] However, all Muʿtazilīs regardless of their differences agreed on five foundational doctrines or principles.[92] These principles were (1) *al-tawḥīd* or the uniqueness of God, (2) *al-ʿadl* or the justice of God, (3) *al-waʿad wa al-waʿīd*, or the promise and threat of God, (4) *al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn*, that the grave sinner that has not yet repented cannot be designated with belief (*īmān*) nor disbelief (*kufr*), and finally (5) *amr bi al-maʿrūf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*, commanding good and forbidding wrong.[93] Most of the discussions of the Muʿtazilīs, whether between themselves or their adversaries, revolved around their first two principles. The third fourth and fifth principles seem to be have been held onto from the founding period of the movement, and even their later books do not speak much on these issues.[94]

The Muʿtazilīs enjoyed two golden periods: the first under the Caliph al-Maʾmūn (197–218/813–833), when they were able to develop and establish themselves, and the second, which Gimmaret termed the 'classical period,' under the Buwayhids.[95] This was when they were able to develop their ideas to a more sophisticated level. Watt refers to this period as the 'silver age' in contrast to an earlier 'golden age' because the fervor that had previously existed had been lost, and "thinkers, instead of exploring fresh fields, were seeking to intro-

90 On the Muʿtazilīs see Josef Van Ess, 'Muʿtazilah', *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones. 2nd ed. (9; Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005) 6317–6325; Daniel Gimaret, Muʿtazila, *EI* v. 7, 783–793; al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* v. 1, 216–311, al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq Bayna al-Firaq* 93–190, Maḥmūd al-Malāḥimī al-Kwārizmī, *al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* (London: al-Hoda, 1991), Aḥmad Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-Muʿtazila* (Beirut: Dār al-Muntaẓir, 1988), al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Niḥal* v. 1, 53–107, Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwāʾ wa al-Niḥal* v. 5, 57–72, Josef Van Ess, *Theologie Und Gesellschaft im 2 und 3 Jahrhundert Hidschra*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–1995).

91 On these two branches see Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī, *Masāʾil fī al-Khilāf Bayna al-Baṣriyyīn wa al-Baghdādiyyīn* (Tripoli, Libya: Maʿhad al-Inmāʾ al-ʿArabī, 1979).

92 On these five principles see ʿAbd al-Jabbar Ibn Ahmad, *Sharh al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Wahba, 1965).

93 Sophia Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Just Deserts: The Character of Muʿtazilite Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) 2–3.

94 Watt, *Islamic Theology* 52.

95 David Gimaret, Muʿtazila, in *EI*^{2}, v. 7, 785.

duce greater refinement into the answers to old questions."[96] However there is no evidence that the Muʿtazilīs were at all persecuted after the arrival of the Seljuks, most likely because some of the Seljuk Sultans were themselves Ḥanafī-Muʿtazilīs.

3.5 *The Ashʿarīs*

This school of theology, named after Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 333/945), came to represent an approach to theology somewhere between the rationalist Muʿtazilīs and the conservative traditionalists.[97] Ashʿarī theology generally began from a traditionalist foundation but differed in methodology and doctrine by being more comfortable in using rational argumentation and *kalām*, whether as a tool of defence or in order to clarify and build upon existent doctrines.[98] Such a direction can be seen in Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's own work, *Kitāb al-Ḥaththʿalā al-Baḥth*.[99] Ashʿarī—a convert away from Muʿtazilism—also composed a book called *al-Ibāna*, which was in line with traditionalist theology, and used much less rational argumentation than some of his other works, although some Ḥanbalī traditionalists of his time still rejected it.[100] Although Ashʿarī gave rational arguments for the doctrinal positions of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, he also delved deeper through rational argument into certain areas that were then developed further by later Ashʿarī scholars.[101]

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96 Watt, *Islamic Theology* 54.

97 On Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī see Richard Frank, Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ashʿarī, *Le Museon: Revue D'Etudes Orientales* 104 (1991), 141–190, George Makdisi, Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History, *Studia Islamcia* 17 (1962), 37–80, George Makdisi, Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History, *Studia Islamcia* 18 (1963), 19–39. An early guide on his views is Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1987).

98 On the Ashʿarites see Richard Frank, *Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism in Medieval Islam: Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām* (1; Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2005a), Richard Frank, *Early Islamic Theology: The Muʿtazilites and al-Ashʿarī: Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām* (2; Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2005b), Richard Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology: The Ashʿarites: Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2008), Van Ess, *Theologie Und Gesellschaft im 2 und 3 Jahrhundert Hidschra*.

99 Richard Frank, al-Ashʿarī's Kitāb al-Ḥaththʿalāʾl-baḥth, *Melanges d'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales du Caire* 18 (1988), 83–152.

100 Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ashʿarī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Dīyāna* (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1977). There is much controversy over when this book was composed and for what purpose or which audience. See Frank, Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ashʿarī, Makdisi, ʿAshʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History.

101 On Ashʿarite doctrines and methods see Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd* (Beirut: Librarie Orientale, 1957), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa

The period of the Buwayhids and Seljuks witnessed some of the most important and influential of the Ashʿarī scholars, many of them being based in Baghdad for at least some portion of their lives. Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) was a follower of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence and studied theology with students of Ashʿarī himself.[102] His *Kitāb al-Tamhīd* is considered the earliest example of a full theological polemic. Two contemporaries of Bāqillānī were Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) and Abū Isḥāq al-Isfaraʾīnī (d. 418/1027).[103] All three had studied together in Baghdad but both Ibn Fūrak and Isfaraʾīnī later moved east to Nishapur. Ibn Fūrak's *Kitāb Mushkil al-Ḥadīth* is a famous early Ashʿarī text dealing with traditions that raise theological issues, and his statements on Ashʿarī's own positions in *Mujarrad Maqālāt* are considered reliable as they are taken directly from students of Ashʿarī.[104] Isfaraʾīnī was more rationalistic in his views when compared to his two contemporaries, and he was seen as closer to the Muʿtazilīs on many doctrines too.[105]

Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Simnānī (d. 444/1052) was an Ashʿarī of the next generation who lived mostly in Baghdad and studied under Bāqillānī.[106] It is interesting to note that he was a Ḥanafī in jurisprudence. Also of his generation was Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), another very influential Ashʿarī, and although he remained mostly in Nishapur, he spent a brief period in Baghdad after the first Seljuk vizier Kundurī had the Ashʿarīs denounced from the pulpits.[107] His most famous student was without doubt Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī who taught for a period at the Nīẓāmiyya in Baghdād, and was one of the first

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al-Adabiyya, n.d.), ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (4; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998), ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwayni, *al-Irshād* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjī, 1950), ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī, *al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya fī al-Arkān al-Islāmiyya* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Azhariyya, 1992), ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā Qawāʾid al-Adilla fī Uṣūl al-Iʿtiqād* (Reading: Garnet, 2000), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl fī ʿIlm al-Uṣūl* (2; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988), Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-Iqdām fī ʿIlm al-Kalām* (London: OUP, 1943), Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb Mushkil al-Ḥadīth aw Taʾwīl al-Akhbār al-Mutashābiha* (Damascus: IFEAD, 2003).

102 On Bāqillānī see, ʿAlī Ibn Ḥasan Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī bimā Nusiba ilā Imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿa al-Tawfīq, 1928) 217–236.

103 On Ibn Fūrak see ibid. 232–233. On Isfaraʾīnī see ibid. 243–244.

104 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī.*

105 Wilferd Madelung, al-Isfaraʾīnī, Abū Isḥāq, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 4; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004b), 107–108.

106 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī bimā Nusiba ilā Imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī* 259.

107 Ibid. 278–285.

Ashʿarīs to critique as well as make use of the doctrines of the philosophers.[108] Finally Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120) was from Nishapur, but came to Baghdad and preached theology in the Niẓāmiyya, causing a hostile reaction from the local Ḥanbalites.[109] He was however given protection by Niẓām al-Mulk and later returned to Nishapur.[110]

Although there were Ashʿarīs present in Baghdad during this period, they seem to have been much more concentrated in the East, especially in Nishapur, where they were challenged by members of the more rationalistic Māturīdī theological school which was popular with the Ḥanafīs.[111] It is important to note that the theological schools were less well defined than the jurispudential schools, because they did not serve any public function, and nor were there any official study circles as was the case with other subjects such as jurisprudence, Qurʾān or Ḥadīth.[112]

3.6 *The Ḥanafīs*

This was one of the three major Sunni law schools present in the city, and was named after Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767).[113] It developed out of the Kufan School of law and absorbed parts of the Basran School also.[114] The school developed from scholars who were considered to be *ahl al-raʾy* rather than *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Although both terms are fluid, the former is generally used to designate persons whose approach to the law included extensive use of rational arguments, which was in contrast to the *ahl al-ḥadīth* who would prefer to primarily quote

108 Ibid. 291–306. See the references on Ghazālī previously mentioned. Also see Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2009).

109 On Qushayrī see, ibid. 308–317.

110 The incident is mentioned again below; see *Syafiq Mughni, Hanbali Movements in Baghdad from al-Barbahāri to al-Hāshimi* (UCLA, 1990) 92.

111 See Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

112 Donnohue, *Buwayhids* 334.

113 On the rise and spread of this school see, Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th–10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 32–38, 41–67, Nurit Tsafrir, *The History of an Islamic School of Law: the early spread of Hanafism* (Cambridge, MA: Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School, 2004). For the consolidation of the law schools during this period see Daphna Ephrat, Madhhab and Madrasa in Eleventh-Century Baghdad, in Rudolph Peters Frank Vogel and Peri Bearman (eds.), *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution Devolution, and Progress* (Cambridge, MA: Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School, 2005), 77–93.

114 Willi Heffering, Ḥanafiyya, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 3; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004), 162–164, Christopher Melchert, How Ḥanafism Came to Originate in Kufa and Traditionalism in Medina, *Islamic Law and Society* 6/3 (1999), 318–347.

Ḥadīth in order to answer questions of law.[115] The Ḥanafī School was favoured by the first Abbasid Caliphs because it had originated in Iraq, and also because many of its adherents were also Mu'tazilites, the theological school which for a time was promoted by certain Caliphs. Members of the Ḥanafī school were also considered loyal to the government, as they were known for holding the legal position that the ruler should be obeyed even when unjust.[116] When the Seljuks took power, they appointed a Ḥanafī *qāḍi* and built a Ḥanafī *madrasa* (law-college) next to the tomb of Abū Ḥanīfa.[117] The vizier Kundurī was a Ḥanafī, and the Seljuks certainly seemed to favour this school. Nevertheless the actual effect of the Seljuk takeover in Baghdad for the Ḥanafī school is debatable. Ibn ʿAqīl, one of the teacher's of Jīlānī reported that he had to abandon his studies in Ḥanafī law, as their main area of activity and teaching, the Bāb al-Ṭāq quarter, had been devastated during the occupation of the city by the Turkmen in 447/1055, and this was one of the reasons that contributed to him switching to studying Ḥanbalī law instead.[118] The Ḥanafīs in Baghdad would sometimes clash with the Ḥanbalīs and Shāfiʿīs, not because of any legal differences, but rather because of theological differences, for the Ḥanbalīs were all traditionalists while the Shāfiʿīs were either Ashʿarīs or traditionalists.[119]

A major personality from the Ḥanafī School for the period was Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī (d. 403/1012), who had a very good relationship with the Caliph, and was a great supporter of the traditionalist cause, being vehemently opposed to the use of *kalām*. One of the most famous Ḥanafīs of this whole period was undoubtedly Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad al-Qudūrī (d. 428/1037) who wrote a manual of Ḥanafī law called *Mukhtaṣr al-Qudūrī*, which in time became

115 Watt, *Formative Period* 181, Eyyup Kaya, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law: the Concept of Madhhab and the Dimensions of Legal Disagreement in Hanafi Scholarship of the Tenth Century, in Frank Vogel, Rudolph Peters, and Peri Bearman (eds.), *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution Devolution, and Progress* (Cambridge, MA: Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School, 2005), 26–40.

116 Andrew Peacock, *Early Sejūk History: A new interpretation* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 108.

117 George Makdisi, Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad, *BSOAS* 24.1 (1961), 19.

118 Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl* 388, 410–411.

119 This was not a group or sect but rather scholars who—in desiring to keep with 'tradition'—were united in not wanting to delve into speculative theology. Abrahamov defines the traditionalists as "those who have regarded religious knowledge as deriving from the Qur'ān, the tradition (*sunna*), and consensus (*'ijmā'*), and preferred these sources to reason." See Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology, Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998) ix. The foundations of traditionalism did not change over the centuries, and though in later times the bulk of the traditionalists were Ḥanbalīs, they could also be found amongst the Shāfʿīs, Mālikīs or Ḥanafīs.

very famous and is still studied today. He held debates on legalistic differences with the Shāfiʿīs Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāʾīnī (d. 450/1058) and Abū Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī (d. 450/1058).[120] Qudūrī was also made a *qāḍi*. Two other Ḥanafīs who were made *qāḍis* were al-Saymāri (d. 436/1045), who was a Ḥadīth scholar, and Abū ʿAbdullāh Muhammad al-Damaghāni, who ended up becoming *qāḍi al-quḍāt* after the arrival of the Seljuks in Baghdad. The Damaghānīs were to become a very prominent family in Baghdad, producing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries five *qāḍis* and four *qāḍi al-quḍāts* (chief justice). Once a member of this family got to the position of *qāḍi al-quḍāt*, he appointed and promoted other members of the family to other important juridical posts.[121]

3.7 *The Shāfiʿīs*

This was the second of the major law schools present in Baghdad and was named after Muhammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), who spent a number of years in Baghdad.[122] Shāfiʿī was able to synthesise the desire of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* to an extent, which was to give primary importance to the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth and that of the *ahl al-raʾy* by giving legalistic reasoning a place in his legal system.[123] In his famous book, *al-Risāla*, he outlined the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), which for him were four: the Qurʾān, the *sunna* (traditions), consensus (*ʿijmāʾ*) and analogy (*qiyās*), the system immediately gaining many followers from outside his circle of influence.[124] The adherents of this school in eleventh and twelfth century Baghdad belonged to either the ʿAshʿarī school of theology or were traditionalists.[125] Unlike the Ḥanafī and Ḥanbalī schools, many of the great scholars of this school during this period

120 Syafiq Mughni, *Hanbali Movements in Baghdad from al-Barbahāri to al-Hāshimi* (PhD: UCLA, 1990) 88.

121 Sophia Saadeh, *The Development of the Position of the Chief Judge During the Buyid and Seljuk Periods* (PhD: Harvard, 1977) 231–245.

122 On this school see Akram Yūsuf al-Qawāsimi, *al-Madkhal ilā Madhhab al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī* (Amman: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 2003). Also see Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th–10th Centuries C.E.* 68–115.

123 Eric Chaumont, Shāfiʿiyya, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 9; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 185–189. On the formation of this school see also Wael Hallaq, *Law and Legal Theory in Classical and Medieval Islam* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), Nicholas Heer, *Islamic Law and Jurisprudence* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, 1990).

124 Watt, *Formative Period* 182, Joseph Lowry, The Legal Hermenutics of al-Shāfiʿī and Ibn Qutayba: A Reconsideration, *Islamic Law and Society*, 11/1 (2004), 1–41, Joseph Lowry, *Early Islamic Legal Theory: The Risāla of Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

125 Abd al-Wahhāb Ibn ʿAlī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfʿiyya al-Kubrā* (Cairo: al-Ḥalabī, 1964–1976).

were not native to the city of Baghdad but rather came from further afield, mostly from the eastern Islamic lands, especially Khurasān.[126]

During the reign of al-Mutīʿ (334/946–363/974), a Shāfiʿī jurist ʿUtba Ibn ʿUbayd Allāh (d. 350/961) was appointed to the position of *qāḍi al-quḍāt* for the very first time. After he died the position was passed onto Abū ʿAbdullāh Ibn Abū al-Shawārib, another Shāfiʿī. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardi (d. 450/1058) a Shāfiʿī famous for his theoretical text on how the state should be run (*Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*), was also a negotiator for the Caliph al-Qādir to the Buwayhids near the end of their rule in Baghdad.[127] One of the greatest Shāfiʿī scholars of the eleventh century was Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāʾīnī (d. 406/1016), who came to Baghdad at the age of 20 and studied under various teachers before embarking on a teaching career. He had a great many students and due to his stature as a scholar was respected by the government authorities.[128] Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī (d. 450/1058) studied under Isfaraʾīnī and it is reported that he won a great many debates with the Ḥanafīs. Three famous students of Ṭabarī were Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), Abu Naṣr Ibn al-Sabbāgh (d. 477/1084) and Abū Bakr Aḥmad Ibn ʿAli, famously known as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071). Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī started off his career as a Ḥanbalī, but changed to become a Shāfiʿī after apparently receiving much hatred and enmity from other Ḥanbalīs in Baghdad due to his Ashʿarī leanings on certain questions of theology.[129] However this may have not been the only reason for his change, for he also traveled to Nahrawān and other cities of Khurasān in pursuit of Ḥadīth and other studies, where the Shāfiʿīs were numerous.[130] He was also a teacher of the famous Ḥanbalī Abū Yaʿlā (d. 458/1066).[131]

Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, the other student of Isfaraʾīnī, became very famous in his own right, and it is claimed the Niẓāmiyya School was established by Niẓām al-Mulk specifically for him. An interesting point worthy of note is the fact that Shīrāzī was a supporter of the activist Ḥanbalī, Sharīf Abū Jaʿfar. They were both concerned about the decay of social morality in Baghdad, and are

126 Ephrat, *Learned Society* 163.

127 Imād al-Dīn Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (12; Cairo, 1939) 80.

128 Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Abbādī, *Kitāb Tabaqāt al-Fuqahāʾ al-Shāfiʿiyya* (Leiden, Brill, 1964) 107; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, v. 2, 277.

129 Yusuf al-ʿIshsh, *al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī Muʾarrikh Baghdad wa Muḥaddithuha* (Damascus, 1945) 210–217. On the biography of al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, see Fedwa Malti Douglas, Controversy and Its Effects in the Biographical Tradition of Al-Khaṭīb Al-Baghdādī, *Studia Islamcia* 46 (1977), 115–131.

130 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* (13; Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 19xx) 157.

131 Abū al-Husayn Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Tabaqāt al-Hanābila* (2; Cairo, 1952) 171–177.

known to have protested together against the Ashʿarī preaching of Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī in the Niẓāmiyya.[132] Both Shīrāzī and Abu Naṣr Ibn al-Sabbāgh, the other student of Tabari, formed their own study circles in Baghdad.[133] Sabbāgh was known for his famous legal treatise called *Kitāb al-Ṣhāmil fī al-Fiqh*. Abu Bakr Shāshi (d. 507/1114) became a student of both Ibn al-Sabbāgh and Shīrāzī, studying the *Kitāb al-Ṣhamil* with its author, and in time became the most prominent Shafʿī of Baghdad of his generation.[134]

3.8 *The Ḥanbalīs*

This school of law had the largest following in Baghdad, was very popular among the masses, and is the school to which ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī belonged.[135] The Ḥanbalīs were followers of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), whose main works were the Ḥadīth collection known as the *Musnad* and the various collections of *masā'il* or responses to questions that were asked of him.[136] When in 210/825 the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mūn (197–218/813–833) setup an inquisition checking that all *qāḍi's* conformed to the Muʿtazilī doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān, Ibn Ḥanbal was one of the few scholars who openly held out against the doctrine, and on account of this was jailed and publicly scourged.[137] This earned him a great reputation amongst the orthodox, as well as the title '*imām ahl al-sunna*' or 'Imam of the Sunnis.'[138] In contrast to the

132 Mughni, *Hanbali Movements* 92.

133 Ephrat, *Learned Society* 53.

134 Ephrat, *Learned Society 53*.

135 On this school see, ʿAbd al-Qādir Ibn Badrān, *al-Madkhal ilā Madhhab Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996). Also see Nimrod Hurvitz, Schools of Law and Historical Context: Re-Examining the Formation of the Ḥanbalī Madhhab, *Islamic Law and Society* 7/1 (2000), 37–64, Nimrod Hurvitz, *The Formation of Ḥanbalism: Piety into Power* (London: Routledge, 2002), Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th–10th Centuries C.E.* 1–31, 137–155.

136 These were collected by students of his, such as Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī or Abū Hātim al-Rāzī, or by his sons Ṣāliḥ Ibn Aḥmad and ʿAbdullāh Ibn Aḥmad who asked him questions and recorded his responses, rather than Ibn Ḥanbal himself. It is probably fair to say that the most important figure in the development of this school after Ibn Ḥanbal was Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923), who was responsible for collecting together all the *masā'il* into a single text known as the *Jāmiʿ*. This book was still available in the fourteenth century as there are authors of that period who quote from it and make use of it but is unfortunately no longer extant. Ibn Badrān, *al-Madkhal ilā Madhhab Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal* 53–63.

137 Watt, *Formative Period* 20. For a full account of sources on debates in interpreting the *miḥna* and Ibn Ḥanbal's role within it, see chapter 4, section 1 and the footnotes there.

138 Ibid.

other law schools, the Ḥanbalīs were also united on principles of theology and its members were nearly all opposed to speculative theology or *kalām*.[139] Nevertheless, Ḥanbalīs came in all forms, some being more dogmatic on this issue than others. At times the differences between members of the same law school could lead to heated disputes, such as occurred when a faction led by Abū Jaʿfar al-Hāshimī turned against Ibn ʿAqīl and his supporters.[140] In theology, the Ḥanbalīs were strictly traditionalist. This pitted them against the Muʿtazilīs—who were mostly Ḥanafī and Shīʿī—and the Ashʿarīs who were mostly Shāfiʿīs.[141] By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Ḥanbalīs had become a powerful force in Baghdad with a mass following greater than any other school or sect.

The Ḥanbalīs could mainly be found in the Bāb al-Muḥawwal Quarter, the Bāb al-Basra Quarter, and around the Dār al-Khilāfa, while their activities were centered around the Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr on west side of Baghdad and the Jāmiʿ of the Caliphal Palace on the east side of the city, these *jāmiʿs* being in or near the Ḥanbalī areas.[142] Although it is a much mentioned fact in the historical sources that the Ḥanbalīs constituted the largest grouping in Baghdad, it is not possible to assess their number because the biographies only mention the scholars and major personalities that were most important in the development of this school and its activities. Therefore it is to the prominent scholars that we turn our attention:

1) Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farra (d. 458/1066) came from a Ḥanafī family, his father being a Ḥanafī scholar of some repute, and so Abū Yaʿlā started his education by studying Ḥanafī law. However, at the age of ten his father died and he came under the custody of a Ḥanbalī. Abū Yaʿlā then took up the study of Ḥanbalī law, becoming very close to his teacher Ibn Ḥāmid, and when the latter left Baghdad to go on pilgrimage in 403/1012, he left Abū Yaʿlā in charge of his study circle. Since Ibn Ḥāmid died on the return journey, Abū Yaʿlā took over Ibn Ḥāmid's position permanently. Abū Yaʿlā was offered the position of *qāḍi* more than once in his life. Initially he refused finding it objectionable to take up any official government-appointed position. However after much persuasion from two

139 Henri Laoust, Ḥanābila, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 3; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004), 158–162.

140 See Makdisi *Ibn Aqil* 28–44.

141 See George Makdisi, Hanbalite Islam, in *Studies on Islam*, translated and edited by Merlin L. Swartz. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

142 Mughni, *Hanbali Movements* 71.

Ḥanbalī patrons of the time, Abū Manṣūr Ibn Yūsuf and Abū ʿAlī Ibn Jarāda, he accepted the position, believing that it might bring benefit to the school.[143]

In 431/1040 Abū Yaʿlā led a group of his followers to the Caliphal Palace with regard to the many complaints and accusations that had been made against him, and which specifically claimed that one of his works on theology contained anthropomorphism. The Caliph al-Qā'im (a patron of the Ḥanbalīs) examined the text and declared it to be in agreement with the official Caliphal creed. The Caliph then made scholars from all the different law schools sign a document attesting to their agreement with the Caliph's findings. Among the signatories was Abū Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī, the Shāfiʿī scholar previously mentioned.[144]

Abū Yaʿlā held a study circle (*ḥalaqa*) in the Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr after the Friday prayer, and the crowd that attended this *ḥalaqa* was so large that three transmitters were needed to carry Abū Yaʿlā's speech to the farthest corners of the mosque.[145] It is interesting to note that all the major Baghdadian Ḥanbalī scholars of the next generation were all students of Abū Yaʿlā. The most important of these were Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119) and Sharīf Abū Jaʿfar (d. 470/1077).

Abū Yaʿlā was a prolific writer producing more than 50 works during his career. The most important of these in relation to the development of the Ḥanbalī school were his *Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* and his *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad*.[146] The first was a treatise on government which claimed a consistent position amongst the Ḥanbalīs on the issue from the time of Ibn Ḥanbal; specifically that an evil ruler was preferable to a state of anarchy, making any justification for rebellion against a tyrant a very difficult task.[147] If the ruler commanded things that were against the religion then the individual was allowed to disobey that particular command or order but was still not allowed to take up arms against that ruler. The second work was written against groups and sects such as the Shīʿīs, Muʿtazilīs and Ashʿarīs who were opposed to the Ḥanbalīs. Interestingly enough, Abū Yaʿlā used *kalām* methodology to support his traditionalist positions. There is no mention however of any fellow Ḥanbalī being against this

143 Mughni, *Hanbali Movements* 134.

144 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt* 234.

145 Ibid. 235.

146 The *Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* deals with the same subject as the book by Māwardī that bears the same title. However although they come to very similar conclusions, it has been shown by Donald Little that the methodologies used by each author to reach those conclusions are very different. See Donald Little, A New Look At The Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya, *The Muslim World* 64 (1974), 1–15.

147 Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrā', *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭaniyya*, ed. Muḥammad al-Fīqī (Cairo, 1938) 4–5.

work for using *kalām*, and this raises the issue of how acceptable it was to the traditionalists for one to use *kalām* in order to defend traditionalist positions.[148]

2) Sharīf Abū Jaʿfar al-Hāshimī (d. 470/1077) was a Ḥanbalī in the mould of Barbahārī, and thus was very active in calling for social morality. He studied Ḥanbalī law and Ḥadīth under Abū Yaʿlā as well as other teachers and became a *shāhid* under the *qāḍi al-quḍāt*, Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Damaghānī.[149] However even from this position he was not afraid to be critical of the rulers, for he is known to have expressed the opinion that the Seljuks were to be considered highwaymen because they pillaged Baghdad while its inhabitants were defenceless.[150] The most famous recorded incident concerning Abū Jaʿfar was in 464/1071, when he and the Shāfiʿī Abū Isḥāq al-Shirāzī came together with their followers and demanded from the Caliph that he uphold public morals, and specifically that he put a stop to prostitution. No action was taken by the Caliph and a flood occurred shortly after this that ruined part of the Caliphal residence. Abū Jaʿfar interpreted this as divine punishment and wrote to the Caliph expressing this opinion.[151]

Abū Jaʿfar was also responsible for making Ibn ʿAqīl repent from his purported Muʿtazilism and for the removal of Abū al-Naṣr al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120) for preaching Ashʿarī ideas in the Nizāmiyya.[152] Among the students of Abū Jaʿfar were Ibn Abī Yaʿlā—one of the sons of Abū Yaʿlā—who authored the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, and Abū Saʿad al-Mukharrimī.[153]

3) Abū al-Wafāʾ ʿAlī Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119) was born in 432/1040 and studied Ḥanbalī law under Abū Yaʿlā and other subjects under Abū Abdullāh al-Damaghānī and Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī.[154] In his early career he was also interested in Muʿtazilī ideas and is known to have had teachers who taught him

148 Mughni, *Hanbali Movements* 142.

149 Ibn Rajab, *Dhail alā Ṭabaqāt al-Hanābila*, (1; Damascus: Instituit Francais de Damas, 1951) 20. A *shāhid* was the assistant to the *qāḍi* or a notary who was in charge of formulating documents and contracts. On the *shāhid* see the article by Muhammad Amin, al-Shāhid al-ʿAdl fī Qadīʾ al-Islāmī, *Annales Islamologiques* 17 (1982).

150 Ibid. v. 1, 31.

151 Ibid. v. 1, 24.

152 This was the son of the famous Sufi Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) who had come to Baghdad from Khurasan at the request of Niẓām al-Mulk to teach in the Nīẓāmiyya.

153 A biographical text on all known scholars and members belonging to the Ḥanbalī school from the date of its founder, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal till the time of its author, Ibn Abī Yaʿlā.

154 For detail on Ibn ʿAqīl's life, see George Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

kalām. In 458/1066 he was appointed a chair at the Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr but had to abandon it soon afterwards due to pressure from a particular group of other Ḥanbalīs under Abu Jaʾfar, who were not pleased by his leanings towards the Muʿtazilīs.[155] In 465/1072 he was forced to publicly repent and retract his beliefs concerning his Muʿtazilī ideas as well as his veneration for Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922).[156]

However after the death of Abu Jaʾfar and until his death, Ibn ʿAqīl became a respected member of the Ḥanbalī community once more, and an incident narrated by Ibn al-Najjār (d. 643/1245) shows that he was not afraid to censure those in power. He is known to have censured the vizier ʿAmīd al-Dawla on multiple occasions, as well as the Sultan Malik Shāh, complaining that his beliefs had been corrupted by the Ismāʿīlīs.

Ibn ʿAqīl wrote many works, the biggest being *al-Funūn*, and Ibn al-Jawzī reports that it was over 200 volumes. However Dhahabī writes that it was 400 volumes and also gives a report stating that it was over 800 volumes, claiming it to be the largest book ever written. It dealt with all manner of subjects including preaching, Qurʾān exegesis, law, principles of law, grammar, poetry, history and literary stories. Unfortunately very little of this book remains extant.[157]

4) Abū Saʿad al-Mubārak Ibn ʿAlī al-Mukharrimī (d. 513/1119) was born in 446/1054, and studied under Abū Jaʿfar and Abū Yaʿlā. He also became a *shāhid* under al-Damaghānī and later his deputy, a post he left in 511/1117 two years before his death.[158] He also built a *madrasa* in the Bāb al-Azaj Quarter where he lived. This *madrasa* was later given to his most famous student, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, at which time it was expanded and renamed Madrasa Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir. Being a teacher of Jīlānī, and from whom Jīlānī took his *khirqa* or Sufi cloak, it is unfortunate that we do not have more extensive information on Mukharrimī.

5) Abū al-Muẓaffar Yahyā Ibn Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (Ibn Hubayra) (d. 560/1165) came to Baghdad as a youth and studied law according to the Ḥanbalī

155 Ibn Rajab, *Ṭabaqāt* 176.

156 See Louis Massignon, *The passion of al-Hallaj, mystic and martyr of Islam*, translated from the French with a biographical foreword by Herbert Mason (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1982); Herbert Mason, *The Death of Hallaj: A Dramatic Narrative* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

157 ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akbār Man Dhahab* (6; Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathīr, 1991) 61.

158 Ibn Rajab, *Ṭabaqāt*, v. 1, 200.

school as well as Ḥadīth. During the Caliphate of al-Muqtafī (530–555/1136–1160) he started working for the government and worked his way up until he became vizier. He remained in that position for sixteen years until his death.[159]

Ibn Hubayra, as well as being involved in politics, was also active in the field of learning and wrote a commentary on the Ḥadīth books of Bukhārī and Muslim as well as a law treatise according to the school of Ibn Ḥanbal. During his time as vizier he was also a great patron of the Ḥanbalī school, providing means for many scholars in addition to having a *madrasa* built specifically for the Ḥanbalīs. His Ḥanbalīsm was not lost in his role as vizier, for it is reported that he banned the wearing of silk in his gatherings and would himself wear either cotton or sometimes wool. Having come from a poor background, he would in meetings often give thanks to God for his position and mention his early life of poverty.[160]

Ibn Hubayra and the first Caliph he served under, al-Muqtafī, were great allies in attempting to reduce the power of the Seljuks, and by the end of that Caliph's life, Ibn Hubayra was bestowed with the titles 'Sulṭān al-'Irāq' and 'Malik al-Juyūsh.' When al-Muqtafī died, Ibn Hubayra resigned but was reinstated for life by al-Muqtadī's son, al-Mustanjid (555–565/1160–1170), and he was able to negotiate very good terms for himself.[161] Ibn Hubayra's power was thus vastly increased, although the new Caliph was far more tyrannical than his father. Ibn Hubayra's main concern during this period seems to have been about increasing the revenue of the state, as his campaigns against the various Seljuk princes were proving very costly. In 556/1161 he abolished the *muqāṭa'āt* and imposed taxes on all these protected lands. *Muqāṭa'āt* were "parcels of land having a fiscal autonomy protecting them from intervention by the agents of the treasury, and paying to the state out of the normal payment of the inhabitants only a fixed contracted sum."[162] Although the ruling increased the revenue of the Caliphate, it affected all levels of society due to an increase in food prices, and Ibn al-Jawzī reports that "people were everywhere complaining about the vizier."[163]

Ibn Hubayra died in 560/1165, having apparently been poisoned by his own doctor.[164] He left his son to the vizierate, but the Caliph had by this time tired

159 George Makdisi, Ibn Hubayra, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 3; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004), 802–803.

160 Peter Mackay, Patronage and power in 6th/12th Century Baghdad. The Life of Vizier 'Adūd al-Dīn Ibn al-Muẓaffar, *Studia Islamcia* 34 (1971), 36; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt* 320.

161 Mackay, *Patronage and Power* 32; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, v. 6, 319–327.

162 Claude Cahen, Itkā', *EI* 2nd Edition v. 3, 1088.

163 Mackay, *Patronage and Power* 35.

164 Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, v. 6, 326.

of the family and after his death persecuted his household and allies. His son and brother were both murdered in prison, and a similar fate befell Ibn Ḥamdūn (d. 562/1167), the scholar who had helped him sort out the legality of the taxes.[165]

Amongst the Ḥanbalīs as a whole in Baghdad there was an activist element and they sometimes found support from the masses or powerful groups in society. After the weakening of Buwayhid power the Caliphal government supported them in their struggle against the Muʿtazilīs. When they opposed the Ashʿarīs, they were supported by the *ahl al-ḥadīth* (partisons of tradition), and against the Shīʿīs they were supported by the Sunnis generally.[166] When the Shīʿī Buwayhids took power in Baghdad, the Caliph who was now dependent on them, in wishing to show himself as representing the Sunnis, looked for support and found it in the Ḥanbalīs. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, 30,000 Ḥanbalīs gathered behind the Caliph at that time.[167]

After 352/963 Ghadir Khum and Āshūrā' became annual ceremonies and on these days there was often a violent reaction from amongst the Sunnis. In addition to this, a group of Sunnis set up their own ceremonies; on the 18th of Muḥarram they celebrated the victory of Musʿab Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 71/691) against al-Mukhtār (d. 67/687), who had rebelled in the name of Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya (d. 81/700) (one of ʿAlī's sons), as well as celebrating a *yawm al-ghār* to commemorate the day when the Prophet was accompanied by Abū Bakr during his emigration from Mecca to Medina.[168] These celebrations were intended to offend the Shīʿīs and were in retaliation of the Shīʿī ceremonies which these Sunnis felt equally offended by. During these times there were often riots between the two groups with the Ḥanbalī masses representing a large proportion of the Sunnis, while the Shīʿī Karkh Quarter—which was next to the Ḥanbalī filled Bāb al-Basra Quarter—was regularly attacked, plundered and set on fire.[169]

There do not seem to be many reported instances of disturbances between the Muʿtazilīs and the Ḥanbalīs during this period, perhaps because as this period progressed the Muʿtazilīs became less of a threat for the Ḥanbalīs due to a general decline in their numbers. However there were still some incidents

165 Mackay, *Patronage and Power* 36.

166 Mughni, *Hanbali Movements* 150.

167 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, v. 6, 344.

168 Musʿab also had many of al-Mukhtār's followers executed. See Henri Lammens, Musʿab Ibn Zubayr, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 7; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 649–650. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, v. 7, 23; Ibn al-Kathīr, *Bidāya*, v. 11, 254–255.

169 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, v. 7, 24.

between the two groups such as in 360/970 when the Ḥanbalīs attacked the Muʿtazilī al-Muṭahhar Ibn Sulaymān in the Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr for believing that the Qurʾān was created.[170]

There were however quite a few occurrences of troubles between Ḥanbalīs and Ashʿarīs during this period. The incident of the work of theology by Abū Yaʿlā, which was condemned by the Ashʿarīs as anthropomorphist and then validated by the Caliph as orthodox, as well as the incident where al-Qushayrī was removed from Baghdad due to preaching Ashʿarism in the Niẓāmiyya have already been mentioned. There were, in addition to these, many smaller incidents such as in 461/1068 when the Ashʿarī, Kiyāʾ al-Ḥarāsi, was removed from his pulpit by a Ḥanbalī named Ibn Saukarrā, for delivering false statements concerning the Ḥanbalīs.[171]

With regard to the differences between all these groups, it is worth noting that the primary cause of division between Sunnis and Shīʿīs at this time was still more political than juridical or theological, although the Shīʿīs by this period had indeed developed a distinct theology.[172] The difference between the Muʿtazilīs, the Ashʿarīs and the traditionalists was theological while the difference between the schools of law was juridical. Thus it is possible to find persons that were Shāfiʿī and Muʿtazilī, or Ḥanafī and traditionalist, and the Shīʿīs also had persons that were *ahl al-kalām* and persons that were *ahl al-ḥadīth*. The Ḥanbalī school was somewhat unique in this respect because its adherents, despite a few exceptions, were generally united in both law and theology. This allowed a greater coherence to develop between members of this school because it meant that they were less likely to be pitted against one another.

3.9 *The ʿAyyārūn*

This was a term for bands of people made up from the lower urban classes of Baghdad.[173] They were initially recruited by the police and given weapons to defend the city against the incoming Buwayhids in the period 324–332/936–944.[174] These ʿAyyārūn can thus be understood simply as common people bear-

170 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, v. 7, 54.

171 George Makdisi, Autograph Diary of an Eleventh-Century Historian of Baghdad III, *BSOAS* 9 (1957), 31.

172 See Mohammad Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism: Beliefs and Practices* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994) esp. 5–28. He finds that prior to this period Shīʿī theology was "an early non-rational esoteric tradition," and that "it represents the pre-*kalāmic* and pre-philosophical phase of the doctrine." Also see Wilferd Madelung, Imamism and Muʿtazilite Theology, *Le Shiʿisme Imamite* (1968), 13–30.

173 See Franz Taeschner, ʿAyyār, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 1; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 794.

174 Donnohue, *Buwayhids* 340. They were also later used by Sultan Masʿūd in 1136 in his fight

ing arms. However once they were armed and had gotten used to taking the law into their own hands, it became very difficult for the government in Baghdad to control them. The Caliph al-Nāṣir was successful in using them as part of his army, by grouping them into *futuwwa* or brotherhoods, but this was only during his reign in the latter part of the twelfth century. There are frequent complaints in the historical sources that the ʿAyyārūn stole from merchants and the richer families of Baghdad and in general harassed 'better people' in the streets.[175] However the sources also claim that the ʿAyyārūn were prepared to take any work available to them, whether it was for private individuals or the government. Some of the ʿAyyārūn were used by wealthy families to guard their quarters, and they were able to earn money for this protection service. This was a good way for the wealthier classes to protect themselves against other ʿAyyārūn, especially during the prolonged periods of unrest in the city, such as when the *amīr* (de jure ruler of the city) was out fighting. In these times they more or less took over the city. The only real protection against the ʿAyyārūn was to have a strong government present in Baghdad.[176]

4 The System of Education

Between 400/1000 and the Mongol devastation of Baghdad in 656/1258, many new educational institutions came into existence.[177] From the earlier Abbasid period, there were two main institutions of learning; the *jāmiʿ* or cathedral-mosque, and the *masjid*, or mosque-college.[178] Over the eleventh century a new institution gained prominence in Baghdad known as the *madrasa*, or law-college. These institutions can be seen as facilitating secondary or higher education. Elementary or primary education was carried out in the *maktab*. Parents who wanted to get an education for their children of any sort would send them to a *maktab* where they would be taught the Qurʾān, reading, writing, basic

against the Caliph al-Rāshid and Nūr al-Dīn Zengī. Masʿūd was able to incite many of the ʿAyyārūn to riot inside the city while his troops besigned the outside walls, see Taef al-Azhari, *Zengi and the Muslim Response to the Crusades: The politics of Jihad* (Oxford: Routledge, 2016) 24–39.

175 Ibid. 341.

176 Taescheur, *ʿAyyar*.

177 This section is mostly based on the work done in this area by George Makdisi, and to a lesser extent Daphne Ephrat.

178 George Makdisi, Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad, *BSOAS* 24.1 (1961), 1956, 4–90.

arithmetic in addition to being introduced to maybe a few other subjects, such as poetry or law at a basic level.[179]

4.1 *The* Jāmiʿ

The *jāmiʿ* (*pl. jawāmiʿ*) was essentially a large mosque that had the right to hold the Friday congregational prayers. A mosque could not become a *jāmiʿ* except by direct order of the Caliph. Thus in Baghdad during the eleventh century there were only six *jawāmiʿ* and out of these six there were three main *jawāmiʿ*: the Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr, on the west side of the city, and the Jāmiʿ al-Ruṣāfa and Jāmiʿ al-Qaṣr or Jāmiʿ al-Khalīf (*jāmiʿ* of the Caliphal palace), both on the east side of the city.[180] Within the *jāmiʿ* scholars would hold *ḥalqāt* (study-circles) to teach such subjects as Ḥadīth (traditions) and law. To be able to teach in such a *jāmiʿ*, a scholar would have to be appointed a chair by the Caliph, and while this meant that the Caliph had the final appointing authority, his choice was nearly always influenced by recommendations. Once a chair was appointed to a scholar, they would usually hold tenure for the remainder of their life.[181] Although a professor could not hold more than one chair in any single *jāmiʿ*, it was possible for a professor to hold multiple chairs in more than one *jāmiʿ* for the same or even different subjects. When a professor died, the choice for the successor was usually made from amongst the family or disciples of the deceased professor.[182] The chair that a professor held would either be known by the subject that the professor taught—and here all 'religious sciences' such as law, traditions, Qurʾān exegesis, Arabic grammar and literature could be taught, but not 'foreign sciences' such as Greek philosophy—or by the name of the family that occupied it. Thus, for example, there could be a *ḥalqāt al-ḥadīth* (for the study of traditions) or *ḥalqāt al-barāmika* (referring to the family of Baramkids).[183]

4.2 *The* Masjid

All the mosques that were not *jāmiʿs* were *masjids*. A *masjid* was simply a place where the five daily prayers were performed in congregation. In Baghdad a great number of these *masjids* were used as institutions for education and moreover many of these *masjids* were founded with the primary aim of education. From the earliest period of Islam, *masjids* had been used for teach-

179 George Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981) 19.
180 Makdisi, *Muslim Institutions* 4.
181 Ibid. 5.
182 Ibid. 6.
183 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, v. 2, 153–155.

ing; there are traditions that the Prophet himself had taught in his *masjid*.[184] An important point to note here is that in contrast to the *madrasa* described below, there was no lodging for the students or professor in a *masjid*.[185] Oftentimes there was a *khān* (inn/lodge house) somewhere near the *masjid* where the out of town students could reside while studying at the *masjid*, and this *khān* would again quite often be set up as a *waqf*. A *waqf* was an endowment or charitable trust whereby a person or persons would donate some land, buildings, books or other part of their property as inalienable (i.e. the property could not be sold, donated or inherited) while "designating persons or public utilities as beneficiaries of its yields."[186] There were also *khāns* in Baghdad that were solely for the use of members of a single school of law. Thus, for example, there was a *khān* that was used by students of the Ḥanafī law school, which was situated on the west side of Baghdad.[187]

The *masjids* would teach a single main subject, which in most cases was law, along with other ancillary subjects such as Arabic grammar and Ḥadīth. By the tenth century, the various schools of law had diminished to four and each *masjid* would only teach one of the four schools of law.[188] However there are examples of *masjids* that taught as their primary subject something other than law. The *masjid* of Abū Bakr al-Muqrī' taught Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, while the *masjid* of Ibn Shāhīn taught the art of preaching.[189]

There were three *masjids* that taught Ḥanafī law: the *masjid* of Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Jurjāni (d. 398/1008), the *masjid* of Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī (d. 403/1012) and the *masjid* of al-Saymāri (d. 436/1045). Famous scholars of the Ḥanafī School of this period that emerged from these *masjids* were Qudūrī, ʿAbdullāh al-Damaghāni and Ilyās al-Daylāmi (d. 461/1069).[190] The Shāfiʿīs of this period had a great many scholars that graduated from *masjids* at the head of

184 Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Afayāt al-aʿyān wa anbā' abnā' al-Zamān* (5; Cairo: al-Saʿāda Press, 1948) 318.

185 See section on *madrasas* below.

186 Rudolph Peters, Wakf, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 10; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004), 60–63 60.

187 Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges* 24.

188 Ibid. 22.

189 Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, (1; Damascus: Instituit Francais de Damas, 1951) 13–14, 118–119. Also see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1889–1936), v. 1, 165 and C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur, Supplement* (1; Leiden: Brill, 1937–1942) 276.

190 This was the same Damaghāni who was made *qāḍi* of Baghdad by Tughril Beg. Daylāmī became the first professor of the first *madrasa* of Baghdad, which was built adjacent to the shirne of Abū Hanīfa.

which stood Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfaraʾīni. They had five *masjids*: that of ʿAbdullāh Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) where al-Isfaraʾīni himself taught, the *masjid* of Ibn al-Labbān (d. 446/1054) who was a student of Isfaraʾīni, the *masjid* of Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī, who was another student of Isfaraʾīni, the *masjid* of Abū Isḥāq al-Shirāzi, who was a student of Ṭabarī and would later become the first professor of the Niẓamiyya *madrasa*, and the *masjid* of Abū Bakr al-Shāmi (d. 488/1095), who was another student of Ṭabarī.[191]

The Ḥanbalī institutions are the ones that interest us most here. There were eight *masjids* that taught Ḥanbalī law. The most respected Ḥanbalī scholar of law at the turn of the eleventh century was Ibn Ḥāmid, who had two main students, Abu Yaʿlā, and Ibn al-Baqqāl.[192] Ibn Ḥāmid held a chair in the Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr and after he died the chair passed onto Abu Yaʿlā, who also had his own *masjid* on the east side of Baghdad. Ibn al-Baqqal also held a chair in the Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr too and again had his own *masjid* that was located on the west side of Baghdad. A famous student of Abu Yaʿlā was the Sharīf Abū Jaʿfar who held a chair in Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr as well as Jāmiʿ al-Ruṣāfa and in addition to this taught in three separate *masjids*, that of Ḍarb Dīwān, that of Sikkat al-Khiraqī and finally a *masjid* named after himself. Ibn al-Quwwās was another student of Abū Yaʿlā and had his own *masjid* where he taught Ḥanbalī law as well as a chair in Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr. His chair in Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr, however, was not in law but in *munāẓara* (the art of debate). Finally, the son of Abu Yaʿlā, Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, also had his own *masjid* and the famous Ibn ʿAqīl had his own *masjid* as well.

4.3 *The* Madrasa

This type of institution developed out of the *masjid* and in fact was not much different to it. The prayers were held in a *madrasa* just as they would be in a *masjid* and the building design was often no different to that of a *masjid*. However, unlike in a *masjid*, the main subject was always law. George Makdisi has argued that this distinction is most likely a semantic one, because the term *madrasa* comes from the Arabic verb *darrasa*, which was used when talking about *fiqh* (law). Thus when referring to Ḥadīth one always finds the verb *ḥaddatha* e.g. *ḥaddatha ʿan fulān* (he heard or learnt or took Ḥadīth from so and so), but for law one does not find the verb *faqqaha* (the noun *fiqh* being used to designate the study of the law) but rather the verb *darrasa*. Therefore an institution that did not teach law as its main subject could never be referred to

191 Ṭabarī also became *qāḍi* of the Karkh Quarter around 436/1044.

192 Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥasan Ibn Ḥāmid al-Ḥanbali (d. 403/1013).

as a *madrasa* but rather was always referred to as a *masjid*.[193] Another distinction between a *masjid* and a *madrasa* was that the *madrasa* had the student's lodgings within the building complex. This was because once a building was designated a *masjid*, its legal status meant that it could not be sold, rented or put to private use, for the Qur'ān stated that mosques belonged to God.[194] Thus the founder of a *masjid* could have no official say over who was employed within, because once the *masjid* was made a *waqf*, the founder would lose all rights over the institution. This was in contrast to a *madrasa* where the founder could continue to have legal rights over the running of the institution.[195] A *madrasa* would also provide salaries for the staff and scholarships for the students, while the *masjid* would only provide a salary for the main professor who held the chair and the imam of the *masjid*, who oftentimes was the same person as the professor.

The first *madrasa* in Baghdad to be built was either the Ḥanafī institution that was built adjacent to the shrine of Abū Ḥanīfa, or the famous Niẓāmiyya built by the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk. According to Makdisi, the idea for the Niẓāmiyya as well as the start of its construction occurred before the Ḥanafī *madrasa* but the Ḥanafī *madrasa* was completed and inaugurated first.[196] The inauguration of the Niẓāmiyya occurred in the same year as that of the Ḥanafī *madrasa* in 459/1067.[197] Niẓām al-Mulk was not only the founder but also the patron of this institution and as such financially endowed it. Niẓām al-Mulk had the *madrasa* built specifically with Abū Isḥāq al-Shirāzi in mind as its first professor, and being its patron had the power to appoint and dismiss from the chair and other teaching positions whomsoever he willed.[198] This was in contrast to the Ḥanafī *madrasa* where although the institution was founded by a financial agent of Alp Arslān, al-Mustaufī, the right to appoint and dismiss professors was left to the Ḥanafī scholarly community at large. Niẓām al-Mulk's successor to the vizierate, Tāj al-Mulk, also founded a *madrasa* for the Shāfi'īs in 482/1089, and like the Niẓāmiyya it was also financially endowed by its founder.[199]

The first Ḥanbalī *madrasa* was that of Abū Sa'd al-Mukharrimi—one of the teachers of Jīlānī and a student of Abū Ya'lā and Sharīf Abū Ja'far—which was

193 Makdisi, *Muslim Institutions* 10.
194 Qur'ān 72:18; Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges* 33.
195 Ḥasan Ibn al-Manṣūr Khān, *Fatāwa* (Cairo, 1865) 286.
196 Makdisi, *Muslim Institutions* 19.
197 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, v. 8, 245.
198 Makdisi, *Muslim Institutions* 21.
199 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, v. 9, 38.

founded somewhere near the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century. The *madrasa* was later used by Jīlānī as his residence and teaching place, and in 528/1134 was expanded to accommodate the ever-growing crowds. It was also renamed as the Madrasa of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. The only other Ḥanbalī *madrasa* that we know about from this early period is that of Ibn al-Abradī (d. 531/1137) who was a student of Ibn ʿĀqīl. It seems that this *madrasa* was founded around the same time as Mukharrimi's. Other *madrasas* for the Ḥanbalīs were not founded until the latter half of the twelfth century. Thus the Ḥanbalī vizier, Ibn Hubayra founded a *madrasa* in 557/1161 and in 570/1174 Ibn al-Jawzī founded his own *madrasa* in addition to being given the chair to another *madrasa* that had been founded by the wife of the Caliph al-Mustadiʿ.[200] Other patrons of the Ḥanbalīs in Baghdad were the great merchant Abū Manṣūr Ibn Yūsuf, who was responsible for founding many *masjids*, libraries and *zāwiyas*, and Abū ʿAbdullāh Ibn Jarada, another wealthy merchant of Baghdad.[201]

There seems to have been some dislike for *madrasas* amongst the Ḥanbalīs of Baghdad. Many Ḥanbalī scholars saw it as a bad thing to teach in a *madrasa* or to teach only in a *madrasa* and not in a *masjid* as well.[202] Thus we find a great *masjid* to *madrasa* ratio for the Ḥanbalīs in comparison with the other law schools. The primary reason for this might have stemmed from the fact that a *madrasa* was the only institution of the three discussed above, where the person who endowed the institution had the power to appoint the teachers. There was a strong conservative Ḥanbalī tradition against any involvement in political affairs or to subject oneself to any sort of influence from a rich patron. The idea of having a *madrasa* built by somebody in government may have seemed akin to being appointed a government position itself, whereby the scholar could have become subject to influence of the patron through a feeling of gratitude towards that patron.

It seems that the fears of the Ḥanbalīs were not unfounded, for a history of the Niẓāmiyya shows that between the years 459/1067 and 512/1118 the Niẓāmiyya had fourteen professors appointed to it in comparison with the Ḥanafī *madrasa*, which had only two. This was clearly due to the fact that appointments to the Ḥanafī *madrasa* were not made by its patron but rather were made in the same way as for a *masjid*, whereas appointments to the Niẓāmiyya were

200 Ephrat, *Learned Society* 27–29.

201 George Makdisi, Autograph Diary of an Eleventh-Century Historian of Baghdad II, *BSOAS* 9 (1956), 254, ibid. 248.

202 See Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, v. 1, 339.

done directly by Niẓām al-Mulk at first, and then later by his descendents.[203] The fact that the patron could hire and dispose of professors at will was not in line with the traditional system, where a professor would hold a chair for life. This would more or less guarantee that the students could finish their course of study without interruption under a single professor, for it usually took four years to complete ones 'undergraduate' law studies. We find in the sources that the students of the Niẓāmiyya were often left without professors and these periods where the chair was left vacant, could last months.[204] In addition to this was the fact that a *madrasa* offered the student economic stability with its scholarship. Before the advent of the *madrasa*, a student would chose his institution with regard for the professor that taught there, but with the arrival of the *madrasas* the student was now tempted to enroll into a *madrasa* for economic reasons, and to many Ḥanbalīs as well as members of other law schools this must have seemed scandalous. Furthermore when a student enrolled at a *madrasa* for economic reasons, it would mean that they would adopt the school of law that was taught at that institution. A wealthy patron of a specific school of law could therefore use this system to found *madrasas* and churn out scholars for his or her school.

As the twelfth century wore on and the thirteenth century began, institutions were opened that were not exclusive to any particular school. The Dar al-Qur'ān and the Dār al-Ḥadīth were founded approximately a hundred years after the establishment of the first *madrasas* in Baghdad. They aimed to raise the status of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth studies to that of law. The student did not have to be of any particular school of law.[205] This process was topped off in 631/1234 with the establishment of the Mustanṣiriyya, which housed all four schools of law. The government of Baghdad wanted more unity amongst the scholars and thought that this would remove the sectarian element bought about—they thought—by the exclusivist tendencies in *madrasas*.[206] The Seljuks also thought that pluralism in Islam was to be found in Sufism. Thus Sufi *ribāts*, *khānaqas* and *zāwiyas* (lodges) were also encouraged. This not only made Sufi associations more respectable and acceptable, but in 'officialising' these institutions they found another source of unity.[207] Initially Sufis would teach Qur'ān

203 Makdisi, *Muslim Institutions* 56.

204 Ibid. 46.

205 George Makdisi, Law and Traditionalism, in *Theology and Law in Islam, Second Georgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference, May 9–10, 1969, Near Eastern Center, UCLA* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1971) 87.

206 Arthur Tritton, *Materials On Muslim Education in the Middle Ages* (London: Luzac, 1957) 104.

207 Ephrat, *Learned Societies* 3.

and Ḥadīth in the mosques of Baghdad and this slowly moved to *ribāts*, which ultimately became centres of learning just like the *madrasas*.[208] The first *ribāt* of Baghdad was founded by a Ḥanbalī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Zawzanī, opposite the Jāmiʿ al-Manṣūr, an area dominated by Ḥanbalīs.[209] These Sufi 'monasteries' were again institutions that were open access to students from all schools of law.

Having gained an overview of the political and social atmosphere in Baghdad leading up to and during the life of Jīlānī, the next chapter attempts to construct a biographical account of Jīlānī's life in as much detail as possible.

208 Ephrat, *Learned Societies* 49.

209 During his life he was the Shaykh al-Sūfiyya of Baghdad. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam* v. 8, 214; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shatharāt*, v. 3, 288–289.

CHAPTER 3

The Life of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

Jīlānī's life may roughly be divided into two general phases. The first of his youth and education, of finding himself and gaining a good grounding in the spiritual aspect of Islam, and the second of teaching, giving sermons to large crowds and guiding new adherents on the spiritual path. The first phase amounts to roughly the first forty or fifty years of his life, while the second phase amounts to the remainder of his life, again a forty to fifty year period.[1]

1 The First Phase

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was born in the year 470/1077 in the village of Nīf, which is situated in an area to the northeast of Iraq and south of the Caspian known as Gīlān.[2] The area roughly corresponds to the province of the same name in

1 The problems of dating have already been mentioned and are discussed in further detail below.

2 His full name is Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ al-Jīlānī and is also often referred to as al-Jīlī.

On the year of his birth see ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* (17; Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992) 173, Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, ed. James Richard Jewitt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907) 164, Ismāʿīl Ibn ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (1; Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988) 270.

Khayr al-Dīn al- Zarkalī, *Al-Aʿlām* (4; Cairo: Al-Muʾallif, 1959) 171 gives the year as 471/1078 and this claim may have some backing that can be found in ʿAbdullāh b. Asad al-Yāfʿī, *Mirʾāt al-Janān* (1; Hyderabad Deccan: Oriental Publication, 1919) 451. Yāfʿī writes that when Jīlānī was once asked about his birth, he replied that he did not remember the year, but knew that he came to Baghdad at the age of 18, in the same year that Tamīmī died. This Tamīmī is identified by the narrator (who Yāfʿī does not bother to mention) as Abū Muḥammad Rizq Allāh Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb who died in the year 488. That would mean that Jīlānī was born in 470. However Yāfʿī also mentions a narration from Aḥmad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Jīlānī that Jīlānī was born in 471 and came to Baghdad in 488 when he was 18 years of age. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2; Riyadh: Maktaba al-ʿUbaykān, 2004) 189, says it was either 470 or 471. Khalīl al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt* (19; Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2000) 27, is the only biographer who claims he was born in 491 and I would suggest that this is a clear mistake on his part. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* (10; Damascus & Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1995) 330–336 does not mention any birth date.

On Gīlān see ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Manṣūr al-Samʿānī, *Al-Ansāb* (3; Hyderabad Deccan: Oriental Publication, 1963) 462; Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, *Lubb al-Albāb fī Taḥrīr al-Ansāb* (1; Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1991) 230.

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modern day Iran.[3] Jīlānī was born into a well-respected family descended from the fourth Caliph ʿAlī on both sides. His fathers' lineage is given as:

> Abū Ṣāliḥ Mūsa Jangi Dost son of ʿAbdullāh son of Yaḥya al-Zāhid son of Muḥammad son of Dāwūd son of Mūsa al-Jawn son of ʿAbdullāh al-Maḥḍ son of Ḥasan al-Muthannā son of Ḥasan son of ʿAlī the fourth Caliph,

while his mother's lineage is:

> Fāṭima daughter of ʿAbdullāh al-Ṣūmaʿī al-Zāhid son of Muḥammad son of Maḥmūd son of ʿAbdullāh son of Īsā son of Muḥammad al-Jawād son of ʿAlī al-Riḍā son of Mūsā al-Kāẓim son of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq son of Muḥammad al-Bāqir son of ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn son of Ḥusayn son of ʿAlī the fourth Caliph.[4]

However these lineages are disputed (more so on the father's side), especially in many Western works that deal with Jīlānī. In the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Braune writes, after declaring his belief that Jīlānī was a Persian and not an Arab, that "the Persian name of his father not only supports this statement but at the same contradicts the common assertion that he was descended in the paternal line from al-Ḥasan."[5] Margoliouth raises a different question of why Jīlānī, if an Arab, would have been worried about speaking to the Baghdad public for fear of offending them with his foreign Arabic.[6] He also points to the Persian name 'Jangi Dost' and the variances amongst the biographers in naming his father, sometimes Mūsa and sometimes ʿAbdullāh, which he believes is due to the biographers trying to conceal or get rid of this obviously foreign name. In general the objections seem to be based around four issues. Firstly that he

3 There is also a claim that he was born in a village called "Jīl" in modern day Iraq, to the south of Baghdad, near Madā'in. For the arguments supporting this claim see Jamāl al-Dīn Fāliḥ al-Kīlānī, *Jughrafiyya al-Bāz al-Ashhab*, (Fez: al-Munadhdhama al-Maghribiyya lil-Tarbiyya, 2014).

4 ʿAbd al-Razzāk al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1994) 90–91, ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Shaṭṭanawfī, *Bahja al-Asrār* (Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya 1999) 171–174.

5 Walther Braune, Abd al-Kadir al-Djilani, in H.A.R. Gibb [et al] (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 1; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 69–70.

6 D.S. Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan, *JRAS* (1907), 288. This work, as well as containing the original Arabic, is a direct translation of the biography of Jīlānī as given by Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748) in his *Sayr Aʿlām al-Nubalā'* and will be employed whenever the biography of Dhahabī is referred to.

was born in the Persian area of Gīlān, secondly that Arabic was a foreign tongue to Jīlānī by his own admission, thirdly that his father had a non-Arabic Persian name, and fourthly that many of the biographers tried to 'get rid' of this Persian name.

It is a well-known fact that many Arab families settled in Persia and the lands further east following their conquest. Both sons of the fourth Caliph ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were in the army of Saʿīd Ibn al-ʿĀṣ during the battle of Tabristān and Gīlān, and there is also a claim in the historical literature that Ḥusayn married Shahabānū, the daughter of the last Persian king Yazdigard.[7] Therefore it should not be a surprise to discover that there were Arab families or families descended from Arabs, including ones descended from ʿAlī, living in non-Arabic speaking lands. Furthermore most of these families lost the ability to speak Arabic after a few generations and could only speak the language of their fellow countrymen. Thus the fact that Jīlānī was born in a Persian area does not rule out the possibility of his having Arab lineage. Nor does the fact that he had to learn Arabic as a foreign language and was therefore shy of addressing the public of Baghdad in what was their native tongue mean that he could not have been descended from Arabs. The situation may be compared to modern day immigrant families in the UK or the US where members of a family of Arab, Chinese or Indian descent may only be able to speak English and may have never visited their countries of ethnic origin, in addition to maybe even naming their children with English names. Yet this would not allow us to deny them their lineage.

Now with regards to the issue of the biographers trying to 'get rid' of the name Jangi Dost one only has to look at the sources to see that they do not actually substitute this name with Arabic ones but rather disagree whether it was the father, the grandfather or the great grandfather that carried this name. Furthermore it is very unlikely that this was actually the main name of any of Jīlānī's ancestors but rather the title or a sort of nickname for Jīlānī's father, meaning 'somebody who likes fighting'. Nevertheless even if we accept that it was the main name, it would not conclusively define the ethnicity of the person named.

In addition to the above defensive arguments there is some positive evidence supporting the lineage. From 250/864–316/928 there was a Zaydī state

7 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 65.

According to Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, 'Šahrbānu', in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2009, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sahrbanu (accessed on 29 December 2009), this is a legend, and the mother of Alī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn was a slave most likely from Persia or Sind.

in control of Tabristān and Gīlān. The state was initially set up by Zayd Ibn Muḥammad, a descendant of Ḥasan Ibn ʿAlī. When Zayd Ibn Muḥammad came to Gīlān, he had in his army two brothers, both of whom were his nephews. Their names were Idrīs Ibn Mūsa and Dāwūd Ibn Mūsa. This latter Dawūd is the great great grandfather of Jīlānī, and the lineage of this man until ʿAlī is known while between him and Jīlānī are only three people.[8] It is a good possibility that Dāwūd settled in Gīlān, maybe after receiving land there, and this would give us a reasonable explanation on how Jīlānī's family ended up in Gīlān.

Jīlānī was from a pious and scholarly family; his maternal grandfather al-Samʿāni was known in Gīlān as a scholar and an ascetic, while his brother Abū Aḥmad ʿAbdullāh was also known as a scholar.[9] Taking the path of education and learning was therefore not a strange or surprising decision for Jīlānī. He completed his memorisation of the Qur'ān in Gīlān and learnt what he could until the age of around sixteen or seventeen. Jīlānī's father had died when he was a young boy and his grandfather helped his mother bring up the child.[10] It is also very likely that Jīlānī studied under his grandfather. However, Gīlān contained only small villages and did not have any large town or city and so one's access to education in such an area was limited to the elementary level. Any higher learning could only have been sought outside of Gīlān, and at the age of around seventeen or eighteen, Jīlānī decided to leave Gīlān and continue his studies in Baghdad. There is an anecdotal incident related in the hagiographies with regard to his initial journey to Baghdad that illustrates his uprightness and truthfulness even as a young boy, and there seems no reason to doubt its veracity.

Before Jīlānī left his home, his mother gave him some money for the journey and to get him started in Baghdad. She took forty dinars that she had inherited from her father and sewed it into the lining under the armpit of his shirt. She then made him promise to always tell the truth, regardless of the situation and with this Jīlānī departed, never to see his mother in person again. During the journey, while passing through an area called Fallat, the small caravan was attacked by a group of around sixty bandits.[11] Initially none of the highwaymen took any notice of Jīlānī but after a while one of them came to him and asked if he had anything of worth. Jīlānī answered that he had forty dinars under his armpit sewn into the cloth. The bandit thinking that Jīlānī was trying to be

8 Ibid. 66–67.

9 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir, in *Safīna al-Qādiriyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 1991) 10.

10 Ibid.

11 Mentioned in the source as an area that comes after Hamadhan on the road to Baghdad.

funny left him alone. After a while all the thieves gathered on a nearby hill and began to divide all the loot they had obtained from the caravan. The bandit who had spoken with Jīlānī at that point informed their leader what he had heard from him, and Jīlānī was called to answer to the head of the gang. This man asked Jīlānī what he had with him and he again answered that he had forty dinars sewn into the lining of his clothes, specifically under the armpit area. The man ordered the cloth ripped up and found therein the forty dinars that Jīlānī had told him about. The leader inquired why he had told them about the forty dinars at all, for if he had kept quiet they would not have found it and bothered him any further. Jīlānī replied that he had promised his mother to always tell the truth and that he could not break his promise to her. The bandit thinking about this began to weep from shame and exclaimed that while Jīlānī did not break a single promise made to his mother, he the bandit had not kept the promise of his lord for all these years. He then repented at the hands of Jīlānī, his gang following suit, and they decided to return all that they had taken from the caravan. Jīlānī counts this as the first incident of someone repenting at his hands.[12]

Jīlānī arrived in Baghdad in the year 488/1095 just as a perplexed Ghazali was leaving the city. Over the next few years he studied under an array of different teachers. He read Ḥadīth with Abū Ghālib al-Bāqillānī, Ibn Muẓaffar, Abū Qāsim al-Razzāz, Jaʿfar al-Sirāj, Ibn Khushaysh and Abū Ṭālib Ibn Yūsūf, the various sciences of the Qurʾān with Ibn ʿAqīl and Abū al-Khaṭṭāb al-Kalwadhānī, Arabic language and literature with Abū Zakariyya Yaḥyā al-Tabrīzī and jurisprudence with Ibn ʿAqīl, al-Kalwadhānī, Mukharrimī and Ibn Abī Yaʿlā.[13] He is also known to have studied Shāfʿī law after mastering Ḥanbalī jurisprudence and in later life was able to give legal rulings in both schools.[14] However, once in Baghdad he was affected by a strong desire to leave the city and return to his homeland. The primary reason for this was the general ill state of affairs in the city. Jīlānī, who had grown up in a quiet village, was shocked to see the levels of decadence attained in the Abbasid capital, and he truly

12 al-Shaṭṭanawfī, *Bahja al-Asrār* 167–168.

13 Abū Ghālib Muḥammad Ibn Hishām al-Bāqillānī (d. n.d.), Abū Bakr Aḥmad Ibn Muẓaffar (d. 535/1141). ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Samʿānī was also taught by him as well as Jīlānī, Abū Qāsim ʿAlī Ibn Bayān al-Razzāz (d. 510/1116), Abū Muḥammad Jaʿfar Ibn Aḥmad al-Sirāj (d. 509/1115), Abū Saʿad Muḥammad Ibn Khushaysh (d. n.d.), Abū al-Khaṭṭāb Maḥfūẓ al-Kalwathānī (d. 510/1116), Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā al-Tabrīzī (d. 502/1109 or 512/1118), who taught grammar at the Niẓāmiyya for a while. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad Ibn Abī Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ (d. 526/1132) (author of the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* and son of the famous judge).

14 al-ʿAsqalānī, Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir 25, Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 299–301.

believed that staying in the city was harming his faith. In addition to this was the fact that Baghdad as a world capital had very high prices that made day-to-day living a very difficult exercise for a poor student. There was no agricultural land in the city where Jīlānī could work as he had done in Gīlān, and so he had to try and find menial work to be able to pay for the basic necessities of life such as food. During these years Jīlānī ate very little and according to his own statements often fainted from hunger.[15]

He sometimes ate what he could find on the banks of the Tigris: lettuce, carob plant and leftover or thrown away parts of vegetables. He relates a time when there was a great shortage of food in Baghdad and hungry people were everywhere. After not having eaten anything for a few days he went in desperation to the riverbank but found many people already there trying to find what they could. He then went outside the city to the ruins of the Persian Palace but found there again a multitude of hungry people trying to get something to eat. He decided that it was not right that he should join the crowd and increase the competition for the measly nourishment that might be found in that place. He therefore turned back to the city and upon entering it felt as if he were going to collapse and so went straight to a nearby mosque wherein he sat down totally exhausted and fatigued. He thought at that moment that he may die in that very mosque as he was too weak to even move. After a while a man of Persian origin came into the mosque, sat down and began to eat a meal of bread and roast meat. Everytime the man opened his mouth to take a bite, Jīlānī would involuntarily open his own mouth, so hungry was he, and had to check himself for not having more self-control. Noticing Jīlānī, the Persian man turned to him and requested that he share his food. Initially Jīlānī refused, but finally accepted after the man continued to press him. The Persian man asked Jīlānī where he came from and Jīlānī told him. The man was surprised to hear that he was from Gīlān, as that was the same area he was from and asked further if Jīlānī knew a man by the name of ʿAbd al-Qādir, who was the son of the daughter of al-Ṣūmāʿī. Jīlānī replied that person was none other than he. Upon hearing this, the man's countenance changed and he told Jīlānī that he was coming from Gīlān to Baghdad and was trusted with money to give to a young man named ʿAbd al-Qādir by the latter's mother. However upon reaching Baghdad he could not find this ʿAbd al-Qādir and after exhausting his journey money, passed three days without any food. On the fourth day he decided to use some of the money that was entrusted to him for Jīlānī and with that money bought the very bread and meat that they were both eating at that moment. Jīlānī then put

15 al-ʿAsqalānī, Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir 12–15.

the man at ease, telling him that he did nothing blameworthy and furthermore gave him a part of the money.[16]

However after a certain time his food problems seemed to have been solved, for he relates that one day while in the desert revising a law lesson he heard somebody, whom he could not see, say to him to "borrow enough money to maintain yourself while you are studying."[17] Jīlānī replied that he was too poor to borrow any money and he would never be able to pay back what he borrowed. The voice replied that he should just borrow and that "we will undertake the payment." So he went to a grocer and asked him if he would give him a loaf and some cress everyday on the condition that he would pay the grocer whenever it was possible for him to do so, while if he were to die then he would owe the grocer nothing. The grocer was more than happy to deal with Jīlānī on such a basis, perhaps believing there to be a blessing in helping a poor student.[18]

Jīlānī's desire to leave Baghdad led him to depart the city on numerous occasions, but he was always brought back by his conscience. He knew that he had come to Baghdad to fulfil a purpose; to learn about the religion and way of life he loved so much and to grow spiritually. He also felt that he should help improve the situation of decay in the city rather than walk away from it. On one of these occasions he left the city and walked a distance of fifteen days before returning. On another occasion he reached the Ḥalaba gate and was about to exit when somebody asked him where he was going and then proceeded to give him such a push as to knock him down. He then ordered him to return to the city as he would be a benefit to the people therein.[19] Jīlānī remarked that he wanted to keep his religion sound to which the person replied that such was granted to him. Although unknown to him at that moment, the person who had given him the push was the famous Ḥammād al-Dabbās who would later become one of Jīlānī's spiritual trainers.[20]

16 Ibid.

17 An exact date for this event cannot be ascertained although the following part of the text that this report is extracted from continues with a story of the first meeting of Jilānī and Ḥammād al-Dabbās. This would suggest that the event probably happened a year or two before 498/1105, that being the year that Dabbās pushed Jilānī into the Tigris. Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 301.

18 Ibn al-Najjār in al-'Asqalānī, Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir 25 states that Jilānī was the owner of some land which was looked after for him by his disciples, though this indicates that this must have been after he became renowned. Also see below.

19 The Ḥalaba gate is now known as the Ṭalsim (Talisman) Gate, although it was more or less completely destroyed by the departing Ottoman army in 1917. See Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate* (London: OUP, 1924) 281. Also see chapter two.

20 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 302.

At this time Jīlānī was also experiencing many spiritual states that he was not able to fully understand or comprehend. These states would often lead him to fits of ecstasy, which to an outside observer could only be comprehended as insanity. It was during this period that he spent much of his time outside the city in the desert and wastelands or ruins (*kharabāt*) around Baghdad, and he became known in these areas as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Majnūn (the crazy one). During one of these incidents a fit of insanity caused him to be taken to a madhouse in the city where the fit of ecstasy put him into a sort of paralysed state. The people there thought that he had died and started preparing the funeral shrouds for him when he suddenly came out of the fit and back to normal life. On another occasion he was outside the city at night when a fit overcame him and caused him to scream uncontrollably. He was heard by a group of ʿAyyārūn who would roam at night outside Baghdad waiting to come upon anybody from the city whom they could rob.[21] They were terrified by what they heard and decided to investigate. They came to where he was and immediately recognized him commenting, "Its only ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Majnūn who frightened us."[22]

Jīlānī was very troubled by these fits and states that would involuntarily overcome him and in later life commented that such 'heavy burdens' were put on him as to crush a mountain. When he felt that he could no longer cope he would lay down on his side and recite, "With every difficulty there is ease" over and over again until the weight was lifted from him and he was normal again.[23] He wished to find somebody who could explain these states to him and more importantly help him remove them. During this time he was once passing through the Ẓafariyya quarter of Baghdad when a man opened his door and asked Jīlānī what he had been seeking the previous day. Jīlānī, confused and having forgotten, remained silent, at which the man became angry and slammed the door. Afterwards he remembered and realised that it must have been concerning his fits and so went back to look for the man but unfortunately could not recognize the door. This had been the second time he had met Ḥammād al-Dabbās. He afterwards got to know Dabbās, who cleared up all his difficulties, and he started accompanying him in order to get a good understanding of spiritual matters.[24]

According to Jīlānī's own admission, Dabbās treated him very badly and sometimes even beat him. Yet it seems that this was all part of the spiritual

21 On the ʿAyyārūn, see chapter two.

22 al-ʿAsqalānī, Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir 14, Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 301.

23 Qur'ān 94:5.

24 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 302.

and character training that Dabbās was putting him through. For example, when Jīlānī would return to Dabbās and his followers after a law lesson, Dabbās would mockingly ask him what connection a jurist had with them, and that he belonged not with them but with the jurists. If he would ever come to Dabbās hungry then he would be told that they (Dabbās and his disciples) had eaten much bread and sweetmeat that day but had saved none for Jīlānī as they did not want his company. There is even a famous report that once in the height of winter, Jīlānī was accompanying Dabbās and his followers to the mosque for the Friday prayer when Dabbās pushed him off a bridge over the Tigris that they were walking upon and into the cold river water. Always making the best of a situation, he told himself that this would count as his Friday bath.[25] Jīlānī had on a woolen garment and after getting out of the water wringed it as dry as he could and proceeded to follow the party, which had carried on. He suffered severely from the cold, yet neither this nor any of the other incidents of ill treatment deterred him from accompanying Dabbās as much as he was able. He understood that Dabbās was no ordinary person or teacher and he knew that he had a rare sort of knowledge that was not easily come by, for was it not Dabbās who had been the one to explain his fits and states in addition to removing them? That this was indeed one of the ways that Dabbās was training him became clear when one day he caught his disciples teasing Jīlānī in the way of their master, telling him that he was a jurist and did not belong with them. Dabbās immediately scolded them, informing them that there was not one among them worthy of his rank and that he only teased Jīlānī in order to test and prove him and that he had found him to be as firm as a mountain.[26]

Jīlānī also had Mukharramī, one of his teachers in Ḥanbalī law, as a spiritual guide. In fact Jīlānī's spiritual *sanad* or chain of transmission runs back through Mukharramī and not Dabbās. This may be because he met Mukharrimī first and therefore accepted the line of transmission from him. It may also have been that although he accompanied Dabbās, he did not ever become a formal disciple of his. This line of transmission has three branches, two of which differ after the great Sufi master Junayd, and the third branches off the first after the famous Maʿrūf al-Karkhī. The line in its most oft quoted form is:

> ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jīlānī took the *khirqa* from his teacher Al-Mubārak al-Mukharrimī who took it from ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf al-Qurashī who took it from Abū Farj al-Ṭarṭūsī who took it from ʿAbd al-Wāḥid Ibn

25 The Friday ritual bath or washing is a recommended but not obligatory act in Islam.
26 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 302.

> ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Tamīmī who took it from ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Tamīmī who took it from Abū Bakr Ibn Jaḥdar al-Shiblī who took it from Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd who took it from his uncle Sarī al-Saqaṭī who took it from Maʿrūf al-Karkhī who took it from Dawūd al-Ṭāʾī who took it from Ḥabīb al-ʿAjmī who took it from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī who took it from ʿAlī the fourth Caliph.[27]

The second branch takes a different path after Junayd:

> Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd took it from Jaʿfar al-Ḥidhāʾ who took it from Abū ʿUmar al-Iṣṭakhrī who took it from Abū Turāb al-Nakhshabī who took it from Shaqīq al-Balakhī who took it from Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ad-ham who took it from Mūsā Ibn Yazīd al-Rāʿī who took it from Uways al-Qaranī who took it from both ʿUmar the second Caliph and ʿAlī the fourth Caliph.

The third branch is identical to the first branch until Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, where it diverges in the following way:

> Maʿrūf al-Kharkī took it from ʿAlī al-Riḍā who took it from Mūsā al-Kāẓim who took it from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq who took it from Muḥammad al-Bāqir who took it from ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn who took it from Ḥusayn who took it from ʿAlī the fourth Caliph.[28]

The reason for these divergences is that Junayd took a *khirqa* from both Jaʿfar al-Ḥidhāʾ and his uncle Sarī al-Saqaṭī while Maʿrūf al-Karkhī took a *khirqa* from both ʿAlī al-Riḍā and Dawūd al-Ṭāʾī.

After gaining a good mastery over the spiritual element of Islam—in both its practical and theoretical aspects—and already having become an expert in Islamic law and various other Islamic sciences including *waʿẓ* (the art of giving a good speech or sermon), it became an obvious move for Jīlānī to begin teaching and guiding others in all that he had learnt. The next stage of Jīlānī's life is that of a teacher of various subjects, a famous preacher and a guide for the spiritual path. However before that phase is addressed it would make sense to

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27 The *laqab* or surname of ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf al-Qurashī in the third branch is given as al-Khākiyānī, though the rest of the long name is exactly the same. I have no doubt that this is one and the same person.

In the third branch the father of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Tamīmī is not included. So the line runs directly from ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Tamīmī to Abū Bakr al-Shiblī.

28 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 125–126, ʿUmar Ibn ʿAli Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyāʾ* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjī, 1973) 495, 500.

try and put some sort of chronology and dating to the general scheme of events that have already been discussed as well as the important transition between the two phases of his life. In order for the following discussion to make sense it is first necessary to mention a few things.

The transition from the first phase of Jīlānī's life to the second, from student to famous preacher was obviously not an abrupt overnight event but was rather a gradual transition over a few years. The following events, in no particular order, mark the transition: Jīlānī got married and over time married another three times. Jīlānī's teacher Mukharrimī died and left possession of his *madrasa* to Jīlānī, where he took over all teaching duties. At some point this *madrasa* was expanded and became known as the *madrasa* of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir. Jīlānī began preaching and gathered a loyal following that grew very quickly in size and thus his fame spread throughout the city and in the Islamic lands further afield.

As has been mentioned there is much confusion among the biographers of when Jīlānī did what, as well as a general lack of any dates. There are however a few 'anchor' dates to work with. It may be safely assumed—for there is no disagreement in the sources—that Jīlānī came to Baghdad in 488/1095 at the age of eighteen. Using this date we can be sure of his birth and his age in any subsequent year. There is also a widespread mention of the year 528/1134 as the completion date for the expansion of the old *madrasa* of Mukharrimī. The regular mention of this date no doubt occurs from the fact that all the residents of the area, if not the wider city, would have been aware of the expansion of this *madrasa*, which many lay people of the city helped to expand.[29] The year 521/1127 is mentioned as the year when Jīlānī began openly giving sermons to the people of Baghdad and although this date seems to be good enough to rely upon, it is certainly not as strong as the previous two.[30] One can also rely on the year 508/1114 as the date for the birth of Jīlānī's first son. Other than these four dates, there is a mention of Jīlānī going to *ḥajj* in the year 509/1116, and a single source dating of the incident when Dabbās pushed Jīlānī into the Tigris as the middle of Shaʿbān 499/1106. These last two dates are from the same source and are less reliable than any of the previous ones.

Many of the biographies mention that Jīlānī spent much time in the desert and wastelands outside Baghdad. Some of his own statements claim that he would revise his law lessons in the desert. However some biographies go as far

29 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* 17; 173.

30 That is because Ibn Rajab mentions that Jilānī started preaching after 520/1126, Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* 191.

as to claim that he spent twenty-five years 'wandering' in the desert and others as many as fourteen years. Twenty-five years seems an exaggeration, for if we assume that he started preaching in 521/1127, then most of his time between that period and his arriving in Baghdad would have been spent in the desert. Fourteen years is less of course but it would still mean that a great deal of his time was spent in the desert. Furthermore none of the works of the standard biographers such as Ibn Rajab or Dhahabī mention any specific period of time and neither do they allude to any long single period of time spent in the desert. From reading most of the entries on Jīlānī in these works, one gets the idea that Jīlānī did indeed spend time in the desert but that firstly this was on more than one occasion and secondly that any single period cannot have been for so long. The matter seems clearer once we try to put some order to the rest of this phase of his life.

The passing of the *madrasa* from Mukharrimī to Jīlānī happened after the former died, but the biographies are at odds as to when this occurred. Some write it to be the year 528/1134, others 513/1119 and still some others conclude from circumstantial evidence that it must have been either in or just a little before 521/1127.[31] Now we know for sure that the *madrasa* was expanded in 528/1134—especially considering it was a public event that lasted a while—and at first it might seem strange to assume that he took control of the *madrasa* after he started preaching in 521/1127. Yet this may not be so strange when further considering that the sources tell us that he initially preached from the lectern at the Ḥalaba gate where there was an open prayer area, and that afterwards when the crowds got large, he moved outside the gate, and therefore outside the walls of Baghdad, where a lot more people could be accommodated. Thus Jīlānī could have been preaching for a number of years before he came into possession of his teacher's *madrasa*. This would also help explain why or how the *madrasa* was immediately expanded in the same year.

However, Ibn Rajab dates Mukharrimī's death in the year 513/1119, a whole fifteen years before the expansion. Some biographers have raised objections to this date, arguing that it seems a little too early to fit in with the other details.[32] The argument runs thus: we know that Mukharrimī left his *madrasa* to Jīlānī.

31 The year 528 for example is quoted by Mehmed Ali Aini, *Un Grand Saint De L'Islam: Abd-Al-Qadir Guilani* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1938) 46. The year 513 is quoted by Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* 183–184, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab, *Histoire Des Hanbalites* (*Dhail alā Ṭabaqāt al-Hanābila*), ed. Henri Laoust, 2 vols. (1; Damascus: Instituit Francais De Damas, 1951) 199. The year 521 is quoted by al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 119.

32 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 119.

If Mukharrimī died in 513/1119 then who was it that taught in the *madrasa* until 521/1127, which is the year when Jīlānī started preaching? The year 528/1134 for Mukharrimī's death seems too late because to gain control of a *madrasa* (i.e. in 521/1127) and then have it expanded and renamed while its original teacher is still alive appears to be more than just a lack of courtesy. It is therefore concluded that Mukharrimī must have died in or just a little before the year 521/1127.

The flaw in the above reasoning lies in believing the year 521/1127 to be the year that Jīlānī started preaching as well as teaching in the *madrasa*. In any case the issue is put to rest once one refers to the entry for Mukharrimī in the biographical book by Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*.[33] Ibn Abī Yaʿlā—a Ḥanbalī teacher of Jīlānī that we have made previous mention of—died in the year 526/1132 and yet his work contains an entry for Mukharrimī, making it impossible for the latter to have died in the year 528/1134. How could Ibn Abī Yaʿlā add an obituary in his work for someone who had not yet died? Furthermore Ibn Abī Yaʿlā enters the date for Mukharrimī's death as Friday 12 Muḥarram 513/1119. In addition to this he informs us that Mukharrimī was buried on Sunday 14 Muḥarram, while his funeral prayer was prayed in many different areas of the city and that he, Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, led one of these prayers himself.[34] The exact and detailed nature of the information given to us by Ibn Abī Yaʿlā puts the issue beyond doubt that the year 513/1119 is a reliable date for the death of Mukharrimī.

With this information we may put together the following case: Jīlānī was left the *madrasa* of Mukharrimī upon the latter's death in the year 513/1119, when he took over all teaching duties. In fact it is probable that he was helping with the teaching in the *madrasa* before this date, while Mukharrimī was still alive for Mukharrimī to have recognized him and appointed him successor. We may return to this point further below. Jīlānī therefore taught in the *madrasa* but did not preach for a number of years, not until around 521/1127 when he began to do so publicly. This is in line with the story that he gives regarding his preaching role: At a certain time there came into the city a great person called Yusūf al-

33 Muhammad Ibn Abi Ya'la, *Tabaqat al-Hanabila* (Damascus: Maktabat al-Arabiya, 1931). Many people do not refer back to this biographical book but instead refer to the *Dhayl* of Ibn Rajab, which contains the contents of the former work as well as continuing the biographies up until Ibn Rajab's own day, therefore making it a more useful piece of work. However the year of Ibn Abī Yaʿlā's death makes reference to his original work a decisive factor in this instance.

34 Muḥammad Ibn Abi Yaʿlā, *Tabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (Damascus: Maktaba al-ʿArabiyya, 1931) 412.

Hamadhānī about whom it used to be said that he was the 'pole.'[35] Jīlānī went to visit him and found him lodging in a cellar.[36] When Jīlānī entered, Hamadhānī showed him great respect and after discussing some issues with Jīlānī asked why he did not address the public. Jīlānī replied that his Arabic was that of a foreigner's and that he did not feel right to speak openly in public and add himself among the great native orators of Baghdad. Hamadhānī rhetorically asked him who would be qualified to speak if he, Jīlānī, who had studied and learnt so much, was not? He told him to "mount the pulpit and address the people".[37] From then on Jīlānī started to address the people and his gatherings grew exponentially. The conversation between the two in Arabic does not mention teaching or taking on students, but rather addresses the issue of 'speaking to the people.' The following section in the narration then moves to Jīlānī describing how he would receive inspiration in both his sleep and waking hours and that this would overwhelm him until he let it out in his open speeches. At first there were only two or three persons present but after a while this grew to around seventy thousand.[38] The whole issue is concerned with Jīlānī becoming a famous preacher and not with his teaching duties. There is thus no conflict in the dates if we accept that he came into possession of the *madrasa* in 513/1119 but did not speak publicly until 521/1127, after which he became widely known. This allowed his *madrasa* to be expanded by 528/1134 in order for him to be able to give the speeches there instead of outside the city.

We may now return and try to order events before 521/1127. There is not much information for the years between 513/1119 and 521/1127, which is one of the reasons for the resulting confusion. However we have established that he probably

35 The *quṭb* or 'pole' is the highest single person in the hierarchy of saints; it basically means one of the greatest saints alive. For a more exact discussion of ranks or stations in Sufism, see Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, *al-Ḥāwī lil-Fatāwī fī al-Fiqh wa ʿUlūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ḥadīth wa al-Uṣūl wa al-Naḥw wa al-ʿIʿrāb wa Sāʾir al-Funūn*, 2 vols. (2; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000) 229–242. Also see the chapters on Sufism below.

Yūsuf al-Hamadhānī (d. 535/1140) was a renowned Sufi, and one of the Khawajagān, a chain of central Asian Sufi masters who were spiritual ancestors to the Naqshbandī order. There is also a tradition narrated by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-Ḥaytamī, *al-Fatāwa al-Hadīthiyya*, (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, n.d.) 315–316, that Jilānī, along with two other students, met with Hamadhānī at an earlier time, when Hamadhānī visited Baghdad in 506/1112, and that he made predictions about Jilānī becoming a great spiritual master in the future. On Hamadhānī see Wilfred Madelung, 'Yūsuf al-Hamadānī and the Naqsbandiyya', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi Vol. 5/6, Gli Arabi nella Storia: Tanti Popoli una Sola Civiltà* (1987–1988), 499–509.

36 Margoliouth comments that it was a form of asceticism to dwell underground, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan note 2, 303.

37 Ibid. 303.

38 Ibid.

took control of the *madrasa* around 513/1119 and when we look at the period of training and preparation before this date we can use some of the dates given above and try and draw a picture of what happened. The date for the birth of Jīlānī's first son, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, is given as 508/1114. We may infer from this that he got married maybe a year or two before this, around 506/1112. This obviously does not take into account the fact that any number of daughters may have been born before the first son and they would not necessarily receive a mention in the literature as would sons, or more importantly, the first born son. We then have the year 509/1116 as when he went to Mecca for his first pilgrimage. The other date we have is the middle of Shaʿbān 499/1106 as the year when Dabbās pushed Jīlānī into the Tigris. Margoliouth, using Wüstenfeld's tables, dates Shaʿbān of 499/1106 to fall between April and May and comments that it should not have been so cold at that time.[39] It seems to me that the earliest this incident could have occurred would be early April. Modern temperature charts for this time of year show that the average daily temperature in Baghdad would be somewhere around 20°C with the highest around 30°C and lowest around 10°C. It is not inconceivable then that it may have been a cold day, and even if the temperature was at an average 20°C that day, the water temperature of the river would have been below that, compounded by the seasonal change from winter to summer, as the temperature change in water is more gradual and steady than land. Furthermore the Friday prayer in the Ḥanbalī school optimally takes place at mid-morning, at the same time as the Eid prayer would, and not at the time of the *ẓuhr* prayer post-noon, as is common in the Muslim world today.[40] The *jāmīʿ* mosques of Baghdad would have most likely prayed at this earlier timing considering that the majority of its population was Ḥanbalī—the point here being that this event would have occurred during the coldest part of the day.[41] Thus being immersed in that

39 Refer to the full incident above to see the importance of the temperature. According to Faik Resit Unat, *Hicri Tarihleri Miladi Tarihe Çevirme Kilavuzu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1988) 34–35, the month of Shaʿbān for the year 499 was from the 8th of April to the 7th of May 1106.

40 The Friday prayer in the Ḥanbalī school according to Jīlānī is between sunrise and noon (*zawāl*), and he quotes an opinion that it preferably be performed at the fifth hour (counting from the start of the *fajr* prayer), which would be mid-morning. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2001) 551. Other Ḥanbalī jurists, such as the later writer of a commonly used text today, Mūsā al-Ḥajjāwī (d. 968/1561), consider its timing to be from sunrise until the end of the time for the *ẓuhr* prayer at mid-afternoon. See Mūsā Ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥājjāwī, *Zād al-Mustaqniʿ* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2006) 58.

41 Regardless of whether or not all the mosques of Baghdad followed the earlier timing, there is evidence from Jīlānī's works that at least the Ruṣāfa mosque did. We have a report that

water and then proceeding to the mosque without properly being able to dry oneself cannot have been a comfortable experience.[42]

If the above dates are correct then we can safely assume that Jīlānī accompanied Dabbās in the late 490's/early 1100s. He therefore already had quite a few years of study behind him when he met Dabbās; this at least seems to fit in well with the reports that are available.[43] The next step was for Jīlānī to get married around the middle of the following decade. On the issue of marriage we have a report from Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) asking Jīlānī why he did not get married earlier.[44] His reply was that he did want to get married earlier but refrained from doing so, fearing that it would take up too much of his time. He remained patient in the matter and when finally the time was right, God allowed him to marry four times.[45] This seems to suggest that Jīlānī did not marry until he had more or less completed his studies and training, when he could afford to give more time to something like marriage and when he had also developed and trained his character to the extent that marriage would be an asset and not a distraction or hindrance from the strict dedication to the religion to which he had decided to devote his life. He also went on the pilgrimage to Mecca in 509/1116.[46] This, his first pilgrimage, again seems to indicate that he had finished his studies and training by this time and felt it right to go on the *ḥajj*.

On his return from pilgrimage and until Mukharrimī's death in 513/1119 he spent the time accompanying his teacher and most probably helped him to teach. Then before his death Mukharrimī left possession of his *madrasa* to Jīlānī, whom he considered most competent to succeed him. For the period between 513/1119 and 521/1127 we have virtually no information. However sometime around 521/1127 Jīlānī met with Hamadhānī as mentioned above and

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Jīlānī used to rarely leave his *madrasa* complex, except for the Friday prayer (see below), and also that he preached on Sunday mornings, Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings (see below also). In the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, after giving one of his speeches (it is not indicated which day), he leaves his *madrasa* with a multitude of people and goes to the Ruṣāfa mosque. Although it is not stated why, we may deduce that the speech was given on a Friday morning immediately after which he, along with many of his listeners, departed for the Friday prayer at the Ruṣāfa mosque. This would also indicate that the Friday prayer took place—at least in the Ruṣāfa mosque—in the morning and not post-noon.

42 In fact even water temperature of 20°C feels very cool on the body.

43 I.e. Dabbas and his students referring to Jilānī as a jurist.

44 Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1134). Jīlānī would have been around 35 when he got married which was quite late in the society of the time.

45 ʿAbd al-Qāhir [*sic*] al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿArabī, 1983) 167. The publisher has clearly mistaken the author (Shihāb al-Dīn ʿUmar) of this text with his uncle (ʿAbd al-Qāhir).

46 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 269.

began to speak in public as opposed to his private teaching which he continued. Between 521/1127 and 528/1134 his fame grew from his public speeches and this led to the local people helping expand his *madrasa*. After 528/1134 the information increases, as one would expect with regards to a famous personality.

From this short sketch for the first period of Jīlānī's life we can see that his educational phase lasted just under 20 years between 488/1095 and around 505/1112, after which he went through a transitional phase for a few years before beginning teaching in earnest around 513/1119. However the entire time between 488/1095 and 513/1119 could also be considered as his educational phase, both formal and informal, and it is maybe this period that some biographers allude to as his twenty-five years of 'wanderings' or development, perhaps meaning that he was not properly settled. The period of fourteen years mentioned by others might be from when he began wandering in the early 490's to around the time he got married which also fits in. He thus began teaching at the age of 43, and to speak publicly just after reaching the age of 50. The next phase of his life, that of teaching and preaching, would last around forty years between 521/1127 and his death in 561/1166. It is to this part of his life that our attention must now be turned.

2 The Second Phase

It seems appropriate to start this section with a physical description of Jīlānī, something which has not been possible so far as there are none available of him as a youth or even as a young man. In fact most of the descriptions given by his contemporaries are of character rather than person, and there are only two narrations from two of his students that are available. The first is from his student Abū al-Suʿūd and describes him as having brown skin, being slender and of medium stature.[47] It is not possible to get any sort of date for this description, as one cannot be sure of the exact time when Abū al-Suʿūd was Jīlānī's student, and nor is it possible to verify whether he outlived Jīlānī or died before him.[48]

47 al-Shaṭṭanawfī, *Bahja al-Asrār* 174.

48 Ibn ʿArabī, on the authority of one of the students of Jīlānī, writes that Abū al-Suʿūd died twenty years before Jīlānī in 540/1145 but himself refers to Abū al-Suʿūd as living on after Jīlānī, see William Chittick, *The Self-disclourure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʾArabi's Cosmology* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1997) 377. ʿAbd al-Muʾmin al-Isfahānī cites the year 579/1183 for the death of Abū al-Suʿūd. See Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (*Persian Translation*), trans. Abd al-Muʾmin al Isfahani (Tehran: Sharikat Intishārāt ʿIlmī va Farhangī, 1985) see page 13 of introduction.

The second description is given by Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, the famous Ḥanbalī jurist, who describes Jīlānī as slender, of medium height and wide build, with brown skin, a wide and long beard, joined eyebrows with deep black eyes, and a loud voice.[49] Ibn Qudāmā studied law under Jīlānī for just over thirty days at which point Jīlānī passed away. Thus we can be sure that his description is of the man when he had reached the advanced age of ninety.[50] He would wear the clothes of the scholars of the time, and was also known for wearing a *ṭaylasān*, a shawl-like garment worn over the head and shoulders. When he needed to travel around the city he would ride on the back of a mule.[51]

With the expansion of the *madrasa* in 528/1134 Jīlānī found a permanent dwelling for himself and his family within the new complex.[52] The *madrasa* complex also contained a *ribāṭ* which was in essence a residence for his *murīds* (disciples).[53] The *ribāṭ* of Jīlānī has been regarded by Jacqueline Chabbi as something that was attributed to him after his death, by persons wishing to appropriate his name for the Sufi cause.[54] Although she finds mention of a *ribāṭ* attributed to Jīlānī in the various sources, she is nevertheless unable to locate any mention of a date for the founding of this *ribāṭ* in the contemporary sources. She is furthermore misled to think that the missing *ribāṭ* may be one that is mentioned as existing in the Bāb al-Ḥalaba area of the city.[55] Her mistake here is to think that the *ribāṭ* is a separate building, whereas it is in fact part of the *madrasa* complex, which as a whole is always referred to as the Madrasa of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir, and later on as the Qādirī Madrasa.[56] This also answers Chabbi's query of there being no mention of the succession of the *ribāṭ*, to Jīlānī's son or anyone else, as the whole complex would have been passed down as one.

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49 Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Qudāma al-Maqdisī (d. 620/1223) most famously known as the writer of the *fiqh* (Islamic law) book *al-Mughnī* of which Ibn ʿAbd al-Salam said: "I did not see in all the books of knowledge in Islam, anything like Ibn Hazm's *al-Muḥalla* or Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Din's [Ibn Qudama's] *al-Mughni*," Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ* (18; Beirut: Muʾassasa al-Risāla, 1996) 193.

50 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 294.

51 al-ʿAsqalānī, Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir 11.

52 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 292.

53 Singular *murīd*.

54 See especially Jacqueline Chabbi, ʿAbd al-Ḳādir al-Djīlānī Personnage Historique: Quelques Éléments de Biographie, *Studia Islamica* 38 (1973) 100.

55 Ibid. 101.

56 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 127.

It was the habit of Jīlānī to only come out of his *madrasa* on Fridays for the prayer.[57] His day would otherwise consist of teaching, preaching in open lectures and spending some time with his disciples in the *rībāṭ*.[58] After the *'ishā'* (night) prayer he would go into his room and not come out until the *fajr* (dawn) prayer.[59] A certain Harawī spent a night with Jīlānī and said that after *'ishā'*, he prayed a little and then did a chant until the first third of the night was over.[60] The chant consisted of "*al-muḥīṭ al-rabb al-shahīd al-ḥasīb al-fa'āl al-khallāq al-khāliq al-bāri' al-muṣawwir*."[61] He then prayed standing and reciting the Qur'ān till the second third of the night had passed; in these prayers he would lengthen the prostrations. Then he sat quietly until a little before dawn at which point he made prayers of supplication (*du'ā*) and self-abasement (*tadhallul*) and a light covered him so bright that Harawī could not see him, though he could hear salutations of *al-salām 'alaykum*, and Jīlānī would return the salutations until he went out for the dawn prayer.[62]

Jīlānī taught thirteen different subjects in his *madrasa*. He would begin the day with lessons in *tafsīr* (Qur'ān exegesis), then Ḥadīth, then *fiqh*, and then *khilāf* (comparative law), and would teach the various readings of the Qur'ān after the *ẓuhr* (midday) prayers.[63] He also had lessons on *uṣūl* (principles of jurisprudence), grammar and literature.[64] In addition to this he would also be asked to give legal rulings (*fatwa*) on various matters which he was able to do in accordance with both the Ḥanbalī and Shāf'ī schools of law. If he was given such a query then he would not sleep until he had read its contents, and his habit was to then immediately answer it by determining the legal ruling. This he would do without having to think.[65] His skill in being able to answer even the most difficult queries is highlighted by an anecdote: 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Jīlānī reported an incident when the request for a *fatwa* came to Baghdad with regard to a man who had taken a religious oath to divorce his wife unless he was able

57 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 308. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān* 165.

58 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān* 165. See also al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 290.

59 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Aḥmad al- Sha'rānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 2 vols. (1; s.l.: s.n., no date) 110.

60 Sha'rānī only mentions the name al-Harawī.

61 These are all names of God and could be translated as: The Encompassing One, The Sustainer, The Witness, The Accounter, The Efficacious, The Planner, The Creator, The Maker of Order, The Fashioner.

62 Sha'rānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* 110.

63 al-'Asqalānī, 'Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir' 16.

64 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 170.

65 al-'Asqalānī, Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir 16.

to perform some canonical worship of God, which no other person on Earth would be engaged in at the particular time of performance.[66] All the scholars of the city were baffled as to what should be advised as they could think of no form of worship that would fit the criteria. When the query was bought to Jīlānī he immediately answered it saying that the man must make seven circumambulations of the Kaʿba in the holy sanctuary in Mecca, while nobody else was doing it, and that he would then be freed from his oath.[67]

Jīlānī was also known to be extremely knowledgeable in all the subjects that he taught; he was able to master any subject he studied until he surpassed all his contemporaries.[68] Aḥmad al-Bandanījī and Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Jawzī attended a lesson by Jīlānī where he was giving the interpretation of a verse of the Qurʾān.[69] For every interpretation that was given, al-Bandanījī would ask Jamāl al-Dīn if he was already aware of it. The first twelve interpretations were known to Jamāl al-Dīn, but Jīlānī continued with another twenty eight interpretations all of which were new to Jamāl al-Dīn, who was astounded by the depth of Jīlānī's knowledge in the subject.[70] Jīlānī was also on occasion called to lecture at the Niẓāmiyya, where the students would receive him with awe and respect.[71]

Jīlānī's preaching was separate to his teaching. He would give sermons three times a week, on Friday morning and Tuesday evening in the *madrasa* and on Sunday morning in the *ribāṭ*.[72] His sessions would always begin with a recitation from the Qurʾān and for this purpose he had two very adept reciters.[73] It is claimed that there were often nearly four hundred people writing down what he said, which if true would allow us to consider the collections of his sermons quite accurate. After the sermons he would answer *fatāwa* presented to him.[74] It seems he initially (i.e. after 521/1127) gave his sermons at the *madrasa*, but this in time became too small and so he moved to the oratory of the Ḥalaba gate.[75]

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66 The son of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.

67 al-ʿAsqalānī, Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir 16.

68 Ibid.

69 A contemporary scholar mentioned in Ibn al-ʿImād.

70 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 171.

71 Ibid. 173.

72 There is reported by his son ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in al-ʿAsqalānī, *Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir* 17. However the time and location is recorded at the beginning of every sermon in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, which concurs with this report, as they rotate from Sunday morning to Tuesday evening to Friday morning.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 For the Ḥalaba Gate see chapter two. It was the third of four main gates in the eastern walls of the city (i.e. the area around the Dār al-Khilāfa on the east bank on the Tigris, as

This also became too small and the pulpit had to be brought inside the wall between the furnaces.[76] People used to come to these gatherings with candles and torches on the backs of horses, mules and donkeys, and the reports claim that over seventy thousand persons would attend.[77] After 528/1134, when the *madrasa* had been expanded, the sermons were given there once more.[78] Jīlānī used to deliver his sermons from a high pulpit so that the vast crowds were able to hear him, and he was not afraid to speak his mind.[79] Thus it is recorded that after the Caliph al-Muqtafī (530–536/1135–1141) appointed Wafā Ibn al-Murakhkhim—an unjust scholar it would seem—as a judge, Jīlānī rebuked him in a sermon saying, "you have today appointed over the Muslims the most abhorred of transgressors, what will be your answer tomorrow to the Lord of the Worlds?"[80]

Through his sermons he had a great effect on the people of Baghdad; he claimed to have converted over five hundred persons to Islam and reformed countless thieves and bandits.[81] As could be expected he received many gifts of money and other things from the people, and these he would distribute amongst the poor without discriminating between the deserving and the undeserving. This in turn would encourage people to attend his sermons and he was thus able to provide spiritual as well as temporal aid.[82] Yet it would seem that it was not the words that Jīlānī spoke which had such an effect on the people, but rather something inherent in his being or personality. Jīlānī himself said that he would receive orders and prohibitions and what was to be said, in sleep and while awake, until he could contain himself no longer and had to address the people.[83] His son, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, relates that on returning to Baghdad after studying abroad, he asked his father if he might address the people in his father's gathering. Jīlānī gave permission and although he had studied well and

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opposed to the area around the Round City on the west bank, the other three gates being the Muʿaẓẓam, Ẓafariyya and Baṣaliyya). The gate later became known as the Ṭilsām (talisman) gate and was destroyed by the Ottomans in 1917. Its remnants can today be seen on al-Kahhal Street. It is approximately just over half a mile from the *madrasa* of Jīlānī. See Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate* 281.

76 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* 173.

77 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 168. Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 303.

78 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* 173.

79 al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 172.

80 وليت على المسلمين أظلم الظالمين ما جو ابك غدا عند رب العالمين Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 309.

81 Ibid. 304.

82 Ibid. 274.

83 Ibid. 303.

mastered the science of preaching, he could not stir the crowd with his words; they in turn became restless and called upon Jīlānī to speak to them. Jīlānī then proceeded to relate to them how the previous day his wife had boiled an egg for him and put it in a plate, when a cat came and playing around with it, broke it. The crowd was instantly captivated by this trivial story. His son afterwards asked how it was that he was able to affect them in such a manner, and he replied that when he ascended onto the pulpit, the truth would manifest in his heart and it would tell him what to say.[84]

At some point in time Jīlānī acquired some land, which was cultivated for him by the people of Rishāq.[85] They were able to produce bread from the wheat grown there and he received this daily, keeping for himself what he needed and distributing the rest to those that needed it.[86] He was also able to live off money that was gifted to him or money that was vowed by people wanting to attain some particular thing, i.e. that if they were able to attain their aim then they would give a certain amount of money in a good cause; although he would himself make gifts of most of this money too.[87] His wives also took care of him financially and his contemporary Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī quoted him as saying that "there wasn't one of them that did not spend on me with good will and the utmost desire to do so."[88] Over the course of his life Jīlānī had forty-nine children, twenty-seven of them male and twenty-two female.[89]

He also had many students who graduated from under him. These included Naṣr Ibn al-Munā (d. 583/1187), who later became the leader of the Ḥanbalīs, Aḥmad Ibn al-Mubārak known as Abū al-Suʿūd (d. 579/1183), Maḥmūd Ibn ʿUthmān al-Naʿʿāl (d. 609/1212), ʿAbdullāh al-Jubbāʾī (d. 605/1209), the two famous Maqdisīs, (i.e. the jurisconsult, Ibn Qudāma, author of the famous *fiqh* book *al-Mughnī* and the traditionist Ḥāfiẓ ʿAbd al-Ghanī (d. 600/1203), author of *al-Kamāl fī Maʿrifat al-Rijāl*), Aḥmad Ibn al-Mubārak al-Muraqqaʿātī (d. 570/1174), Abū al-Fatḥ al-Harawī (d. 590/1194), ʿUmar Ibn Masʿūd al-Bazzāz (d. 608/1211) and Abū Badr al-Tamāshikī.[90] The famous mystic Ibn ʿArabī met both of these

84 al-ʿAsqalānī, *Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir* 17. Also see Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 272.

85 The Bahja has it as Rasnāqiya.

86 al-ʿAsqalānī, *Ghibṭa al-Nāẓir fī Tarjama al-Shaykh* ʿAbd al-Qādir 25, Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 301.

87 al-Shaṭṭanawfī, *Bahja al-Asrār* 199.

88 al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* 167. See also al-Shaṭṭanawfī, *Bahja al-Asrār* 199.

89 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 304.

90 On the Maqdisīs see Stefen Leder, Charismatic Scriptualism: The Ḥanbalī Maqdisīs of Damascus, *Der Islam* 74 (1997), 279–304. Aḥmad al-Muraqqaʿāti used to spread out Jīlānī's

latter two during one of his two sojourns in Baghdad, and was told many stories of Jīlānī.[91] Amongst Jīlānī's students during his *hajj* are often cited Shuʿayb Abū Madyan (d. 594/1179) and ʿUthmān Ibn Marzūq (d. 564/1169), who are also said to have taken the *khirqa* off him and thus the Sufi path. The same is said of many of his other students including the two Maqdisīs on a report from Ibn Qudāma himself who claimed that they both took it at the same time.[92] We also have a report from Ibn ʿArabī that he received a *khirqa* (a third one, for he already had two previously) in Mecca from Yūnus Ibn Yaḥyā al-Hāshimī (d. 608/1211), who had taken it from Jīlānī. This Hāshimī is well attested for, because we are told that Ibn ʿArabī also narrated Ḥadīth from Hāshimī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) has an entry on Hāshimī, grading him as a "dependable transmitter."[93] Dhahabī also makes mention of those who narrated Ḥadīth from Jīlānī, amongst whom are included the great Khurasanian Ḥadīth scholar ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Samʿānī (d. 562/1166), the two Maqdisīs, and ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ibn al-Qubbayṭī (d. 641/1243).[94]

In early 561/1165–1166 Jīlānī became very ill and it became clear to his family that he was near death. When his son ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz asked him about his illness, he replied that nobody should ask him about anything and that nobody knew what his illness was and nor could anybody comprehend it. His son ʿAbd al-Jabbār asked him where he felt pain. To this he replied that all of his body was aching except his heart, which was with God. Another of his sons Mūsā said that just before the moment of death he recited: "*ʿistaʿantu bi subḥānhū wa taʿālā, huwa al-ḥayyu allathī lā yamūt wa lā yakhsha al-mawt, subḥāna man taʿazzaza bi al-qudra wa qahara ʿibādahū bi al-mawt, lā ilā ha illa Allāh Muḥammad al-rasūl Allāh*," but that he stuttered at the word *taʿazzaza* and could not get it out so he kept repeating it until it was pronounced clearly.[95] After com-

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patched cloak (*muraqqaʿa*) for him on the pulpit, and it seems that this is how he got his name, see Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* 6: 391. On Tamāshikī see the note below.

91 ʿUmar al-Bazzāz is also repeatedly mentioned in Shaṭṭanawfī's *Bahjat al-Asrār*, e.g. 47, 85 and 222. His birth and death dates are given as 532/1137–608/1211 in Ṣayf al-Dīn Ibn Abī al-Manṣūr, *Le Risala de Safi al-Din Ibn Abi al-Mansur Ibn Zafir* (Cairo: IFAOC, 1986) 236. No such information could be found on Abū Badr al-Tamāshikī.

92 See al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 286–289 and the sources contained therin.

93 Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993) 145, 214.

94 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 276.

95 This translates as: "I seek help from the Most Glorified and High One, He is the Living One who never dies. Glory be to the one who is honoured with power and who subdues His servants with death. There is no God except Allāh, and Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh."

pleting this sentence he kept repeating 'Allāh, Allāh' until his voice grew faint and his tongue began to stick to the roof of his mouth, at which point he passed away.[96] Various days are given for his death, the 8th, 10th, 11th, and 17th, all of the fourth month of Rabīʿ al-Thānī 561/February 1166, at which time he was ninety years old.[97]

3 Miracles

It seems only right to address the issue of miracles when dealing with the biography of Jīlānī, considering that both the hagiographic and biographical material is so full of them. When talking of miracles here, it is not my intent to define the term exactly but rather to let it, in general and perhaps vaguely, refer to all incidents whose occurrence is outside the normal operational rules and workings of the world we inhabit.[98] The present biography was purposefully left free of any miracles in order that the issue not distract from the primary purpose of the biography, which was to construct some sort of picture of the stages of the life of Jīlānī. Nevertheless his miracles are so ubiquitously reported—therefore being an important part of his legacy—that it is necessary to discuss them at some point, and although I do not wish to go into any of the miracles specifically, it seems only sensible to deal with the issue generally and as a whole.

Every single hagiography, without exception, details at least a few of his miracles (which of course is as would be expected of such a work), but as in the biography constructed above, I would like to stick more to the biographical source material. However, even in these—barring a few very short biographies that provide us with very scant details in any case—a mention of his miracles is nearly always made. We may begin by turning to the biography of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), the grandson of the famous contemporary of Jīlānī, Ibn al-Jawzī, who was born only twenty years after Jīlānī's death in 583/1187. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī is a good source on Jīlānī because his position seems to be fairly unbiased. He seems personally fond of Jīlānī, yet was fully aware of the rivalry his grandfather felt with Jīlānī and later with the sons of Jīlānī, and was even present at the controversy of his grandfather with the latter, where, as detailed below, he without hesitation took the side of his grandfather.[99] Nevertheless we

96 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2003) 120–122, al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* 265–266.

97 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 310.

98 Of course what may be considered 'normal' is subject to interpretation.

99 See chapter eight.

find that after quoting the short paragraph his grandfather provided on Jīlānī in his *Muntaẓm*, he adds that Jīlānī "had manifest miracles, and I have personally met many of the shaykhs who relate them."[100] From these he mentions two, one that he heard from his own mother on the authority of his uncle Khāṣṣ Beg Ibn Balangirī (d. 548/1153), who was a powerful and apparently favourite *amīr* of the Saljuk Sultan Masʿūd (d. 547/1152), and the other from Muẓaffar al-Ḥarbī, who in the *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir* is mentioned as one of Jīlānī's helpers.[101] Both stories are of the type were Jīlānī shows his knowledge of some information that is known only to the protagonists without Jīlānī ever having being informed previously; in the first case reprimanding a person for attending his gathering while in a state of ritual impurity, and in the second bringing dates to a hungry person who has just requested such of his Lord.[102] These are related from two contemporaries of Jīlānī and were recorded very early on, only a generation after Jīlānī's death.

The information just given, which is from the *Mir'āt* of Sibṭ, is also reported verbatim in the biography of Dhahabī. However, Dhahabī also includes in his biography some interesting statements from other contemporaries of Jīlānī. He reports that Ibn Qudāma, who studied with Jīlānī at the very end of his life, remarked that "I have never heard as many miracles narrated about anyone more than what has been narrated about him."[103] Although Ibn Qudāma was with him for only a little over a month, his comment shows us that Jīlānī was already renowned for his miracles before his death. Dhahabī also cites another report from the famous blind grammarian ʿAbdullāh al-ʿUkbarī (d. 616/1219), who upon attending one of the lessons of Jīlānī heard some of his students making grammatical mistakes and wondered to himself why Jīlānī did not censure them.[104] At that very point Jīlānī remarked "here comes the man who has studied a few chapters of law and finds fault." ʿUkbarī supposed that the remark was perhaps meant for someone else, after which Jīlānī said "it is you I

100 Sibṭ Ibn al- Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, ed. James Richard Jewitt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907) 165.

101 Khaṣṣ Beg or Arslan Beg Ibn Balangirī placed Malikshāh on the throne after the death of Masʿūd in 547/1152, but finding him to be incompetent replaced him with his brother Muḥammad, who not wishing for any more interference by this *amīr* had him killed in early 548/1153. Thus he may have attended any of Jīlānī's gatherings between 528/1134 and 548/1153. Muẓaffar al-Ḥarbī is mentioned twice in the *Qalā'id* on pages 10 and 97.

102 Ibn al- Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān* 165.

103 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 278.

104 Abū al-Baqā' ʿAbdullāh Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-ʿUkbarī al-Baṣrī (d. 616/1219), the blind grammarian.

mean."[105] Dhahabī also relates a report from his famous teacher Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), who quotes ʿUmar al-Suhrawardi—founder of the Suhrawardī order—as saying that he intended to study *kalām* and *uṣūl al-dīn*, but thought to ask Jīlānī first. However before he even uttered a word, Jīlānī said "'Umar, it is no preparation for the grave!"[106] Again these are reports from contemporaries of Jīlānī, and Dhahabī is known to be someone who carefully verified his reports. We also find him reporting to his teacher Mūsā al-Yūnīnī (d. 726/1326), that he heard ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1262), a scholar who was known to be very strict in his views, remark that "no miracles have ever been related to us through sound or fully certified chains (*tawātur*) except those of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir."[107] To this we may add Dhahabī's own evaluation of the matter, that although there are many tales of miracles that are told about Jīlānī, and reported "on the authority of persons of no worth … yet in general his miracles are recorded through sound chains (*tawātur*), and there have been none after him that match him."[108]

This aspect of Jīlānī, that he manifested miracles, became one of the major features of the legacy of Jīlānī as passed down in history. In fact we may safely assume that this particular charisma was and is more popularly known in prosperity than even his writings and works. These miracles, which are considered to emanate from his rank as a saint, are part and parcel of the ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī as understood and venerated by the Muslim community through the subsequent centuries.

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105 Margoliouth, Contributions to the Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 279.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid. 287.

PART 2

Thought, Practice and Experience

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CHAPTER 4

Theology I: The Ḥanbalī Foundation

To examine Jīlānī's thought as a whole means looking at him as a Ḥanbalī as well as a Sufi, if he can be rightly described as such. The term Ḥanbalī can be used to refer to a school of theology as well as a school of jurisprudence and sometimes in popular parlance as a school of morality too. By the twelfth century, all four Sunni schools of law were generally accepted as equally valid according to their own methodologies, and so all four were considered orthodox. Jīlānī was known to be a Ḥanbalī in jurisprudence and this could not have caused any controversy. However the situation with the theological schools was somewhat different, and the nature of the subject did not allow any space for alternative orthodox views. Only one answer for each theological question could be correct. Whereas in law there could be no charge of heresy levelled against any particular school so long as the jurisprudential method was within certain boundaries, in theology questions about some specific nature of God or whether the Qur'ān was created and contingent or eternal could only really have one correct answer. The theological schools therefore all claimed to be the sole agents of orthodoxy, and the 'Ḥanbalī School of theology' was no different in this regard. However, one could be a member of the Ḥanbalī School in jurisprudence and yet disagree with its theological stance, although this was rare. Conversely one could agree with the theology of the Ḥanbalī School but follow a different school of jurisprudence, and this latter state of affairs was far more common. An important point worth mentioning here is the fact that what I have just termed the 'Ḥanbalī School of theology' usually did not go by that name, and it appears that this was not even a very common name. Thus followers of this school could be referred to by many names in Arabic while today in academic writing they are usually termed traditionalists.[1] I will also

1 See Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology, Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998) ix, George Makdisi, *Ibn ʾAqil et la résurgence de l'Islam traditionaliste* (Damascus: Instituit Français de Damas, 1963a) 293–384. The view of Abrahamov has been previously quoted in a footnote in chapter 2, section 3.6. Merlin Swartz, not differing with Abrahamov in any real way, defines the term 'traditionalist' as "a designation for that movement in medieval Islam whose adherents were known as *ahl al-sunna wa'l-ḥadīth*, that is, those who considered themselves adherents of the *sunna* of the Prophet and who stood in sharp opposition to rationalist tendencies. The doctrinal position of the traditionalists is conveniently summarized in the Qādirite creed. While the traditionalist movement

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generally use this term throughout this work, primarily to stop any confusion with the jurisprudential school. In fact as will become clear below, the term Ḥanbalī seems itself to be used by Jīlānī only when discussing jurisprudential matters.

Theology is always understood to mean discourse or speech about God, but what is to be discussed under that term here has a slightly wider application.[2] In Arabic it is a subject often known by the names of *ʿaqīda* or *uṣūl al-dīn* amongst others, although there is no universal name for the subject matter. Furthermore it is often the case that the different Arabic names are used because the author of any given text believes one or another name to denote a particular methodology in approaching the subject against another methodology which they believe to be the more or the less appropriate. We have then a situation where the subject matter at hand does not easily define itself under any one Arabic name. It could be said that what is to be discussed here is in fact *ʿaqīda* or *uṣūl al-dīn* and that would, in a way, be correct. However it would seem prudent to define the subject in and of itself.

In Christianity "theology exists because the Godhead is revealed in historical actions or events," and historical actions and events are always open to interpretation.[3] With regard to Muslim history theology could be understood as a particular set of problems that arose due to historical events after the death of the Prophet, and in time these problems collected themselves to make a specific subject area.[4] This subject area is what is being defined as theology here, where the topics or problems discussed seem to be contingent and historical

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included elements from each of the four schools of law, by the sixth century A.H., the Ḥanbalites had come to constitute the most important element in the traditonalist movement, at least in 'Irāq." See Merlin Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa 'l-Mudhakkirīn* (Beirut: Dar El-Machreq, 1986) 25–26. For the Qādirite Creed see Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam* 7:109–111. English translation by Salah al-Din Khuda Buhksh in *The Renaissance of Islam* (New York: AMS Press, 1975) 206–209; German translation by Adam Mez, *Renaissance* 198–201; French translation by George Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqil et la résurgence de l'Islam traditionaliste au XIe siècle*, (Damascus: Insituit Francais de Damas, 1963) 303–310.

Some of the names used by Jīlānī to describe those whom he identifies with in this regard are mentioned in chapter five.

2 Yves Congar, Theology, in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (13; Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2005), 9134–9142.

3 See Ibid.

4 For a discussion of the series of historical disputes that led to differing beliefs and opinions see Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Niḥal* (Cairo: Mu'assasa al-Jallī, 1968) 19–31.

Richard Frank has an interesting article on the development of speculative theology or *kalām* in Richard Frank, The Science of *Kalām*, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 2 (1992), 7–37.

rather than a priori and essential. It seems certain that debate about certain issues regarding God and His creation would have inevitably arisen sooner or later if not at the particular time that they did, but the question of whether they would have been the same particular problems is harder to answer. That revolves around the question of whether the problems that did arise were due to mere historical circumstance and are in some way arbitrary, or whether they are something intrinsic to the nature of the religion itself. However it is not an aim of this work to answer that particular question.

I have picked five problems that are discussed by most writers on theology and that cover some of the major issues. They are heavily debated between the different sects during this period, and evaluating Jīlānī's stance on these topics will hopefully help identify his theological standpoint. They are the attributes of God, the status of the Qurʾān, faith, human actions, and the Caliphate.[5] The Caliphate seems to have been the first issue to arise after the death of the Prophet, and became more acute after the assassination of the third Caliph ʿUthmān. The problem revolved around who had the right to be a Caliph and what the exact role of the Caliph was. As time passed the issue centralised around the question of how one was to interpret the early historical events of the Caliphate and whether there was any blame to be laid on any individuals for the way things had played out.[6]

The problem of faith started with the Khawārij who left the army of ʿAlī and claimed that he had made a mistake in allowing arbitration between his own camp and that of his rival Muʿāwiya. They viewed this mistake as a grave sin (*kabīra*); something that annulled his belief and took him out the fold of Islam. This made it acceptable to kill ʿAlī—for how could a non-Muslim rule over Muslims—and he in fact ended up being assassinated by a member of the Khawārij.[7] Against the Khawārij was a group called the Murjiʾa, members of which held faith to be an act of belief only and separate to actions. No physical

5 A fifth problem, the *ṣura* of Ādam, is also discussed below but is not evaluated later on, nor is it included in the general discussion here because firstly Ashʿarī does not comment on it in his *Ibāna* and secondly because it is not as important an issue as the other five in its own right and is normally connected or subsumed under the topic of interpreting the problematic traditions of God's attributes—which is where it really belongs. However it is dealt under its own heading here.

6 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (1; Cairo: Maktaba Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1950) 39–64, Frank, The Science of *Kalām* 12–13.

7 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* 1:156–196, ʿAlī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwāʾ wa al-Niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1985) 5:51–56, Mustafa Shah, Trajectories in the Development of Islamic Theological Thought: The Synthesis of *Kalām*, *Religion Compass* 1/4 (2007) 432.

action therefore, whether it constituted a sin or not, could have any affect on one's belief and on whether one was to be considered a Muslim or not.[8]

The problem of human actions arose with a dispute over the idea of *qadar* or predestination and revolved around the central issue of the extent to which humans were free agents able to act as they pleased.[9] The ruling ʿUmayyads of the time held the convenient belief that everything was preordained by God, giving a sort of legitimacy and justification to their rule as well as removing responsibility for any unjust actions that were carried out by them.[10] The famous Basran ascetic and scholar of the first/eighth century, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, when asked about what he thought of the view of the ʿUmayyads, replied that "they are the enemies of God, they are liars."[11] The "Umayyad' predestination view was also intellectually held by a group known as the Jabarīs. An opposing view that held humans to be absolutely free agents was held by a group known as the Qadarīs and was later taken up by the Muʿtazilīs.[12] Between these two wings were views of varying contrasts, mixing the idea of predestination with human responsibility.

The Muʿtazilī view also came from their belief that God's justice and unity were paramount and not to be compromised under any circumstance. His justice required that He only punish and reward where it was merited, leading back to the idea of absolute free will.[13] They also held that God's attributes (*ṣifāt*) could not exist separately to his essence (*dhāt*) or this would bring God's unity into question. However, some attributes even as part of His essence raised problems and this was especially the case with the attributes of action. Some of these attributes, such as ascending and descending, could be interpreted to mean other than what the literal sense implied, a view that brought heavy opposition from other groups, while other attributes like speech were declared

8 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* 1:197–215, Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal* 5:73–96.

9 Shah, Trajectories in the Development of Islamic Theological Thought: The Synthesis of *Kalām* 432.

10 Colin Sedgwick, Predestination, Pauline and Islamic, *Vox Evangelica* 26 (1996) 79–80, William Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1973) 114.

11 Abdallāh ibn Muslim Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Maʿārif* (Cairo: s.n., 1981) 441. On Ḥasan al-Baṣrī see, Suleiman Mourad, *Early Islam Between Myth and History: Al-Ḥaṣan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 H/ 728 CE) and the formation of his legacy in classical Islamic scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). For his views of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī on this particular issue see 161–175. Mourad argues (p. 172) that he was—and remained all his life—a *qadarī*.

12 Shah, Trajectories in the Development of Islamic Theological Thought: The Synthesis of *Kalām* 433.

13 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* 1:224.

not to be attributes at all but rather to be considered as accidents. This led to the understanding that the Qurʾān being God's speech was something created, a view rejected by most non-Muʿtazilīs.[14] The particular problem became more acute when the Caliph al-Maʾmūn publically adopted the position of the createdness of the Qurʾān, and his chief judge, Aḥmad Ibn Abī Dawūd, in an attempt to secure the conformity of all religious scholars to the view that al-Maʾmūn had adopted, ordered an inquisition.[15] Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal was one of the scholars persecuted in this affair but held his ground in direct opposition to the idea and ultimately emerged as the most famous character from the entire episode.[16]

Having briefly considered the origins of the theological field within Muslim culture, it is now possible to move on to survey Jīlānī's pronouncements and positions on these various issues.

1 Jīlānī's Theology

The following consideration of the theology of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī is to be divided into three sections. In the first section I wish to go through the actual creedal doctrines that he outlines which should give indication to his

14 Ibid. 1:245, Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwāʾ wa al-Niḥal* 5:57–72.

15 William Patton, *Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and the Mihna* (Leiden: Brill, 1897) 52–57.

16 Patton's is the classic text on this issue, but more up to date texts include Michael Cooperson, The Ḥadīth Scholar Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, in *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophet in the Age of al-Maʾmūn* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 107–153, Nimrod Hurvitz, Biographies and Mild Asceticism: A Study of Islamic Moral Imagination, *Studia Islamcia* 85/1 (1997), 41–66, Nimrod Hurvitz, Who is the Accused? The Interrogation of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Qanṭara*, 22/2 (2001a), 359–373, Nimrod Hurvitz, Miḥna as Self-Defence, *Studia Islamcia* 92 (2001b), 92–111, Nimrod Hurvitz, *The Formation of Ḥanbalism: Piety into Power* (London: Routledge, 2002a), Nimrod Hurvitz, The Mihna (Inquisition) and the Public Sphere, in Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel Eisenstadt, and Nehmia Levitzion (eds.), *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002b), 17–29, Josef Van Ess, *Theologie Und Gesellschaft im 2 und 3 Jahrhundert Hidschra*, 6 vols. (3; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–1995) 446–508.

Concerning Ibn Ḥanbal's role in the whole affair, Hinds argued that he might well have capitulated under torture and it was the later biographies, beginning with his son Ṣāliḥ, that made him out to be the hero, Martin Hinds, Miḥna, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (7; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 2. Van Ess thinks that he must have capitulated or the authorities would not have released him from prison, Van Ess, *Theologie Und Gesellschaft im 2 und 3 Jahrhundert Hidschra* 3:465. However Cooperson has more recently argued that it is more than plausible that Ibn Ḥanbal could have been released without capitulating, Michael Cooperson, Two Abbasid Trials: Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq, *Al-Qanṭara*, 22/2 (2001), 375–393.

theological stance. I will not however attempt to prove that Jīlānī is of a certain theological school for that is in some sense an already settled fact. A basic reading of his texts gives one the impression that Jīlānī is a Ḥanbalī, and the biographies do not differ in the matter. As already mentioned, however, the term Ḥanbalī can refer to one's school of jurisprudence and law (*madhhab*) as well as one's theological 'school,' (what we have preferred to term traditionalist) and so it has been assumed that Jīlānī must have been a Ḥanbalī in both, that is in theology as well as jurisprudence. I have found nothing in the texts to disagree with such a general conclusion, and in matters of theology would not hesitate to place Jīlānī firmly in the traditionalist camp. However such labels, while giving a good indication as to a scholar's theological attitude as well as—and perhaps more importantly here—where he might have viewed himself to stand within the spectrum of the theological rainbow, do not give a clear account of the scholar's stance on specific doctrinal matters. This seems an obvious enough point, but in the history of Muslim theological writing we find doctrines that, at one point defined as the hallmark of a certain group, are often taken up at a future date by an author identifying himself and identified by others as belonging to a different and sometimes opposing group.[17] This ultimately leads to the problem of giving a concrete definition for any theological school. In the writing of Jīlānī we find repeated mention of the Ashʿarī School as well as the Muʿtazilī School among others, specifically with reference to an incorrect understanding of specific doctrinal issues, but the analysis here will be concerned with what was perceived as Ashʿarite, Muʿtazilī or anything else at the time of Jīlānī.[18]

With each doctrinal point mentioned I wish then to attempt a comparison with other scholars who wrote on theology and whose works might have been considered by Jīlānī. With regard to the traditionalist view, I will use the *Kitāb Sharḥ wa al-Ibāna ʿalā Uṣūl al-Sunna wa al-Diyāna* of Ibn Baṭṭā al-ʿUkbarī (d. 387/997). This text would have been composed some halfway in time between Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and Jīlānī, and so should be useful in highlighting any continuity or disruption amongst the traditionalists. I will also refer to *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* of Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿAshʿarī in this context. This may

17 An example of this is the change in the position of the Ashʿarites with regard to God's attributes, see William Montgomery Watt, Some Muslim Discussions of Anthropomorphism, *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*, 12 (1951), 1–10. Also for the general change in their methodology see Louis Gardet and Marcel Anawati, *Introduction à La Théologie Musulmane: Essai de Théologie Comparée* (Paris: Vrin, 1970) 52–76.

18 The adjective Ashʿarite rather than Ashʿarī is used throughout this chapter when referring to this group in order to differentiate between them and the person of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī who is regularly referred to in the comparisons.

seem a strange choice and even though the text was rejected by certain traditionalists in Ashʿarīs own time, it seems to remain fully faithful to every doctrine of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and was perhaps rejected for its occasional use of rational argumentation in support of those doctrines.[19] The Ashʿarite comparison

19 On the *Ibāna* being a traditionalist work and an accurate representation of Ashʿarī's final stance on theology see, George Makdisi, Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History, *Studia Islamcia* 17 (1962), 37–80, George Makdisi, Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History, *Studia Islamcia* 18 (1963b), 19–39. Richard Frank has argued against the picture presented by Makdisi and finds the *Ibāna* to be in line with Ashʿarī's other more *kalām*-based works which would definitely not be classified as traditionalist, and believes it to have been written in the guise or methodology of a traditionalist work to make it more palatable to them, especially Barbahārī. See Richard Frank, Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ashʿarī, *Le Museon: Revue D'Etudes Orientales* 104 (1991), 141–190.

Frank has some very interesting arguments, but I feel that he paints too rigid a picture of the traditionalists/Ḥanbalīs. Two points here may suffice as demonstration. Frank argues (pp. 179–180) that Ibn Ḥanbal's purported statement (quoted from Abū Jarīr al-Ṭabarī) that "whoever says 'my oral recitation of the Qurʾān is created' is a *jahmī*, and whoever says 'it is not created' is an innovator," is most likely a false attribution because none of the Ḥanbalīs of Ashʿarī's period hold the view, and he "suspects that it might not be acceptable to most of them," and moreover because the formula is "reminiscent of that employed by Ibn Kullāb and adopted by Ashʿarī with regard to God's eternal attributes." However we find the statement right here in Jīlānī's *Ghunya* (p. 117), with the essence of the doctrine covering all theological matters, as Jīlānī explains: "His (Ibn Ḥanbal's) way (*madhhabihī*), may God have mercy on him, is built upon the principle that if something is not to be found in the Qurʾān or related in the traditions of the Messenger of God, and the age of the Companions passed without any of them saying anything about it, then talk concerning it (*kalām fīhi*) is innovation and invention." ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2001) 117–118. Also see chapter 4, section 4 below. The second point concerns Frank's statement that the *Ibāna* contains a *kalām* argument concerning the status of the Qurʾān that would be unacceptable to the traditionalists (pp. 173–174), but again we find that the argument is used by Jīlānī (p. 109 and chapter 4, section 4 below), as well as being referenced in its primitive origin to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal himself. Thus it would seem that the Ḥanbalī's are more fluid than Frank would allow, and even if Barbahārī did reject the *Ibāna*, it does not stop it being a traditionalist text, not least because Barbahārī is not representative of all traditionalists. (Barbahārī may be placed on the more conservative wing of the traditionalists, which was very against rational argumentation even in defence of their own doctrines, as opposed to the less-conservative wing which was quite happy to employ rational argumentation as a tool of defence. Jonathan Brown indicates such a division when discussing the position of Bukhārī amongst the traditionalists in *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 77–81.) It also seems to me that both Makdisi and Frank try too hard to make Ashʿarī fit a certain mould and neat classification post-conversion. It is true that the *Ibana* does not contain any outright condemnations of *kalām*, but then it also seems, in my opinion, somewhat far-fetched to assert that Ashʿarī was only writing the *Ibāna* to try and—so to speak—sneak his views by the traditionalists, but that they were too clued on and saw straight through the guise—

will be provided by the various texts of ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). By the time that Jīlānī was writing, the theological works of Juwaynī would have become quite famous. Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) was also a famous Ashʿarite of the time, but being a contemporary of Jīlānī, we cannot be sure whether his theological works would have become widely distributed by this time, although there is anecdotal evidence to say that they were (see below). In addition to this is the dispute over the centuries on the views of Shahrastānī, and whether he was an Ismāʿīlī or perhaps held some Ismāʿīlī views, which would make him less than a perfect candidate for establishing Ashʿarite doctrine at this time.[20] Between these two authors lies Ghazālī, but the fact that his thought was unique in many ways raises problems of using him as the benchmark of what at that time may have been understood as Ashʿarite; better to use his teacher Juwaynī.[21] There is a piece of anecdotal evidence that would support the use of Juwaynī, one that exists in many of the biographical entries on Jīlānī, in which the latter advises ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī not to study the *Shamāʾil* of Juwaynī or the *Nihāyā* of Shahrastānī.[22] There are further reasons for using Juwaynī that revolve around the attempt to identify who Jīlānī is talking about whenever he mentions the Ashʿarites, but they will be better understood after the theological exposition and for this reason will be mentioned at the end of this section.

The format of this section will address the five previously itemised topics, and for each will firstly give an exposition of Jīlānī's view followed by a comparison with the views of the above mentioned where appropriate. This section

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this based on a reading-into an anecdotal story. Regardless of all these issues, it is still useful to use Ashari's work as a comparison alongside Ibn Baṭṭa and Juwaynī as it will allow us to see where and how they all agree and disagree. I may note here in advance that Ashʿarī's *Ibāna* is far more in line with Ibn Baṭṭa and Jilani than the Ashʿarite Juwaynī (see chapter 4, section 8 below).

20 Shahrastānī was accused of Ismāʿīlism by at least two contemporaries, al-Khwārizmī and al-Samʿānī as well as many others after his life. See Diana Steigerwald, The Contribution of al-Shahrastani to Islamic Medieval Thought, in Todd Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought: Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

21 In fact it has been disputed whether Ghazālī was an Ashʿarite at all. See Richard Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School* (London: Duke University Press, 1994), George Makdisi, The Non-Ashʿarite Shafiʿism of Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazzālī, *Revue Des Etudes Islamiques* 54 (1986), 239–257. Also see, Kojiro Nakamura, Was Ghazali an Ashʾarite? *Memoirs of Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 51 (1993), 1–24. Although Nakamura concludes that Ghazali was an Ashʿarite, he nevertheless raises some interesting issues.

22 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, 2 vols. (1; Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 198–) 296–297.

will then be followed up by a statistical analysis of the persons quoted and used as authorities in Jīlānī's theology which should give a good indication as to the influences upon his theological position, and who he considers as authorities in the matter of theology. Finally there is an analysis of the nomenclature used by Jīlānī himself in describing his own school (viewed as the orthodox) and those he believes to be heterodox. These latter two sections on the statistical analysis and nomenclature constitute chapter five.

The theological account given below is based around three main texts. Nearly all of the theology of Jīlānī is taken from a specific section in the *Ghunya*, although there are a few single points that are taken from the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and the *Futuḥ al-Ghayb*. However these generally just confirm what is already stated in the *Ghunya*. It must be remembered that the *Ghunya*'s concern is as a guide for somebody 'on the path of God,' and that it attempts to take them from the initial step of becoming a Muslim to gaining direct knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God. The particular section of interest here is located in the first half of the book following initial sections on the obligations due on a Muslim (prayer, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage), the Prophetic manners and customs that a Muslim should adhere to and the rules and practices of marriage. Jīlānī refers to all of these matters as being from the *ādāb al-sharīʿa* (regulations of the sacred law), constituting what will qualify somebody as being a Muslim as well as a follower of the *sunna* (Prophetic tradition).[23] Although this knowledge is important as an initial step, constituting what is necessary for one to be aware of (*maʿrifa mā yanbaghī*), it is possible that one can end up following it and adhering to it in an external or outwardly fashion only (*ẓāhir*^{an}), because, prima facie, everything mentioned is a physical action. Thus one could go through the motions of the physical actions and "be clothed in the light of Islam externally," but would require something more and above this mere physicality to be "clothed in the light of *īmān* internally (*bāṭin*^{an})"[24] Jīlānī wants to move to describe what he calls real knowledge of the creator (*haqīqa maʿrifa al-ṣāniʿ*), itself being from the *aʿmāl al-qalb* or works and actions of the heart. The ordering of this section, coming after an exposition of the basic rites of worship, is to make it easy upon somebody to enter the religion and get a grip of the basics before one moves on to gain a better understanding and a deeper level of faith.

The theology section itself is divided into three parts. The first part, by far the longest, sets out the views of Jīlānī and could in itself be taken as a small credo. The second part is very brief and merely states what names and attributes one

23 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 98.
24 Ibid. 98.

is not allowed to ascribe to God, while the third aims to give an exposition of all the heretical sects that are not considered orthodox. This section does not seem to have anything new or innovative about it but rather seems to follow standard lines in theology works. In fact as will become clear below, with regards to format the work is very similar to the *Ibāna* of Ashʿarī and the *Sharḥ* of Ibn Baṭṭā.

In his book *al-Ibāna*, Ashʿarī describes the basis of the creed as being the Qurʾān, the *sunna* of the Prophet, what is related of the Companions, those that followed them (*tābiʿīn*) and the leading scholars of Ḥadīth, and what was said by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, who is described as the *imām* through whom God chose to manifest the truth (*haqq*), remove error (*ḍalāl*), and make clear the methodology (*manhaj*), as well as quashing innovation (*bidʿa*), doubt (*shakk*), and deviancy (*zaygh*). He thus gives Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal a very prominent role in his theology. It is an interesting statement because theologians from many of the other schools also accepted the traditions as a primary source to base one's theology on, and the crux of the debate therefore was on how to interpret these traditions, most importantly those that attributed to God such anthropomorphic qualities as hearing and sight or went against the conclusions of what seemed to them as 'rational.' By qualifying further that he relies on the opinions of the imams of Ḥadīth and specifically Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Ashʿarī was making clear from the start which interpretation he considered to be the right one.[25] In light of this, the actual text of the *Ibāna* does not give any opinions of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, it only cites Qurʾān verses and *ḥadīths* as source material for the theological doctrines, and so the reference to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal can be confirmed as that of the methodology of interpretation of these texts. He also clarifies and elaborates doctrines throughout the text much more than Ibn Baṭṭa does, and in this way the text can be said to be much closer to the way the theology is presented by Jīlānī. However Ibn Baṭṭa seems to stay closer to the aim of presenting creedal doctrines as they come in the sources (Qurʾān and *Ḥadīth*) without any rational elaboration. It is an interesting difference that will be commented upon again at the end of this section.

Ibn Baṭṭā's book is divided into three sections. The first simply lists verses of Qurʾān followed by *ḥadīths* and other traditions that are to be read, accepted and believed in. The texts are simply listed, one after the other without any comment or explanation. This is followed by a second section that is best described as a statement of creed, where he writes down what is the correct belief on particular matters and sometimes mentions an incorrect belief, stating it to be so. The information in the second section is in essence clearly

25 Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ashʿrī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1977) 20–21.

derived from the verses and traditions that are given in the first. A third section lists practices of the Prophet (*sunna*) over which there should be no dispute, and a fourth lists practices and beliefs that are innovations (*bidʿa*); both these sections deal mainly with matters relating to worship (*ʿibādāt*). This section really pertains to matters that would normally be considered under the subject matter of law (*fiqh*) and for this reason, and with a view to our purpose, may be ignored. In his critical introduction to Ibn Baṭṭā's *Sharḥ*, Laoust writes that Ibn Baṭṭā puts forth a Muslim rather than a Ḥanbalī creed. His statements are not just verses of the Qur'ān, *ḥadīths* and statements of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, but also include many statements of other exemplary Muslims, from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī to Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyād to Mālik Ibn Anas.[26] The inclusion of a third section that tries to bring some aspects of *fiqh* as commonly accepted among all Muslims may be viewed in such a light.

2 God's Attributes

After stating that there is only one God by quoting the whole of Sūra Ikhlās, Jīlānī begins his theological chapter in the *Ghunya* with the assertion of "*laysa ka mithlihi shay'*" (there is nothing whatever like unto Him).[27] Jīlānī makes it absolutely clear before he begins to talk about the divine that there is nothing comparable to Him and thus attempts to remove any conclusions that may lead one towards any comparisons anthropomorphic or otherwise. He states clearly that God is not to be conceived of as a body, essence or accident, or as being composite or delimited in any way.[28] He then proceeds to state that the *jiha* (direction) of God is predicated as *ʿuluww* (high, lofty), *mustawi ʿalā al-ʿarsh* (established on the throne). It is not correct to describe God as being in every place but rather it is said that "He is in the heavens upon the throne,"[29] thus affirming the verse "the Most Gracious is established upon the throne."[30] He is

26 The same approach can be seen in the creed of Barbahārī, and Ibn Baṭṭa may have been influenced by him. See Henri Laoust, *La profession de foi d'Ibn Baṭṭa* (Damascus: Instituit Francais De Damas, 1958).

27 Qur'ān 112, Qur'ān 42:11.

28 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 101.

29 Ibid. 104.

30 Qur'ān 20:5. Here *istiwā'/mustawi*^{n} has been translated as "established" as found in many English translations of the Qur'ān. The word has a variety of meanings, including "being even" or "being equal", "to become straight", "to be firm" or "to be steady", "to advance towards something", and "to become complete" or "ready" (e.g. intellectually). See William

adamant that one not metaphorically interpret (*ta'wīl*) this *istiwā'*, whether to give it a meaning of exaltedness (*'uluww*) and loftiness (*rif'a*) or of conquering (*istīlā'*) and triumph (*ghalaba*). The former he claims is the position held by the 'Ash'arites and the latter by the Mu'tazilīs. Contrariwise one must not believe the *istiwā'* to mean sitting or touching in any way, and this position is attributed to the anthropomorphists and the Karrāmiyya.[31] Aside from the above Qur'ānic verse, Jīlānī cites other verses, as well as a few *ḥadīths* that give him the basis to state the above assertions about God.[32] The idea that one may not make any metaphorical interpretation of these verses is based on the fact that there is no precedence for it and it was not something that was done by the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the first three generations after the Prophet) or by the people of Ḥadīth. He cites a report from Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet, stating that "the *istiwā'* is not unknown, its modality cannot be conceived by the mind (*ghayr ma'qūl*), belief in it is obligatory while its denial (*juḥūd*) is disbelief."[33]

Jīlānī's point here concerns the wider methodology that is to be adhered to when dealing with knowledge of the divine. Nothing can be said about God except for what is found in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and furthermore one is not to move away from the language that is used in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. He thus affirms through Qur'ān verses and *ḥadīths* that God has a face and two hands, that both his hands are right hands and that He planted the Garden of Eden and the tree of Tūbā with His hands as well as writing the Torah with them.[34] The language used is clearly understood; it should not be metaphorically interpreted, for that would lead to a negation of what is found in the text (*ta'ṭīl*) and neither is one to understand it with a likening to any of His creation (*tashbīh*). Jīlānī relates some sayings of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal to make his point:

> The attributes of God are taken as they come (i.e. in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth), without likening (*tashbīh*) or negation (*ta'ṭīl*).

Lane, *An Arabic English Lexicon* (2; London: Williams and Norgate, 1863) 1477–1478. The issue here is about how this Qur'ānic phrase is to be understood theologically.

31 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 104. On the Karrāmiyya see, Ahmad Muhammad El-Galli, *The History and Doctrines of the Karrāmiyya Sect with Special reference to al-Rāzī's Criticism*, (University of Edinburgh, 1970), Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin Clark (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

32 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 104. Specifically Quran verses 25:59 and 35:10.

33 Ibid. Ibn Ḥajar in his Fatḥ al-Bārī quotes the *ḥadīth* as being: "his *istiwā'* is not unknown and its modality is inconceivable in the mind; one does not ask 'how' about Him, 'how' does not apply to Him."

34 Ibid. 102–103.

> I am not one for *kalam* and I don't view any statement to have any say in this matter except for that which is to be found in the Qurʾān or in a *ḥadīth* from the Prophet, his companions or the followers (*tābiʿīn*). As for anything other than this, then talk concerning it is not praiseworthy. One does not ask 'how' or 'why' except if one is a doubter.
>
> We believe that God is upon the throne, however He wishes and as He wishes, without any description that anybody could describe Him with, or any definition or limitation that anybody could place on Him.[35]

When it comes to descriptions of God, one merely repeats verbatim what is in the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. Thus in describing Jīlānī's position it may be problematic to even translate terms such as *istiwā'* into English for there can be no exact synonym. The 'how' of the *istiwā'* or for that matter, the explanation of any of the attributes of God are to be left to the knowledge of God. One can give no explanation of the attributes except to recite or read the relevant verses or *ḥadīths*, for this is something from the unseen (*ghayb*). The righteous servant believes in these attributes without asking questions, for the matter is beyond the ken of the human intellect.[36]

This methodology is adhered to with regard to all the divine attributes, whether it is the *nuzūl* (descent), *ṣuʿūd* (ascent), *yad* (hand) or *aṣābiʿ* (fingers) of God. Jīlānī also provides answers to those that may have a problem in accepting this by quoting earlier famous personalities such as Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyād, who said "if somebody says that they cannot believe in a God that descends, then one should answer them with, 'I believe in a God that does as He wishes,'" and Isḥāq Ibn Rāhawayh who was asked concerning *ḥadīths* that he had narrated which mentioned God as descending and ascending, and whether this meant that God moved about?[37] Isḥāq Ibn Rāhawayh asked back, "would you say that God has the ability to descend and ascend and yet not move?" The questioner assented and Isḥāq continued, "so why would you deny it? (i.e. deny the ascending and descending)."[38]

The attributes are derived from God's names and he has ninety-nine of them, a fact that is based upon a *ḥadīth*. These names can all also be found in the

35 Ibid. 104–105.

36 Ibid. 105.

37 Ibid. 107.

38 Ibid. These particular remarks are perhaps aimed at the Muʿtazila who in their insistence on God's uniqueness denied that these traditions could hold any literal meaning in any way, but rather necessarily needed to be metaphorically interpreted, see for example, ʿAbd al-Jabbar Ibn Ahmad, *Sharh al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Wahba, 1965) 229–230.

Qurʾān and Jīlānī lists them chapter by chapter. However he does quote two other views, that God has three hundred and sixty names, ascribed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) via Abū Bakr al-Naqqāsh (d. 351/962), and that God has a hundred and fourteen names from an anonymous source and concludes that this must be because they have decided to include names that recur in the Qurʾān within their count.[39]

2.1 *Comparison*

Ibn Baṭṭa states that all of God's attributes must be accepted, and then proceeds to list some of them but puts them forth in a simple manner without recourse to much clarification. He states that "God is wise, knowledgeable, mighty, powerful … takes, gives, and is upon His throne distinct from His creation, He gives life and death, enriches and impoverishes, He gets angry and gets pleased, He talks, laughs and does not require sleep …"[40] The list of attributes are not commented upon in any way save a brief point at the end where he states that "anybody denying, rejecting or having any doubt in them … has forged the gravest of lies against God and His messenger, and that God and His messenger are free of such persons …"[41] Further on in the text we find him bringing up the matter of *ḥādīths*, whose understanding or acceptance might be problematic for some people. However we are to accept these *ḥadīths* without asking 'how' or 'why.' *Ḥadīths* that talk about God descending at a particular time or being established upon the throne are not to be compared with anything and then argued about rationally, nor is it possible to fully comprehend them, for this is beyond the reason (*ʿaql*) of the human, and it is a matter that is from the unseen (*ghayb*). One resorts to the fact that God has the power to do as He wishes and accepts the statements as they are.[42] Ibn Baṭṭā then, does not delve into any sort of rational argument in explaining how the attributes are to be taken, except upholding what is often referred to as the *bilā kayf* position. Having in a previous section given *ḥadīths* and Qurʾān verses from where the list of attributes are derived, he puts down that which should be read, believed in, and accepted without question and in a simple manner. Ibn Baṭṭā then, does not give rational arguments to support his stated doctrines, as does Jīlānī, and nor does he spend as much time clarifying the methodology to be observed when dealing with the attributes.

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39 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 114–115.

40 Ibn Baṭṭa, *Kitāb Sharḥ wa al-Ibāna ʿalā Uṣūl al-Sunna wa al-Diyāna* 51.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid. 56.

For Ashʿarī, the attributes of God are to be taken "*bilā kayf*," (without modality) or without asking 'how', and accepted in the way that He said them.[43] "God has a face, two hands, sight and hearing." Verses are quoted—usually more than one—in support of each attribute. As for God's hands, Ashʿarī writes that God has two hands, which is proved using a verse, "… both His hands are spread out …"[44] The interpretation which is ascribed to the Jahmiyya, that God's 'two hands' could mean 'two graces,' is rejected, firstly because the Arabic language does not allow such a meaning and therefore such an interpretation, and secondly because the plural of *yad* in the Qurʾān is *ayd* and not *ayādī*, the latter allowing the meaning of *niʿma* (grace or favour).[45] Another interpretation that 'His hands' refer to 'His powers' is taken from the verse "and the heaven with Our hands (*ayd*) We have built it up" where *ayd* is understood as *quwwa* (power). This is also rejected through rational arguments, such as the plural of *yad* when meaning 'hand' being *ayd*, as in the case of the verse in question, while the plural of *yad* when meaning 'power' being *āyād*, and as stated above, the plural of *yad* when meaning 'grace' being *ayādī*. Further arguments are given against the idea that *yad* could mean anything other than 'hand,' such as Adam being created with God's hand, and that being a difference between him and Iblīs, whereas if it had meant 'power', then God having also created Iblīs through His power could have had no reason for preferring Adam over Iblīs nor would Iblīs have been told: "What prevents you from prostrating yourself to the one I have created from my own hands," for that would not have been a defining characteristic, God having created everything by His power.[46]

As for the *istiwā'*, then God's being established on the throne does not mean that He has power over things; the *istīwā'* is not power (*qudra*). This view is attributed to the Muʿtazlīs in addition to the opposing view that God is in fact in every place. It is argued that this is an absurdity, for how could it be that God is over waste and gardens etc. The throne is above the heavens, which is proven by various *ḥadīths* such as the one that refers to the descent of God to the low-

43 Richard Frank argues that when Ashʿarī talks of *bilā kayf* in the *Ibāna*, he means something different to the traditionalists who use this term, and something that matches his arguments in other works where he accepts anthropomorphic traditions or verses about God as *bilā takyīf*. Frank, *Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ashʿarī* 175–177. However the two phrases are not the same—even if there is only a difference in form—and there is also the paragraph in the *Ibāna* following this statement of his to contend with. That seems to be completely traditionalist, both in word and spirit—some of which is mentioned above. Nevertheless it is an interesting point and something to keep in mind when reading this section.

44 Qurʾān 5:64.

45 al-Ashʿrī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* 126–129.

46 Qurʾān 38:75. Ibid. 130–132.

est heaven in the last third of every night. A rational argument is used but only in refuting the view that God is in every place for if He were in every place then that would mean that He were above his creation as well as below His creation and that would mean that He is above what He is under and under what He is above, which is an absurdity.[47] However all the proofs given that affirm the view that God is upon the throne are either verses from the Qurʾān or *ḥadīths*.

Ashʿarī thus presents the knowledge of God as coming from an acceptance of the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. There is plenty of rational argumentation but it is only used in deconstructing the positions of opponents. The doctrines of the '*ahl al-haqq*' that he puts forward are all proven only through the citation of verses and *ḥadīths*.

Juwaynī in his *Irshād* writes that the attributes of God such as His hands, eyes and face should be interpreted (*taʾwīl*). For him they are based on hearing (*samʿ*) (i.e. tradition) rather than by use of rational proofs. Thus the hand (*yad*) is interpreted as power (*quwwa*), the eyes (*ʿaynayn*) as vision (*baṣr*), and the face (*wajh*) as existence (*wujūd*).[48] An interesting feature here is that Juwaynī argues against Ashʿarī's proof that uses the Qurʾānic statement that Adam was special because God created him with His hands. One is also to do *taʾwīl* with the verses and *ḥadīths* that describe God as established (*istiwāʾ*) coming (*majīʾ*) and descending (*nuzūl*). The *istiwāʾ* is interpreted as domination (*qahr*), triumph (*ghalaba*) and exaltedness (*ʿuluww*).[49] It is interesting to note that Juwaynī uses *qahr* and *ghalaba*, which Jīlānī believes to be the Muʿtazilī interpretation.

2.2 *Summary*

Jīlānī, Ibn Baṭṭa and Ashʿarī all hold a position that is sometimes referred to as the *bilā kayf* position: accepting reports that contain or are about God's attributes without delving into an explanation of them. Both Jīlānī and Ibn Baṭṭa argue that the human mind cannot rationally comprehend these attributes and that they are a matter of the unseen. Ashʿarī uses rational arguments to counter attempted interpretations of these attributes, while Juwaynī on the other hand does just that, and not only interprets each of the attributes metaphorically, but believes that it is the correct thing to do. However they are all in agreement on the fact that the attributes are taken from Qurʾān verses and *ḥadīths*, and not deduced by rational logic.

47 Ibid. 105–119.

48 ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjī, 1950) 155–159.

49 ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī, *Textes Apologétiques de Guwaynī: Shifāʾ al-Jalīl fī al-Tabdīl and Lumaʿ fī Qawāʿid Ahl al-Sunna*, trans. Michel Allard (Beirut: Dar El-Machreq, 1966) 151.

3 *Ṣūra* of Ādam

Jīlānī writes that one must believe that "God created Adam with His hands in his image (*ṣūra*)."[50] The idea that God created Ādam in his image was based on a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, which said as much. However a debate broke out in theological circles on what this *ḥadīth* meant exactly. Many theologians could not accept the plain reading of the tradition—that Ādam was made in the image of God—because first and foremost, they could not accept that God had an image. They tried to make sense of the tradition by interpreting the pronoun 'his' of 'his image' to refer to something other than God. The Ḥanbalī position on this tradition was to generally consider the pronoun to refer to God. However Jīlānī's position on this issue cannot be fully verified because he does not comment on the matter further than stating that one must believe that God created Ādam in his own image. This interpretation would fit in with his general stance on the attributes of God and how one is to approach traditions but this can only be speculated and not confirmed.

3.1 *Comparison*

Ibn Baṭṭa writes that one should not uglify the face because God created Ādam in his image. The conclusion that is drawn from the image shows clearly that Ibn Baṭṭā understood the pronoun 'his' in 'his image' to refer back to God. He follows this statement up by referring the reader to the *ḥadīth* where the Prophet saw his lord in 'such and such' a form. Again we are told not to question the *ḥadīth* and ask how this can be or why but instead to accept it, for it is within the power of God to do anything.[51] There cannot be any doubt then that Ibn Baṭṭa interprets this *ḥadīth* as it seems on first appearance.

Ashʿarī does not cite or comment on this specific *ḥadīth*.

Juwaynī is of the opinion that the pronoun refers to something other than God. In his *Irshād* he puts the *ḥadīth* in a context, as a statement resulting from a situation where a man struck his slave on the face and was told by the Prophet not to do it because God created Ādam in his image, i.e. created Ādam in the image of the slave. In this instance the pronoun is seen as referring to the slave. However, Juwaynī also gave another interpretation of the *ḥadīth* and one which was very often used, where the pronoun refers back to Ādam himself and thus giving the meaning that God created Ādam in Ādam's image.[52]

50 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 103.

51 Ibn Baṭṭa, *Kitāb Sharḥ wa al-Ibāna ʿalā Uṣūl al-Sunna wa al-Diyāna* 56–57.

52 al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād* 163–164.

3.2 *Summary*

It would seem that the *ḥadīths* on the *ṣūra* of Ādam are accepted by all, but that Ibn Baṭṭa and Juwaynī are on opposite sides as to the reference of the pronoun 'his' in 'his image', Ibn Baṭṭa believing it to refer to God and Juwaynī to Ādam. Jīlānī is not clear on this particular issue of the pronoun and so we only know he called for belief in this *ḥadīth* but not exactly how, and perhaps to him that issue was unimportant.

4 The Status of the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān, being *kalām Allāh* (the speech of God), is not-created, whether it is read, recited or written. It comes from God and to Him it returns. It is an attribute of his essence. If one alleges that it is created then one becomes a disbeliever. Even if one were to claim that one's *lafẓ* (utterance) were created (i.e. *lafẓī bi al-Qur'ān makhlūq*), it would make one a disbeliever.[53] Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal is quoted again in corroboration:

> Imām Aḥmad was asked concerning one who says: 'my utterance of the Qur'ān is created,' and he replied: 'he has disbelieved' (lit. *kafara*). He also said concerning anyone that says that the Qur'ān is the speech of Allāh and not created but that the recitation (*tilāwa*) is created, or that our utterances (*alfāẓunā*) of the Qur'ān are created, that they are a disbeliever.[54]

The majority of the supporting evidence provided by Jīlānī for the Qur'ān not-created principle is through reports from the 'pious predecessors' and verses from the Qur'ān such as, 'if one of the idolaters seeks protection from you then grant it to him so that he may hear the word of God', where the 'word of God' (*kalām Allāh*) is the all important part, for it does not read 'your speech' (*kalāmak*) in reference to the Prophet.[55]

However, there is an interesting rational argument, albeit derived from the Qur'ān, that is given, and it can be found in exactly the same form in Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's *Ibāna*.[56] It is based on verse 7:54: 'His is the creation and

53 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 108.
54 Ibid.
55 Qur'ān 9:6. Ibid.
56 Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ashʿarī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Dīyāna* (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1977) 63–65.

the command' (*alā lahu al-khalqᵘ wa al-amrᵘ*). A distinction is drawn here between the *khalq* and the *amr*. If the *amr* refers to the *kun* (be!), that is the command with which God creates, then this would only result in undue repetition, as if it read 'His are the creation and the creation.' Surely God is above such imperfection.[57] The point of the argument here being that when God creates something, he merely says *kun* (be!), and it is, where the *kun* is taken to be from his speech.[58] Now if the speech of God is created, then it follows that this *kun* of his speech be a created thing also. However, this would imply that the *kun* itself would be subject to a preceding *kun*, which in turn would require a preceding *kun* and so on and so forth, leading to an infinite regress.

The argument in origin can be found in the sayings of Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal, where he cites the above verse as well as "The merciful taught the Qurʾān; created man", where the difference in 'taught the Qurʾān, created man' is highlighted.[59] The second verse is far clearer as a proof, based on a simple reading than the first, and the narration of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal that Ashʿarī gives in his *Ibāna* does not have Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal explain the argument as above, but rather merely quote the two verses and then repeat 'taught the Qurʾān, created man' over and over. However, as the tradition states that "they discoursed about the matter," it could easily have been the case that Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal gave the argument of 7:54, and that the verse was quoted in the tradition while the argument was expected to be known.[60]

An interesting point that Jīlānī mentions in an unrelated section of his work is that Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal accused the one who professes the Qurʾān to be created of unbelief (*kufr*) while accusing the other party—it would seem here that he refers to the one alleging that it is uncreated—of heretical innovation (*bidʿa*).[61] It would appear then that one is in a paradoxical position here lacking an answer to the question on the status of the Qurʾān that will not be condemned. Further to this is the question of how one is to reconcile the stance detailed above of alleging that the Qurʾān is not-created with what we have here. However, what seems to be meant by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal's answer is that the actual question on whether the Qurʾān is created or not is itself an innovation and something new. There are no reports of this question being raised amongst the first few generations of the Muslim community and so the assertion that the Qurʾān is not-created must be viewed as a denial of the belief that

57 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 109.
58 See Qurʾān 36:87 and 2:117.
59 Qurʾān 55:1–3.
60 al-Ashʿrī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* 87–88.
61 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 117–118.

it is created, i.e. one is asserting against it being 'created' and stating in the negative, that it is not 'created.' This is to be distinguished from the positive assertion that the Qur'ān is 'uncreated.'[62] It may seem like semantic pedantry or sophistry but the principle behind the semantics is an important one for the traditionalists. It sticks to the fine line of an attempt to steer clear of giving statements concerning theological matters that do not have a precedent within *ḥadīth* reports and traditions, whether from the Prophet himself or the first few generations of the Muslim community.

Two other theological points follow from the principle that the Qur'ān is not-created, both deriving from the fact that it is made up of intelligible letters and audible sounds: firstly that God must have the attribute of eternal speech, and secondly that the alphabet itself must be not-created. The fact that the Qur'ān must be made up of letters and sounds is argued firstly from commonsense: how would anyone enunciate speech if it were not for these two components; the speech of God being no exception to this; and secondly by providing supporting proofs from the Qur'ān such as, "A.L.M. That is the book" and "Ṭ.Ṣ.M. Those are signs of the book," where these individual letters are shown to be *kalām Allāh* also, and "If the ocean were ink for the words of my lord, the ocean would be exhausted sooner than the words of my lord, even if another (ocean) were brought like it," indicating that the words of God are infinite. Other *ḥadīths* such as "God, all Glory to Him, will gather His servants (on the day of judgement) and will call out to them in a voice that will be heard by those far away as well as those nearby: 'I am the king! I am the Judge!'" or those describing how God spoke to Moses, go to show that the *kalām Allāh* must be a sound (*ṣawt*).

God then has never stopped speaking (*lam yazil mutakallim*^{an}) and His speech is a sound (*ṣawt*), not like the sound of a human but rather as an attribute that befits him, just as His other attributes are confirmed without resemblance to human attributes (*tashbīh*).[63] On the issue of whether God has ever fallen into silence, it is reported that Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal reported that he did not find any evidence to suggest that God had ever fallen into silence. Jīlānī also notes here that the *kalām Allāh* as a sound goes against what is ascribed to the Ashʿarites, that the *kalām Allāh* is actually the eternal semantic meaning of the Qur'ān (*maʿnā qā'im bi nafsihī*). This will be looked at in a little more detail below.

62 Hence the term used here 'not-created' as the translation of *ghayr makhlūq*, which itself can be ambiguous but must be taken to mean not 'created' or 'other than created' rather than 'uncreated.'

63 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 112.

A final point that in a way logically follows from all the above is that the letters of the Arabic alphabet are also not-created whether in regard to the speech of God or that of humans. Interestingly it is pointed out that some of *ahl al-sunna* have claimed that they are pre-eternal in the Qurʾān but created everywhere else, though this is a mistake and not to be considered as the majority opinion of *ahl al-sunna*.[64] A quick repetition of the above argument concerning the *kun!* command of creation is given, except this time the two letters of the word *kun*, 'k' and 'n' are separated and we return to the problem of the infinitely required *kun!* needed to create each separate part of the '*k*' and the '*n*'.

4.1 *Comparison*

On this issue Ibn Baṭṭa makes two points: firstly, that one should have no doubt that the Qurʾān is the speech of God (*kalām Allāh*) and His revelation and that it is not-created in whichever form it may exist, whether written or recited, engraved on tablets or in book form, whether in the heavens or on the earth, in every state and in every direction; secondly; whosoever claims that it is created, in reference to even a single letter, or says that it is *kalām Allāh* and then wavers or doubts therein, is a disbeliever. He then proceeds to give three verses of the Qurʾān that in his eyes substantiate all of this.[65] Again with Ibn Baṭṭa there is no elaboration or rational argument given. The point is simply made and then backed up by Qurʾānic verses that are just expected to be understood and to prove the point being made.

Ashʿarī cites Qurʾān verses to support this doctrine, though he repeats some of his arguments a few times within the same section. Unlike the section on the attributes of God, he does not just use verses to hold up the doctrine but rather uses the verses as foundational bases for various arguments. One reason for this is the lack of any verses or *ḥadīths* that clearly state the Qurʾān to be not-created. As we saw above, when Jīlānī quoted Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal as saying that the question itself was an innovation, it was because it was an issue that did not arise in the first three generation of Muslims, and so there was a lack of clear cut material from that period, in distinction to the situation on some of the other disputed doctrines such as the attributes of God. We thus get a situation where verses from the Qurʾān that are in essence completely unrelated to the topic at hand are used as the starting point for an argument. Such an argument—concerning the verse 7:54 given and explained above—was used

64 This term and whom it refers to in the eyes of Jīlānī is discussed below in the section titled 'Names and Nomenclature.'

65 Ibn Baṭṭa, *Kitāb Sharḥ wa al-Ibāna ʿalā Uṣūl al-Sunna wa al-Diyāna* 50. The verses he gives are 85:21, 9:6 and 65:5.

by Jīlānī and the argument is also given by Ashʿarī.[66] However, whereas Jīlānī only used one such argument to try to prove the doctrine that the Qurʾān is not-created, Ashʿarī uses many such arguments. Another difference in this regard is that Ashʿarī's main concern is to prove the single point that the Qurʾān is not-created whereas Jīlānī moves on to give other doctrines stemming from the central one such as the letters of the alphabet being not-created.

After giving the arguments for why the Qurʾān is not-created, Ashʿarī moves to cite traditions in which various scholars' position on the issue are given starting with that of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, which has already been discussed above. This is followed up by many other narrations from prominent scholarly personalities such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, all attesting to the fact that the Qurʾān is not-created, or that anyone who believes such a thing is an infidel.[67] Ashʿarī also puts forward arguments against those who would withhold from giving a position on the status of the Qurʾān by claiming that there are no clear-cut verses or *ḥadīths* on the matter. Such a position, for Ashʿarī, is not tenable and is no different to holding that the Qurʾān is actually created. With regard to one's utterance (*lafẓ*) of the Qurʾān, Ashʿarī argues that one cannot claim to have uttered anything because the Qurʾān is only read, recited, written and memorised. This is therefore just a device used by some people to mask their innovation and he denies such people of belief.[68]

Juwaynī in his *Irshād* argues a very different line to what we have seen so far. He defines speech as that which arises in the soul (*qāʾim bi al-nafs*). That which is heard is only called 'speech' in so much as it is understood to refer back to what actually arises in the soul. It is thus used conventionally and one cannot claim that 'speech' is made up of letters and sounds.[69] The argument given for this begins with the premise—agreed upon by all Muslims according to Juwaynī—that a speaker is one in whom speech occurs. After this first premise he puts forth a second, that God is the agent of the speech of humans but not the speaker of that speech. Now were we to posit that the 'speaker' is to be defined as the one that produces the sound then either humans are not speakers—because God is really the one that produces the sound—or speech is not letters and sounds. However, considering that we know that humans are speakers brings us to the conclusion that speech is not letters and sounds. This latter notion was, according to Juwaynī, held by the Muʿtazilīs, which is one of

66 al-Ashʿrī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* 63–65.
67 Ibid. 87–96.
68 Ibid. 101.
69 al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād* 108.

the things that led them to assert that the Qurʾān was created.[70] Thus we come to the view that speech is not a property of a speaker by action but that rather a speaker is one in whom the speech arises, and as Juwaynī views it, the one in whose soul speech arises.[71]

As regards the recitation of a reciter, this is not the speech of God in as much as we refer to the sounds but rather is something that signifies the eternal speech of God—in the way that speech has now been defined. The same may be said for that which is to be found in copies of the Qurʾān and that which is in the memory of people. Juwaynī also deals in similar fashion with the verse "until he hears the speech of God." The hearing here could be sense perception or comprehension or that which leads to obedience. What is heard by somebody is indeed sounds, but this in itself is not the speech of God. Rather what is understood by the expressions of these sounds is what is actually the speech of God.[72]

4.2 *Summary*

Jīlānī, Ibn Baṭṭa, Ashʿarī and Juwaynī all agree that the Qurʾān is not-created. However, Jīlānī adds to this that the Qurʾān is made up of intelligible letters and audible sounds, that the letters of the Arabic alphabet are not-created, that God's speech is eternal, and that God's speech is a sound (*ṣawt*). Ibn Baṭṭa just states the doctrine without argument, while Jīlānī gives some arguments for the doctrine and Ashʿarī gives many. Juwaynī also gives arguments for the non-createdness of the Qurʾān, but puts forward the case that the Qurʾān is actually the eternal semantic meaning, and it is this that is not-created rather than a person's recitation of it, or the words themselves, or the letters used to make up those words. This is something that Jīlānī specifically argues against and claims are the incorrect doctrines of the Ashʿarites.

5 Faith

Faith (*īmān*) consists of articulation with the tongue, knowledge through experience, and observance of the fundamental religious actions (*qawl bi al-lisān wa maʿrifa bi al-janān wa ʿamal bi al-arkān*). Its definition is: "affirmation; that

70 If speech is letters and sounds, and letters and sounds are preceded and followed by other letters and sounds, then it logically follows that they cannot be eternal but rather must be contingent and therefore created.

71 al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād* 109.

72 Ibid. 133–134.

is knowledge of God and His attributes, as obedience and compliance in all religious matters, obligatory and supererogatory, as well as staying clear of disobedience and defiance." Another 'permitted' definition that is given is: "Faith is the religion (*dīn*), the law (*sharīʿa*) and the Muslim community (*milla*); the religion is what is owed as a debt to be paid back with obedience as well as an avoidance of the forbidden."[73] Faith also increases with obedience to the divine law and decreases with disobedience, something the Ashʿarites, it is claimed, deny. How then is one to get an increase in faith? Firstly one must realise that this cannot be achieved by merely praying and fasting; there are many components that must all be in place. It involves obeying the divine commandments and refraining from indulging in the forbidden, an acceptance of destiny, leaving aside any feeling of opposition or dissatisfaction towards God whether it concerns His actions or His creation, abandoning any doubt concerning one's allotted share (*aqsām*) and provision (*rizq*), having complete trust in Him as well as relying only upon Him, moving away from a belief in one's absolute control over one's affairs, patience in the face of affliction and gratitude with every blessing, realizing the absolute incomparability of God (lit. the truth, *al-ḥaqq*), and discarding any blame towards Him in all matters.[74]

As one can already gauge from the above, when considering whether *islām* is equivalent to *īmān*, it logically follows that it is not.[75] For whilst *īmān* contains all of *islām*, the latter is only one component of *īmān*. *Islām* is defined as "a term that expresses the two articles of faith with serenity, and the five compulsory acts of worship."[76] The separation of *īmān* and *īslām* have a backing in the *Ḥadīth* literature, two of which are given by Ibn Ḥanbal when separating *īmān* and *islām*.[77] The first is a famous tradition where the angel Gabriel in the guise of a man asks the Prophet to give him a description of *īslām* and then *īmān* amongst other things.[78] The second is a tradition where a Bedouin, complaining to the Prophet of having received less than somebody else, is told that the other person is a *muʾmin*. The bedouin answers that he is also a *muʾmin*

73 The Arabic word for religion here, *dīn*, is related through the trilateral route to the verb *dāna yadīnu*, meaning to be indebted or to owe someone something.

74 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 117.

75 *Islām* here being used as a term in its technical sense.

76 *shahādatayn maʿa ṭumaʾnīna al-qalb wa al-ʿībādāt al-khams*. 'With serenity' would seem to refer to the fact that it should not be a forced act. The five *ʿibādāt* seem to refer to the five pillars although the first—the *shahāda*—is already explicitly mentioned. It might be the case that they refer to the four, *ṣalāt*, *zakāt*, *ṣawm*, *hajj* and *jīhād* as the fifth.

77 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 116–117.

78 See Bukhari *hadīth* 4499 and Muslim *hadīth* 8.

and the Prophet asks him in reply: "or are you a *muslim*?"[79] In this vein one can never assert the fact that one is a *mu'min* but rather must add 'if God so wills' (*inshā'allāh*). This goes against the view of the Mu'tazilīs who, it is claimed, make it an obligation to say, 'I am truly a *mu'min* (*haqq*^{an}).'[80]

Finally, on the question of whether *īmān* is created or uncreated, we are referred to the answer that was given by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal; that whosoever believes it to be created is an unbeliever while believing it to be uncreated makes one an innovator (*qad ibtada'a*). Jīlānī explains that Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal charged adherents to the former view with unbelief because the idea that *īmān* is created rests on the prior assumption that the Qur'ān is created, and this, as has already been discussed, is clear unbelief. On the other hand claiming that *īmān* is uncreated is an innovation primarily because it was not something that was said by the Prophet or the first three generations of Muslims and secondly because of the implication that this belief would result in when considered in light of a *ḥadīth*, namely: "*īmān* has more than 70 qualities; the best of which is *lā ilāha illallāh* (i.e. the *kalima*) and the lowest of which is removing something injurious from the road." The act of removing something injurious from the road or for that matter any religious obligations as have been mentioned in the definition of *īmān* above cannot be considered as uncreated. Thus a subtle middle path is traversed whereby one denies that *īmān* is created but at the same time abstains from asserting that it is uncreated.

5.1 *Comparison*

Ibn Baṭṭa deals with faith as the first item in the second section. His definition of faith (*īmān*) is "belief (*tasdīq*) in what He has said and commanded with regard to what He has made obligatory and what He has forbidden," where *taṣdīq* is "articulation with the tongue, knowledge through experience and observance of the fundamental religious actions" (*qawl bi al-lisān wa tasdīq bi al-janān wa 'amal bi al-arkān*). The definition of faith is verbatim the same as that which Jīlānī gives. Ibn Baṭṭā then moves on to affirm that faith increases with good actions and decreases with disobedience to the divine law. He cites Qur'ān verses where there is explicit mention of an increase in *īmān*, and concludes that anything that can increase can also decrease.[81] The next issue he addresses is the necessity of giving the qualification of *inshā'allāh* (if God wills) whenever claiming that one is a believer (*ana mu'min inshā'allāh*). He spends a greater

79 See See Bukhari *ḥadīth* 27 and Muslim *ḥadīth* 150.

80 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 118.

81 Ibn Baṭṭa, *Kitāb Sharḥ wa al-Ibāna 'alā Uṣūl al-Sunna wa al-Diyāna* 48. He gives the following Qur'ān verses: 3:173, 74:31, and 48:04.

time on this issue than does Jīlānī, and gives the reason for such a qualification as being the unknown fact of whether God has accepted one's actions and one's faith as well the unknown factor of whether one will remain a believer in the future and whether one will die as a believer. The qualification however must not be understood to stem from any self doubt in what one says and does. One cannot doubt whether one has prayed or performed the pilgrimage and only qualifies these actions from the view that one cannot be certain that God has accepted these deeds. That such a qualification is justified is based upon this practice being upheld by companions as well as scholars from the past such as Ibn Masʿūd, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ, amongst others, the list of which he claims would fill his entire book![82]

The final point that Ibn Baṭṭā addresses on the issue of faith is that it is not the same as *islām*. He defines *islām* as the community (*milla*) and *īmān* as belief (*taṣdīq*). Thus one can leave the category of *īmān* but still be within *islām*, for one cannot be taken out of *islām* except by associating partners with God (*shirk*) or by refusing to accept that one of the obligatory duties of *islām* is in fact obligatory; one may abandon such practices through laziness and it would not take one out of *islām*.[83] Ibn Baṭṭa, then, covers the same issues as Jīlānī: the definition of faith, that it increases and decreases, that a statement of faith must be qualified, and that *īmān* is not the same as *islām*. The stance on all four issues is exactly the same for both. Jīlānī however covers one other issue, that of whether faith is created or not; an issue that Ibn Baṭṭā is silent on. One can only speculate whether Ibn Baṭṭa left out writing about this on purpose, or whether it was simply not an issue at his time.

Ashʿarī does not write much on the issue of faith and only briefly mentions the points in his initial creedal summa. He writes that *īmān* is testimony and actions (*qawl wa ʿamal*), and that it decreases and increases. In addition *islām* is more extensive than *īmān* and one can leave *īmān* and still be within *islām*.[84] However, in as much as these points are short, they agree fully with Jīlānī.

Juwaynī writes that the *ahl al-ḥadīth* define faith as "*maʿrifa bi al-janān wa iqrār bi al-lisān was aʿmāl bi al-arkān*." His own definition however is that it is just "*taṣdīq bi Allāh*" (true belief in God). Someone might argue for the former definition by giving the *ḥadīth* of faith more than ninety branches (sic), which was used by Jīlānī to show that faith cannot be said to be uncreated.[85] How-

82 Ibid. 48–49.

83 Ibid. 50.

84 al-Ashʿarī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* 26–27.

85 The *ḥadīth* is normally found to read as faith being either 'more than 60 or 70 qualities' (*biḍʿa wa sittūn aw sabʿūn*) or sometimes '77.'

ever this *ḥadīth* is firstly of the *aḥad* category and such *ḥadīths*, if denied with regard to matters of theology, do not constitute disbelief.[86] Secondly the *hadīth* is of the type that ought to be interpreted (*mu'awwal*). The interpretation that is given rests on the fact that the Arabs designate a thing by another thing when it indicates that thing or is part of it for some reason. Now because Juwaynī constitutes faith as a profession of true belief, he cannot then accept it as increasing or decreasing because one man's faith cannot be superior to another's. He acknowledges that a group, which he attributes as that of Qalanisī, maintained that faith did indeed increase with acts of obedience and diminish with acts of disbelief.[87] However Juwaynī finds that a better and more correct understanding of faith is that it does not increase or decrease.[88] Does this then mean that the Prophet had the same level of faith as any other believer? Juwaynī answers in the negative giving the reason that faith can either be present or not present and for most people there are times in their life when faith is not present whereas for the Prophet, faith was present all the time and throughout his life.[89]

5.2 *Summary*

Jīlānī, Ibn Baṭṭa and Ashʿarī agree that faith is testimony and actions while for Juwaynī it is just true belief and actions are not included. The former three also hold faith to increase and decrease, and faith to be more than *islām*. Juwaynī also disagrees here and holds the doctrine that faith does not increase or decrease, his denial being what Jīlānī charged the Ashʿarites with. Finally Jīlānī and Ibn Baṭṭa also agree on a further point, that a statement of faith must be qualified with *inshā'allāh*.

86 These types of *hadīths* were not considered reliable enough to base issues of theology on because there were not enough duplicate chains of narration to confirm the report beyond any doubt. On *āhād ḥadīth* see Binyamin Abrahamov, Necessary Knowledge in Islamic Theology, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (1993), 20–32, Wael B. Hallaq, The Authenticity of Prophetic Ḥadīth: A Pseudo-Problem, *Studia Islamica* 89 (1999), 75–90, James Robson, Traditions From Individuals, *Journal Of Semetic Studies* 9 (1964), 327–340.

87 Often viewed as an early Ashʿarite due to a similar methodology but rejected as such by Ghazālī due to apparently heretical views. See Daniel Gimaret, Cet autre théologien sunnite: Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Qalānisī, *Journal Asiatique* 277/3–4 (1989), 277–262.

88 al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād* 396–400.

89 Ibid. 399–400.

6 *Afʿāl al-ʿIbād*

The issue of *afʿāl al-ʿibād* deals with the question of where to assign the power of one's actions. Who creates the actions, God or the human? In a general sense it deals with the subject of causality and to what extent man is responsible for his actions. If he is not the cause of his actions then can we really assign any responsibility to him?

For Jīlānī, the actions of every human are created by God and 'acquired' by the human. The acquisition element known as *kasb* helps to solve the issue of responsibility. Many verses in the Qur'ān such as "and God has created you and everything you make," and "say, God is the creator of all things," clearly indicate that it is God who creates every action whether it be good or evil, beautiful or ugly, in concordance with his commands or transgressions against his prohibitions.[90] In this respect whether one is nourished through means forbidden (*ḥarām*) or permissible (*ḥalāl*), they are still nourished by God, and when one kills another, that act also is created by God. However the human acquires the act and becomes deserving of reward or punishment as has been promised by God. Therefore just because one is not the creator of one's own actions it does not allow one to claim that one is not then responsible for that action and what may result from it. This was in fact a conclusion drawn by a group Jīlānī refers to as the Jahmiyya who believed that the condition of the human was like that of a tree blowing in the wind.[91] This he views as being in contradiction to what can be found in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*. He quotes a tradition where ʿAli Ibn Abī Ṭālib is asked concerning the actions of humans that merit reward and punishment and whether they are something from God or from the human, to which ʿAli replies that they are the creation (*khalq*) of God but the action (*ʿamal*) of the human.[92]

Jīlānī's view also disagreed with a group referred to by him as the Qadariyya.[93] This name designated those Muslims that believed that they created their own actions. They had as their prime reason in believing this a desire to make sense of man being responsible for his deeds.

A closely associated doctrine is that of believing in predestination (*qadar*) as something that has been finalised from the beginning of time until the day

90 Qur'ān 32:17 and 13:16.

91 Also known as the Mujbira in this context and the name refers to those that were on the determinist side of this debate; see al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Niḥal* 85–91.

92 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 120.

93 On the Qadariyya see Joseph van Ess 'Kadariyya' in *EI*^{2}, v. 4, 368–372, and al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Niḥal* 139–146.

of judgement. One must believe in both destiny's good aspects and bad. Everything has been predestined and one cannot take any precaution against any misfortune that has been written in the inscribed tablet (*lawḥ*).[94] Although this is not much of a contested theological issue, it proves to play an important role in the Sufism of Jīlānī as will become clear below.

6.1 *Comparison*

There is no mention of *afʿāl al-ʿibād* or the relating topic in the text of Ibn Baṭṭā. He does however cover the issue of *qadar*; that one must believe in destiny's good and bad aspects, in that which is bitter and that which is sweet, where the wording he uses is the same as Jīlānī's.[95]

For Ashʿarī, all the actions of humans are created by God because a human does not have the ability to do anything until God causes him to. God allows the believers to believe through His grace and kindness. In the same vein God causes the disbelievers to be misguided; He does not guide them and He does not grace them with belief. He is able to guide them if He wishes, and were He to wish so then they would be guided. Humans do not have any control over any benefit or harm, whether in regard to themselves or others except for what God wishes. In this way what befalls us can never pass us by and what passes us by can never befall us, which brings us onto the issue of *qadar*.[96] Ashʿarī writes that everything is preordained and known to the will of God. This issue is argued out at length with refutations of intricate points of the Muʿtazilīs. What concerns us here is that he argues for the predestination of man before he comes forth into this world. *Ḥadīths* are quoted such as one where it is said that the people of hellfire are currently in the loins of their father and the people of paradise are the same, all evidence to the fact that one's destiny is known to God and preordained.[97]

In his *Irshād*, Juwaynī has a very similar if not equitable view with regard to *kasb*. Actions are created by God and acquired by the human. He argues against the determinists, who claim that having the ability for any action is only used metaphorically for the human by drawing a distinction between a voluntary and necessary action. The latter is of the type such as when a person's hand trembles uncontrollably, while the former, when a person moves his hand to pick something up intentionally. The difference between the two cannot be

94 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 120–122.
95 Ibn Baṭṭa, *Kitāb Sharḥ wa al-Ibāna ʿalā Uṣūl al-Sunna wa al-Diyāna* 52.
96 al-Ashʿrī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* 23–25.
97 Ibid. 220–239.

ascribed to a difference in the motion but rather is clearly in an attribute possessed by the person able to voluntarily move.[98]

However it is known that Juwaynī changed his view by the time he wrote the *Niẓamiyya* within which a different conception of man's actions is given.[99] He seems to have arrived at something closer to the Muʿtazilī idea of man being the actual performer of his deeds rather than a mere acquirer. God gives man a power (*qudra*) to act as he wishes if God so permits; in cases where God does not permit him, he cannot act as he wishes. In this way the acts can be considered to be God's 'acts' in as much as He has allowed them to happen. Furthermore it is not only a negative permission in a preventative sense that must come from God, but rather a positive permission or allowance to use the ability (*qudra*) that God has given. So if a man wants to pray, it is not only that he has the ability to pray and so can pray if he wants to because God is not preventing him, but rather that God must also will him to pray.[100]

6.2 *Summary*

Ibn Baṭṭa does not comment on this matter but Jīlānī, Ashʿarī and Juwaynī all agree that the actions of a human are created by God and acquired by the person (*kasb*). However Juwaynī in a later text seems to hold a different position, that God gives humans the power to act as they wish, if He so permits. Nevertheless our text for comparison here was the *Irhād* and not the *Niẓamiyya*, and with regards to this text there is clear agreement.[101]

7 Early Muslim History (the Caliphate)

Early Muslim history here refers to the interpretation of the events—especially the civil strife—which occurred after the death of the Prophet, and includes the issue of the imamate and general leadership of the Muslim community.

The starting point for Jīlānī is an unwavering acceptance of all the companions of the Prophet.[102] The best of all communities is the community of

98 al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād* 215–216.

99 ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī, *al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya fī al-Arkān al-Islāmiyya* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Azhariyya, 1992).

100 See Irmeli Perho, Man Chooses his Destiny: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's views on predestination, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 12/1 (2001), 65–66.

101 Sticking to the texts here is significant because a writer can have different theological stances throughout his life as is the case with Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī himself.

102 Scott Lucas argues that this—which he terms 'the collective probity of the *saḥāba*'—is one of the three defining features of Sunnism; the other two being a common methodol-

the Muslims, and from amongst these the best are those that witnessed and believed in the Prophet. From this elite generation are one thousand four hundred persons who gave allegiance to the Prophet under a tree at Hudaybiyya and are thus known as the *ahl al-hudaybiyya*. The best of the *ahl al-hudayiyya* are the three hundred and thirteen men that fought at the Battle of Badr and this is the same number of people that were present in the army of Saul (*Ṭālūt*) that fought against Goliath.[103] The best of these three hundred and thirteen men are the forty men that used to gather at the *Dār al-Khayzurān*, the last man who completed the forty being ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.[104] The best out of these forty are the ten companions who were promised paradise by the Prophet, namely Abū Bakr, ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUthmān Ibn ʿAffān, ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ṭalḥa Ibn ʿUbaydallāh, Zubayr Ibn al-Awwām, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn ʿAwf, Saʿad Ibn Abi Waqqās, Saʿīd Ibn Zubayd and Abū ʿUbayda Ibn al-Jarrāḥ. The best of these men are the first four Caliphs, Abū Bakr, then ʿUmar, then ʿUthmān and then ʿAlī.[105]

However, regardless of the ranking one may not speak ill of any of the Companions. Although the Companions had their differences in both religious and worldly matters, the fact that they witnessed the Prophet gives them a special place within Muslim history. In addition to this is the fact that not only was the Prophet specially chosen by God (being *al-Muṣṭafā*) but that his companions were also chosen by God for him, and thus have a special metaphysical status and importance. In line with the view on *qadar*, it can only have been the case that the best of people were chosen as companions for the best of prophets.

From this starting point we may move to the issue of the Caliphate. For Jīlānī, the first four Caliphs were all righteous rulers, all legitimately appointed and whose tenures were attested to as righteous by a *ḥadīth*, where the Prophet spoke of the mill of Islam turning for thirty five, thirty six or thirty seven years.[106] The 'mill of Islam' is explained by Jīlānī to mean the strength of the

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ogy of Ḥadīth-transmitter criticism, and a common historical vision of the five-generation development of the science of Ḥadīth. See Scott Lucas, *Constructive critics, Hadith literature, and the articulation of Sunni Islam: the legacy of the generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿīn, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

103 313 is a significant number in Muslim thought, being associated with the battles at the end of time where the army of the Mahdī will also have 313. See for example the *ḥadīth* in, Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥākim al-Nīsāpūrī, *al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn fī al-Ḥādīth* (4; Hyderabad Deccan: Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyya, 1915) 431.

104 The *Dār al-Kuzayrān* is more famously known as the *Dār al-Arqam*, and was a very small house where the Prophet and some companions used to gather in the early days of Islam.

105 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 138.

106 Abū Dawūd, Ḥadīth 4254, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Ḥadīth 3699. This is usually taken to be

religion.[107] The Caliphate of Abū Bakr was agreed upon by all the Muhājirūn (immigrants from Mecca) and the Ansār (original residents of Madīna), including ʿAlī and Zubayr. In fact with regards to ʿAlī, two traditions are provided, both of which show that not only was he satisfied with the choice of Abū Bakr, but moreover that he was in complete support of his leadership. The first of them records Abū Bakr, when taking the allegiance as leader (*bayʿa*), standing up and asking the people whether there was anybody who would like to rescind his allegiance. ʿAlī was one of the first to reply to this, saying, "we shall not remove you and nor shall we allow you to resign."[108] In the second tradition ʿAlī, after the Battle of the Camel which took place during his Caliphate, is asked by ʿAbdullāh Ibn Kuwwā' on whether the Prophet had told him anything with regards to 'The Matter' (*al-amr*) (referring to the matter of the Caliphate). ʿAlī replies that he examined the situation and found the prayer (*ṣalah*) to be the foundation of Islam. He was satisfied with the choice of Abū Bakr for the community's worldly affairs just as God and His Prophet was satisfied with him for their religious affairs, and thus he gave 'the matter' to Abū Bakr.[109] Jīlānī also has on trustworthy narrators that ʿAlī was one of the most vehement of the Companions in the defence of the Caliphate of Abū Bakr.

His Caliphate was not only a matter of the free choice of the Muslim community but was also confirmed by indirect suggestion as well as insinuation from the Prophet, as was also the case with the Caliphates of ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿAlī.[110] This was the stance (*madhhab*) of Jīlānī's own imām, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, as well as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and a whole group of the Ḥadīth folk. There is also a *ḥadīth* in which ʿAli claims that the Prophet entrusted him with the information that Abū Bakr would be the first Caliph followed by ʿUmar, then ʿUthmān and then ʿAlī.[111] As ʿUmar was appointed by Abū Bakr, there never arose any question of his legitimacy after Abū Bakr. The Caliphate of ʿUthmān, chosen

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thirty years, the last six months of which are fulifilled by the Caliphate of Ḥasan, the son of ʿAlī before he handed over to Muʿāwiya in the name of peace.

107 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 143.

108 Ibid. 139.

109 Abū Bakr, on orders of the Prophet, led the Muslims in prayer during the Prophet's final illness. Ibid.

110 Ibid. 140. The tradition given is "The Prophet was asked: 'whom shall we make leader after you?' to which the Prophet replied: "If you choose Abū Bakr then you will find him trustworthy, an ascetic with regard to the world (*dunyā*) eager with regard to the afterlife (*ākhira*); if you chose ʿUmar then you will find him strong, trustworthy, not fearing any blame in the work of God; if you chose ʿUthmān then you will find him upright with proof and evidence; if you chose ʿAlī then you will find him a guide, rightly guided," and thus they united upon the choice of Abū Bakr for Caliph."

111 Ibid.

through agreement (*shūrā*) by the six persons left by ʿUmar at his death, was legitimate from start till end.[112] There was never a justifiable reason to blame him for anything, let alone to remove him from his post or even kill him. Thus his assassination was completely illegitimate. As for ʿAlī, he did not initially desire to be Caliph, but accepted after the people told him that they would not find anybody more worthy of it. Again his Caliphate was legitimate from start to finish and those that went against him were rebels, rightly considered by him to be so, and he therefore had the right to fight them. However, from the point of view of Muʿāwiya, Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, they wanted justice for the murderers of ʿUthmān and had a right to call for it as the assassins were within the army of ʿAlī.[113] The Caliphate of Muʿāwiya became legitimate after the death of ʿAlī and after his son Ḥasan made an agreement with Muʿāwiya and handed the Caliphate over to him.

If the companions of the Prophet have a special rank amongst all Muslims in time, then how is one to explain the fighting and disputation that occurred at this time? Jīlānī's stance on the issue is to take the position of his imam, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, who advised abstention in giving any moral judgement. It is not the concern of the generations that follow the Companions to judge their actions, for regardless of what occurred between them in this world, they will be reconciled by God on the day of judgement: "And we shall remove any rancour that may be in their breasts; (they shall be as) brethren, facing each other on raised couches."[114] One should also abstain from comparing the Companions with each other and leave all of this to God. It is better to give each his due and pray for them as God has advised: "And those who came after them say: Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancour towards those who have believed. Our Lord! Thou art indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful." The Prophet also warned of people that would come after him and belittle his companions, advising those that witnessed them not to eat drink or marry into them. He also cursed those people who would curse his companions.[115] Jīlānī also quotes many *ḥadīths* in praise of the Companions in general such as when the Prophet declared, "none who gave me allegiance under the tree (i.e. at Hudaybiyya) will enter the hellfire."[116]

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112 The six being Ṭalḥa, Zubayr, Saʿad, ʿAlī, ʿUthmān and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn ʿAwf.

113 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 142.

114 Qurʾān 15:47.

115 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 144.

116 Ibid. 145.

This section also contains the famous doctrine accepted by many Muslim medieval scholars whereby tyranny is preferred to anarchy. Although this is not explicitly stated by Jīlānī, he does point out that it is an agreed upon doctrine of *ahl al-sunna* that all the leaders of the Muslim community are to be listened to and obeyed and that one must pray behind every one of them, whether he is a just and pious person or a tyrannical and open sinner.[117]

7.1 *Comparison*

Ibn Baṭṭa is much briefer on this topic than Jīlānī. He starts with the basic point that it is best for one not to discuss what happened between the Companions. They may have made mistakes but their mistakes are forgiven by God. He does not give any specific ranking for the Companions except for saying that one is to love them according to rank from those present at the battle of Badr to those at Hudaybiyya to those present at the battle of Uḥud. Names, however, are not mentioned except for that of Muʿāwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān who became Caliph after ʿAlī, and ʿĀ'isha who was the wife of the Prophet. He reports a *ḥadīth* where the Prophet tells Ibn ʿUmar, amongst other companions, that Muʿāwiya will enter paradise. As for ʿĀ'isha, then one must believe that she was righteous and of the highest rank, the mother of believers in this world and the next, and that anybody who had doubt in this, or believed otherwise was devoid of any *īmān*.[118]

Ashʿarī writes that it is necessary to love the companions of the Prophet because they were specifically chosen by God to accompany him. The imam after the Prophet is Abū Bakr followed by ʿUmar then ʿUthman and then ʿAlī. These four are beyond comparison with any other Companion and their caliphates are described as 'prophetic' (*khilāfa al-nubuwwa*). In addition to this they are, as Caliphs, rightly guided (*rāshidūn*) and divinely guided (*mahdiyyūn*). One is to avoid what was disputed amongst the Companions and affirm paradise for the ten particular Companions that were promised it.[119] These doctrines in themselves are in agreement with what Jīlānī said on the topic; an affirmation of the caliphates of the first four Caliphs as being legitimate and agreed upon by the community, refraining from giving moral judgment on the historical disputes of the period and holding all the companions in high esteem.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibn Baṭṭa, *Kitāb Sharḥ wa al-Ibāna ʿalā Uṣūl al-Sunna wa al-Diyāna* 63–66.

119 al-Ashʿrī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* 28–29.

However Ashʿarī sets apart a section to try to argue that the order of the four Caliphs was correct and justified and specifically that Abū Bakr was designated rather than just chosen through agreement. This is supported by interpreting verses of the Qurʾān that talk about certain Bedouin Arabs that lagged behind the Prophet at Hudaybiyya but afterwards wanted to join his army for the campaign at Khaybar. The Qurʾān stated that they would not be allowed to fight with the Prophet, but that in future they would be summoned to fight a people of great prowess, and that in such a case they should not turn back from the call of the one summoning them.[120] Ashʿarī then speculates that the people to be fought were either the Persians, Byzantines or the tribe of Yamāma all of whom Abū Bakr fought. Thus his caliphate is attested to as he is confirmed as the one who summoned these Arabs. Another argument used is that there was unanimous consensus (*ijmāʿ*) on the leadership of Abū Bakr and it is not possible to argue that the expressed agreement of everybody could hide the unspoken private opinions of certain individuals to the contrary. Private unexpressed opinions cannot be considered with regard to *ijmāʿ*, because then such a claim could be made for every occurrence of *ijmāʿ* rendering it useless and meaningless. Furthermore the religion cannot take into account unspoken private opinions but can only consider those that are openly expressed.[121]

Ashʿarī also claims that the first Caliph was by designation of the Prophet (*naṣṣ*) and that this is disputed among the Muslims threeways: that Abū Bakr was the designated, that ʿAlī was the designated (by the Rawāfiḍ), or that ʿAbbās was the designated (by the Rāwandiyya), but that the claim for Abū Bakr was actually fulfilled through consensus and agreement of the Muslims at the time. In this regard Jīlānī talks of insinuation (*naṣṣ khafī*) and suggestion (*ishāra*) in a quote of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal but seems to ultimately point towards the matter being a choice and decision for the Muslims to make, whereas with Ashʿarī there seems to be more of an emphasis of Abū Bakr having been the designated one, and this being the logical reasoning behind why he is the best (*afḍal*) of Muslims after the Prophet.[122]

120 Qurʾān 9:84, 48:15–16.

121 al-Ashʿrī, *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* 252–255.

122 Ibid. 255–257. It is also interesting to note that Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal was asked by his son ʿAbdullāh about who was the best (*afḍal*) of the Companions, to which he replied Abū Bakr, then ʿUmar, then ʿUthmān. His son asked, "and then ʿAlī?" to which Ibn Ḥanbal replied, "O my son, ʿAlī is from the *ahl al-bayt* (family of the Prophet), and nobody can be compared to them." ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*, (Giza: Hijr, n.d.) 219.

Ashʿarī's *Ibāna* also shows agreement with Jīlānī on the issue of praying behind the leader of the Muslims, whether they be pious or open sinners. However a proof is given for this doctrine, that ʿAbdullāh Ibn ʿUmar, a companion, prayed behind Ḥajjāj.[123]

Juwaynī does not comment on the issue.

7.2 *Summary*

Jīlānī, Ibn Baṭṭa and Ashʿarī agree that one has to love all the companions of the Prophet and that one should also refrain from delving into the disputations that occurred amongst them. They all assert that each of the caliphates of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿAlī were legitimate from start to end, but whereas Ashʿarī argues that the initial caliphate of Abū Bakr was designated through the Qurʾān and by the Prophet, Jīlānī views it as a choice through consensus and agreement that was made by the Muslims of the time. Ashʿarī and Jīlānī also agree on another doctrine, that one should pray behind the leader of the Muslims, regardless of whether they are pious or open sinners.

8 Conclusion

Five disputed issues have been considered here; God's attributes, the status of the Qurʾān, faith, human actions, and the caliphate. Using Ibn Baṭṭa and Ashʿarī as calibration, it has been shown that on each of these issues there has been congruence between what Jīlānī wrote and what these authors who preceded him wrote. Jīlānī's views—as might be expected—seem to be in agreement with other Ḥanbalīs that precede him. However there are some interesting differences that exist with regard to the presentation of these three works.

Jilānī quotes Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal often and at length unlike either Ibn Baṭṭa or Ashʿarī. This can be understood by considering Ibn Baṭṭā to be aiming for his work to be a creed for all Muslims with the intentional attempt at keeping anything that may seem partisan to a particular school (*madhhab*) at bay. Ashʿarī, although making clear at the start that his work takes as the basis for each doctrine the view of Ibn Ḥanbal, then cites him only once or twice in the whole book. This can most probably be explained by Ashʿarī wanting to put forth some

123 Ibid. 30, Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf was a governor of the Umayyad Caliphs ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Marwān and Walīd Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, and was viewed as an extremely tyrannical ruler who besieged the city of Mecca, causing much damage and bloodshed. See Albert Dietrich, al-Ḥadjdjādj b. Yūsuf, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 3; Leiden: Brill, 1987–) 39.

rational and textual proofs for these views, perhaps considering quoting Ibn Ḥanbal to be superfluous to his aim.

Jīlānī also delves into explanations and proofs for creedal points far more than Ibn Baṭṭā—who in fact rarely does so if at all—but much less than Ashʿarī. He usually states the case as he sees it and cites Qurʿān verses, *ḥadīths* and opinions of scholars (the scholars he cites are evaluated below), mostly expecting comprehension without him having to give commentary. He thus usually ends up giving little explanation of his own, although does not shirk from giving arguments if he thinks it necessary. This can be seen most clearly with the issue of the status of the Qurʾān. Again this difference seems to come from Ibn Baṭṭā wanting his text to be a simple credo for the general Muslims rather than something to persuade the scholars, while Ashʿarī seems to be writing to defend this creed most specifically against Muʿtazlīs but also against other groups, and therefore has to appeal somewhat to their methodology. Jīlānī also freely criticises the views of opponents—something that Ibn Baṭṭā does not do.

It has also been shown that wherever Jīlānī cites the opinion of the Ashʿarites it agrees with what can be found to be the opinion of Juwaynī in his *Irshād*. It seems safe to assume at this point, that it was these views as exemplified by Juwaynī that had become popularly known as Ashʿarite by this time, and were what Jīlānī was referring to when mentioning this group.

Is there any evidence here then, that Jīlānī read Ibn Baṭṭa or Ashʿarī or Juwaynī? There are certainly no clear reasons to reject the idea that Jīlānī was aware and had read or even studied any of these texts. However, with regard to Ibn Baṭṭa and Ashʿarī, the similarities and sometimes exact renditions between their texts and Jīlānī's do not necessitate that he had read them or even show that he had come across them, because as we saw with the case of the use of Qurʾān 7:54 as a proof ("His is the creation and the command"), many of the definitions, arguments and reasoning used by these three originated with scholars that predated both Ibn Baṭṭa and Ashʿarī. They could thus be viewed as the hallmarks of the traditionalists rather than being definite evidence of any writer being specifically aware of a previous one.

With regards to Juwaynī, the situation is even more tenuous. There are of course doctrines that Juwaynī argues for and which Jīlānī identifies as Ashʿarite, but there is nothing concrete to allow one to be certain of the fact that Jīlānī had read the *Irshād*. In all three cases then, we may only assume that the likelihood was for Jīlānī to have at least come across these texts.

CHAPTER 5

Theology II: Names and Nomenclature

This chapter analyses the names and occurrences of persons and groups whom Jīlānī refers to in his theology section of the *Ghunya*. The names that are evaluated here are persons other than the companions of the Prophet and names that merely appear in a chain of transmission (*isnād*) for any given *ḥadīth*. They are persons from whom Jīlānī is taking an opinion, rather than just a report.

1 Names

Altogether fourteen different persons are mentioned, and five of them more than once. The most oft quoted person is Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal whose opinion is given fourteen times, nearly five times more than anyone else. Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyād (d. 187/803) and Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna (d. 198/813) are both mentioned three times while Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) are mentioned twice each. The remaining nine people are all mentioned only once. They are Abū Bakr Ibn Sulaymān (d. n.d.), Muḥammad Ibn Kaʿab (d. 118/736), Shurayk Ibn Abdullāh (d. 177/793), Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfʿī (d. 204/820), Yaḥyā Ibn Maʿīn (d. 233/848), Isḥāq Ibn Rāhawayh (d. 238/852), ʿAbdullah Ibn Aḥmad (d. 290/903), Muḥammad Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923), and Abū Ayyūb al-Sijistānī (d. 131/748).

The first thing that one notices is the importance given to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, which can be seen by the amount of times he is quoted in relation to the rest. This does not just seem to stem from the fact that Jīlānī followed Ibn Ḥanbal's school of law but rather from the esteemed position that Ibn Ḥanbal was held in amongst the traditionalists. It is all the more interesting once one takes into account the fact that all the other persons apart from Ibn Khuzayma and Ibn Ḥanbal's son ʿAbdullāh were either his contemporaries or his predecessors.

The second most obvious observation about these names is that they were all scholars connected with the study and transmission of Ḥadīth. In fact at least seven of the persons (Ibn ʿUyayna, Ibn Kaʿab, Shurayk, Ibn Maʿīn, Ibn Rāhawayh, ʿAbdullāh Ibn Aḥmad, and Ibn Khuzayma) are known to posterity solely due to their work with Ḥadīth. To this list could be added Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Sulaymān and Sijistānī who are known primarily due to their contribution to Ḥadīth. Ibn Ḥanbal during his lifetime was also known primarily with regard to

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his contribution to the study of Ḥadīth, so much so, that more than half a century after his death, someone like Ṭabarī could claim that Ibn Ḥanbal was solely a Ḥadīth scholar (*muḥaddith*) and not a jurist (*faqīh*). The four names that do not primarily present themselves as being scholars of Ḥadīth are Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, who is famous as a polymathic scholar amongst all Muslims, (and the sixth imam for the Twelver Shīʿīs), Ibn Iyāḍ, usually viewed as an ascetic and early Sufi, Shāfʿī. a supreme jurist who is often credited with having syncretised the more rational approach to the law with the Ḥadīth orientated approach, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, a successor (*tābʿī*) and early Sufi ascetic. However it must be stressed that all four of them were still heavily involved in transmitting Ḥadīth. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq narrated many *ḥadīth*s from ʿUrwa, ʿAṭāʾ, Zuhrī and Nāfiʿ and some of the famous Ḥadīth scholars that narrated off him include Sufyan al-Thawrī and Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna (who was one of the teachers of Ibn Ḥanbal), as well as the founders of two of the four major Sunni law schools, Mālik Ibn Anas and Abū Ḥanīfa. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī narrated many *ḥadīth*s from the Companion (*ṣahābī*) Anas Ibn Mālik, while Shāfʿī could not have been the successful jurist without first being a scholar of Ḥadīth.

So far then, we can deduce that with regard to the sphere of theology, Jīlānī viewed the opinions of the Ḥadīth scholars as an unrivalled authority, with Ibn Ḥanbal standing out as the leader of a prestigious pack in this regard and the one most relied upon. What then of the spread of opinions of these persons in relation to specific theological issues?

2 The Topics

Although sixteen different topics are discussed within the theology, only five of them make mention of the opinions of the above while a sixth, which discusses the nature of the night journey of the Prophet (*al-isrāʾ wa al-miʿrāj*) and whether the event was merely a vision or occurred in actual reality, has a single opinion from Abū Bakr Ibn Sulaymān.[1] The table below shows these particular five topics along with the names of those cited and the frequency of their mention.

Four of the five topics correspond with those that were chosen to be expounded upon earlier in this chapter: God's attributes, the status of the Qurʾān, faith, and the Caliphate. The fifth topic is one that enumerates the various major and minor sects within Islam. Already then we can see that the top-

1 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2001) 122.

ics of greater conflict—those that were more heavily debated—are the ones where the views of earlier authorities are voiced. Furthermore, out of these five topics the two with the most opinions, God's attributes and the status of the Qur'ān, were two of the major issues that defined the traditionalists' position. On God's attributes we have more than eleven cited opinions, and eight of these are on the methodology of how one should accept the so called 'problematic' traditions which discuss attributes of God that are often considered anthropomorphic. Virtually all the opinions given in this regard are by the famous Ḥadīth scholars, either contemporaries or teachers of Ibn Ḥanbal. The two remaining opinions that are not concerned with the methodology are those that give a varying tradition concerning the number of names of God.

The section on the status of the Qur'ān cites a total of eight opinions, five of them coming from Ibn Ḥanbal. Although the opinion of Ibn Ḥanbal is given at least once in every topic, the five occurrences here make it the most frequent of any topic he is mentioned under. The fact that he is always mentioned at least once can point to a few things. Firstly it shows that a great many pronouncements on theological matters were made by Ibn Ḥanbal as well as recorded and transmitted for it to be possible to find such decisive statements of his across the various topics. This may also help partly explain why he subsequently became the most important figure for the traditionalists. Secondly it indicates Jīlānī's position; that he always wishes to cite the opinion of Ibn Ḥanbal whenever possible due to the fact that he views him as a sort of 'final' authority in theological matters.

With the status of the Qur'ān being the principal theological issue during the lifetime of Ibn Ḥanbal, it is not surprising to discover him appearing here more than anywhere else. This can be viewed in two ways; it comes as a result of him having been questioned upon the matter by many different persons, which would naturally lead to a greater presence and occurrence of his opinions. It is also alludes to the fact that this issue more than any other is where Ibn Ḥanbal's opinion became gospel after he successfully came through the inquisition (*miḥna*) with his integrity intact and his status now unlike that of any other contemporary scholar. Thus in subsequent history, his opinion on this particular issue would not be rejected or questioned (although it may be explained away) by any of the Sunni theological schools, and his statements became a powerful tool in arguing the traditionalist's case.

It was previously highlighted that this point was not discussed by earlier scholars as the issue had not arisen amongst the first few generations of Muslims. It is interesting therefore to find an opinion of Muḥammad Ibn Kaʿab (who died in 118/736 and before the status of the Qur'ān had ever become an issue) being given. However his quote is about how Moses described the speech of

Topic	Name of scholar	Number of opinions
God's Attributes	ʿAbdullāh Ibn Aḥmad	1
	Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal	3
	Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ	1
	Isḥāq Ibn Rāhawayh	1
	Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq	1
	Shurayk Ibn ʿAbdullāh	1
	Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna	2
	Yaḥyā Ibn Maʿīn	1
	Total	**11**
Status of the Qur'ān	Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal	5
	Muḥammad al-Shāfʿī	1
	Muḥammad Ibn Kaʿab	1
	Muḥammad Ibn Khuzayma	1
	Total	**8**
Sects	Abū Ayyūb al-Sijistānī	1
	Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal	1
	Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ	2
	Ḥasan al-Baṣrī	1
	Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna	1
	Total	**6**
Faith	Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal	4
	Total	**4**
The Caliphate	Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal	1
	Ḥāsan al-Baṣrī	1
	Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq	1
	Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna	1
	Total	**4**

God as a sound (*ṣawt*) and is used to confirm the view that the speech of God is something that can be heard.[2] Thus Ibn Kaʿab was not making a statement in order to give a theological position but rather was innocuously making a statement about the speech of God, that in future times would gain a significance and importance probably unbeknown to him. The two other opinions, from Shāfʿī and Ibn Khuzayma, are very different in this regard. Firstly both Shāfʿī and Ibn Khuzayma are either contemporary to Ibn Ḥanbal or posterus to him; it was within the lifetime of Ibn Ḥanbal that the whole issue became amplified. Secondly the opinion of Shāfʿī, that one should not assert that the letters of the Arabic alphabet are created and of Ibn Khuzayma, that the speech of God does not contain silences, were both given with a view to the central debate and the issues surrounding it.[3]

A final interesting point is an opinion given by Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, which interprets a verse of the Qurʾān (48:29) to be alluding, in various parts, to the ten companions promised paradise. The verse reads:

> Muḥammad is the Messenger of God and those who are with him (1) are strong against the unbelievers (2), compassionate amongst each other (3); you will see them bowing and prostrating themselves (in prayer) (4), seeking God's Grace and Good Pleasure (5). On their faces are the traces of prostration (6). This is their similitude in the Torah; and their similitude in the Gospel is like a seed which sends forth its shoot (7), then makes it strong (8); it then becomes thick (9) and stands on its own stem (10) pleasing the sowers (11). That as a result, through them (12) He fills the unbelievers with rage. God has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great Reward.

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq interprets the verse at the various points to refer to Abū Bakr at (1), ʿUmar at (2), ʿUthmān at (3), ʿAlī at (4), Ṭalḥa and Zubayr at (5), Saʿad, Saʿīd, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and Abū ʿUbayda at (6) and the Prophet at (7), the metaphor here being achieved through Abū Bakr at (8), ʿUmar at (9), ʿUthmān at (10), ʿAlī at (11), while (12) refers to the Prophet and his companions.[4] It thus mentions all the ten Companions promised paradise at least once and mentions the four Caliphs twice. It is also interesting that that the first four Caliphs appear in historical order on both occasions. Jīlānī might have thought it especially

2 Ibid. 112.
3 Ibid. 113.
4 Ibid. 143–144.

convincing to mention such an interpretation coming as it does from a figure revered as a great polymath scholar by all, and as the sixth imam by a major branch of the Shīʾīs.

3 The Sects

Jīlānī ends the theological section in the *Ghunya* with a brief discussion of sects (*firaq*), using various narrations of a *ḥadīth* that predicts the Muslims finally ending up divided into either seventy one, seventy two or seventy three sects. He then proceeds to enumerate who he believes the seventy three sects are (he seems himself to rely upon the seventy three version of the tradition). However, he also clarifies that this division did not occur during the time of the Prophet, or that of the four Caliphs, nor while any of the Companions, their followers (*ṭābiʿīn*) or the seven jurists of Madina were alive, but that this only happened after many generations had passed and knowledge of the religion had decreased.[5] This is not to claim that there had not arisen any sects during any of these periods, but rather that the completion of this process whereby a total of seventy three sects would appear and exist, whether simultaneously or asynchronously, could not have occurred until many generations had passed. However, it is not made clear whether the process is assumed to have been completed by the time of Jīlānī. The fact that he then proceeds to detail seventy three sects could lead one to believe that all the sects had appeared by his own lifetime, although the detailing of the seventy three sects is itself based on a ten part division. It could therefore also be interpreted as a claim that all sects, past and present, were to be subsumed under the title of one of these ten divisions:

1. Ahl al-Sunna—which are a single group.
2. Khawārij—divided into fifteen sects.
3. Shīʿa—divided into thirty two sects.
4. Muʿtazila—divided into six sects.
5. Murjiʾa—divided into twelve sects.
6. Mushabbiha—divided into three sects.
7. Jahmiyya—which are a single group.
8. Ḍirāriyya—which are a single group.

5 The seven jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) of Madina were Saʿīd Ibn al-Musayyab (d. 94/712), Abū Bakr al-Makhzūmī (d. 94/712), ʿUrwa (d. 91–95/710–714), Khārija Ibn Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 99/717), ʿUbaydallāh al-Hudhalī (d. 98/716), Sulaymān Ibn Yasār (d. 100/718), and al-Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Bakr (d. 106/724). See Ch Pellat, Fuḳahāʾ al-Madīna al- Sabʿa, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 12; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 310.

9. Najjāriyya—which are a single group.
10. Kullābiyya—which are also a single group.[6]

The correct or orthodox sect from amongst these is the first one, Ahl al-Sunna, which itself is shortened from Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa. The '*sunna*' part of the name refers to "all that the Messenger of God did" (*mā sannahu rasūl Allāh ṣallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) while the '*jamāʿa*' refers to "all that the companions of the Prophet agreed upon during the reign of the first four Caliphs."[7] The names used by the various sects and groups to define themselves and define others seem to play an important role, not only in how any one group recognizes itself but also because it allows one to correctly identify an individual from another group by simply noting what name they use to identify their own group. Thus Jīlānī details the names that six of these ten divisions of groups use to describe Ahl al-Sunna.

The Muʿtazila and Qadariyya refer to them as Mujbira (determinists) because the original issue of contention between them was on the topic of predestination where the Muʿtazila and Qadariyya held a more liberal view on human actions. The Murji'a refer to them as Shikākiyya (doubters) in reference to the fact that they find it imperative to place the exceptional statement of "if God wills" after the statement "I am a believer." The Rāfiḍa refer to them as Nāṣiba (usurpers) because they believe that the imam or leader of the Muslims was destined and chosen and that their right was usurped by others, and logically following, by those that supported these others by accepting them or making an agreement with them. The Jahmiyya and the Najjāriyya refer to them as Mushabbiha (anthropomorphists) because of the contention on how to interpret the *ḥadīth*s and verses that talk of God's anthropomorphic qualities, and because the Ahl al-Sunna affirmed certain of God's attributes that were denied by the former. The Bāṭiniyya (Ismaʿīlis) refer to them as Hashawiyya (rubbish collectors) in light of the fact that they are concerned with collecting and following Ḥadīth.

However in another place Jīlānī explains how one can recognise the different groups of innovation (*ahl al-bidaʿ*) by the condescending names they use for Ahl al-Athar; the Zanādiqa calling them Ḥashawiyya, the Qadariyya calling them Mujbira, the Jahmiyya calling them Mushabbiha, and the Rāfiḍa calling them Nāṣiba. The use of the term Ahl al-Athar here is interesting but for now may be understood as another name for the Ahl al-Sunna; *athar* meaning traditions and reports. The term shall be discussed further below, but first let us note

6 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 156–157.
7 Ibid. 146.

that out of the four groups mentioned in the second list, the first one, Zanādiqa (from singular *zindīq*) is not to be found in the former list. This group used the same name to describe the Ahl al-Sunna as did the Bāṭiniyya, and this alongside the well documented fact that the term *zindīq* was historically used as a name for the Bāṭiniyya would seem to provide very compelling evidence that both names refer to the same group. However, it must also be noted that the term *zindīq*, which comes from the middle Persian *zandiq* or *zendiq*, literally means a free thinker and it seems was originally used to refer to followers of the Manichean religion. It then also came to be used in a more general sense to refer to any heretics whose teaching seemed to have strayed quite far from Islam.[8] Whether identical or disparate, whatever similarity there is between these two groups would seem to revolve around the issue of the group's denying of traditions (*āthār*) whether literally or through annulment by metaphorical interpretation.

After giving these examples of differing names, Jīlānī states that the only correct term for Ahl al-Sunna is Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth. He repeats this in the section where he outlines the ten divisions and seventy three sects, except there he finds that the correct term can be either Aṣḥab al-Ḥadīth or Ahl al-Sunna. We thus end up with three names that Jīlānī identifies with, Ahl al-Sunna, Ahl al-Athar, and Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth, the first name having been made use of thirteen times in the theology, the second four times and the third only twice and in the specific instances just mentioned. The four occurrences of Ahl al-Athar are all within two paragraphs and are used interchangeably with Ahl al-Sunna, in a repeating phrase that describes what the different groups call Ahl al-Sunna or Ahl al-Athar.[9] The use of Ahl al-Sunna in some of the phrases and Ahl al-Athar in others, with no apparent reason for the variance would suggest that the two terms are completely interchangeable, which then raises a question as to why Ahl al-Athar is used at all? And if both names are equivalent in all respects, then why is Ahl al-Sunna used more than three times the amount that Ahl al-Athar is, its usage spread across the entire theology rather than within the short space of two paragraphs?

One of the reasons could be that although both these names existed, Ahl al-Sunna was the name more commonly known and used, and while Ahl al-Athar was still recognised as an equivalent, Jīlānī clearly seemed to prefer the

8 On the Zanādiqa and the term *zindīq* see Melhem Chokr, *Zandaqa et zindiqs en islam au second siècle de l'hégire* (Damascus: Institut francais de Damas, 1993). Francois de Blois, Zindīq, *EI*^{2} (Leiden: Brill) v. 11, 510.

9 "A defining sign of group 'x' is their naming Ahl al-Sunna / Ahl al-Athar with 'y' name" (*'alāmat* 'x' *tasmiyyatuhum fī ahl al-sunna / ahl al-athar* 'y').

use of the former. However, to highlight the fact that Ahl al-Athar was also an acceptable name for the same group, and to show that the two did not have any differing significance, he used them in this interchangeable way and specifically in the section where he was discussing what disparaging and correct names the 'orthodox' are given.

Another reason could be that although the two names are used interchangeably by Jīlānī, they could in fact be seen to have a slightly differing range. Both *athar* and *sunna* refer to traditions establishing practices and custom, the Prophet being the establishing factor in this regard.[10] However *athar* came to have a wider scope than *sunna* as the latter ended up referring only to prophetic practices while the former included under its rubric traditions detailing practices and sayings of the Companions as well, and in fact could sometimes be used exclusively for these types of traditions.[11] In using both names, and by covering the entire activity of collecting traditions as important rather than just those of the Prophet, one places magnitude on the opinions of the Companions and the generation that followed them. This is also highlighted by the longer name of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a which as we have already seen, gives a significant role to the opinions of the Companions during the reign of the first four Caliphs. The idea then does not stray from the reason cited above; to create an awareness of another equally valid name for this group.

Finally, the name Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth can be understood, in this particular context, to be presented as a name given in defence of what was this group was most commonly attacked for; their preoccupation with Ḥadīth. Every disparaging name given to them is either a direct criticism on their use of Ḥadīth, such as the Bāṭiniyya calling them 'rubbish collectors' or is in connection with a contentious issue that relates back to a *ḥadīth*, such as the Qadariyya calling them 'doubters' because of their *ḥadīth* based insistence on the exceptional "… if God wills" requirement in relation to the declarative statement of faith.

All three names revolve around the high position give to the Ḥadīth literature (Ḥadīth here including traditions relating back to the Companions' practices and pronouncements). Their deep involvement with Ḥadīth, collecting, relying upon, and using the Ḥadīth as a complementary source to the

10 It is generally agreed that sometime after Shāf'ī, *sunna* (custom) came to denote *sunna al-nabī* specifically rather than just the *sunna* of the early Muslims or a laudable *sunna* or just any *sunna*, See Gautier Juynboll, 'Sunna' *EI²* (Leiden: Brill) v. 9, 878.

11 For the differing meanings of *sunna* see Yasin Dutton, Sunna, Hadith and Madinan 'amal, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 4 (1993), 1–31, Yasin Dutton, 'Amal v Ḥādīth in Islamic Law the Case of Sadl al-Yadayn (Holding One's Hands by One's Sides) When Doing the Prayer, *Islamic Law and Society* 3/1 (1996), 13–40.

Qurʾān, is what defines how Jīlānī views this group, which he considers to be the orthodox. Furthermore, in his own explanation of the name Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa, it was made clear that—at least in theological principles—the relied upon source after the Qurʾān is the Ḥadīth (of the Prophet) and the reports of the Companions when the Companions are in agreement. In this respect we find specifically in Jīlānī's work an agreement with what Scott Lucas detailed in his study "*Constructive Critics, Hadith Literature, and the Articulation of Sunni Islam*," that the three things that held this group together was a common view and attitude towards early Muslim history, a reliance upon the Ḥadīth literature, and an acceptance of the methodology employed by the Ḥadīth scholars.[12] That study used as its timeframe the era of the great Ḥadīth scholars at the end of the second and start of the third century, but it is interesting to see that we can find all three of these elements present in Jīlānī another two centuries later. The collective probity of the Companions can be clearly seen in Jīlānī's view on the early caliphate alongside his interpretation of the civil strife that took place. The reliance on the Ḥadīth literature defines the entire theology, while an acceptance of the methodology of the Ḥadīth scholars can be seen in the extra reverence given to their reports and opinions.

The place of Ḥadīth in Jīlānī's philosophy will need to be returned to once we have examined the other major element that complements theology and sacred law; his Sufism. What role the Ḥadīth literature plays there will need to analysed in order to give some sort of coherent understanding to his thought as a whole. For the moment we can simply conclude that it plays an absolutely central role in theology.

12 Scott Lucas, *Constructive critics, Hadith literature, and the articulation of Sunni Islam: the legacy of the generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿīn, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). See specifically pp. 371–376 for a concise articulation of his findings.

CHAPTER 6

Sufism 1: Reading the *Ghunya*

Having looked at the theology of Jīlānī in the previous chapter, we must now begin in earnest to understand his thought as a complete system, and thus in the course of attempting to set down this system, the theology just enumerated must be re-evaluated and put in its appropriate place and given its appropriate significance. That will be done in due course, but before we begin to detail this system it is prudent to highlight that we cannot consider this to be in any way merely the "thought" of Jīlānī, for to assume that would be to serve a great injustice to what we have here. Rather, as has been stated, this must be considered more as a system or method for one to reach a goal, something that we can for now vaguely define as ultimate felicity or the realisation of ultimate reality.

It seems that Jīlānī was never interested in writing books or giving speeches that merely gave a description of reality (*ḥaqiqa*) or the lesser realities on the path to ultimate reality, but rather saw his role as being a guide in the achievement of this goal. This would explain a lack of any work that deals specifically with cosmology, as well as the fact that nothing of his is extant that details or gives a description of this reality. Instead what we have are a few works that are intended to help any sincere and genuine seeker of this goal to achieve his or her aim. The clearest indicator of this is the content of his book the *Ghunya*. In the introduction to this book Jīlānī clarifies what it is about and why it was written: A friend of his persisted in requesting him to compose a book that would clarify the right way to proceed on the path to God, in obeying the commands of the *sharīʿa* and staying clear of that which it prohibits. This friend wanted to gain inner knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of the correct behaviour with regard to the *sharīʿa*, its obligatory acts (*farāʾiḍ*) and its recommended acts (*sunan*), knowledge of the Creator through verses and signs, learning some lessons from the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth through discourses, and taking example from the lives of the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*). Jīlānī found this friend to have a true and sincere intention, this information emanating, as Jīlānī puts it, from an opening of the *ghayb* (unseen), and so he rushed to compose a relevant text and named it "The Indispensable for the Seeker of the Path to the Truth (God)".[1]

It is interesting to note that in the very introduction to the book Jīlānī indicates that he is subject to information from the unseen and that his relationship

1 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2001) 11–12.

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with the unseen was pivotal even in the composition of this book. Furthermore although not stated by Jīlānī anywhere, we would probably not be wrong in assuming that he believed the contents of the book to have also been subject to information from the unseen. It is to an examination of the contents that we must now turn, but it is not only the contents that are of interest here but moreover the actual structure of the book, which can act as our guide because through it one can gain a clearer picture of the overall system of Jīlānī.

1 The Structure as Guide

The book begins by explaining how one is to enter Islam, and thus begins at the most elementary point of the seeker's journey. He proceeds by giving a very basic description of the prayer (*ṣalāt*), almsgiving (*zakāt*), fasting (*ṣawm*), and the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*). This is all given in a manner that would allow one to carry out these duties without burdening the beginner, yet elucidating the obligatory components (*farḍ*) of each of these from the recommended (*sunan*/*mandūb*) or reprehensible (*makrūh*) ones.[2] He therefore covers the five pillars of Islam in a manner appropriate for someone new to them. He then moves on to *ādāb* which is best translated as behavioural manners, or appropriate behaviour for the different situations of everyday life. In this section he covers a very wide and varying range of topics such as giving greetings to fellow Muslims, eating and drinking, relieving oneself, sleeping, cutting one's nails, and marriage.

Through this section on *ādāb* he elucidates the correct behaviour for everyday conduct, and the importance of this is shown not only by his emphasis of it at the end of the section, but also by the fact that he places the section immediately after the basic exposition of the five pillars, as if to say that after taking upon oneself the obligatory acts of Islam, the next most important thing one should do is to begin to perfect one's *ādāb* by putting into practice what he gives there. He also writes that one must stick to this *ādāb* at all times and in all conditions, and gives statements such as the advice of the second Caliph, ʿUmar to learn *adab* before other knowledge, in order to show its utmost importance.[3] His view of *ādāb*, in relation to the rest of Islam such as the pillars and faith (*īmān*), is that it protects these, so long as one sticks to it. However if

2 A distinction must here be understood between acts that are obligatory upon a Muslim (such as prayer or fasting), and the components or elements that make up each of these acts which themselves might be obligatory—such that leaving them out would invalidate the act—or recommended or permissible—such that leaving them out would not invalidate the act.

3 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 98.

one neglects his or her *ādāb*, then one can find very quickly that one begins to neglect the recommended things (*sunan*), and then the obligatory things (*farḍ*), after which one's sincerity (*ikhlās*) becomes in danger and finally one's certitude (*yaqīn*).[4]

Everything that Jīlānī has written about until this point, he describes as "the external light of *islām*," which cover the constituent elements of being a Muslim and which allows the practitioner to gain some direct knowledge of what is necessary; the five pillars making one a Muslim, and the *ādāb* making one a follower of the *sunna*. The next section (beginning with theology) is described as "the internal light of *īmān*," and allows one to gain the reality of direct knowledge of the Creator.[5]

We have already examined the theology, and may merely highlight here that its placement after the five pillars and before the section on Sufism (which constitutes the final section in the book) fits in, with regard to order, with the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel on the description of *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*.[6] The theology section is followed by a section containing fourteen discourses that extract lessons from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Four of these are on Qur'ān verses—on the *taʿawwudh* (taking refuge in God from Satan), on the *basmalah* (taking God's name), on repentance (*tawba*) and on piety (*taqwā*)—and the remaining ten are on the merits of various months and days.[7] However, all fourteen of these take Qur'ān verses as their starting point and are thus backed up by indisputable scripture. The latter ten all being dates have an emphasis on blessed time (*zamān mubārak*), and Jīlānī recommends making the best use of these times.

The section following these discourses is on commendable actions and practices (*faḍā'il al-aʿmāl*), the emphasis here being on specific actions rather than specific time, this perhaps being the reason for their separation. In addition to this, many of these actions are based on *ḥadīths* rather than Qur'ān verses, some of which were deemed to be of less than sound quality by later Ḥadīth scholars. Thus while the discourses cannot be argued against in regard to what they teach and recommend, some of these 'commendable actions' could be disputed and disregarded by scholars or persons who are only convinced by

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 In this *ḥadīth*, the angel Gabriel comes as a man to the Prophet with his companions also present, and asks the Prophet to tell him about *islām*, and then *īmān*, and then *iḥsān*, and the Prophet's answers are taken as the definition of these three terms. See also Ibid. 116–117.

7 The *taʿawwudh* consists in saying "I seek refuge in God from Satan, the accursed" (*aʿūdhu billāhi min al-shayṭāni al-rajīm*) and the *basmala* which consists in saying "In the name of God the most gracious the most merciful" (*bismillāhi al-raḥmāni al-raḥīm*).

scripture of sound quality, and this has in fact happened.[8] There are five of these actions: fasting on certain days of the week, fasting generally, praying generally, collective prayers, and night prayers. This section overall then, covers fasting and praying and goes into much greater detail for these two acts than was done at the beginning of the book where just the basics of each were given. This is especially the case with the prayer, and in this section he expounds the recommended, permissible, reprehensible and prohibited elements as well as giving full and detailed descriptions.

The book ends with a final section on Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), which describes the people "who left their desires and became *awliyā'* (saints) and *abdāl* (substitutes)."[9] Jīlānī claims that his intention here is to keep this section short so as not to bore the reader. We will soon see how knowledge of everything that has come previous to this section and action upon it is crucial for the seeker desiring to progress on the Sufi path. The majority of what is written about up until this point can be categorised under the rubric of the *sharīʿa*, something that we will find to be integral to the path; without it there is no Sufism, without it there is no path. In fact the aim of the *sharīʿa* itself, often viewed as a mere set of rules, is according to Jīlānī, "to advance creation in getting closer to God."[10] However before we delve into an elaboration of this section, it would seem appropriate at this point to say something about the position of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and the Ḥanbalī School in this book, both with respect to the *sharīʿa* and in general.

2 The Position of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal

We already saw the level of respect and authority accorded to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal in the exposition of the theology of Jīlānī, and we find the matter to be no different elsewhere. Wherever he writes about *fiqh* (sacred law), it is according to the school of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal. He regularly uses the term *aṣḥābanā*, referring to 'our fellows in the Ḥanbalī School,' and frequently quotes a personal opinion of Ibn Ḥanbal himself.[11] Thus when discussing the dispensation given to the traveller in being able to shorten the prayer and break the fast, he brings

8 See for example, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al- Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓm fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* (17; Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992) 173, Ismāʿīl Ibn ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, 11 vols. (1; Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988) 270.

9 Singular *badal*. On the *abdāl* see below in the section entitled "Travelling the Path." al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 603.

10 Ibid. 213.

11 See for example ibid. 354 or 560.

in the opinion of Ibn Ḥanbal, that although the traveller may choose between shortening the prayer or praying it in full, and fasting or not fasting, it is in fact better to shorten the prayer and break the fast. Jīlānī then proceeds to defend this position, arguing firstly through *ḥadīths* that God loves his dispensations to be accepted just as he loves his laws to be taken seriously, and then through admonishment, finding it very strange that people leave the dispensations of God in some pretence of self-piety while simultaneously giving disregard to such major prohibitions as fornication, the wearing of silk and the drinking of intoxicating liquor.[12] We therefore find that he is willing to defend the opinion of Ibn Ḥanbal through scripture as well as his own reasoning.

Ibn Ḥanbal is known to have often held two or more opinions on a single issue, this being distinct from the case where two or more opinions are attributed to a jurist (*faqīh*), either because they have held different opinions at different stages of their lives, or because of some discrepancy in the transmission of their opinion. The latter situation is also true in Ibn Ḥanbal's case at times, whereas the known transmission of two or more opinions on a single issue arises as a result of the methodology of Ibn Ḥanbal in deriving *fiqh* (i.e. his *uṣūl*).[13] Jīlānī often gives the different opinions of Ibn Ḥanbal, such as when he gives the differing views on whether one should repeat the odd night prayer (*witr*) if, after having already prayed it, one decides to do the night vigil prayer (*taḥajjud*), stating that according to one view of Ibn Ḥanbal, one does not need to repeat it, while according to another view, one can repeat it. Not only does Jīlānī show his knowledge of the varying opinions of Ibn Ḥanbal, but he also shows awareness of the transmitters of the differing opinions, mentioning in the just quoted example that the preference for the repetition view comes from Faḍl Ibn Ziyād.[14] He also quotes Ibn Ḥanbal's view when wanting to give extra weight to issues that perhaps would not be discussed in a general *fiqh* book, such as when he writes about fasting continuously throughout the year, stating that Ibn Ḥanbal was asked concerning the matter and considered it permissible so long as one did not fast on the two festivals of Eid.[15]

Throughout the book Jīlānī constantly shows his preference for Ibn Ḥanbal's opinions over those of other jurists, where this often extends even to opinions

12 Ibid. 559.

13 *uṣūl al-fiqh* denotes the subject matter covering the methodology that jurists use to derive *fiqh*.

14 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 483.

15 These are *ʿīd al-fiṭr*, being on the first day after the last day of fasting in Ramaḍān and being coincidental with the first day of Shawwāl, and *ʿīd al-aḍḥā*, being the tenth day of Dhū al-Ḥijja. Ibid. 465.

where a difference between scholars is stated in matters other than *fiqh*, and this latter phenomenon is highlighted a little below. Thus for example he states that Ibn Ḥanbal was of the opinion that the dawn prayer (*fajr* or *ṣubḥ*) was best prayed at its earlier time, when it first comes in, and that this goes against the opinion of the Ḥanafīs that it is better prayed nearer its end time at sunrise.[16] When writing about the permitted time for the Eid of the sacrifice (*ʿīd al-aḍḥā*), he mentions the differing opinion of Shāfʿī, that it is allowed on the day of Eid and the three days following it, in contradistinction to the opinion that it is allowed on the day of Eid and only two days following it. He proceeds to back this latter opinion against the opinion of Shāfʿī by giving it credence with the support of some famous Companions: ʿAli, ʿUmar, and Ibn ʿAbbās.[17]

In addition to this we come across solitary opinions of some of the members of the Ḥanbalī School, such as when some of them thought Friday to be more auspicious than the night of power (*laylat al-qadr*), where we then find that Jīlānī attempts to support the validity of their view by giving arguments to such effect. Thus although it states in the Qur'ān that the night of power is better than a thousand months, these thousand months do not include the Friday, just as they do not include the night of power itself. In addition to this is the fact that the day of Friday is everlasting in paradise and its date (i.e. that it lies between Thursday and Saturday) is known whereas the date of the night of power is disputed.[18] Jīlānī puts forward these arguments in defence of his fellows in the school even though the matter is disputed amongst the members of the school themselves, many of them holding the reverse view. This demonstrates his strong loyalty and devotion, not only to Ibn Ḥanbal, but also to the Ḥanbalī school in general, something that is shown by a comment elsewhere in the book. When giving Ibn Ḥanbal's explanation of a *ḥadīth* that one should never overtake the leader during the prayer, he precedes the explanation with, "the imam Abū ʿAbdullāh Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī said, may God have mercy upon him, and allow us to die upon his school in methodology and application, and raise us from amongst his group …"[19]

However one cannot mistake this love for Ibn Ḥanbal and the Ḥanbalī school for any sort of intolerance of the other schools present at his time. We shall shortly see how he regularly quotes opinions from other schools, but this suggestion can be put to rest definitively by a look at Jīlānī's short explanation of

16 Ibid. 508.

17 Ibid. 415.

18 The night being better than a thousand months comes from Qur'ān 97:3. Ibid. 354.

19 "*qāla imāmunā Abū ʿAbdullāh Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal, raḥimahu Allāh, wa amātanā ʿalā madhhabihī, aṣlᵃⁿ wa farʿᵃⁿ, wa ḥashrunā fī zumratihī*", ibid. 542.

this matter and inclusion of it within his *ādāb* section, where it comes under the chapter of commanding the good and forbidding the wrong. He writes that one cannot show disapproval where someone following a different school does something that is permitted in their school but disallowed or disapproved of in one's own school. Such would be the case with drinking *nabīdh* (a beverage made of fermented dates), or conducting a marriage without a legal guardian (*walī*), both of which are permitted in the Ḥanafī school but not in either the Ḥanbalī or Shāfʿī schools. He proceeds to reinforce this with a saying from Ibn Ḥanbal that a jurist is not allowed to convert anyone to his school nor can he be harsh upon them (due to their following a different opinion or school).[20] One can only disapprove of another's action when, if after having filled many other conditions, it is clear that there is no difference of opinion with regard to the evaluation of the action amongst the jurists.

Jīlānī's respect for Ibn Ḥanbal extends even to matters not normally under the purview of a school of law. Thus he gives a charm that Ibn Ḥanbal used when he had a fever, which can be written and tied around a sick person, and informs us that Ibn Ḥanbal began to dye his hair with henna at the age of thirty-three, whereupon his uncle, commenting that Ibn Ḥanbal was preparing for old age a little early, prompted Ibn Ḥanbal to reply that it was the *sunna* of the Prophet.[21] We also come across anecdotal stories involving Ibn Ḥanbal such as when the sister of the famous wondering Sufi Bishr al-Ḥāfī came to him, asking whether it was permissible for her to sew on her rooftop at night under the light from the surrounding houses. After ascertaining her identity Ibn Ḥanbal began to cry, commenting that the high-level of truthful God-consciousness had left the house of her family (i.e. from having known her brother Bishr) and that she should not sew on her rooftop at night.[22] This is an interesting story because of the reverence and respect it shows for Ibn Ḥanbal and for the Sufi Bishr al-Ḥāfī, and the fact that the story itself highlights the strict level of moral consciousness present in the people percieved as worthy models in society.

A different story tells of Ibn Ḥanbal pawning a pail of his to a grocer in Mecca, and then being tested by the grocer for his level of piety by being shown two near identical pails, and being asked to identify and claim his own. Ibn Ḥanbal, unsure as to which pail was his, tells the grocer to keep his pail as well as the money, and insists on this even after the grocer tells him that he was only testing him and actually knows which pail is his.[23] The inclusion of such

20 Ibid. 97.
21 Ibid. 73 and 36.
22 Ibid. 236.
23 Ibid. 239.

stories, not only involving Ibn Ḥanbal but other famous personalities of the past, fulfils the request of Jīlānī's friend who commissioned the book to include within it stories of righteous persons (*ṣāliḥūn*) from whom one may take example and learn something. Thus not only is Ibn Ḥanbal viewed as an imam, learned scholar and jurist to be followed in theological doctrine and in *fiqh*, but also as a famous *ṣāliḥ* (righteous person) and Sufi of the past; stories from his life are to be used and understood as examples of the highest kind. Such a view of Ibn Ḥanbal would seem to fit in well with that of other Sufis, including Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj who regularly prayed at his grave, and Ibn ʿArabī who half a century after Jīlānī would number Ibn Ḥanbal from amongst the past *afrād* (solitaries), solitaries being in Ibn ʿArabī's view, situated at the same spiritual rank as that of the *quṭb* (pole) but not being under his or her authority, and including such other past persons as Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn and ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.[24]

3 An Ocean of Knowledge

Throughout the book Jīlānī shows an amazing knowledge of differing opinions from different schools. He regularly relates the opinions of the other three jurists, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik and Shāfʿī such as when writing on whether the sacrifice on *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* (Eid of Sacrifice) is obligatory or not. At times he shows that he is aware of the opinions of other schools such as when he mentions, on discussing the Friday bath (*ghusl*), that it is obligatory according to the school of Dawūd.[25] However, not only does he show knowledge of the positions of the other schools, but he is able to relate them back to their origins with specific Companions. Thus when writing about the proclamations of the greatness of God (*takbīrāt*) that are to be repeated on the Eid of Sacrifice and the days after it, and how and when they are to be done, he relates the differing opinions by ascribing them firstly to a Companion, or group of Companions, and then mentioning that such is the way of Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfa or Ibn Ḥanbal.[26] He also does this when writing about which of the last odd ten nights of Ramaḍān is the 'Night of Power.' For each night, from the 21st to the 29th, he gives the opin-

24 For Ḥallāj praying at Ibn Ḥanbal's grave see Louis Massignon, *La passion de Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj*, 4 vols. (1; Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 68, 276–277 and 323. For Ibn ʿArabī see Michael Chodkiewicz, Seal of the Saints 107.

25 Also known as the Ẓāhirī School for its 'literalist' approach. al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 414 and 436.

26 That is, saying 'Allāhu akbar' out loud. Ibid. 419.

ion of at least one Companion or jurist if not more.[27] However, his knowledge extends beyond that of the preponderant opinion of a particular school (the *rājiḥ*) to that of famous individual jurists within the school, and even to different opinions of the same jurist. Thus on the issue of the proclamations just mentioned, he informs us what the opinions of Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad al-Shaybānī are, both highly important and early jurists of the Ḥanafī School as well as giving three different opinions of Shāfʿī.[28] He also tells us whether a specific method of making the proclamations is that of a particular location, such as Iraq or Medina.[29]

3.1 Tafsīr

The wide breadth of knowledge shown by Jīlānī, specifically within this book, is not only limited to *fiqh*, but extends into other subjects as well. His knowledge of *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis) is impressive and goes beyond what could be considered as standard *tafsīr* to what we might perhaps describe as non-traditional *tafsir*. When giving an exegesis of the first few verses of Sūra Fajr (89), he gives explanations from Companions, as well as from famous exegetes such as Ṭabarī.[30] We have already come across Jīlānī being recognised and commented upon for his ability to give numerous explanations for a single verse in the biographical chapter, and examples of this can also be found within the *Ghunya*.[31] For the part of the verse "remember me, I will remember you,"[32] Jīlānī gives a staggering total of forty-nine explanations, thirty-one of his own and eighteen from others, including al-Suddi, Ibn ʿAbbās, Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyād and Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna. He thus not only gives explanations from traditional exegetes but also quotes from Companions as well as from past pious and Sufi personalities.[33] Nor is this an isolated example, for it is repeated throughout the book many times such as when he gives fifteen explanations of the meaning of the verse, "Our lord, give us in this world good, in the next world good, and save us from the punishment of the fire."[34] In other places his exegesis is done according to the individual letters of a word, such as when he gives an explanation for each of the letters of the word *bismillāh*.[35]

27 Ibid. 352–353.
28 Ibid. 419.
29 Ibid. 421.
30 Ibid. 371–373.
31 See chapter two.
32 Qur'ān 2:152.
33 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 403–406.
34 Ibid. 400–401.
35 Ibid. 202–204.

3.2 *Arabic Language*

We may also briefly comment here on his knowledge of the Arabic language, and his familiarity with the opinions of the linguistic scholars. On the word 'Allāh' he is able to give a total of eight linguistic explanations, showing where the word might be derived from. Some of these explanations are from other scholars such as Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad (d. 175/791), Naḍr Ibn Shumayl (d. 204/820), Abū al-'Amr Ibn al-'Alā' (d. 154/770) and al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898), and others are his own.[36] He continues this with the words *raḥmān* and *raḥīm*.[37] The linguistic information given here and in other places is not just placed there for the reader to simply become more knowledgeable on the topic being discussed, but rather is there to help one to gain some insight and understanding on some specific matter, that they may be able to change themselves and their behaviour through knowledge and prescribed practices. Getting a better appreciation and understanding of God, the working of the world, the reasoning behind practices and acts, and the aim of life, is supposed to help the reader in reaching the goal that the entire book is geared towards.

3.3 Fiqh

The same must be said of the *fiqh* contained within the book. Unlike a regular *fiqh* book which sets out to detail the law as a system of rules and regulations, and perhaps detail the derivation of each specific law, this book places the *fiqh* in its real-life application and significance, where an obedience of the rules and methods is no ultimate end within itself, but only there to transform the believer to a higher state of being. We may remind ourselves here that the aim of the *sharī'a* according to Jīlānī, is nothing more than "to advance creation in getting closer to God."[38] Thus the *fiqh* is integrated within chapters that are aimed at engendering good practices of worship and elaborating special times for general as well as specific worship. For example, when writing about praiseworthy practices between the *maghrib* and *'ishā'* prayers, he includes a prayer and some worship to be done that is related by Karz Ibn Wabra, who he

36 For Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad see Karin C. Ryding, *Early medieval Arabic: studies on al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998). For Ibn Shumayl see Charles Pellat, al-Naḍr b. SHumayl b. Ḵharasha al-Māzinī, Abu 'l-Ḥasan, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 7; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 873. For Ibn al-'Alā' see 'Abdullāh Muḥammad Usṭā, *Abū 'Amr Ibn al-'Alā' al-Lughawī wa al-Naḥwi wa Makānatuhu al-'Ilmiyya* (Miṣurāta: Dār al-Jamāhīrīya, 1986). For al-Mubarrad see Monique Bernards and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Wallād, *Changing traditions: al-Mubarrad's refutation of Sībawayh and the subsequent reception of the Kitāb* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

37 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 205–206.

38 Ibid. 213.

tells us is one of the *abdāl*.[39] The practice is originally given to an Ibrahīm al-Taymī by the immortal Khiḍr, who himself, the story tells us, took it from the Prophet.[40] When Taymī wishes to take the practice from the Prophet himself, Khiḍr teaches him a method to see the Prophet in his dream—a method that is described in full and may be used by anyone—and testing this method, Taymī does indeed see the Prophet in his dream, who tells him that the practice is a valid one and that Khiḍr is the captain of the *abdāl* and one of the soldiers of God upon the earth.[41]

The *Ghunya* also peppers the *fiqh* with information that would not normally be included in a book of *fiqh*, such as when he tells us that the immortals Ilyās and Khiḍr meet up every year at *ḥajj* along with the angels Jibrīl, Mīkaʾīl and Israfīl, and that one of the former two shaves the others' head, this being one of the rituals of *ḥajj*.[42] In fact the entire book is composed in a very unique and particular style; it is very engaging, with a real-life immediacy to it, the overall writing producing a very individual and distinct prose. At the end of the section on Ramaḍān, the writing places the reader as if he or she were within the month's last days, and it calls for them to reflect on whether they have really benefited themselves during the special month. Even if one were to feel that they had done quite a bit more than what is at least normally expected to be done in Ramaḍān—extra prayers, extra charity, greater observation and restraint in behaviour, perhaps keeping vigil in a mosque in the last ten days (*iʿtikāf*)—one is urged to consider whether they can be confident in the fact that anything they have done has been accepted by God. It then moves on into a panegyric for the month, with great praise and exaltation for the month's eminence, along with sad lamentations and grief for its passing.[43] In its entirety it produces an awe and reverence for the month and highlights the importance of Ramaḍān, not only by stating such to be the case, but by using the language in an attempt to actually produce such a feeling within the reader.

Another example is when he writes about the Night of Decree.[44] After giving some general information about it he suddenly breaks off into rhyming couplets, and continues thus for a paragraph, highlighting how over the next year following this night when the year's destiny is set out, some will be brought near

39 On this spiritual rank see chapter seven below.

40 On the figure of Khiḍr see Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr. Quellenstudien zum imaginären im traditionellen Islam* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000).

41 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 477–480.

42 Ibid. 399.

43 Ibid. 361–362.

44 This is the night of mid-Shaʿbān.

while others are removed far away, how some will die and be buried while their associates are busy trading in the market, and how while some will be hoping for ease, they will receive only hardship. The paragraph is a powerful example of how his writing is able to stir up emotions within the reader, again by a brilliant and skilled use of language, to produce a style that is not normally found within a text discussing such material and such subject matter.[45] A final example is a full three-page admonition which can be found in his section on repentance. Having mentioned the states of various prophets and messengers when being in a state of *tawba* to God, and the lengths they had to go to in order to assure themselves of being in God's good favour, he turns to the reader to ask how ill-conceited he must be to consider his trivial offering to God, alongside his many offences, to be worth anything at all. He writes as if he were speaking to the reader directly, as if he were the reader's concerned father or teacher, giving sincere advice but with a heavy tone of admonition and rebuke.[46] Within this address he often uses rhyming couplets to give the language an import of something other than normal speech, as if it were some type of inspired speech. The use of his language here can be compared to the speeches found in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, and in fact could be placed within that collection without any reader or listener considering it to be foreign, odd or ill-fitting in any way. What we came across in the biography, about Jīlānī having an amazing ability to speak and completely engage people, seems to clearly be present within his writing. If his actual speech was at all similar to what we have preserved within the *Ghunya*, then it must indeed have been something significant enough to be repeatedly mentioned by the biographers.

4 The Use of *Ḥadīths*

A final consideration should here be given to the *ḥadīths* that are used in this book, specifically in regard to their authenticity, and in relation to the practices or beliefs they support or encourage. Ḥadīth scholars have often picked up books on diverse subjects, written by non-Ḥadīth scholars but containing *ḥadīths* as part of the text, and given an evaluation or gradation (*takhrīj*) of the *ḥadīths* found therein. A famous example of this is the evaluation done in the seventh/fourteenth century by Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī for the *ḥadīth*s contained within Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*.[47] Such an evaluation has been done for the

45 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 335–336.

46 Ibid. 217–219.

47 See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, n.d.).

Ghunya in more recent times by Yūsuf Ibn Maḥmūd al-Ḥāj Aḥmad, and it is to this evaluation that we will be referring to in discussing the use of *ḥadīths* in this book.[48]

Jīlānī often uses *ḥadīth*s that are graded by many scholars as weak (*ḍaʿīf*) or sometimes even as fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) in order, it seems, to establish certain practices or beliefs. This was noted in general by a late contemporary of his, Ibn al-Jawzī, who stated in his brief biographical entry on Jīlānī that "in it (his book, the *Ghunya*), are weak and forged *ḥadīth*s," as if to slight the work.[49] A prime example of the usage of such *ḥadīth*s can be found in the sections on the importance of the months of Rajab and Shaʿbān. Both of these sections contain, according to Ibn Maḥmūd, mostly weak and sometimes forged *ḥadīth*s, and cause him to comment at the beginning of the section on Rajab, that there is only one soundly established *ḥadīth* on the merit of this month, and that most of the other reports coming from the Prophet with regard to this month are forgeries.[50] He also gives a quote from Nawawī that there are no soundly established *ḥadīth*s for either commending or condemning the practice of fasting in this month, while fasting itself is in general to be commended.[51] Thus we find a situation where the importance of a month and the practices within it are all entirely based upon weak *ḥadīth*s and yet we find scholars such as Jīlānī enthusiastically promoting its importance and recommending these very practices. Before we move to an attempted explanation of why this may be the case, we may highlight an argument from within the *ḥadīth*s given by Nawawī, that although each *ḥadīth* in itself is weak or forged, there seems to be some significance in the existence of such a multitude of *ḥadīth*s supporting the same general conclusion, and that there may therefore be some scriptural basis for the importance of Rajab and Shabʿān.[52]

Although it seems that Jīlānī is basing the importance of these months and the practices he gives here and elsewhere upon Ḥadīth, when one examines the situation a little closer, one finds such a method—especially when universalised—to be somewhat implausible. There are two points to consider here that run against such an idea. Firstly there is the fact that not everything is backed up with a *ḥadīth*; there are many practices mentioned that are not based on any *ḥadīth*. An example of this is a supplication given for one to read

48 His evaluation for the *ḥadīths* is provided within the footnotes of the text published as al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*.

49 Ibn al- Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓm fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* 173.

50 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 304.

51 Yaḥyā Ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277). Ibid.

52 Yaḥyā Ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (7; Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1987) 287.

after prayer on the first night of Rajab, which is presented without any indication as to where the supplication in its given form comes from.[53] Secondly a *ḥadīth* is sometimes given which purports a general idea after which Jīlānī gives further details which are not contained within the given *ḥadīth*. Such an example of this is a prayer that he recommends to be read on the night of the fifteenth of Shaʿbān, which he calls *ṣalāt al-khayr*. A report coming from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī where he claims to have heard from thirty Companions the merits of this prayer gives some support to this practice. However the details of the prayer which consists in one hundred cycles within which one is to recite Sūra Ikhlās a thousand times (ten in each cycle) are given without a *ḥadīth* or any other support.[54]

On both of these points, it seems obvious that were Jīlānī aware of a *ḥadīth* or *ḥadīth*s to support a given practice or to give further details to a point or practice, then he would not have failed to mention it in his work. The first point seems to allude to the fact that the given practices are not actually based on *ḥadīth*s, or at least not all of them, while the second point seems to show that the *ḥadīth*s quoted give support to the practices rather than establish them. We do not know whether Jīlānī was aware of the quality of the *ḥadīth*s that he was using (although there is no reason to doubt that he would have at least been aware that some of the *ḥadīth*s he was using were much weaker than others), but we can see that he will often give a practice regardless of whether there is some scriptural evidence in support of it or not. It therefore seems more likely that many practices were not based on *ḥadīth*s, but that when Jīlānī had a *ḥadīth* that backed up such a practice, or even part of it, then he would not hesitate to include it, regardless of whether according to the science of Ḥadīth evaluation it was considered weak or strong.

However we are still left with the question of what Jīlānī bases such practices on, or where he gets them from. One explanation is that he perhaps bases them on his own experience, where having learnt them from somebody else or having come across them himself in some other way, he finds them to be of benefit, and he thus feels justified in recommending them to others. Such practices might also have been confirmed through his own spiritual experiences. In the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* we find some evidence supporting such a hypothesis with Jīlānī commenting that:

53 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 316.
54 Ibid. 336.

> If one of you practices with outer knowledge, then the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, will feed him with inner knowledge. He will feed him with an inner law just as a bird feeds its young.[55]

This seems to clearly suggest that Jīlānī did not only rely on outer knowledge such as that which would be based on assessable texts and traditions, but also an inner knowledge, which could not be scrutinised and criticised in the public domain in the same manner, if only because it was something personal to each individual. In another place in the same book we find some further evidence that supports the above quotation in a little more detail:

> With relation to the outer (*ẓāhir*) then it is up to the sacred law (*sharīʿa*) and not our own minds to determine whether an approving or disapproving view should be taken. You must also be careful to recognize cases where it is up to the inner (*bāṭin*) to determine whether something merits its disapproval or approval. The verdict (*fatwa*) of the heart can overrule the verdict of the jurist (*faqih*), because the jurist arrives at his verdict through his own *ijtihād* (reasoning based on evidence), whereas the heart always bases its judgment on what is strictly correct (*ʿaẓīma*), on that which is pleasing to the Lord of Truth and in compliance with His wishes. This is the judgment of knowledge over the legal ruling (*qaḍāʾ al-ʿilm ʿalā al-ḥukm*).[56]

Although this paragraph is talking in particular about the verdict of the heart through spiritual experience overruling a verdict seemingly based on scripture, the point can be extended to our case regarding Ḥadīth, where the verdict of the heart regarding a practice being commendable may overrule the verdict based upon the authenticity of a *ḥadīth*. In fact in both cases the verdict is one with regard to the *sharīʿa*, and Jīlānī makes it more than clear that the heart and therefore one's spiritual experience has a role to play in determining whether something merits approval or disapproval.

55 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, n.d.) 228.
56 Ibid. 342.

5 Names

Before we begin to examine the spiritual path of Jīlānī, we may first take note of the statistical occurrence of personalities in the remainder of the *Ghunya*, as was done at the end of the theology section. Again the names that will be evaluated here are of those persons other than the companions of the Prophet or names that merely appear in a chain of transmission for any given report, and are thus those persons from whom Jīlānī is taking an opinion or through whom he is giving an example.

The table below lists the most commonly occurring names along with their frequency. It excludes occurrences of names that occur in the theology section of the *Ghunya*, although the names that are only mentioned there and not here do not have any significant occurrence when considering the entire text.

Name of person mentioned	Number of times mentioned
Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal	46
Ḥasan al-Baṣrī	21
Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī	18
Junayd	17
Sahl al-Tustarī	14
Sufyān al-Thawrī	7
Sarī al-Saqatī, Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī, Bishr al-Ḥāfī, Ibrahīm Ibn Ad-ham	6
Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ, Ibrahīm Khawwās, Yaḥyā Ibn Muʿāth al-Rāzī, al-Shiblī	5

The first thing one notices, and as might have been expected, is that the most commonly occurring name in the entire book is that of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal who is mentioned 46 times (58 when including the theology section), more than double the amount of the next most frequently mentioned person. This is not only because of his importance as the founder and originator of the school of law named after him and which Jīlānī adhered to, or as a traditionist, or as a theologian, but also because (as we have seen above) he was considered a great saint by many that came after him, and a person who many of the Sufis viewed as a role model of piety and asceticism. The second most mentioned person is Ḥasan al-Baṣrī who was also considered a great ascetic and a role

model for later Sufis, as can be seen by the regular mention of his name in virtually every one of their works.[57] In the *Qūt al-Qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī for example, we find the author commenting that "Ḥasan is our imam in this doctrine which we represent. We walk in his footsteps and our light is from his lamp."[58]

The third most mentioned person in the *Ghunya* is Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/861), a famous early Sufi from Egypt. He was condemned by the Mu'tazila of his time for holding the view that the Qur'ān was not-created, as well as by the Mālikī judge 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam for openly teaching mysticism in public. According to Margaret Smith he was the first to teach about the true nature of gnosis (*ma'rifa*), which he described as "the knowledge of attributes of unity which is rightly ascribed to the saints."[59] The next most commonly occurring name is that of the famous Sufi Junayd (d. 298/910), the nephew and disciple of Sarī al-Saqatī (see below). He is known to have been opposed to openly diverging mysteries, and he therefore made sure that none of his writings could ever be misconstrued as being against orthodoxy. He believed in holding one's tongue and was perhaps the most famous proponent of what is often described as the sober approach to Sufism, in contrast to the more intoxicated approach of such Sufis as Bistāmī and Ḥallaj.[60] The next most commonly occurring name is that of Sahl al-Tustarī, another very famous Sufi. It is known that he met Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī and most probably became his disciple, for he began to take his own disciples immediately after the death of Dhū al-Nūn. It is also known that Ḥallāj was with him for a period of two years. After his death his group of disciples split into two camps, one staying in Baṣra where Tustari was based before his death, and the other going to Baghdad. Some of the

57 There are too many to mention here, but for examples see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb* (Cairo: s.n., 1310 AH). Also for Ḥasan al-Baṣrī see Suleiman Mourad, *Early Islam Between Myth and History: Al-Ḥaṣan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 H/728 CE) and the formation of his legacy in classical Islamic scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

58 al-Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb passim*.

59 Margaret Smith, Ḏ̲Ḥu 'l- Nūn, Abu 'l- Fayḍ T̲hawbān b. Ibrāhīm al-Miṣr, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 2; Leiden: Brill, 1960–2004). On Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī see also Arthur J. Arberry, The Miracle of the Pearls, *BSOAS* 12/1 (1947), 36–38, Ibn Arabi, *La vie marveilleuse de Dhū al-Nun l'Egyptien, Introduction, traduction et notes de Roger Deladrière* (Paris: Sinbad, 1989).

60 On Junayd see Ali Hasan Abd-al-Qadir, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd: a Study of a Third Century Mystic with an Edition and Translation of his Writings* (London: Luzac, 1976), Arthur J. Arberry, 'Junayd', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3/July (1935), 499–507, Roger Deladrière, *Enseignement spirituel: traités, lettres oraisons et sentences de Junayd* (Paris: Sinbad, 1983).

disciples that went to Baghdad joined the circle of Junayd, while others such as Barbahārī went and joined the Ḥanbalīs of the Bāb al-Muḥawwal quarter of the city.[61]

It is interesting to note the web of connections that existed between all the personalities mentioned so far, some being based on a teacher-student relationship such as between Tustarī and Dhū al-Nūn, and others being based on reverence such as that which Ḥallāj had for Ibn Ḥanbal. The movement of Sufi ideas and spiritual practice must clearly have been occurring between all these personalities. It is especially interesting to note how the Ḥanbalīs of Baghdad—often considered as puritanical troublemakers (especially around the time of Barbaharī) and therefore assumed to be against mystical and Sufi currents—happened to be so intricately involved in the middle of all this.[62] Jīlānī, being himself one of the Ḥanbalīs of Baghdad, could not have been unaware of such currents, for how else can we explain the regular occurrence of stories and lessons involving these famous Sufis over and above anybody else?

After these five individuals, there is a drop in frequency of occurrence with the next person, Sufyān al-Thawrī, appearing seven times, exactly half the amount of the previous Sahl al-Tustarī. We then have Sarī al-Saqatī, the uncle and teacher of Junayd, Bistāmī, Bishr al-Ḥāfī and Ibraḥīm Ibn Ad-ham, all appearing six times while Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ, Ibrahīm Khawwās, Yaḥyā al-Rāzī and Shiblī all appear five times. Abū ʿUthmān al-Maghribī (not in the table) is mentioned four times and beyond this there are many names that appear once or twice within the entire text. Every single one of the names mentioned so far, with perhaps the exception of Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), is known primarily as a Sufi. Thawrī is known primarily as a scholar of Ḥadīth and as the founder of a school of law. However he was also highly regarded amongst the Sufis—Junayd being an adherent of his—and he is also known to have had an influence on al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857).[63] We can also be sure that Jīlānī considered Thawrī as somebody who held a very high spiritual state, because in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* he states that Thawrī used to worship a lot and eat a lot and that one should copy Thawrī in his plentiful worship but not in his lavish eating, because, as he puts it, "you are not Sufyān (al-Thawrī), do not completely satiate yourself as he used to satiate himself, for you are not in control of your

61 On Tustarī see Gerhard Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: the Quranic Hermeneutics of the Sufi Sahl al-Tustari* (Berlin—New York: Walther de Gruyter, 1980).

62 On these troubles, especially around the time of Barbahārī, see chapter two above.

63 On Muḥāsibī, see Gavin Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam: The Life and Works of al-Muḥāsibī* (London: Routledge, 2011).

nafs while he was in control of his."[64] This seems to suggest that Thawrī had reached a state whereby he had complete control of his *nafs*, and did not need to fear being affected by its impulses or falling prey to its desires with any negative result.[65] In another place Jīlānī relates that Thawrī was seen in a dream after his death and was asked what God had done with him? He replied that "one of my feet is on the bridge while the other is in paradise," again showing the high opinion that Jīlānī had of Thawrī.[66] Names that occur more than once include such persons as Mālik Ibn Dīnār, Rabīʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, Ruwaym and Muḥāsibī.

Altogether there are 111 personalities mentioned that are not companions of the Prophet, and at least 43 of these are known primarily as Sufis.[67] However there are many names in the book whose bearers are difficult to identify because of the commonness of their appellation and there being no other helpful identifiers, in addition to many persons being practising Sufis but having their fame resting primarily in some other field or being recognised more strictly as ascetics rather than Sufis, as is the case with Ḥasan al-Baṣrī or Mālik Ibn Dīnār.[68] Sixteen of all of the other names are primarily traditionists, and about half that number are jurists.[69] There are a couple of linguists and

64 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 273.

65 See below for an explanation of the role of the *nafs* in Sufism.

66 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 117.

67 The following names are in general order of appearance in the *Ghunya*: Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ, Bishr al-Ḥāfī, Ḥākim al-Tirmidhī, Shiblī, Hibbatullāh Ibn Mubārak, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūri, Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī, Ibrahīm Ibn Ad-ham, Abū Sulaymān Dārānī, Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī, Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, the sister of Bishr al-Ḥāfī, Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī, Sahl al-Tustarī, Rabīʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, ʿUtbat al-Ghulām, Abū ʿAlī al-Daqqāq, Sarī al-Saqatī, Abu Naṣr al-Sarrāj, Ruwaym, Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, Yaḥya Ibn Muʿāth al-Rāzī, Aḥmad Ibn ʿĪsā, Muḥammad Ibn Khafīf, Abū al-Qāsim Naṣrabādī, Abū ʿAbdullāh Rūzbārī, Ibn ʿAtiyya al-Dārānī, Abū Ḥafs al-Ḥaddād, Abū al-Ḥusayn Zanjānī, Dawūd Ibn Abī Hind, Abū ʿUthmān al-Maghribī, Abū Bakr al-Daqqāq, Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz, Yūsuf Ibn ʿIṣām, Hātim Ibn ʿIṣām, Abū Suʿād Ibn Aḥmad Ibn ʿĪsā, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Warrāq, Hamdūn al-Qassār, Jaʿfar al-Khuldī, Bahlūl al-Majnūn, Abū Mūsā al-Dabīlī, Abū Turāb al-Nakhsabī.

68 The whole issue of distinguishing between ascetics and Sufis is a very confusing one—as is highlighted by the main contention of this study—and a commonly found general view is to identify earlier persons, such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī or Mālik Ibn Dīnār, as ascetics rather than Sufis. It goes along with the belief that real Sufism in the early period had not yet had the chance to develop. With the aim of steering clear of controversy, such disputed names therefore have not been added to the above list. On ascetics and Sufis see Christopher Melchert, The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at The Middle of The Ninth Century C.E., *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996), 51–70, Christopher Melchert, The Ḥanābila and Early Sufis, *Arabica* 48/3 (2001), 352–363.

69 The traditionists are Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Isḥāq Ibn Rāhawayh, Yaḥya Ibn Maʿīn, Shurayk Ibn Abdullāh, Ibn Khuzayma, Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna, Abū Ayyūb al-Sijistānī, Sufyān al-

exegetes, while a few are famous personalities such as the general Aḥnāf Ibn Qays, or the Caliph ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. We therefore find that 40% of all the persons mentioned in the entire *Ghunya* are Sufis.

However this statistic does not take into account the fact that certain names are mentioned and appear far more often than other names, and this percentage therefore does not give an accurate picture. If we thus take into account the frequency of occurrences for all the names that appear more than once in addition to those appearing only once we get a slightly different picture. There are 155 occurrences of Sufi personalities and 134 occurrences of others when including Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, while excluding him reduces the latter figure to 76. As a percentage then, the Sufi personalities make up 53.6% of all occurrences when counting Ibn Ḥanbal as a non-Sufi, and rise to an incredible 74% if we count Ibn Ḥanbal as a Sufi. Excluding Ibn Ḥanbal from the count altogether leaves us with the Sufi personalities at 67%. It seems more accurate to take this latter figure of 67% for our purposes here because Ibn Ḥanbal has a unique position within the *Ghunya* specifically, and with Jīlānī generally, and a single person occurring so often and so many more times than anybody else undoubtedly skews the statistical picture. The result, regardless of which figure is chosen, is significant. It does, however, tie in quite perfectly when we consider the aim of the book as expounded above. It shows that Jīlānī did not only have respect for the Sufis that came before him, but also found in them the example and teaching necessary to fulfil his aim. Perhaps if the objective of the book had been something other than taking one along the path to God, then we could have expected a different result; if a book of Qurʾānic exegesis might perhaps regularly quote previous exegetes, and a book on Arabic grammar regularly quote other grammarians, then why should we find it surprising for a book attempting to take seekers on the path of God to their destination, to regularly quote those who are the specialists in this particular field.

Thawrī, Shaʿbī, Ibrahīm Nakhaʾi, Khālid Ibn Maʿdan, Wahb Ibn Muabbih, Saʿīd Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Kaysān, Ibrahīm al-Taymī, and Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdullāh.

CHAPTER 7

Sufism II: the Path to the Truth

We can now finally turn to the path of Jīlānī, as extracted from his works, in earnest. We begin by looking at some elementary aspects, such as the basic understanding of Sufism and the prerequisites to the Sufi path and its foundations. This is followed by an attempted description of the path itself along with various significant themes and aspects that play an important role therin. Finally, there is an evaluation of all of this in itself as well as against the key elements of Sufism that were highlighted at the end of the introduction.

1 What is Sufism?

Sufism, or *tasawwuf* in Arabic, is the process through which one can arrive at being a Sufi. In such a sense it can be understood as something that involves a permanent change of character and state, on both a personal and social plane. The person, as defined by individual traits and characteristics believed to reside in the *nafs*, is to be positively affected by the practices, thoughts, and ideas that together constitute this *tasuwwuf*. For Jīlānī, the *mutasawwif*, or the one trying to be a Sufi, is the one who is attempting to rid himself of his *nafs* (or the bad traits of the *nafs*)—the *nafs* being that thing which is consumed by this world and the creation therein, as well as with a desire for the eternal pleasures of the next world.[1] He tries to give up acting on matters in consideration of these worlds and tries to do everything solely for God. He must leave attachment to all created things—that is anything other than God. When a person achieves this aim they become detached from humans as well as other creatures and they are no longer concerned by secondary causes but are now only interested in the primary cause itself: God.[2]

However, sometime before reaching this point certain veils will be lifted from the person and God's *ʿaẓma* (grandeur) and *jalāl* (Majesty) will be revealed to him, whereupon the viewing of such will cause him to be left beside

1 Although the masculine 'he' and 'his' is used throughout when referring to the aspiring Sufi, it is only done so out of convention, and refers at all times to both men and women equally, unless explicitly stated.

2 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2001) 606.

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himself and extinct to his own self. This is known as *fanā'* and will be explained in greater detail below. A person at this point no longer has to restrain himself from this world for he will have no desire for it—or for that matter the next world. Such a person may accurately be called a Sufi. In the physical form he still exists with his fellow creatures in this world, but is separate to them by the fact that he makes no movement from his own will but is rather moved by the will of God.[3] In the Qur'ān the verse, "He takes them out of the darkness into the light"[4] describes such a person while in the Ḥadīth literature the most common tradition given is:

> My servant does not draw near to me by carrying out my obligatory duties, but rather draws near to me through supererogatory acts until I love him; and when I love him, I become his hearing, his sight, his tongue, his hand, his foot and his heart; so through Me he hears and through Me he sees and through Me he speaks and through Me he comprehends and through Me he strikes.[5]

Jīlānī also talks about the terms *irāda* and *murād*. On a simple linguistic level these terms simply mean a desire or wish, the former actively seeking or wishing and the latter to be passively sought. In the language of Sufism the *irāda* is specifically for God, the search for God or The Truth both being identical. Anybody who has this *irāda* is a *murīd* (not to be confused with *murād*). The *murīd* according to Jīlānī leaves the comforts of this world and seeks only God, this being the real beauty of both this life and the hereafter. The *murīd* therefore can be equated with the *mutasawwif* while the *murād*, being defined as the one being sought, it would follow, with the Sufi. This is indeed correct. The person being sought by God has surely reached the state where his own will has been effaced, but Jīlānī is quick to point out that one seeking God (*murīd*) can also be understood to be the same thing as the one being sought by God (*murād*), because nobody can have *irāda* and be a *mutasawwif* on the path of *tasawwuf* except that God wills it and seeks him. This raises the interesting concept of destiny (*qaḍā'* and *qadar*) that we have already seen playing an important role in the theology, and will see play an even more vital role in the Sufism. Jīlānī also gives the comparison of the prophets Moses and Muhammad as *murīd* and *murād*. Moses was seeking God, his journey being over land and ending

3 Ibid. 606–607.

4 Qur'ān 2:257.

5 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 608.

at Mount Sinai, while the Prophet Muḥammad was being sought by God, his journey being through the heavens and ending at the throne of God.[6]

2 Prerequisites of the Path

Before one is able to embark on the path to becoming a Sufi, one must fulfil certain conditions and take certain measures that will allow the aspirant to reach his or her goal successfully. To begin with one must have the correct *ʿaqīda*, which is based on the *sunna* of the Prophet, his companions, their successors, the saints, and the *siddīqīn* (completely truthful people).[7] Following this one must stick to the Qurʾān and *sunna*, which in reality means a strict adherence to the injunctions of the *sharīʿa*, and this is achieved by the application of two very important principles, the first being *sidq* or truthfulness and the second *ijtihād*. Being truthful to oneself will stop one finding excuses when breaking injunctions of the *sharīʿa*, while applying *ijtihād* in cases where there is no clear ruling will allow one to feel that they are always within the bounds of the *sharīʿa*. This must be the case until one finds a *qāʾid* (leader), that is one who will be able to lead the aspirant in the right direction, and after this the worry of whether one is capitulating to one's *nafs* with regards to following injunctions of the *sharīʿa* can be put to rest. One must also look for a *muʾnis*, or close friend, who is also an aspiring Sufi and is preferably at a similar stage. This companion will hopefully allow the aspirant to keep his focus even when at rest or leisure and will raise his spirits when he is down (and vice versa), as well as providing healthy competition in the attempt to reach the final goal.[8]

One must also find a place or refuge to resort to where one can be at peace, away from the distractions of this world, and where one is able to regain one's focus. One must not frequent areas of a city or town where activity contrary to the *sharīʿa* is widely present, not only because this would be unbecoming, but also because one is liable to get distracted and even fall into behaviour that is contrary to the aim of the Sufi path. In the same vein one must not accompany lazy people and those who falsely claim themselves to be believers.[9] The aspiring Sufi cannot be a miser but rather must be generous for there has never been a saint that was miserly, and one cannot expect to reach the goal with

6 Ibid. 604–605.

7 On the ṣiddīqīn, see below.

8 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 610.

9 Ibid. 611.

this negative quality present in one's character; a quality that is incompatible with such a rank. One must not only accept but must actually expect humiliation, deprivation, hunger, and criticism, and must not expect God to grant any of one's requests except the forgiveness of sins and help in performing good deeds. Putting all of this into practice as pre-required conditions of becoming a Sufi will hopefully lead to God looking beneficially upon the aspirant's life as well as endearing love from other saints.[10]

One of the most important of all these prerequisites is that of finding a leader or shaykh. There are certain things one must look for when searching for a shaykh, and certain ways to behave in front of the shaykh. However, before addressing this issue, it is important to understand why Jīlānī believes having a shaykh is so crucial.

2.1 *The Importance of a Shaykh*

The shaykh acts as one's link to God, because he or she is a connection or mediator between the aspiring Sufi and God. Jīlānī gives the analogy of a king's courtier, so that one may better understand the usefulness of a shaykh. If a person has no access to the king but is an acquaintance of one of the king's courtiers, then this courtier can be very useful in getting the person access to the king. It would obviously never make sense for the person to burn this bridge. Furthermore, he can learn very useful information from the courtier such as what kind of behaviour is acceptable in the presence of the king, or how one praises the king or requests things from the king.[11] In addition to this the relationship of a shaykh and disciple has existed since the beginning of man. Adam was himself taught by God the names of all things, and he in turn taught the Angels and can therefore be rightfully considered their shaykh. Adam was also taught by Gabriel on Earth, and he in turn taught his children. Most prophets, messengers, and saints have had shaykhs and thus for an aspiring Sufi a shaykh is indispensable. It is very rare for one to get direct training from God although there are certain famous examples, such as the Prophet Abraham, the Prophet Muhammad or the famous contemporary of the Prophet, Uways al-Qaranī.[12] The relationship with the shaykh continues until the aspiring Sufi becomes independent and his care is taken over by God Himself, at which point he no

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. 612.

12 Ibid. 614. On Uways al-Qaranī see A.S. Hussaini, Uways al-Qarani and the Uwaysi Sufis, *The Muslim World* 57/2 (2007), 230–258, Katia Zakharia, Uways al-Qarani, Visages d'une légende, *Arabica* 46/2 (1999), 230–258.

longer keeps the same contact with the shaykh and may not even be allowed to see him. After this the shaykh will no longer be of any use to the aspiring Sufi, for his rank may have reached that of the shaykh or even surpassed it.[13]

2.3 *Which Shaykh?*

Jīlānī does not give much information on how one is to choose a shaykh except that one must believe one's shaykh to be the best in the whole area or district that one resides in. This is extremely important, for if one were to believe that he had chosen the second or third best, then he may later be plagued by regret on not having chosen the one whom he considered to be the best, and this may lead him to doubt the instructions of his shaykh as not being the best in his particular case.[14]

2.4 *The Role of the Shaykh*

We are able to get a glimpse into how the shaykh should train his pupils according to Jīlānī through what he considers imperative in the shaykh's behaviour. Firstly, the shaykh should treat his disciple as a mother treats her child and set the disciple easy tasks that he can handle without too much difficulty. This should always be the case unless the disciple is gifted and has a capacity to learn and implement what he is taught quickly in addition to being able to maintain all that he has learned. In such a case the shaykh may set his disciple harder tasks, for he should never intend to waste the disciple's precious time. The shaykh must initially train the disciple to stop following his natural impulses and desires, and instead follow the dispensations (*rukhṣa*, pl. *rukhaṣ*) of the *sharīʿa*. This would mean that he would be following the *sharīʿa* rather than his natural impulses, but in the easiest form available to him. Then once he has escaped the domination of his natural impulses, the *rukhaṣ* of the *sharīʿa* must be stopped and he must be made to follow the stricter applications of the *sharīʿa* (*ʿazīma*), one thing at a time, removing each *rukhas* and replacing it with an *ʿazīma*.[15] This will allow the disciple to gradually get better in following the *sharīʿa* in its full and strictest sense, meaning not only that his natural

13 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 614.

14 Ibid. 616.

15 Ibid. p. 617. Technically speaking, an *ʿazīma* is a "ruling that is established on legal evidence of the *sharīʿa* that is free of a preponderant contingency" as opposed to a *rukhṣa* which is "a ruling established in opposition to legal evidence of the *sharīʿa* that is free of preponderant contingency." For a full discussion of these terms see ʿAbd al-Qādir Ibn Badrān, *al-Madkhal ilā Madhhab Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996) 77–79. Original translation of the term *ʿazīma* by Musa Furber.

impulses are denied and restrained, but rather that his nature is brought into line with the *sharīʿa*. As previously mentioned, the disciple must remain with the shaykh until through him he reaches God, at which stage God will directly take over his instruction and he will no longer be reliant upon, or in need of his shaykh.[16] This will be the basis of the training. Of course it will consist of many more facets than just this, but these will depend on the shaykh's own method or system as well as his evaluation of his discipline when looking to his needs and requirements.

2.5 *How to Behave with the Shaykh*

The most important aspect of one's behaviour with the shaykh is that of obedience. One must obey the shaykh without exception, inwardly and outwardly. This is especially important in the early stages where the shaykh's instructions may be in contradiction to what one feels is the correct way. One must also overlook what one considers to be faults in the shaykh. For example, if the shaykh goes against the *sharīʿa* the disciple must interpret it in favour of the shaykh, or ask him concerning it in an indirect manner. If he is able to find no excuse, then he must seek forgiveness on his behalf and pray for his benefit. This would still not mean that the shaykh has done something wrong but rather it should be considered as a deficiency in the disciple's understanding of the situation. Jīlānī explains that one reason why this may happen is because the shaykh might be transported from one degree of spirituality to another higher degree of spirituality and with such an occurrence there is usually a break in strict observance of the *sharīʿa*. This could also be a very common occurrence, as every day the shaykh will be getting closer to God and therefore be regularly changing in spiritual degrees and stations.[17]

Other general points of behaviour that Jīlānī mentions include the disciple remaining calm if the shaykh becomes angry or is rude to him. If this occurs then he must overlook it and be even more courteous and pleasant to him than before. The disciple must refrain from speaking in front of the shaykh except when spoken to and must never highlight his own achievements and virtues. If a question is ever raised in the presence of the shaykh and one is able to answer it, one must desist and leave it for the shaykh to answer. Furthermore, if one believes that they could have answered the question better than the shaykh then they must believe that the shaykh's answer was more befitting the situa-

16 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 614.

17 Ibid. 612.

tion. One must certainly never consider the shaykh to be wrong on any point.[18] Overall these various points may be subsumed under the general idea of complete obedience and submission to one's shaykh.

3 Foundations of the Path

Jīlānī talks of seven *khiṣāl* (virtues or characteristics) that form the foundation of "this path" or "this method" (*ṭarīqa*), but before delving into these, we may take a moment to consider what he means exactly when he says "this path" (*hādhihi al-ṭarīqa*).[19] Does he mean the Sufi path in general, or is he perhaps referring to his own path or method here?

We may begin to answer this by considering the fact that Sufi orders (*ṭuruq* sing. *ṭarīqa*) as we know them today did not exist before Jīlānī, and that although there were methods and ways peculiar to each teacher, the Sufis saw their "way" generally as a single path, for the multitude of teachers could not be classified as completely separate schools.[20] Nevertheless when Jīlānī says "this path," if we assume that he is talking about the Sufi path generally, and not his own way in particular, it cannot escape us that "this path" as presented by Jīlānī must ultimately be the Sufi path as experienced and interpreted by Jīlānī. Thus we may safely assume that "this path" must be the path that Jīlānī had experience of and taught to students and disciples, and the one he presented to us, the reader of his texts.

The seven foundations that Jīlānī gives are *mujāhada* (struggle against the carnal desires and whims of the *nafs*, and exerting a great effort in general), *tawakkul* (complete and absolute reliance upon God), *ḥusn al-khulq* (having good character and behaviour), *shukr* (gratefulness), *ṣabr* (patience), *riḍā* (contentment) and *ṣidq* (truthfulness).[21]

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid. 636.

20 The Arabic term *ṭarīqa*, used in a Sufi context, is often translated as 'order' and sometimes 'brotherhood', most probably because a *ṭarīqa* can so closely be identified with the various Christian orders and brotherhoods that existed in medieval Europe. The term itself however conveys the meaning of a path, way or method, and can be understood as being in regard to a method to an end, or a particular method in distinction to another method, see 'Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī, *A Glossary of Sufi Techincal Terms*, trans. Nabil Safwat (London: Octagon Press, 1991) 31. On *ṭarīqa*s generally see John Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders In Islam* (Oxford OUP, 1998).

21 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 636.

3.1 Mujāhada

This is a struggle against the base desires of one's own soul and its natural impulses. It is called *mujāhada* (struggle) because that is a basic descriptor of what has to be done—one must oppose *hawā* (desire) by opposing whatever the *nafs* desires at any moment. The *nafs* in its non-purified state can beguile the seeker even in his *mujāhada*, for it may make him feel happy and proud of the progress he makes and the virtues he gains, as well as any praise he may receive from other people. The seeker needs to understand that this too is from the *nafs* and must be combated, just as he must combat hunger, thirst and sexual desire, these latter being far easier to identify. This means that the seeker must examine himself very closely, and at all times be one who is attentive to his behaviour, state, and condition. This in turn can only be achieved through what Jīlānī calls *murāqaba* (vigilant awareness).[22]

Murāqaba is being constantly aware that one is being watched by God. Jīlānī explains that, just as if one were under constant observation by one's parent or some other person held in high esteem, one would be very careful of one's behaviour and make certain not to do or say anything that might upset or offend them, then in the same way one should make the *murāqaba* a reality in one's life, and then it should help them abstain from displeasing the Lord.[23] For Jīlānī, *murāqaba* cannot have been fully realised until one has gained an inner understanding (*maʿrifa*) of four things: of God, of Iblīs the devil, of one's own *nafs* when it incites to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bī-al-sūʾ*), and of acting only for the sake of God.[24]

Maʿrifa of God consists of a certain understanding of God, that He keeps his promises whether to execute his rewards or punishments and that He protects, is merciful, loving and all-knowing. However His knowledge extends to that which is hidden from all other creatures, to one's secret thoughts, wishes and intentions. Once this has been kept at the forefront of one's mind and then internalised, the seeker can directly experience the reality of all this, which will then become a proof for him.[25] *Maʿrifa* of the devil comes from the understanding that Iblīs not only wants to lead the human being astray but ultimately wants to take him to hell with himself. Thus the *mujāhada* must also be against him. The seeker appeals to God through prayers for His help against the devil, for if the danger of the situation is not realised the seeker could lose his way.

22 Ibid. 636–638.
23 Ibid. 639.
24 Ibid. 640.
25 Ibid.

However, Iblīs cannot force a human to do anything except by working through his *nafs*, which is why the seeker must also gain *maʿrifa* of his *nafs*.[26]

In order to gain *maʿrifa* of the *nafs*, the seeker must first recognise the weakness of his moral character and must become suspicious of everything the *nafs* tells him. When the human being experiences fear, the *nafs* is in reality quite secure and when he feels secure the *nafs* is actually in a state of fear. When one feels sincere, the *nafs* is actually in a state of *riyāʾ* or pride. However, strange as it may seem—and the *nafs* is something that is ultimately only understood by the one who created it—it is always heading towards its own destruction and ruin.[27]

Finally the *maʿrifa* of acting only for the sake of God begins with the understanding that God has commanded the human to perform certain actions, and forbidden him from partaking in others—this being the foundation of obedience and disobedience. The extra ingredient that makes the action solely for the sake of God is *ikhlās* or sincerity. Thus the intention of the seeker is seen as very important and must at all times be present with a view to doing something or refraining from something only to please God, or so as not to displease Him. Sincerity in itself is a difficult thing to obtain, and is ultimately a gift bestowed by God, and so the best way of gaining it is to constantly petition God for it. If the seeker maintains these practices, then he should accumulate and gain experience of the reality of the true intention, as well as the actual experience of religious actions.[28]

For one engaged in *mujāhada*, Jīlānī recommends ten habits that must be made part of the seeker's character. The same ten habits are mentioned in exactly the same language in both the *Ghunya* and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* with regard to the same purpose; for the one engaged in *mujāhada* and *murāqaba*.[29] It would seem that these ten virtues would have been regularly recommended and commented upon by Jīlānī to his students for them to have been recorded fully and in two separate texts. If one is able to maintain these ten virtues, then one should be able to attain to spiritual stations. They are:

1. To not swear or give oath by God. This habit is supposed to bring the practitioner better physical well-being and an increased determination.
2. To absolutely refrain from lying even in jest or with a good reason. This habit should benefit the practitioner with a purified mind.

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26 Ibid. 641.
27 Ibid. 642.
28 Ibid. 643.
29 Ibid. 644–646, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2003) 183.

3. To refrain from making promises that cannot be fulfilled, although to refrain from making promises completely is a better option. The practitioner of this habit is supposed to attain a higher level of modesty.
4. Not to curse or injure anything in creation, which should afford the practitioner compassion from other humans.
5. Not to invoke evil on anything in creation.
7. Not to accuse any other Muslim of polytheism, unbelief, or hypocrisy, regardless of whether one has evidence to support the accusation or not.
7. To keep clear of sinful behaviour in both action and thought.
8. Not to place any burden or inconvenience on any other creature. This should allow one to gain strength for calling to good and forbidding wrong (*ʿamr bi al-maʿrūf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*).
9. To remove the desire of wanting what other people have. This particular quality is understood to be the meaning of confidence in God and is also part of *zuhd* (asceticism). It should allow the practitioner to attain a higher level of *waraʿ* (pious self-restraint).
10. The final quality is *tawāḍuʿ* or humility. This is a quality that is seen as the perfection of God-consciousness (*taqwā*) and it seems that Jīlānī views this as perhaps the most important of all the ten qualities, as one is tested with it at the beginning of the path and at its end. It prevents the mind from considering oneself to be better than any other human. Thus if one comes across someone older than oneself, then they are to be considered as better because they have been on the earth longer and have therefore worshipped God for a longer period of time, and may perhaps also have a better understanding of God. On the other hand, if one comes across somebody younger, then they are to be considered better because they have been on the earth for a lesser time and are therefore likely to have offended God less, in addition to having less experience in life and therefore more likely to be excused. If one comes across a non-Muslim, then one is to consider that this person may, before the end of his life, become a Muslim, while one may apostatise and therefore die in a state of disbelief. One may also consider the fact that the non-Muslim may be excused for all his misdeeds through his ignorance while the same cannot be said in one's own case. In this way one can view every other human on earth as being better than oneself, and the constant remembrance of this should keep one humble at all times.[30]

30 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 644–646.

3.2 Tawakkul

The reality of *tawakkul* is handing over all one's affairs to God and moving away from the world of personal choice and personal management—which itself comes from the understanding that nothing can be changed which has already been ordained by God—and moving into the world of divine decrees (*aḥkām*) and ordainment (*taqdīr*). Jīlānī divides *tawakkul* into three stages. The first is the basic sense of which the above definition explains and consists of, in the seeker having confidence in being able to rely solely on God's promise (*waʿad*), which itself consists of God carrying out what he has promised in rewards and punishments. The second stage called *taslīm* or surrender, is where the person relies on God's knowledge, and the third called *tafwīd* or delegation, is where the person is content to accept God's judgement equally, whether it gives him some worldly benefit or deprives him of it.[31]

Jīlānī is quick to point out that there is no contradiction between having complete trust and working with the material means of acquisition (*kasb*). One cannot deny *kasb* as this is in concordance with the outer being of the person (*ẓāhir*); to deny this would be to deny the *sunna*. The outer being of the person—that is his body and limbs—need to work and follow the *asbāb* (secondary causes) that exist within the world, and this is in conformity with God's command. However, the person in their inner being (*bāṭin*) and heart must have trust in God, that anything really can only come through His decree and that if something does happen after one has fulfilled the *asbāb*, it is because that is how God has decreed it to be. So while to deny *kasb* would be to deny the *sunna*, to deny complete trust would be to deny *īmān* or faith.[32]

3.3 Ḥusn al-Khulq

Ḥusn al-khulq is having a good character and morally upright behaviour. Jīlānī shows the importance of *ḥusn al-khulq* by pointing to the fact that although the Prophet was given many miracles, virtues, and special gifts, he was not praised for any of them as he was for his character; in the Qur'ān he is told, "And you are indeed of a splendid character."[33] Jīlānī does not give any explanation of his own by what exactly is meant by *ḥusn al-khulq*, nor does he give—as he often does—a synthesising position whereby he collects one or two sayings or opinions and brings them together. Rather, he leaves the understanding of *ḥusn al-khulq* to the quotation of various forerunners, including the explanation that it is the character of somebody who has no *himma* (aspiration) other than God,

31 Ibid. 646–647.
32 Ibid. 650.
33 Qur'ān 68:4.

and that it consists in not attaching any importance to that which is withheld from you, while attaching great importance to that which is given to you. With regard to *ḥusn al-khulq* with God, Jīlānī tells us that it consists in obeying His commands and staying away from that which He has prohibited.[34]

3.4 Shukr

Thankfulness or gratefulness is ultimately the acknowledgement of the blessings that one has been given. It also consists in giving praise to the one who has given any benefit by making mention of his beneficence. Therefore in relation to God, it would consist in offering Him plentiful praise, being completely obedient to His commands and prohibitions, and thanking him inwardly from the heart. Making full use of the gifts that one has been bestowed by God is also a form of thankfulness, in the same way as if one were to receive a gift from a friend or from someone they greatly respected; one would make sure to use the gift well and not misuse it.[35]

3.5 Ṣabr

Jīlānī divides patience into three types: patience for God, which is patience in obeying his commands and prohibitions; patience with God, which is being patient with what God has decreed for one, including tribulations, afflictions, and all the bad experiences one has; and patience in God, which is to be patient in waiting to receive all that He has promised, whether it be sustenance, success or admittance to Paradise. However, the most commonly discussed form of patience is the second one. When one is afflicted with an illness or physical pain then one is to understand it as being atonement for one's sins (*kaffāra*) and a way of having one's spiritual station raised. In fact Jīlānī quotes a *ḥadīth* whereby the Prophet explains that in the development of a person there comes a point where the person cannot advance through their own actions but rather must bear the pain and infliction of the body. With such an understanding it should become easier for one to be patient in the face of trials.[36] In the *Fatḥ al-Rabbanī*, Jīlānī writes that a person without patience is a person without religion, and defines patience there as not complaining to anybody, not attaching to any secondary causes, not hating the presence of tribulation, and not wanting or desiring for it to cease.[37]

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34 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 651–653.

35 Ibid. 653–654.

36 Ibid. 657–658.

37 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, n.d.) 160.

Patience is the source of all good and safety in this world and the next, and through it a believer moves to the state of satisfaction and concordance, and then to annihilation (*fanā'*).[38] One should therefore be careful of neglecting it and thus losing out much good in this world and the next.[39] A fully patient person should not complain about anything and should ultimately show no difference between being in a state of blessing and being in a state of tribulation. Rather, both states should be experienced in an equal manner, and this step necessarily contains the next foundational aspect, which is *riḍā*.

3.6 Riḍā

This is being completely satisfied with the decree of God. If one is able to be content then it is good, but if one is not able to be content then one must be patient. Thus the anxiety and trouble that one experiences is in direct proportion to their quarrel with destiny. When someone is content with their destiny than they can rest and not trouble themselves, while someone who is always busy trying to alter their destiny will only experience frustration and anxiety.[40] Jīlānī also makes clear that *riḍā* is being satisfied with one's position and state, even if it is not that of an ascetic because it means that one is not desirous of a raise in one's situation. Thus one should avoid wishing for a change of circumstance, whether it would make one materially richer or poorer. One should rather be making an endeavour to make the most of one's situation; what is ultimately destined for someone will reach them and therefore it does not make sense for one to waste one's time chasing it. In addition to all this Jīlānī highlights the fact that God knows what is better for every single person than any person knows themselves. This is another reason for one to be content with one's situation.[41]

3.7 Ṣidq

This is a very high quality and as an actual rank is considered by Jīlānī as second only to prophethood (*nubuwwa*). There are those who are truthful (*ṣādiq*), and those who have attained the highest level of truthfulness (*ṣiddīq*). As for the truthful people then they do not differ in what they believe in private and what they declare in public, while the *ṣiddīq* or completely truthful person is not only truthful in words, but in actions and states.[42] There are many people

38 On *fanā'* see below.
39 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 55.
40 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 659.
41 Ibid. 660.
42 Ibid. 664.

who do good deeds of varying measure, but the *ṣiddīq* is differentiated by having forsaken all of his sins, both major and minor. They also give up their desires (*shahawāt*) as well as things that are otherwise neutral and permissible in the *sharīʿa* (*mubāḥ muṭlaq*). They go beyond the usual observances of the righteous people and thus the usual order of things is rearranged for them. They receive their provision (*rizq*) from sources that they could never imagine, and this type of person can progress through forty spiritual levels in a single day.[43] A *siddīq*'s love is described by Jīlānī as the only real love, this being the love of God, a love that never changes and consists not only of love through faith, but with certainty and direct perception.[44] Destiny is sweeter to them than the satisfaction of their carnal desires, and they are also able to smell the acceptance and truth of one another and in this way are able to seek each other out.[45]

4 Travelling the Path

In the *Ghunya* Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī does not present a theory of the spiritual path and the method of travelling upon it—whether in terms of its stages or its experiences—and nor does he do this in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* or the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*. In fact we have already examined everything in regards to this from the *Ghunya*, and although the text is in essence a guide, the actual travel along the spiritual path, as we have seen, requires an aid in terms of a teacher or shaykh. In the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* we find Jīlānī commenting that "whosoever does not have a shaykh, then Iblīs is his shaykh. Follow the learned scholars … Have you not heard the saying whosoever follows his own opinion will go astray?"[46] This is a very important aspect, that although one can learn much from a book the spiritual path itself cannot be traversed without a teacher. Thus we find in the *Ghunya* that Jīlānī gives advice on prerequisites that one must prepare with before embarking on the path, and on other things such as how to find an appropriate teacher, but does not delve into giving a detailed step-by-step guide on how to proceed from there. This intended omission, however, does not leave us completely in the dark. From the speeches and advice he gives to his own students—which can be found in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*—we can extract the basic method for spiritual advancement that is propagated by Jīlānī, or at least as found in these discourses.

43 Ibid, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 70.
44 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 94.
45 Ibid. 63 and 216.
46 Ibid. 165.

However, we must point out here that any method that we now expound, based on what can be found in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, was meant for the audience that it was originally addressed to. With the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* the situation is clear. Being most certainly a collection of his speeches we can be sure that its words were, in the first instance, meant for those to whom it was addressed. The lectures were given variously in the *ribāṭ* and in the *madrasa*, and we cannot be sure whether the ordering of the text, and what was and was not to be included was done by Jīlānī himself. With the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* the matter is a little different. This text was compiled by the author from—it would seem—speeches or discourses that he gave, and that these were then put together in their respective order and manner by the direction of the author himself, where he meant for the book to be a text for general students.[47] He writes in the introduction:

> From that which is possible to be expressed by the tongue, conveyed through speech, written by the hand and explained through discourse, are the following words (i.e. the book) which arose in me and manifested themselves through openings of the unseen, settling down in my soul and occupying the space, until arising and being produced in a true state, they manifested themselves by the kindness and mercy of the Lord in the most fitting format for seekers of the truth and students.[48]

We may also note that later on in the book we find Jīlānī stating to the reader that "you are from amongst the scholars of God and from the teachers of good, from the leaders and those who guide and call to the religion."[49] On first glance this may seem as if it is being addressed to a scholarly class, and those already learned in the religion. However, it would not have been expected that such a book would have been read by those not belonging to the literary class anyway, all of whom would have at least had a basic religious educational grounding and we can further emphasise this by referring back to the quote from the introduction where he writes that the book is for 'seekers of the path and students.' This we can take to be a basic assumption of all the books. In fact we find within these texts numerous exhortations by Jīlānī to firstly acquire knowledge before withdrawing for the spiritual path: "seclusion is after observing the laws

47 It is also claimed that it was written for his son ʿĪsā, see ʿĀshiq Ilāhī Mīrtī, *Fuyūḍ Yazdānī, Tarjama li Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* (Dehli: Rabbānī Book Depot, n.d.) 11.

48 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 9.

49 Ibid. 57.

of the *sharīʿa*," "complete your studies, then retire," "observe the laws, and seek knowledge, because knowledge is what will uncover for you (what is right and wrong), learn the *sharīʿa* then retire," and "the believer is one who learns what is required of him and then withdraws from the creation and devotes himself to the worship of his Lord."[50] The message here is clear; one cannot attempt to travel along the spiritual path and expect advancement without firstly studying and becoming aware of the *sharīʿa*. So once one has become familiar with the rules of the *sharīʿa*, how then is one to proceed in this matter?

4.1 *The Four States*

Jīlānī talks of four general states that a person can be in, and these form the basis of our understanding of the spiritual path. The person starts off in what may be termed 'the natural state' or 'the state of nature' whereby he lives and behaves according to his natural urges. "He is not in a state of worship to his Lord, and nor does he give any concern to the sacred law, being unrestrained by any of its limits."[51] Such a person in essence follows his own whims and desires as he pleases. Although the person might believe himself to be free by following his own 'will', in reality he is a slave to himself, being ruled by his lower self (*nafs*), following his natural impulses and attempting to fulfil his carnal desires. Such a person may at some point be viewed by God with mercy and may then be sent a guide or adviser by God, as well as something from within himself, to help extricate himself from this state. The spiritual training in its most elementary form begins here.

The removal of oneself out of this state is achieved simply through following the *sharīʿa*. To begin with the person's adviser or shaykh will put them on a regime of following the *sharīʿa* with all the dispensations or concessions (*rukhaṣ*) that are afforded by the *sharīʿa*. This will allow the person to maintain an adherence to the *sharīʿa* as much as possible without it becoming a task too difficult to sustain. Then as the person gains strength in being able to abide by the rules of the *sharīʿa*, the adviser will begin to take away the dispensations, one by one, until the person is now following the *ʿaẓīma* or stricter interpretation of the *sharīʿa*. In following the *sharīʿa* one is in essence avoiding its prohibitions and maintaining its obligations, initially through opposing one's own *nafs* which may feel attracted by the prohibited and uninterested in the obligated. Through this practice one begins to move away from following one's natural impulses and attempts to bring one's *nafs* in line with what is

50 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 329, 339, 334.
51 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 87.

acceptable in light of the *sharīʿa*. Once one is completely comfortable in sticking to the *sharīʿa*, then they are truly in the second state, which Jīlānī sometimes refers to as that of *taqwa* or piety.[52]

When a person thus sticks to following the strict interpretation of the law, the love for God will develop within his heart and this will bring him to the threshold of sainthood (*wilāya*), and once this love is firmly established then sainthood from God will come: "master this outer law with practice then you will see the goodness of His nearness."[53] We may at this point be able to better appreciate the importance of the exhortations of Jīlānī mentioned earlier, about studying the *sharīʿa* and learning its rules and regulations before attempting to travel the path, for how could one traverse the path without having any knowledge of what one should be avoiding and what one should be practising. Put simply "one must always guard oneself against any infringements of the *sharīʿa*, here meaning its reality (*maʿāni*), and not its form (*ṣūra*) … there is nothing that one needs that is outside the sphere of the *sharīʿa*."[54]

In this next state of sainthood the person lives by inner command and has renounced his whims, urges and desires (*shahwāt*), and is ordered or forbidden in actions by his heart. At this stage there is more than just following the *sharīʿa* because the saint must wait to see what messages his heart gives him in the form of inner commands rather than just following the letter of the law, although there can of course be no inner command that goes against the *sharīʿa*. Rather, there are likely to be things that are permitted in the *sharīʿa* but disallowed for the saint, or things that are not obligatory in the *sharīʿa* but compulsory for the saint. The saint has also reached a stage where the deceptions of this world are clear to see and they do not fool him. He is therefore expected to be able to stand more rigorous tests; he is visited by *jinn* and angels that appear to him in disguise for such a purpose.[55] The sign of the saint is total dependence on God, complete patience in the face of misfortune, and a willing acceptance of the divine decree.[56]

However, in the complete journey to God, sainthood is only the third state of four, the fourth state often being termed *badaliyya*, as well as being described as the state of knowledge (*maʿrifa*).[57] This is a state where the person becomes

52 Ibid. 97.
53 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 308.
54 Ibid. 53.
55 Ibid. 94–95.
56 Ibid. 112, 348.
57 The *badal* meaning substitute is often thought of as coming from the fact that as soon as one of the *abdāl* dies, he or she is replaced by another, keeping the total number of

extinct to himself (*fanā'*) and his self-will disappears. This person does not exert any effort in trying to obtain things, but rather is taken care of by God. He does not concern himself with anything and is stripped of personal volition, all this being accompanied with an effortless observance of the limits of the *sharī'a*. While the saint is the possessor of states (*ḥāl*), the *badal* (plural: *abdāl*) is the possessor of stations (*maqām*), states being temporary conditions while stations are permanent.[58] The transition from sainthood to *badaliyya* involves going through the process of *fanā'*, and the exact meaning of this will be examined in a little more detail below. Beyond sainthood and *badaliyya*, there lies only prophethood (*nubuwwa*), something that can no longer be attained by any person after the coming of the last prophet, for as Jīlānī says, "messengership (*risāla*) and prophethood have expired, while sainthood is still available."[59]

Jīlānī is clear in pointing out that although one cannot make any of this happen, if one exerts oneself with true sincerity then they can definitely expect help from God, because "the supplication is from you while the answer to it is from God, the endeavour is from you while success in the matter is from God, be truthful and sincere in your quest and you will be shown the door of nearness to Him."[60] Another aspect that must be given importance throughout ones journey is being constantly aware and conscious of what one is doing. We see Jīlānī talking of real remembrance being remembrance of the heart rather than of the tongue, and he asserts that "whoever remembers God with his heart then he is the real *dhākir* (one who remembers), but whoever does not remember God with his heart then he is not really one who remembers."[61] Remembrance through the tongue without consciousness in the heart is not as effective as the other way around, for "the tongue is the servant and follower of the heart."[62] And this is not only restricted to the remembrance (*dhikr*) but is the case for all actions because "an atom's weight deed of the heart is a thousand times bet-

abdāl always constant, some say at forty others sixty, see Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, *al-Ḥāwī lī-l-Fatāwī fī l-Fiqh wa 'Ulūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ḥadīth wa al-Uṣūl wa al-Naḥw wa al-I'rāb wa Sā'ir al-Funūn*, 2 vols. (2; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000) 229–242. However, we also have an explanation mentioned by Jīlānī that "The people of God are the substitutes (*abdāl*) of the prophets," perhaps indicating that persons of the rank of *badal* are persons in place of the prophets, meaning that the Earth will never be devoid of such people at any time, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 112, 190.

58 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 20.

59 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 331.

60 Ibid. 103.

61 Ibid. 106.

62 Ibid.

ter than a mere external one."[63] Thus it is not just about physical movement, but rather physical movement with an awareness of the heart, and this is the case in all places and at all times, and applies even when one is avoiding certain actions that are forbidden. A loss of restraint (*waraʿ*) leads to a loss of perception in the heart and thus one's aim must be to remain God-conscious all of the time, for restraint is the beginning of that which brings one close to God.[64] We may also remind ourselves here of the seventh of the ten qualities that one must try to attain, that one must stay clear of sinful offences and restrain one's limbs from such offences, implementation of which brings the quickest effect to the heart and body.[65]

We can also now see the importance of moving from the dispensations of the *sharīʿa* to its strict observance. Jīlānī quotes the second Caliph ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as saying that "we used to avoid nine tenths of the permissible to avoid falling into the forbidden," as well as the Prophet's saying that "every king has a forbidden area and the forbidden area of God are His prohibited things; whoever hovers around a forbidden area is prone to fall into it."[66] Jīlānī also gives the metaphor of somebody wanting protection in a king's fortress that has an outer gate and a few levels of inner gates. The person will be safer within all the gates rather than just being inside the first outer gate, for the more gates he is behind then the safer he will be.[67] It is the same with dispensations, for if one is keeping to the strict interpretation of the *sharīʿa* and is afflicted with some difficulty, then he may fall back to the dispensations, whereas a person who is already following the dispensations is liable to find himself doing forbidden things. In the interests of one's own safety and welfare, one should therefore try to stick to the stricter interpretation of the *sharīʿa*, for "there is danger in sticking to the dispensations, while safety is with the strict interpretation."[68] This training of the *sharīʿa* and *ādāb* in the *Ghunya* can be understood in the same light. We may repeat the analogy given in the *Ghunya* of the city and its series of five protective walls, the inner ones being progressively stronger. The city is like one's faith (*īmān*), where the inner-most wall is equivalent to conviction (*īqān*), with the next wall being sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), the next being the observance of all the obligatory duties (*farāʾiḍ*), the next being completion of the recommended acts (*sunan*) and the last, outer-most wall being the preser-

63 Ibid. 339.
64 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 78–79.
65 Ibid. 119. The ten qualities were mentioned above in the section on *mujāhada*.
66 Ibid. 62, 92.
67 Ibid. 63.
68 Ibid.

vation of one's behaviour and manners or *ādāb*. In as much as the outer-most wall is kept secure, all the other walls will remain secure, so keeping guard over one's *ādāb* will ensure the safeguarding of all the other facets of one's faith just mentioned.[69]

There are a few important themes that run throughout both the *Futūh al-Ghayb* and the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* that play an important role in an understanding of the path, and these will now be addressed. These are namely, the *nafs*, trials and tribulations, *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt*, destiny, *fanā'* or annihilation, and most importantly the role and importance of the figure of the Prophet. This is followed by a brief discussion on the practice of *samā'*.

4.2 *Breaking the* Nafs

The *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* are full of advice and counsel—some of it very stern—on 'breaking' or 'taming' the *nafs*. The *nafs*, which is the soul of the human, is very often talked about in negative terms, especially in Sufi works, and the texts in consideration here are no different. However, it is the *nafs al-ammāra bī-al-sū'*, or the *nafs* that commands to evil that is usually being referred to, and is termed just *nafs* as a shorthand, because it is expected that what is meant will be understood by the reader. This *nafs* then, is the thing that causes one to indulge in matters prohibited by the *sharī'a*, as well as making one reliant on material means (*asbāb*), and other creatures.[70] The *nafs* desires the luxuries, extravagances, and vanities of this world, a world that is described by Jīlānī as being "soft to the touch on the outside" while being "savage and voracious on the inside, quick to destroy."[71] Jīlānī compares this world to a naked person exposed and openly defecating without any shame. Just as one would avert one's gaze from the nakedness and hold one's nose against the stench, so should one behave with regard to this world, at least until one has escaped from its influence and effects.[72] One must give up striving to acquire worldly benefits or believe that any harm or good can come because of any creature.[73] One's task in this regard therefore is to oppose the *nafs* by allying oneself with the divine truth, for "all good lies in opposing it, at all times and in all states."[74]

How is one to practically achieve this opposition? It is done by sticking to the *sharī'a*, "checking all actions against the Qur'ān and *sunna*", and "not stepping

69 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 98.
70 Other creatures really being just secondary causes as well (*asbāb*).
71 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 13.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid. 14.
74 Ibid. 22.

outside of these two."[75] One must refuse to follow its impulses and urges, for "one will control it, or it will take control," and its disobedience is to be treated by "punishing it with hunger, thirst, humiliation, austerity, and seclusion in a place where there is no other creature for company."[76] Through such training one should aim to expel the *hawā* or base desires of the *nafs*. However, the task is not an easy one and for this reason one must persevere with patience, for it is only through "practicing patience and opposing the base desires, sticking to the commands and becoming satisfied with the divine decree, that one can hope to receive the divine bounty and reward."[77] One should at most only feed the *nafs* its due, what it needs at a minimum and only that which is permitted by the *sharīʿa*.[78]

This struggle against the *nafs* must continue until the *nafs* changes from one that incites evil to one that is in a tranquil state, not only satisfied, but desirous of that which the heart prefers and which is in agreement with the *sharīʿa*. In other words "until it (the *nafs*) commands with what the two (the heart and the *sirr* or inner consciousness) command, and cautions against what they caution, and chooses what they choose, and at this point it becomes a *nafs muṭmaʾinna* or a tranquil *nafs*, and they are all three in agreement with a single purpose and a single aim. When the *nafs* reaches such a state then it deserves respite from the struggle against it."[79] When the believer does this then his *nafs* transforms into a heart (or as Jīlānī says in another place, it moulds with the heart) by attaining the understanding or consciousness of a heart (*qalb*)—the heart being able to distinguish between right and wrong—and the heart becomes an inner consciousness (*sirr*).[80] In short, the pleasures of the *nafs* are external while the pleasures of the heart are internal, and one cannot receive the pleasures of the heart until the pleasures of the *nafs* have been turned down. Only then will the allotted portions of the heart's pleasures be received. This will continue until the heart is enriched with them at which point the *nafs* will attain mercy from God and receive its allotted shares of pleasures. However, this *nafs* is now a tranquil one (*nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*), and its nature is in line with the heart so that one does not have to struggle against it in the same way as before.[81]

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75 Ibid. 23.
76 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 56.
77 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 25.
78 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 76.
79 Ibid. 233.
80 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 117, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 360.
81 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 81.

A final brief comment may be given to the *sirr*, which has already been mentioned a few times. It can be variously translated as inner consciousness, secret, inner being, or mystery.[82] While the heart is that which allows one to distinguish between right and wrong, the *sirr* is the seat of inner knowledge (*maʿrifa*), it is the location for receiving divine inspiration, and it even has the ability to read what is destined for oneself from the preserved tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*).[83] In its relation to the rest of the body, it is described by Jīlānī as being "the king, while the heart is its prime minister and the *nafs*, tongue and limbs their servants. The *sirr* drinks from the sea of the Almighty, the heart from the *sirr*, the tranquil *nafs* from the heart, the tongue from the *nafs*, and the limbs from the tongue."[84] The *sirr* can therefore be viewed as the most subtle element within the spiritual body, which must be primed for inspiration (*ilhām*), and to receive the truth.

4.3 *Experiencing Tribulation*

Trials and tribulations in their various forms—including illness, loss of wealth or family and friends, hunger, humiliation, and all other general misfortunes—play an important role within the life of a believer, and there are a few reasons that explain why such trials must occur. Foremost is the reason that tribulations work as a form of expiation and purification from one's sins, and Jīlānī quotes the Prophet as saying that "one day's fever atones for a year's sins."[85] However for many people, tribulations are simply punishment for sins and crimes that they have committed, and this is the most basic level for which one may experience them.[86] Better than this is for the tribulation to be an expiation and purification, while the best is for it to occur in order to raise one's spiritual rank and level, although it is not necessary for these reasons to be mutually exclusive.[87] In every capacity therefore, tribulations are for bringing one to the door of God and away from other creatures and oneself. The natural course of events when one is afflicted is to try and deal with the problem by oneself, exhaustion of which will lead one to others, perhaps experts in the subject matter of the affliction. When the avenue of aid from others has been exhausted without solution, then will the person turn to his lord, often as a final resort, and

82 For more detail on the sirr see ʿAbd al-Qāhir [*sic*] al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (Beirut: Dār al-Qutub al-ʿArabī, 1983), Mohammad Amir-Moezzi, 'Sirr', *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 12; Leiden: Brill), 752.

83 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 74.

84 Ibid. 225.

85 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 37.

86 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 60.

87 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 88.

beseech Him for His help. At this stage the person is convinced that the affliction cannot be removed by any power within himself or in any other creature, but can only come from God himself.[88] However, "in as much as the person is able to resolve the problem himself, he will not look towards the rest of creation, and in as much as he finds the solution with other creatures he will not turn to his creator," and so in this way the tribulation brings the person closer to God.[89]

Another benefit of experiencing tribulations is that they "strengthen one's heart and one's certitude, allow one to realise faith and patience and weaken the *nafs* and one's whims and desires (*hawā*)."[90] This is because the more one feels pain and sorrow, yet perseveres with patience and acceptance of his situation and the workings of his lord, the more God becomes pleased with the person and his offerings of thanks, and ultimately affords him assistance and success in his endeavour.[91] For Jīlānī the truth of this is borne out by the Qur'ānic verse "if you are thankful then I will indeed increase you."[92] In addition to this is the fact that when God loves someone he puts them through trials and tribulations, and if they are patient then God takes this person unto Himself.[93] However, each person is only tried according to his level of faith, meaning that the most severely tried of all people are the messengers and prophets of God—messengers being more so than prophets—and the most severely tried of these was the Prophet Muḥammad.[94] Thus one should not try to escape from tribulations, because if one is able to bear them out with patience, then it becomes the foundation of every goodness, and "if one is not able to bear out tribulations with patience then they have no foundation."[95] Jīlānī gives the analogy of pieces of raw gold being put through the furnace of the goldsmith, being hammered and shaped by his tools, and then being turned into the most exquisite jewellery, fit to decorate the bride of a king. In the same way tribulations put a believer through much difficulty, but if they are patient then they will end up close to the Lord both in this life and the hereafter.[96]

One must also remain careful of falling into unbelief when being tested with tribulations by becoming suspicious or angry with God, for God may then

88 Ibid. 10–11.
89 Ibid. 101.
90 Ibid. 40.
91 Ibid. 41.
92 Ibid. from Qur'ān 15:7.
93 Ibid. 56.
94 Ibid. 40.
95 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 20.
96 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 52.

deprive such a person of their faith. Such a situation is the worst that one can find oneself in, because it would mean that the person has a miserable life in this world and an even more miserable one in the next.[97] Thus one must never resent the tribulation even after it seems that one's supplications have gone unanswered, for He may delay the response, or reward the person with something better.[98] At all times the believer must remain certain that the tribulation is for some benefit, for the *nafs* can only have two states: unbelief or tribulation. In light of this one's response to all situations can also only be of two states: patience when being tried, or giving thanks in all other situations—if not for any other reason then at least because at that time one is not being tried.[99] A final point worth noting is the fact that if it was not for tribulations then anyone would be able to lay claim to sainthood. It is only through being tested with tribulations that true saints are made, because only they are able to bear the experience with true patience, and in this, they are able to go beyond ordinary people.[100]

4.4 Aḥwāl *and* Maqāmāt

It seems appropriate at this point to explain briefly what the terms *ḥāl* and *maqām* mean when used by Jīlānī in a technical sense. Both *ḥāl* (pl. *aḥwāl*), meaning a state, and *maqām* (pl. *maqāmāt*), meaning a station, refer to spiritual conditions that a Sufi practitioner may find himself in. There is no single *ḥāl* or *maqām*, but rather many *aḥwāl* and *maqāmāt*. Throughout his texts Jīlānī uses many other terms when talking about stages and levels that one can pass through, such as *darajāt* (levels) and *manāzil* (waystations), but these seem to be used in a non-technical sense and refer simply to different stages of the path that one may find oneself in.[101] In contrast to this type of usage, both *ḥāl* and *maqām* are used to refer to specific states and stations that are known to exist along the Sufi path. It seems pertinent then to answer the question of what exactly the difference between a *ḥāl* and a *maqām* is, if any?

In the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, Jīlānī comments that the believer is the possessor of *aḥwāl* while the gnostic (*ʿārif*) is the possessor of *maqāmāt*. The difference between these two, we are told, is that the *ḥāl* is subject to change while the *maqām* is not. Although they can both be considered a 'state' that one finds oneself in, the *ḥāl* can be understood to be more of a temporary occurrence,

97 Ibid. 53–54.
98 Ibid. 60.
99 Ibid. 72–73 and 92, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 45.
100 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 227.
101 Ibid. 53.

and the *maqām* as a more permanent situation. Thus, writes Jīlānī, the believer is always afraid that he may lose his *ḥāl* and though he shows happiness on his face, yet his heart is always sad. The gnostic on the other hand is in a much better position. Confirmed in his station his heart is happy even if this is not shown on his face. He may seem stern, but that is because he must warn the people and give commands and prohibitions on behalf of the Prophet.[102] In the *Ghunya* the picture is further clarified. When discussing *riḍā*, Jīlānī delves into the question of whether it is a *ḥāl* or a *maqām*, the people of Iraq considering it to be a *ḥāl* while the people of Khurasan considering it to be a *maqām*. The difference we are told is again the fact that the *ḥāl* is like a visitation to the person (*nāzila*), a temporary occurrence, while the *maqām* is not. Furthermore the *ḥāl* is not something that can be earned (through *kasb*), it simply comes and goes, perhaps being replaced with a different *ḥāl*, while the *maqām* on the other hand, is earned through one's deeds. The *maqām* of *riḍā*, the people of Khurasan maintain, is the final stage of *tawakkul* and is the highest *maqām* that can be attained, and is therefore the highest level that one can attain through one's own deeds. Jīlānī reconciles the two views by stating that the initial stage of *riḍā* is a *maqām* and so is earned while the later stage of *riḍā* is a *ḥāl* and so cannot be earned but is rather a state that one simply finds oneself in.[103]

For every specific state and station there are specific acts of worship that are to be done, specific sins that are to be avoided, and specific laws and conditions that are to be observed. If one complies with whatever these specific things are in any given state or station, then it constitutes worship in itself, while neglecting it is counted as committing sin.[104] There is also an appropriate measure of fear and hope in God in every state and station, meaning that not every supplication made to God is answered, regardless of which state or station one is in. It may be that it results in the person not desiring for anything other than God, which is a good state to be in, but this in itself means that the person would not expect every request of his that is put to God to be fulfilled.[105] Finally, for every person on the path there is a level of consciousness (*yaqẓa*) that is in accordance with his state or station. By consciousness what is meant here is the level of awareness of reality, and the spiritual depth that a person has, the Prophet therefore having had the highest level of consciousness which cannot be reached by anyone else.[106]

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102 Ibid. 232.
103 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 660.
104 Ibid. 214.
105 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 74.
106 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 189.

We are not in any of Jīlānī's texts given a comprehensive or ordered list of the states and stations, or even the stages that exist along the spiritual path such as was done by the earlier Ḥanbalī, ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī, although there are a few 'positions' that are regularly mentioned in all the texts.[107] These include *wilāya*, *badaliyya*, *ghawthiyya*, *quṭbiyya* and *ṣiddīqiyya*, but it would seem that none of these are a *ḥāl* or a *maqām* except for maybe *ṣiddīqiyya*.[108] With regard to saints and *abdāl*, writes Jīlānī, it is the saints that have states that are changeable, while the *abdāl* have stations that are permanent.[109] This would seem to suggest that *wilāya* and *badaliyya* are not either states or stations themselves but are rather more like stages or positions or even roles that exist from within which one can be in a particular state or station. This seems to be substantiated by the statement that "there is nothing beyond *wilāya* and *badaliyya* except prophethood (*nubuwwa*)." However, we also have other statements where *badaliyya* and *ghawthiyya* are mentioned as the highest stages, and yet others where *quṭbiyya* is mentioned as being beyond *badaliyya* and *ghawythiyya*, such as when he writes that, "one moves from faith to conviction and then comes to *wilāya* and *badaliyya* and *ghawthiyya*, finally perhaps attaining *quṭbiyya*."[110] This last statement seems to suggest an ordering where *ghawthiyya* is higher than *badaliyya*, and *quṭbiyya* a step even higher. In the description of the path given above we saw that one moves from the state or position of *īmān* to that of sainthood or *wilāya* and then to *badaliyya*. It would seem then that both *ghawthiyya* and *quṭbiyya* are within *badaliyya* (just as *badaliyya* is within *wilāya* or sainthood), but that there is the plain *badal* and then within the *badal* is a *ghawth* who is higher than that, and there is one who is higher even than he who is the *quṭb*. This, aside from fitting in with the picture presented by other medieval Sufi writers, also seems to be supported by Jīlānī writing that "the *badal* is the minister of the *quṭb* and eats through the action of God, while the *quṭb*'s eating and behaviour are like the eating and behaviour of the Prophet, because he (the *quṭb*) is like his (the Prophet's) servant, deputy and representative in the Muslim community (*umma*)," and that "the *quṭb* car-

107 ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī wrote of ten major stations along the path being divided into another ten making a hundred waystations, see ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī, *Kitāb Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* (Maktaba al-Sharq al-Jadīd, 1990). On ʿAbdullāh Anṣārī see Ravan Farhadi, *Abdullah Ansari of Herat, (1006–1089 CE): an early sufi master* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996).

108 Jīlānī often mentions the *ṣiddīq* as a state and one that is a status rank rather than a position such as the *quṭb*. See al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 664. On the other positions see for example al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 36.

109 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 20.

110 Ibid. 97–98, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 101.

ries the burdens of the entire Muslim community." The *quṭb* in another place is described as the *khalīfa bāṭin* or Spiritual Caliph of the Muslim community, leaving no doubt that this is a singular spiritual functional position of the highest rank, because just as there can only be one Caliph at the head of the Muslim community, thus can there be only one *quṭb* at the head of the spiritual community.[111]

4.5 *Dealing with Destiny*

The basic idea here is that all things within one's life have been predestined and decreed by God. Once one has grasped this idea then it becomes clear that one cannot obtain any benefit or be afflicted with any harm except that it was already decreed by God. Put simply, "what hits you was never going to miss you, while what misses you could never have hit you."[112] It therefore logically follows from this that the best course of action that one can take is to submit all one's affairs to God and to solely rely upon him, because ultimately He is the only one that can bring one benefit or harm, wealth or poverty, success or failure. If this is the case then there certainly seems no logic in getting agitated and wasting time in attempting to pursue things that one will never obtain, and Jīlānī quotes a saying in this regard that "one of the severest punishments is to seek that which is not in one's allotted share (and therefore that which one will never obtain)."[113] Rather if those things are meant for a person then they will come to them regardless of whether they want them or not. Even supplication to God (*duʿā*) cannot change the decree, unless the supplication has already been destined as part of the decree, in which case the supplication itself and its answer only occur at the requisite time for when they were destined.[114] It is also of interest to note that Iblīs, the devil, cannot change or have any effect on destiny either.[115] In fact at all times one should only be in one of two situations with regard to this matter, either making supplication to God with prayer and humble asking, for God has Himself urged His servants to ask Him for their

111 See for example both the Khabr al-Daal ʿalā Wujūd al-Quṭb wa al-Awtād wa al-Nujabāʾ wa al-Abdāl of Suyūtī in, al-Suyūtī, *al-Ḥāwī lī-l-Fatāwī fī l-Fiqh wa ʿUlūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ḥadīth wa al-Uṣūl wa al-Naḥw wa al-ʿIʿrāb wa Sāʾir al-Funūn* pp. 229–242, and, Muḥammad Ibn ʿĀbidīn, Ijābat al-Ghawth: Bayān Ḥāl al-Nuqabā wa al-Nujabāʾ wa al-Abdāl wa al-Awtād wa al-Ghawthʾ, *Majmūʿat Rasāʾil* (2; Damascus: Maktaba al-Hāshimiyya, 1907), 263–281. al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 198 and 328.

112 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 53.

113 Ibid. 75.

114 Ibid. 105.

115 Ibid. 39–40.

needs, or in complete acceptance of the decree of destiny, giving thanks with every blessing and being patient through every tribulation.[116]

Jīlānī is quick to clarify however that this does not mean that one should believe in the determinist doctrine of the Jabariyya, where the role of human effort is completely negated, and we are already aware of what his opinion on this matter is in the theology section of the *Ghunya*. He states this doctrine again in the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, that "actions are created by God and acquired by His servants."[117] One must be careful therefore in sticking to the *sunna* of the Prophet whose procedure was to earn his living but in whose state was reliance upon God.[118] One should also be aware of the fact that as far as one is concerned "destiny is veiled in darkness," and that one should therefore refrain from acting as if one's outcome is already settled because everything is already decreed. While this is correct from an absolute view, as far as each individual is concerned it is a matter unknown and mysterious (there being exceptions to this general rule), and one's only path through the 'darkness of destiny' is with "the lamp of the book of God and the *sunna* of the Prophet."[119] The state that one should therefore strive to attain and ask for in every situation, 'good' or 'bad', is not removal but rather contentment, "for one knows not wherein lies the good."[120] Both good and evil come from the working of God, and evil is not something that exists outside the domain of His creation. Jīlānī likens good and evil with fruits from two branches of the same tree, one branch producing a sweet variety and the other producing a bitter one. Staying close to the tree and familiarising oneself with its two branches allows one to always pick the sweet fruit and remain clear of the bitter variety. However if one were to move far away from the tree and come across some of its fruit, then one would not be able to distinguish the bitter from the sweet and may end up eating from the bitter variety, which would then be the cause of all kinds of injuries and disasters. One's safety therefore lies in remaining close to this tree, which translates into one always remaining obedient to God and taking care in observing His commands and prohibitions, because both good and evil come from God, just as both fruit varieties came from the same tree. Such a person would then be protected by God from all evil, religious as well as worldly.[121]

116 Ibid. 61–62 and 31–32.
117 Ibid. 22–23.
118 Ibid. 66.
119 Ibid. 23.
120 Ibid. 107.
121 Ibid. 48–49.

Destiny can however be very painful when one's faith is weak, and this is like one who is still a child spiritually. However as one grows and becomes a youth, one is able to persevere through it with patience, and then maturing further, bears it with acceptance, while finally as one becomes near to his Lord one finds oneself in complete contentment.[122] This final category of people though few in number consists of those not bothered by destiny, because their hearts are intoxicated by the drug of intimacy, of witnessing, and nearness to God.[123] These people receive their allotted shares without desire or willing, although they do not in any way abstain from their shares, because their life is completely in line with the divine decree.[124] They are therefore beyond the simple asceticism whereby one abstains from the pleasures of this world, because their 'real asceticism' consists in the fact that nothing other than God can enter their hearts, for "their hearts are like cracked containers incapable of holding any liquid."[125] A person in such a state is protected by God generally, and specifically from making any breach in the *sharī'a*, and yet this occurs without any effort on the person's part because "standing in alignment with destiny is absolute ease."[126] If God then wills, He will put such a person on public display and make them famous that they may fulfil the aim of their destiny.[127] The most rare type of saint is the one who can read his own destiny from the preserved tablet (*lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*), and although such a person can see the working of God through the divine decree within all his fellow humans, he addresses them with the language of the law which consists in commands and prohibitions, because while he has attained such a level of knowledge, the general public would be unable to correctly comprehend this knowledge, because it is ultimately a secret.[128]

4.6 *Understanding* Fanā'

Fanā' was described in the succinct description of the spiritual path given above as 'extinction to oneself and the disappearance of one's self-will.'[129] In the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, Jīlānī gives the analogy of a dead body in the hands of someone washing it, who moves its limbs around as he pleases without any will or choice

122 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 94.
123 Ibid. 92.
124 Ibid. 69–70.
125 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 14.
126 Ibid. 89–90.
127 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 65. This seems to have been the case with Jīlānī, who claims to have gone through all the different stages outlined and ended up in the wings of destiny. This will be explored further in the next section.
128 Ibid. 74 and 228.
129 See above section 1.

on the part of the body itself, or as a polo ball, being knocked around and sent in all different directions, impacting other bodies, yet without any will of its own.[130] Does this mean that the person who goes through *fanā'* no longer has any will whatsoever? We can now attempt some further clarification on this matter by examining what else Jīlānī has to say about *fanā'*.

In the state of *fanā'* one does all actions solely through the workings of destiny which is then clarified by Jīlānī as "complete acceptance and execution of the blessings that are given to one, without any reference to the three things (the legal ruling, the inner command, and knowledge)."[131] The legal ruling is what one refers to in the second state of piety or *taqwa*—described in the path above—whereby one attempts to stick to the *sharīʿa* in everything one does, and checks the legal ruling concerning any matter or situation that one is presented with. The inner command is what concerns a person in the third state—that of sainthood—whereby one waits for an inner command to proceed, while knowledge is what is refered to in the fourth state of *badaliyya*. The above definition is described as 'the reality of *fanā*" (*ḥaqīqat al-fanā'*), where one becomes protected from any violation or breach of the *sharīʿa* and from any evil generally, as well as being in complete harmony with the will of God.[132] In another place *fanā'* is described as "reaching or attaining contact (*wuṣūl*) with God by leaving creation, desires, and willing, and becoming firmly in line with His action and without any movement on one's part, either with regard to oneself or to any other creature, but that rather any of this is done with His judgement, His command, and His action."[133] This means that no movement of such a person affects him or the rest of creation except that it is in line with and through the divine will.

In yet another place Jīlānī states that after *fanā'* one's allotted shares will be delivered and received without any effort on one's own part, given to one to be fully enjoyed because these shares were allotted through predestination. This itself is in complete agreement with the will of God. However, the human nature of such a person (or his natural state) will remain until death "so that one can partake in one's allotted shares, for if the nature of the human were to cease to exist then such a person would become an angel, and the divine wisdom would be lost."[134] Furthermore we find Jīlānī claiming:

130 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 11.
131 Ibid. 97.
132 Ibid. 98.
133 Ibid. 32.
134 Ibid. 96.

> Nobody is immune from self-will except the angels while only prophets are immune from their desires (*hawā*). As for the rest of creation, both humans and jinn, then they are all responsible and not immune of these two (desire and will), except that some of the saints are protected from desires while some of the *abdāl* are protected from their self-will. However, this protection is not complete for they may lapse from time to time but God extends His mercy to them and wakes them out of that.[135]

These two quotes serve to demonstrate that the will of a human never gets completely annihilated, and never completely disappears, even after *fanā'*. In fact we find that even in the case of the Prophet who was immune from desire and self-will, that "God gave His Prophet, upon him be blessings and peace, power over his own *nafs* and desires, in order that they would not harm him or cause him to struggle against them, this being in contradistinction to his community or nation."[136] It seems then that it would perhaps be more fitting to understand *fanā'* as the extinction of one's 'free choice' (*ikhtiyār*) in all matters, rather than one's actual will. Thus one could will something contrary to the divine decree yet would not be able to act except in accordance with the decree. The will and *nafs* of a person therefore continue to exist until death, but once one has gone through *fanā'*, then their natural disposition is in accordance with the divine decree, regardless of what their will might suggest.

4.7 *The Role of the Prophet*

The Prophet, as would be expected, plays a pivotal role in the Sufism of Jīlānī, but not only as a messenger who brought—along with the Qur'ān—the methodology that is to be followed in attaining the goal of reaching or getting closer to God. That is very clear in Jīlānī and we may quote him citing the Prophet that "whoever does an action without our authority in it, then he is rejected," and Jīlānī comments that "this includes the search for livelihood, one's actions, and one's words; we do not have a Prophet after him so let us follow him."[137] In the *Ghunya* he advises his readers that one should not look to the states of the saints, but should rather always rely on the guidance of the Prophet.[138] He also advises the seeker to "confirm your descent from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him); whoever confirms himself in following him has surely

135 Ibid. 16.
136 Ibid. 104.
137 Ibid. 66–67.
138 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 485.

confirmed his descent, but as for your saying 'I am from his nation' without following, then this will not benefit you."[139]

However, beyond this we also have the Prophet as a continuing and lasting presence whose role continues even after his earthly death, as the universal guide, facilitator, and giver of all spiritual blessings. In fact the role or position of the Prophet cannot be overstated or emphasised enough, for he is the centre of the entire cosmos, the reason for its creation and continuation, and the only means through which any and all reality can be accessed.[140] The Prophet is the greatest, and in spiritual terms, the highest Prophet that was ever sent (this is of course a standard Muslim tenet of belief), and this is true for all his qualities and characteristics. Thus, as Jīlānī explains, he was more ascetic than even Jesus because real asceticism is not judged by outward appearance but rather by the state of the heart, while real poverty (*faqr*) is not to depend on any of the creation for one's needs.[141] Nobody can attain to any of the Prophet's special characteristics (*khaṣā'iṣ*), and "the *abdāl* and saints receive the leftovers from his food and drink; they are given a drop from the ocean of his spiritual stations, and an atom from the mountain of his spiritual gifts."[142]

For the seeker on the spiritual path then, the Prophet is the means through which all advancement must occur. Talking about the Prophet, Jīlānī states that:

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139 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 116.

140 The reality of the Prophet (*ḥaqiqa Muḥammadiyya*) is something that is written about in very clear terms by Jīlānī in the *Sirr al-Asrār* and although we are not using that text here it seems nonetheless significant to quote the following passage in this regard: "The first thing that God created was the spirit (*rūḥ*) Of Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) from the light of his own beauty, as God said "I created Muḥammad first, from the light of my face," and as the Prophet said, "the first thing that God created was my spirit; the first thing that God created was my light; the first thing that God created was the pen; the first thing that God created was the intellect," the intent here being that they are all one and the same thing, which is the 'Muḥammadan Reality' (*ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya*). It was named 'light' because it is free from any of the darkness of Majesty, and as God said, "there has come to you from God a light and a clear book," an 'intellect' because it is able to comprehend universals or totalities (*kulliyāt*), and a 'pen' because it is a cause of the transmission of knowledge, just as a pen is the cause of the transmission of knowledge in the world of letters. Thus the Muḥammadan Spirit is the quintessence of all beings, the first of all beings and their origin, as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "I am from God, and the believers are from me." God created all the spirits (or souls) in the divine realm in the best real form. He (Muḥammad) is the name of humankind in that realm, and he is the original home." See 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Sirr al-Asrār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2005) 8.

141 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 115, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 114.

142 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 189.

> His heart and spiritual aspiration do not cease to be around the hearts of the people; he is the one who scents and perfumes their hearts, who adorns and purifies their inner consciousnesses (*sirr*), the one who opens the door of nearness for them, he is the maidservant, the ambassador between their hearts and inner consciousnesses, and their Lord, and every step one takes towards him makes him happier.[143]

This shows the intimate and omnipresent role of the Prophet, not only in the spiritual path of the seeker but also generally in the cosmology of the world as a whole. The more one follows the Prophet, the more one's heart will become purified, and the more one's heart is purified the more one will begin to see the Prophet in one's dreams. This is an affirmation of the progress of the seeker on the spiritual path. Following the Prophet at this stage now includes following the prohibitions and commands that he gives when one sees him in one's sleep.[144] The seeker is further advised that he should in all his affairs "be in front of the Messenger of God, ready and prepared to follow his every command and prohibition."[145] Such a person "comes to be with the Prophet spiritually, his heart is trained with his heart and in front of him, while his hand is in his hand."[146]

4.8 *The* Samāʿ

Although the practice of *samāʿ* today is no longer prevalent in the original Arabo-Persian heartlands of Sufism, it still exists in various forms outside these regions, most prominently in the Indian Subcontinent, Anatolia and North Africa, with perhaps its most famous present-day manifestation being the *qawwālī* of the northern Indian Subcontinent. Nevertheless it seems to have been quite prevalent in the Baghdad of Jīlānī and we therefore find that he includes in his *Ghunya* some advice pertaining to this practice. *Samāʿ* is succinctly defined by Regula Qureshi as "the Sufi ritual of 'listening' to mystical poetry performed in a musical setting for the purpose of arousing mystical love, even divine ecstasy, the core experience of Sufism."[147] As we shall see when Jīlānī uses the term it also includes the recitation of Qurʾān in such a concert setting. Jīlānī has a separate little section on the etiquettes surrounding *samāʿ*

143 Ibid. 76.
144 Ibid. 258.
145 Ibid. 53.
146 Ibid. 258.
147 Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, Listening to Words Through Music: The Sufi Samāʿ, *Edebiyat* 2/1–2 (1988), 220.

aimed at the aspiring Sufi, but before we elaborate on that, we must highlight two other places where he makes mention of *samāʿ*.

In the section on marriage he mentions that "*samāʿ al-qawl* with the use of wind instruments and dancing is disliked (*makrūh*), because it excites the urges of nature and lust, makes men interested in women, and raises the passions of the *nafs*, it being much better to engage in the remembrance of God."[148] It is interesting that the same term, '*samāʿ al-qawl*', is used here to describe profane musical entertainment—as for example one might find in a wedding ceremony—as it is to describe the Sufi spiritual concert that we are interested in. The *samāʿ al-qawl* then seems merely to describe any form of concert where some poetry or lyrical verse is recited or sung with or without the accompaniment of music. Thus the intention of the concert is of great importance, and the gathering to listen for the purpose of enlightening the soul is different, and as can be expected, merits a different ruling (*ḥukm*) to gathering only for entertainment.

In the *ādāb* section of the *Ghunya*, Jīlānī writes that "while it is disliked (*makrūh*) for the one feigning ecstasy to rip his clothes during the *samāʿ*, there is nothing against the one who is actually in ecstasy doing it."[149] This is general advice to all people that may attend a *samāʿ*, that feigning spiritual rapture is not a good thing, but that if one is genuinely overcome then that is fully excusable. However, in the final part of the *Ghunya* that has some advice for spiritual aspirants undertaking the Sufi path, he has a section on the manners to be observed by such people during the *samāʿ*. First and foremost, the spiritual aspirant should not burden himself by feeling it necessary to attend such concerts, and in fact should not choose to go to one through his own volition. However, if he does end up at one—perhaps at somebody else's request or at the request of his shaykh—then he should stick to the strict etiquette required and always guard his heart by keeping it busy with the remembrance of God. If the vocalist is reciting Qur'ān, he must try to see the words as coming from the unseen and from God himself. It is possible that one may find oneself in rapture, but should only make movements if it comes from a command within or is a spontaneous movement due to one's being spiritually overcome.[150]

The *samāʿ* that is of benefit spiritually must necessarily affect the heart of the aspirant, and not his passions, otherwise it can be regarded as nothing other than mere entertainment. In this vein Jīlānī advises that one should not focus on merely the outward of the verses and poems that the singer sings, because

148 al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq* 42.
149 Ibid. 38.
150 Ibid. 633.

that would only stir natural instincts and not affect the heart and spirits as is obviously the aim. To this end the listener should not even request the reciter to repeat verses or stanzas that he likes, but rather should purely concentrate on their inner meaning and on the divine presence.[151]

A fair amount of attention is also given to the rules regarding one taking off their robe (*khirqa*) and throwing it during the *samāʿ* concert. One may perhaps do this after one is spiritually overcome. However, a person's reason for doing it may perhaps be a poor one and amongst these Jīlānī includes copying one's shaykh (i.e. if he did it) and copying other people. If one does it through a spontaneous inner feeling or signal, then he is seen as having been given a robe of honour from the unseen, which requires taking off one's current robe. In this situation it is never right for such a person to resume wearing his old robe after having taken it off.[152]

The *samāʿ* does not seem to be a practice that Jīlānī attaches any great importance to, but it must nevertheless have been quite common amongst the Sufis for Jīlānī to have dealt with it in his *Ghunya*, and specifically within the section for aspiring Sufis. Perhaps it was something that he knew an aspirant would sooner or later have to deal with. In addition to this the elaboration of specific rules with regard to the *samāʿ* indicate that there must have been a set of manners or etiquette pertaining to the Sufis' behaviour within the concert which had already become established and quite regulated by this period.

5 Conclusion

It is now possible to comment again on the theology and place it within the overall picture of Jīlānī's thought and practice. The theology, as with everything else he presents, fits into an overall purpose: attaining proximity to God. Theology, for Jīlānī, represents the picture that God has presented of Himself, to be accepted just as he revealed it, without the need for further elaboration; it is to be read and believed in. Rational inquiry into the matter cannot lead to anywhere useful, and it is rather to spirituality that one's attention should be directed. For this very reason, Jīlānī advises people to "give up fanaticism in matters of doctrine and work towards something that will be beneficial in this life and the hereafter."[153] Thus although one needs to know what the correct theology is, it is merely the foundational basis that one begins from, because, in

151 Ibid. 634.
152 Ibid. 634–635.
153 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 23.

this very world "God can be seen with the eyes of the heart," and "whoever sees Almighty God with his heart, God enters into his inner consciousness (*sirr*)."[154] What then is the need for further inquiry with a method that can only provide conjecture while a superior method is available for all?

That method has at its core the ordinances of the *sharīʿa*, which for Jīlānī are absolutely crucial, because it is through following these strictly that one is able to refine one's spiritual state. Doing this in itself constitutes a battle against the *nafs*, but can be added to through further acts of asceticism, as are illustrated in the *Ghunya* and promoted in the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* and the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*. The aim is to tame the *nafs* and bring it into line with the divine will and to waken the heart and the inner consciousness and bring the *nafs* into agreement with them too. The reward is spiritual awakening, which allows one to witness such things as the Prophet, divine inspiration and God himself. Thus everything in Jīlānī's thought is evaluated with the final goal in mind: nearness to God. If something does not contribute anything useful to this goal, then he does not see the benefit in it. This does not however lead to a negation of the self ultimately, either at the beginning of the path or at its end; at the beginning because the *sharīʿa* regulates and encourages such things as marriage, and at the end because the Sufi is not affected by what he partakes in from this world.

We may now also review Jīlānī's thought and practice in light of the five defining elements of Sufism which were highlighted at the end of the introduction. The first idea of direct experience of God and the spiritual world permeates his works and is everywhere, from waking the *sirr* to receive divine inspiration, to being commanded in actions by the Prophet himself; it traverses the core of Jīlānī's thought. As for the second element, travelling a path of stages and states, we have shown Jīlānī to regularly mention states, stages and positions along the path, such as that of *riḍā* or *ghawthiyya*, *badaliyya* and *quṭbiyya*. The path was also shown to be based upon four general states: of nature, of piety, of sainthood and of *badaliyya*. The importance of the third element, having a guide or master, was highlighted in the importance of having a shaykh, without whom traversing the path became an impossible task. Jīlānī did mention the existence of rare cases where an aspirant was trained solely by God, but this really was the exception, and the master disciple relationship was otherwise seen as indispensible. The fourth element, *fanāʾ*, was shown to be the gateway to the fourth state of *badaliyya*, and we also found in Jīlānī a clarification as to what exactly might be meant by the 'annihilation of one's self.' Finally, the identification with the Sufi tradition has been clearly demonstrated

154 Ibid. 144.

throughout, not only by the evaluation of the persons that Jīlānī refers to in his *Ghunya*, but also by the regularity with which he narrates their stories as example, and by the general high esteem he holds them in.

We may already conclude at this point then, that according to ideas that we find in Jīlānī's own works, and in light of what Western academics consider to be Sufi, Jīlānī's works must be deemed, above and beyond anything else, to be works of Sufism. Everything that we found in the works considered led to the Sufi goal, whether it was instructions on prayer or attending a wedding feast, it all fitted into a system of *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*, that ultimately led beyond *fanā'* to the state of *badaliyya*. This then gives us more than ample evidence to conclude that Jīlānī must himself have been a Sufi, and this without any reference to outside opinions, whether unbiased biographers or devoted hagiographers. However, there is one last aspect that is to be considered in his works and one that will shed light directly upon his person. That is the information that we can extract from these works, which relate directly to his personality and character, and it is to this final subject that we now turn.

CHAPTER 8

The Figure of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī

The following section is not meant to be a biography of any sort, for that is something that has already been addressed. It is however supposed to try to illuminate upon and give us a picture of something of the personality and figure of Jīlānī as may specifically be extracted from the sources we have been using so far. It is thus entirely based upon the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, for that is where we find his oratory unmodified (as opposed to the *Ghunya*, which was a completely composed text, and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, which was made into a more organised text), in addition to finding occasional comments upon his physical actions and the situational condition, which are given to us by the scribes taking note of his speech. For this reason the section has intentionally been placed after Jīlānī's views, in order that the small offerings of personality and character that are presented here be better understood and appreciated. In this way the section also differs from the biography, because while that used biographical sources that were produced after the death of Jīlānī, this section relies on material produced during his lifetime and from individuals that personally witnessed the events and comments that are recorded. This material however also gives support to various aspects of the biography, which then allow one to place more faith in some of the biographical information, and it is with this that we should begin.

1 His Life

The biographies claim that Jīlānī had immense respect for all his teachers, and we read, for example, that he did not say anything to his spiritual teacher Ḥammād al-Dabbās after the latter pushed him into the Tigris on a cold day. He did not even ask him why he did such a thing. In the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* Jīlānī addresses his audience by saying "you have shortcomings when in the company of shaykhs, while we always keep good manners."[1] He also mentions that he used to keep company with somebody who was able to tell him what had and what would happen to him, and about his spiritual states.[2] Although he does

1 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, n.d.) 349.
2 Ibid. 348.

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not mention any name, it seems that he is talking about none other than Ḥammād al-Dabbās, who, as we read in the biography, was able to clear up many of Jīlānī's difficulties, knew him well, and could help him in a way that no other person could.

We also read in the biography that he was thought to be a crazy and insane person, by those people who used to lurk in the deserts and wastelands outside Baghdad, and that he gained from them the name ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Majnūn, or ʿAbd al-Qādir the insane. In addition to this, he felt a strong desire to leave Baghdad, and even attempted to on occasion, but was always brought back to the city where he ultimately became, without in any way desiring it, an extremely popular preacher. In the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* he says that his name in other places is *akhras*, or mute, and that he used to behave as a crazy and mute person, unable to speak Arabic.[3] He also says that he did not desire to stay in Baghdad but rather wished to travel from town to town, and from village to village as a stranger, unknown to anybody, but that God desired something other than this for him and thus placed him right in the middle of what he was trying to run away from.[4] His poor opinion of the city can also be found in his statement, "were it not for compliance with the Almighty Truth, would any sane individual remain in this city and live alongside its people?"[5]

We also find an example of him speaking out without any fear against powerful people, something that was claimed in the biographies, with the usual example of him famously speaking out against the Caliph when the latter appointed an unjust judge. We find a different example in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, which records that the master of the household of Imam ʿIzz al-Dīn, son of the Commander in Chief, was present with a whole host of servants and attendants during a particular sermon. As the group entered, Jīlānī addressed them with, "You are all serving one another. God! Who will serve Him?"[6] He then tells the master of the household, "Put your hand upon my hand, that we may rush off to our Lord, away from this ruined house, your property, and your family!"[7] This recorded incident shows not only that Jīlānī was able to speak his mind bluntly to both normal and higher society, but that people from the entire spectrum

3 Ibid. 254.
4 Ibid. 283.
5 Ibid. 15.
6 Ibid. 356.
7 The request that the master of the household put his hand upon the hand of Jilani is an interesting one, not least because this is one of the ways that the seeker or student gives his allegiance to the shaykh. This act known as the *bayʿa* was also the way in which allegiance was given to the early Caliphs. Ibid. 357.

of society were interested in him and his talks. Again this fits in well with the Jīlānī that is portrayed in the biographies.

Finally, we find Jīlānī, in the desire to demonstrate the bounties that come through the Prophet and from the unseen, claim that more than five hundred souls had accepted Islam at his hands, and that more than twenty thousand had repented. This, he states, "is from the blessing of our Prophet, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him."[8] Such a statement from Jīlānī himself is completely in line with what we find in the biographies, such as when Dhahabī reports that Jīlānī converted more than 500 people and reformed countless thieves and bandits.[9] Of course with all these examples, and especially in one with so similar a congruence as in the example above, one could claim that the biographers merely lifted facts about Jīlānī's life from his works and quoted them in their biographies. However, there is the fact that some of these examples show correspondence through character traits, such as when Jīlānī speaks out to different powerful personalities in the biography and in his works, or show correspondence in a mutual fact being confirmed with slightly different information. These examples show that we are able to find facts and events from the works of Jīlānī that agree perfectly with things that are claimed in the biographical sources, giving us confidence that what is portrayed in the biographical sources might on the whole be accurate information.

2 His Interactions

Jīlānī asks his students to treat him as a mirror in order to be able to see things about themselves that they would not be able to discern without him. If there is anything that is lacking in them with regards to religion then he will make it clear to them, without being shy or showing leniency. "My manner when it comes to religion is very forward, I was trained by a rough hand that was not conducive to hypocrisy."[10] Thus we find that Jīlānī does indeed seem forward when dealing with people, but that he behaves in this way in order to teach and train people. We can see this aspect of Jīlānī manifesting itself in various places.

8 Ibid. 148.

9 See the Biography chapter and also D.S. Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 304.

10 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 36.

At the end of a session, after a few people have asked questions and he has given them answers, a man gets up to ask him a question. Before the man has even said a word, Jīlānī tells him, "Hold your tongue! I can see that your question arises from your natural impulse and your *nafs*. Do not play with me. I am an executioner. I am lethal."[11] It seems that Jīlānī was aware of what he was going to be asked, or at least the nature of what was going to be asked in as much as he was able to give such a sharp response. He continues by giving an interpretation of the verse, "And God warns you to beware of Himself," and warns everybody that God will soon take away their hearing, sight, property and family, perhaps giving an indication to the question that these are the sorts of things that Jīlānī is concerned about.[12] In the same session he receives another question in written form to which he replies, "This is absurd. A Sufi is not attached to the creation; he pays no attention to them. A Sufi is sought and does not seek."[13] Again we find that he is not afraid to speak his mind in a forward manner, not only to get his point across, but in order to use it as a training method. In a different session a man approaches him to ask a question while he is already speaking, and he ignores him and does not listen to him, while in another session he declares to the audience, "You are all stupid and crazy! Your staying away from me is a capital loss on your part for which there is no excuse. Do not fantasize and do not let your pride and insolence get the better of you. You will all soon be dead!"[14]

Perhaps he was able to behave in this manner because he knew exactly the type of people he was dealing with. In his own words: "There is no enmity between me and you; I only speak the truth and treat you impartially for the religion of God. I was myself trained in the rough style and speech of the shaykhs."[15] In addition to this he claims to know people's conditions, for as he says "Alas, you try to hide your condition from me, but it will not be hidden from me!"[16] We will return to what he may exactly mean by this below. He also seems to feel strongly that the scholars of the age are not doing their job properly. As we have seen above, practice of knowledge is far more important to Jīlānī than mere intellectual pursuit as an endgame in itself. After advising that the only way to prosper is to turn away from creatures and to God, he comments that "if one wishes to benefit others, then this is what one should do rather than raving

11 Ibid. 354–355.
12 Qur'ān 3:28.
13 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 355.
14 Ibid. 344, 356.
15 Ibid. 22.
16 Ibid. 55.

on about complete rubbish," where this comment is directed at other preachers.[17] He also warns people to be wary of scholars who do not practice what they preach:

> Do not be deceived by these scholars who are ignorant of God. All their knowledge works against them and not for them. They are knowledgeable in the laws of God but ignorant of God himself. They command people with things which they themselves do not do, and forbid the people from things which they themselves do not abstain from. They call people to the Truth, while they themselves flee from Him. They rebel and sin against Him with impudence. I have their names written, recorded and listed.[18]

This attitude perhaps explains the reason for the jealousy and enmity that a few of the other scholars of the time had for Jīlānī. A clear example of this is the attitude of Ibn al-Jawzī—who was probably the second most popular preacher in Baghdad—towards Jīlānī. Being a younger contemporary of Jīlānī, and also being the author of the extensive history work, *al-Muntaẓm*, one would expect Ibn al-Jawzī to have provided us with ample information on our subject. However, we find that in his biography of Jīlānī he provides us with only a few paltry lines. In fact the entry on Jīlānī is so meagre as to have prompted Dhahabī to comment that "the jealousy of Ibn al-Jawzī did not permit him to write any more about the life of Jīlānī than he did, because of the hatred that was in his heart for ʿAbd al-Qādir. May God protect us from such passion."[19] We know from surveys on the writings of Ibn al-Jawzī that he even wrote a book against Jīlānī entitled *Kitāb al-Dhamm ʿalā ʿAbd al-Qādir*, although today this work is not extant.[20] In addition to this we know that he also criticised

17 Ibid. 323.

18 Ibid. 56–57.

19 See Dhahabī's biography provided in Arabic and translated in Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 277. Interstingly Yāfʿī later criticised Dhahabī's biography, especially as he perceived Dhahabi to have not given Jīlānī his due rank and credit. Dhahabī referred to Jīlānī as a Zāhid, while Yāfʿī considers this to be one of the preliminary levels of the Sufi path that Jīlānī eclipsed early in his life. See ʿAbdullāh b. Asad al-Yāfʿī, *Mirʾāt al-Janān* (1; Hyderabad Deccan: Oriental Publication, 1919) 345.

20 ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ʿAlwājī, *Muʾallafāt Ibn al-Jawzī* (Kuwait: Markaz al-Makhṭūṭāṭ wa al-Turāth wa al-Wathāʾiq, 1992) 178. Merlin Swartz believes that this work is extant, referring to ʿAlwājī. However ʿAlwājī only mentions that the work is known to have been written by Ibn al-Jawzī as mentioned by Ibn Rajab in his *Dhayl ʿAlā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*. Swartz also references this to ʿAlwājī pages 178–179, while the actual reference is only at the bottom of page 178, and so perhaps Swartz misread the entry and read over the page into the entry for the book *Kitāb fī ʿAjāʾib ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, which does have an extant copy. See Mer-

Jīlānī's teacher Ḥammād al-Dabbās, because "he was on the path of Sufism, and claimed inner knowledge and spiritual unveilings, but was devoid of knowledge of the *sharīʿa*," and that "he did not have an ear except with the ignorant." The famous historian Ibn al-Athīr also noted this in his biographical entry of Dabbās, writing that, "I have seen Ibn al-Jawzī criticise and slander him. This shaykh (Ibn al-Jawzī) has treated other righteous persons in the same manner, and he wrote a book entitled *Talbīs Iblīs*, wherein he did not spare any of the masters of righteousness."[21]

Massignon goes as far as to claim that the anti-Hallājianism of Ibn al-Jawzī was due to his hatred of Jīlānī (who had sympathy for Ḥallāj), and that he had Jīlānī's remains thrown out of the *madrasa* in the period when it was in his control.[22] The *madrasa* was initially in the control of Jīlānī's own grandson, Rukn ʿAbd al-Salām, but he was stripped of the *madrasa* by the government, had his books burned, his *taylasān* removed (a shawl like garment worn over the head and shoulders that was the symbol of a scholar), and his person charged with *fisq* (moral corruption); all this due in part to the efforts of Ibn al-Jawzī, who had great influence with the authorities.[23] In the account of Qifṭī of this affair, there is no mention of Ibn al-Jawzī, and he suggests that Rukn had good relations with the Imāmīs, which led to envy and jealousy from people who accused him of having 'heretical philosopher beliefs.'[24] However, in the account of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, his grandfather Ibn al-Jawzī was indeed involved in the public burning of the books of Rukn, an event where the crowds present protested against Rukn, his grandfather ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and even Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, a result that Ibn al-Jawzī cannot have been too pleased about. There is no reason to doubt this fact from Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī because he was, if anything, biased in favour of his grandfather, and it would serve no purpose for him to relate this unless he were sure of its veracity. In fact his account only mentions these events as a preamble to make sense of what his entry for that particular

lin Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropormorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 15.

21 ʿAlī Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (10; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.) 671.

22 On Jīlānī's sympathy for Ḥallāj, see for example Jīlānī quoting him in his speech: al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 329 and 351. Unfortunatly Massignon does not reference where he gets the information that Jīlānī's remains were thrown out of the *madrasa*, and so we cannot check its authority and whether it is reliable etc, see Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam* (2; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 10.

23 For evidence of this see any of the biographies of Ibn Jawzī, e.g. the critical assessment by Swartz in Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropormorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*.

24 ʿAlī Ibn Yūsuf al-Qifṭī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥukamāʾ* (Leipzig: s.n., 1903) 228–229.

date aims to record: the banishment of his grandfather, Ibn al-Jawzī, to Wāsiṭ. Thus Sibṭ writes that the *madrasa* was ultimately returned to Rukn ʿAbd al-Salam, after a new Caliph returned honour to the Jīlānī family, and so Rukn had his revenge on Ibn al-Jawzī, who was sent to Wāsiṭ where he was housebound for five years as a punishment. Sibṭ ends the account by quoting some hateful verses against Rukn from al-Muhadhdhab al-Rūmī, a resident of the Niẓāmiyya *madrasa*.[25] It seems pertinent to quote ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī himself in regard to these events. He had of course long passed away before their occurrence and thus could not have been a living witness to any of it. He claims that, "Whoever accuses me and calls me a liar, God will show him to be the liar and will separate him from his family, his wealth and his country unless he repents."[26]

However, all biases aside, we may do no better than to refer to Swartz's fair assessment of Ibn al-Jawzī, that he was simply a controversial figure who "could be severely critical of those who differed with him or those who tried to steal the limelight, as happened on more than one occasion," and he cites his animosity towards Jīlānī as a case in point.[27]

Although we have seen that Jīlānī claims his manner to be in the 'rough style of the shaykhs,' and in spite of his apparent harshness and abruptness, we can see that he is only doing this for the benefit of those around him, for the benefit of the people, his people. As he himself explains:

> I am an advisor, and I do not want any reward for it … my happiness lies in your success, and my sadness lies in your destruction. When I see the face of an honest disciple who has succeeded at my hands, then I feel satisfied and rejoice as how someone like them has turned out under my supervision. My goal is you and not I, that you might change and not I. I have already made the crossing.[28]

Thus Jīlānī sees himself as somebody who has already secured his future and is intent on helping as many others as possible. His call extends to all people, and he even calls out to the ascetics (*zuhhād*) to come to him, "O ascetics of the Earth advance! Destroy your monasteries and come to me. You have been sitting in your retreats for no reason, and have gained nothing. Advance and

25 Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī is quoted in Abū Shāmā al-Maqdisī, *Tarājim al-Qarnayn, al-Sādis wa al-Sābiʿ* (Cairo: Kutub al-Malakiyya, 1947) 56–57.

26 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 358.

27 Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropormorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt* 27–28.

28 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 38.

gain the fruits of wisdom!"[29] He does not assume that he will be able to change every person that he comes into contact with, but still hopes for their salvation: "if I have anything with God on the day of judgement, then I will surely bear the burdens of the first and the last of you."[30] In fact this strong desire for the salvation of the people extends to the whole of humanity and to all creatures of God:

> O creatures of God, I seek for your total welfare and benefit. I wish for the closing of the gates of hell and for it to cease to exist completely, and that not a single thing from the creation of God enter it. I wish for the opening of the gates of paradise and that not a single thing from the creation of God be prevented from entering it. I desire all this because of my acquaintance with the mercy of God and His compassion for all His creation.[31]

While this may only be a wish of Jīlānī and not something certain, we do find that he has something sure for his people: "O you who are present, and O you who are absent, on the Day of Judgement you will see a strange thing from me. I will be arguing on behalf of the hypocrites, so what about the believers!"[32]

Thus we can sum up that the way in which Jīlānī treats those who come to him, whether seemingly good or bad, comes ultimately from his concern for them. This is shown not only through his statements confirming this, but also from the statements highlighting his desire for the salvation of all humanity. This attitude in turn arises from his own internal state and from the state of his heart, for as he says, "when the heart is sound, it is filled with mercy and compassion for all creation."[33]

3 His Insight and Acumen

Throughout the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* we find various instances of Jīlānī making claims and predictions about things and events unknowable to him. Part of this comes as a result of his *firāsa* which may be translated as 'penetrating insight,' 'spiritual intuition,' 'perspicacity,' 'cardiognostic acumen,' or simply insight and

29 Ibid. 95.
30 Ibid. 63.
31 Ibid. 207.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid. 70.

understood to be an overwhelming perception that enters the heart and dominates it.[34] Its veracity is often quoted as being based upon two factors: the quality of one's mind, which is based on the keenness of one's heart and intelligence, and the appearance of signs and indications on others.[35] Jīlānī asserts that "the light of the heart is from the light of God, the Prophet having said, 'beware of the *firāsa* of the believer, for they see by the light of God.'"[36] Thus he advises the sinners and morally corrupt people not to enter the presence of a believer because "they will, by the light of God, see what condition you are in."[37] It is perhaps this *firāsa* that is in action when Jīlānī declares: "Woe unto you! You are trying to hide your condition from me, but it will not be hidden. You are pretending to be a seeker of the hereafter and yet you are actually a seeker of this world. This delusion in your heart is written on your forehead."[38] Although the language here would permit the statement to be interpreted metaphorically, that their behaviour or attitude shows them to be more interested in worldly gain than in spiritual matters, its intention in being more literal becomes more evident when the statement is considered against others such as, "were it not for the law, I would indeed talk about what goes on in your houses … were I to reveal just a little of what I know then it would cause you to separate from me."[39]

However, there seems to be something more than just *firāsa* at work when considering other statements. Jīlānī claims to have once kept company with a person who was able to tell him what had happened to him and what would happen to him, this person having possibly been his teacher Ḥammād al-Dabbās.[40] Jīlānī displays a similar ability too, as for example when a resident of Baghdad who has just returned from the *ḥajj* pilgrimage pays a visit to Jīlānī and is told to repent to God. He protests that he has just returned from the pilgrimage and thus cleansed of sins, and Jīlānī replies: "I know that, but then there was fornication, sins, and flagrantly corrupt behaviour!"[41] The visitor is no

34 The term 'cardiognostic acumen' is the term used by Eric Ohlander, see Eric Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: Umar al-Suhrawardi and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhood* (Boston: Brill, 2008).

35 Muḥammad Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Tahdhīb Madārij al-Sālikīn* (UAE: Maṭbaʿa al-Najāḥ al-Jadīda, 1991) 491–493.

36 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 16.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid. 55.

39 Ibid. 15.

40 Ibid. 348.

41 Ibid. 359.

doubt surprised at this revelation of what, at least he thought, was a very private affair. An interesting occurrence no doubt, but over and above this type of display of his talent is a very singular and interesting occurrence that is recorded thus:

> The Shaykh [Jīlānī] said 'News has come to me of a catastrophe that will befall this city [Baghdad].' He then made a prayer for the people of the city, that they may be saved, and then said in a submissive tone, 'By my life there is somebody in this city that deserves to be killed and crucified. For every individual You [God] honour, there are a thousand individuals on whose account You will destroy us.' He then said as if exasperated, 'You have put both friend and foe into the vastness of destiny, they have both melted and become one ingot.'[42]

This prediction of a future disaster for the city of Baghdad could of course be linked by those adhering to his words to many an event, but would in hindsight be most fitting for the Mongol invasion that took place in 656/1258, less than a hundred years later. There is no doubt in my mind that this is what many of his followers studying his speech would have concluded. The person who deserves to be killed and crucified would most fittingly be the Caliph at that time, al-Musta'ṣim, an arrogant individual who grossly underestimated the Mongols, and thus did little to protect the city or its inhabitants.[43] Regardless of what this statement may or may not have referred to, we have here, along with the other occurrences noted above, an interesting phenomenon whose basis or origin, at least according to Jīlānī, merit explanation. Fortunately we have within the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* plenty of statements that reveal his perspective.

Jīlānī's speech does not seem, on examination, to be ad-lib, for the language, style, and rhetoric suggest some preparation, and yet by his own claim is not an arranged or rehearsed act. When careful examination is somewhat ignored and one's intuition relied upon there does indeed seem something spontaneous about it. He states that, "when speech manifests itself from me to you, then take it as coming from God, for He is the one that causes me to utter it."[44] There is no ambiguity here, he is clearly asserting that at a minimum his speech must

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42 Ibid. 321.

43 On the Mongol invasion see George Lane, *The Early Il-Khanate, 1258–1282: a re-appraisal* (London: s.n., 2001), David Morgan, *Mongols* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), Svet Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

44 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 22.

be considered inspired. He moreover does not want his listeners to have any doubts about his speech being contaminated in any way by his own whims and desires:

> Listen to me and accept what I say, for there is no one else on the face of this earth who speaks about what the text means in a given case. I want people for their sake, not for my own … with every word I utter, I only want the Truth.[45]

The 'text' or *naṣṣ* here refers to the Qur'ān and *sunna*, indicating that only he for certain knows the meaning and application of any particular text in a particular given situation. This obviously is supposed to have come as a result of his spiritual status and access to a knowledge not contained within the scriptures alone. Again the emphasis is on his role as a 'helper' to others, for he personally has no need to do this task and furthermore as we have seen, would, if it were up to him, leave the city entirely. In another place he asserts, "if you are raised to the *ʿilliyyūn*, then you will see that my words originate from there."[46] The *ʿilliyyūn* is the highest heaven, and it is sometimes considered as a level even higher than the seventh heaven.[47] Various biographies of Jīlānī have commented that a 'pressure' or 'weight' would come upon Jīlānī with matters that he could not contain, and this would increase until he stood up and spoke what was on his mind. In Dhahabī's account Jīlānī says, "I used to receive orders and prohibitions in both sleep and wakefulness, and things to be said would overwhelm me, and if I did not speak then it would crowd my heart until I began to

45 Ibid. 152.

46 Ibid. 176.

47 *ʿIlliyyūn* has sometimes been understood by certain western scholars to refer specifically to a scroll or book as seemingly mentioned in the Qur'ān 83:18. Some further allege that it is "*undoubtedly* derived from a *misunderstanding* of the Hebrew ʿelyon (the highest)" [Emphasis mine]. See J. Horovitz, Jewish proper names and derivatives in the Koran, in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925), 215, Rudi Paret, ʿIlliyyūn, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 3; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004) 1132. How they so unreservedly arrived at such a sure conclusion is baffling. Nevertheless we may stick with what the vast majority of scholars have concluded: that it refers to the highest heaven. In addition we have evidence that this is exactly what Jīlānī meant in this statement, because in the previous sentence he says that "if you put into practice what I say, and die on that practice and are raised to the *ʿilliyyūn*, then you will see …," the meaning clearly referencing a location and not an object. Furthermore we have in the commentary on the Qur'ān ascribed to him, his interpretation for the verse at 83:18 as "the *ʿilliyyūn* is the highest level of the highest heaven." See ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī* (6; Istanbul: Markaz al-Jīlānī, 2009) 318–319.

choke, so I was not able to remain silent."[48] According to his own statements, therefore, both in biographical material and in his works being examined here, the words he spoke were not from his own intellectual composition but were rather inspired and therefore of more merit than if they had just been based on intellectual endeavour alone. We saw above how he spoke out against scholars whom he considered ignorant of God, and we have a clarification here of which type of scholars or persons should actually address the public:

> If your heart is sound … then you will never lose the intimations of the Almighty Truth, and His wisdom will reach you through your *sirr* (inner consciousness); the *sirr* informing the heart, the heart informing the tranquil self, the self informing the tongue, and the tongue informing the people. One should either speak to the public in this method, or not speak at all.[49]

This then, is the only type of scholar that is fit to address the public; one that has travelled the spiritual path himself. Any other type of scholar will necessarily to some degree be hypocritical, and Jīlānī is quite harsh against hypocrites. He declares, "I have truthfulness, and with it I cut the head of every unbeliever and lying hypocrite who does not turn to his Lord and repent."[50] In another place he claims, "I cut the necks of the hypocrites who lie in their words and deeds. I examined the accounts of the scholars on many occasions, until I was able to verify their information."[51]

In addition to these statements about where Jīlānī's words originate from, we have other statements that show us that his lectures and lessons are divinely sanctioned. In the very first discourse of the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* he proclaims, "O my people, conform with the divine decree and accept it from ʿAbd al-Qādir (the slave of the All-Powerful Decreer), the expert in conformity with the divine decree. My conformity with the decree leads me to the Decreer."[52] We have already examined how conformance with destiny is a high station on the spiritual path, one that Jīlānī would have had to attain to be at the level of a teacher or guide himself, and that is confirmed for us here. Even more interesting is the claim that he has angels attending his sessions, a fact which he informs his audience of by suddenly giving a loud cry and then calling out: "O God, O God O

48 Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of 'Abd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 283.
49 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 232.
50 Ibid. 103.
51 Ibid. 137.
52 Ibid. 10.

God, an absent friend has come … O rabble!, here we have the servants of kings and the friends of the elite," while the commentator informs us that he was pointing to angels and saints present within the session, but hidden to the rest of the audience.[53] In another place he informs his listeners about having personally met the Angel of Death. He tells them that on a particular night when remembering death, as was his habit, and weeping about it, he prayed to God: "I ask you that the Angel of Death not take my soul but rather that You take it Yourself." While his eyes were still closed, he saw a very handsome old man enter through the door, and he asked him, "Who are you?" The man replied, "I am the Angel of Death," to which Jīlānī said, "I have already asked Almighty God to take my soul rather than you." The man asked, "Why did you ask Him for that? What have I done wrong? I am only a servant under orders, I am commanded to be gentle with some people and violent with others," and he began to cry, and embraced Jīlānī.[54]

For those thinking that Jīlānī may only be putting on an ostentatious show, or wondering why he would divulge such things as meeting angels, we do have instances where he makes statements that perhaps explain such behaviour. At one point during one of his speeches, he suddenly declares:

> O God, I beg Your pardon for speaking openly about these secrets, but You know that I am overwhelmed. As somebody once said, 'beware of what you seek pardon for,' but when I get up onto this chair, I disappear from you all and there doesn't remain a single person in front of my heart for me to seek pardon from, or for me to guard my speech from.[55]

In another place we find him giving the explanation concerning the saints, that "the friends of God are very well mannered in front of Him. They do not make a single move, nor take a single step except with a clear permission in their hearts that comes from him. They do not eat anything permissible, nor put on clothes, nor marry, nor deal in any affair except with a clear permission in their hearts."[56]

These statements take us back to the discussion of the reports of miraculous and supernatural behaviour ascribed to Jīlānī that was given at the end of the biographical section. It is also pertinent here to make mention of the

53 Ibid. 332.
54 Ibid. 302.
55 Ibid. 283.
56 Ibid. 26.

puzzlement that is shown by Ibn ʿArabī when he—in agreement with the above statement by Jīlānī—states that saints, even at the status of 'pole' (*quṭb*), do not openly display the charismatic gifts and 'miracles' (*karamāt*) bestowed upon them by God, for that would be a breach of the respect and manners that are to be observed before God. As for Jīlānī seemingly going against this etiquette himself, then the only explanation that Ibn ʿArabī could think of in 'the strange case of 'Abd al-Qādir,' was that he must have been commanded by God in whatever he did.[57]

4 His Mannerisms

On rare occasions the reader of the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* is treated by the scribes recording the words of Jīlānī to very short but fascinating glosses on his actual physical actions. These few recorded instances, which are examined below, give us perhaps the most interesting observations of the manifest behaviour and mannerisms of Jīlānī, and beyond this allow us, in a fashion more than any other, to gain an instant rapport and connection with the human being who is the voice of so many words and who inhabits a unique position in the spiritual nexus of the Sufi world.

In the middle of one of his speeches, he tells the crowd, "Let us await the arrival of the divine decree. In the name of God …," and then leans against his chair, with his head resting on his hand and his eyes closed. He remains in this position for a while and then proceeds to sit down upon the chair before continuing with his speech.[58] At one point somebody from the crowd asks Jīlānī, "Why do we see you hugging this piece of wood, the pommel of the chair?" The questioner was most likely referring to an ornamental piece of wood shaped like a ball or pomegranate, attached to the arm of the lecturing chair. Jīlānī replies, "Because it is close to me. You see things but you do not experience them, you do not reveal them, and that is why I am hugging it." The questioner responds by asking him, "So we are closer to your heart?" to which Jīlānī replies, "O my foster brother, you will be like that when you become fully devoted to God, when you are observant of Him, fear Him and seek Him. I will then be a loving servant of yours."[59] This exchange, mannerisms aside, also illustrates the

57 William Chittick, *The Self-disclourure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʾArabi's Cosmology* (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1997) 376–377.

58 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 356.

59 Ibid. 319.

freedom and ease that the audience felt in Jīlānī's gatherings, and their confidence in even being able to ask him what seems to be a trivial question with no apparent relevance to his words.

Some of Jīlānī's actions seem to be done with no apparent connection to what he is saying, such as when in the middle of a particular discourse he suddenly blows into his hand while turning his face around in every direction.[60] This may just have been something idiosyncratic or an eccentricity which he did from time to time, or it may perhaps have been a practice that he carried out with specific intent but whose purpose we cannot gauge without being privy to further information. In a different discourse, his described actions are perhaps due to his being affected by the thoughts behind his words:

> Whenever fear attracts you to Him, proximity brings Him closer to you and thus there is constancy. Do not be concerned about whether your life is long or short, whether it is the Day of Resurrection or not, whether people love you or hate you, give to you or deprive you …[61]

At this point he stands up screaming and covers his face. He then uncovers it and says "'O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham.'[62] O God, do not reveal our reports!" He then sits down and continues with his discourse. However, after relating only an anecdote or two to the crowd, he stands up again and begins to sway and lean; to the right and then to the left in a repeating motion, with his hand upon his chest clasping his breast. After a while of doing this, he sits back down and continues his speech.[63] The fact that he broke off from what he was saying could mean that the import of it was too much for him to bear, and that the words were the cause or co-effect of some personal experience, possibly spiritual. On the other hand his words may have had no connection whatsoever with the actions that followed them, and may have been due to something he'd seen or may even have been completely unrelated to anything in his environment. Of course with such pithy information it is impossible in most of these described cases to give any sort of grounded indication as to the cause of his disturbance.

In a similar occurrence as the above, and near the end of another discourse, he gives a great cry, stands up and begins swaying to his right and left and raising his hands towards the sky in a gesture of submission. He continues in this

60 Ibid. 345.
61 Ibid. 310.
62 Qur'ān 21:69.
63 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 310.

manner until the end of the session and then says, "Oh what a blazing fire! Oh what a disaster for you all!" After this outburst he raises his hands and sits down in order to supplicate but does not say anything aloud. Then when he stands up again his face keeps changing colour, sometimes a yellowy colour and sometimes a red.[64] The comment that 'he continues this until the end of the session' indicates that perhaps he was this way for quite a while before his outburst. This may be right if we are to believe a report in the biography of Dhahabī that states, "The silence of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir was lengthier than his discourse, and he spoke from his heart."[65] Thus such moments may have been quite the norm in Jīlānī's sessions.

We find throughout the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* that Jīlānī often ends his discourses with "Give us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and guard us against the torment of the fire," which is an oft-used prayer from the Qurʾān.[66] However, as we have just seen above, some gatherings finished in a more animated manner, and there is record of a particular gathering that ended in a most spectacular fashion. It begins with Jīlānī stating, "Today I am losing an affirmation of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) that I was brought up upon from a young age. A door that was open to me, I am shutting against myself. I am forgetting you all. There is neither love nor respect." This statement of his is immediately followed by a man screaming and crying out, "Allāh!" Jīlānī tells him, "You shall be asked about this, you shall be called to account for it. Why did you say it? Was it ostentation or hypocrisy? Was it sincere or faithless? This day is a sledgehammer; whosoever wishes may leave and whoever wishes may remain." Jīlānī then screams himself, and is approached by a great multitude of people, repenting, shouting and crying. While all this commotion is going on a bird comes and lands upon Jīlānī's head. He tilts his head for the bird and remains in this position while the bird remains upon his head, and the people are upon the steps of his chair.[67] There are people screaming all around him, but he does

64 Ibid. 320.

65 Margoliouth, Contributions To The Biography of ʾAbd Al-Kadir Of Jilan 286.

66 Qurʾān 2.201. See as examples, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 37, 40, 52, 62.

67 When speaking of the chair (in Arabic *kursī*) that Jilani speaks from, we are not talking of a simple table chair, but rather something more in line with the 'chairs' found in mosques that imams deliver sermons from. At minimum they usually have at least two steps and a main seating area (a sort of large step) and therefore raise the user to a higher position than a normal chair, and not only when seated but also when standing, for the user will be standing on one of the steps of the chair which will raise them above ground level. The height of the chair and therefore the number of steps it might have can vary considerably, from ones with only one or two steps to ones with over fifteen. The larger types are called mimbars or pulpits (*minbar*) and where a chair becomes a mimbar is vague. How-

not stir until one of his companions holds out his hand towards the bird at which point it flies away. Jīlānī then makes a supplication, and the people create a great tumult with their crying, supplications and repentance. Jīlānī leaves for the Ruṣāfa Mosque amid this great commotion with a great many of the people following him with their crying, screaming, ecstatic states and tearing of clothes. The description ends with Jīlānī stating "This is the end of the age. O God we seek refuge in You from its evil."[68] This scene, or spectacle if we may call it such, cannot have gone unnoticed by many of the residents and workers along the route. We can therefore be almost certain that the person of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī must surely have been known to the residents of at least a large part of the city, and moreover must have been known as a person associated with Sufism and Sufis, for it cannot have been too difficult for a local of that time and place to have identified the constituent members of the scene as such.

However, let us now return to his statement, which we related at the beginning of this event where Jīlānī declared, "Today I am losing an affirmation of divine unity that I have been raised upon from a young age. A door that was open to me, I am shutting against myself. I am forgetting you all. There is neither love nor respect." It is indeed, on first reading, a very strange statement. What does he mean by declaring that he is losing a *tawḥīd*? Divine unity being the quintessence of Islamic belief, the statement cannot simply mean that he is in some respect no longer a monotheist. With a slight change in the punctuation (classical Arabic texts are not punctuated) we may change the translation to read: "A divine unity that I have been brought up upon from a young age, what, shall I lose it this day! Will I myself close a door that is open to me! I

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ever, the term used in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* is clearly *kursī* and not *minbar*, although we have descriptions from the biographies that claim "he gave his sermons from a high pulpit in order that vast crowds may be able to hear him." See the Biography chapter and ʿAbd al-Razzāk al-Kīlānī, *Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al- Jīlānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1994) 172. The term *minbar* also seems to have been in usage from the earliest times and so *kursī* cannot in this instance have been the only term known to the scribe for the object in discussion. Perhaps it was called *kursī* because it was smaller than what would be normally have been termed a *minbar* at that time. Or it may have been termed thus because it was not just a pulpit from where the Friday sermon was given, but was rather a chair of a professor, and as such represented something more than just an average *minbar*. Of course it may be that perhaps the scribe used the word *kursī* for no particular reason other than that he could, and in most of the biographical material the term *minbar* is used rather than *kursī*. On mimbars see Johannes Pederson, Minbar, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2 edn., 7; Leiden: Brill, 1964–2004), 73–76.

68 The Ruṣāfa Mosque was one of the Ḥanbalī mosques in Baghdad, see chapter 4. al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 359.

have forsaken you all. There is neither love nor respect in this."[69] This although softer in import still raises the question of its meaning. Both translations can be appreciated with a single explanation, I believe, but we must go to what Jīlānī is talking about before he makes this statement to get a fuller understanding. He begins by relating an incident that took place at the funeral of a person he had told to repent, but who died without doing so. The person during his own funeral appeared to Jīlānī in spirit, pulling at his clothes, and begging for his help, whereupon Jīlānī told him, "I warned you about this." He then tells the audience:

> How much you all lie in what you claim. You have a shaykh and he is there for you, so refer to him, that he may give you a record that has some weight so that you are not weak in piety and goodness. Then it can be read at death, at separation. I hope for your intercession on that day even though this is *shirk* (attributing partners to God). Today I am losing a divine unity I have been raised upon from a young age. A door that was open to me, I am shutting against myself. I am forgetting you all. There is neither love nor respect.

The words come after a person, who did not take the normal recourse and repent for his sins, comes to Jīlānī asking him for help. We are not informed that Jīlānī did immediately help him but neither are we told that it was the end of the matter. More importantly is the fact that this incident is related to the audience for a purpose, that they should be taking the standard path of repenting for their sins and obeying their shaykh in all that he instructs them. They will then "have a record that has some weight," and will not need to recourse to any extra-normal means of help and intercession, as did the man who did not repent. This should be the normal state of affairs in a system of simple *tawḥīd*. The rules are clear, that one must follow and obey the commands and prohibitions of God, and repent before death for any of one's inadequacies and shortcomings in that. Asking for intercession from an intermediary saint after death should not be the normal state of affairs and in a way seems to imply *shirk* or associating partners with God. However, Jīlānī does not declare that he will not help and intercede for those who do not follow these simple 'rules,' and on the contrary wishes for their intercession. In his own words: "I hope for your intercession on that day even though this is *shirk*." The statement fol-

69 This translation is based on the Urdu interpretation of this line in, ʿĀshiq Ilāhī Mīrtī, *Fuyūḍ Yazdānī, Tarjama li-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* (Dehli: Rabbānī Book Depot, n.d.) 523.

lowing that, does not then mean that Jīlānī is in fact no longer on *tawḥīd* and that he is committing some form of *shirk*, but rather must be seen as a lament from him that a certain way of *tawḥīd*, of following the simple 'rules'—where one's transgressions are resolved by petition to God alone—is tainted by his necessary interference in the affairs of those under his care. Thus his statement, "Today I am losing a divine unity I have been raised upon from a young age. A door that was open to me, I am shutting against myself," shows his emotion at the gravity of his situation and his position. He himself has become an intermediary of God—albeit a valid intermediary—and someone who will, in a way, be sidestepping the law of God. We may remind ourselves here of the idea of God's knowledge being over his legal ruling which we have already come across, and a statement of his which is quoted in the next section, that "the knowledge of God is not diminished by the law of God. The law changes but the knowledge does not change."[70] This then is one way in which his words might be interpreted.

5 His Death

It seems appropriate to end this chapter with some descriptions that are given of Jīlānī's death. In a small section entitled 'Dhikr Wafātihī,' a brief mention is given of certain events that occurred while Jīlānī was on his deathbed. The section is approximately four hundred words of Arabic, is found both at the end of the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, and is reported by an unnamed person—most probably one of the scribes who would have recorded his words—and by his sons, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Mūsā among perhaps others who are not mentioned explicitly by name. There are however slight variances between the report at the end of the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* and the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, and these differences will be elicited below.

Jīlānī gave various religious advice to his son ʿAbd al-Wahhāb including telling him that, "When the heart is sound in relation to Almighty God, then it lacks nothing and it loses nothing. I am a kernel without a shell."[71] This was given from his deathbed, where in addition to the presence of his sons, there seem also to have been many other visitors, including ones that his sons could

70 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364. On this statement see also chapter 6, section 4 and a few paragraphs below. I must thank Malik A. Shaheen for this particular understanding of Jīlānī's words.

71 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* (Damascus: Dār al-Albāb, 2003) 121, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 363.

not see, for he tells them, "Others besides you have come to visit me, so make space for them and be courteous with them. There is a great mercy here so do not crowd their space." To some of his visitors he would raise his hand and stretch it out and say, "And upon you be peace. Repent and join the ranks and then I will come to you," as well as, "And upon you be peace. May God forgive me and you all, and may God relent towards me and you all.[72] In the name of God, farewell." In addition to this he also told his sons: "Move away from me, for I may be with you outwardly, but I am with others inwardly. Between me and between you and all the creatures, there is a distance equal to that between the heavens and the earth, so do not compare me to anyone, and do not compare anyone to me."[73] This is a considerable claim from Jīlānī, that he is unique and should not be explained with reference to anybody else, even other spiritual figures. We may present here the thoughts of Ibn ʿArabī who claimed that he knew that Jīlānī was the *quṭb* of his time but could not understand his behaviour which went against how any saint should have behaved. He concluded that Jīlānī must have been commanded to behave as he did and thus held a unique position even as a *quṭb*.[74]

In the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, when he is asked by one of his sons about which part of his body it is that gives him pain, he replies, "All of my limbs are hurting except my heart. That has no pain for it is with Almighty God."[75] This particular report does not appear in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, but the following report can be found in both books: It is related that some of his sons merely ask him how he feels, and he replies, "Let nobody ask me about anything. I am basking in the knowledge of God."[76] Thus Jīlānī remained true to his chosen path and beliefs right till the end of his life. Even when he is at the door of death, we are not related any quotes of regret of past acts, such as is sometimes the case with classical Muslim scholars, but rather his bliss in "basking in the knowledge of God" even while his whole body is in pain.

In the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*, the scribe who is reporting all of this claims that he entered Jīlānī's presence while some of Jīlānī's children were with him, and was asked to write the following for Jīlānī: "'After hardship, God will surely grant ease.'[77] Leave reports of the attributes as they have come. The law changes but

72 However in the Futūḥ al-Ghayb it reads "Repent and join the ranks when it comes to you," which could also be taken to mean, 'when it comes to your turn.' al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 121.

73 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 363–364.

74 Chittick, *The Self-disclourure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʾArabī's Cosmology* 376–377.

75 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 122.

76 Ibid, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

77 Qurʾān 55:7.

the knowledge does not change. The law can be abrogated but the knowledge is never abrogated. The knowledge of God is not diminished by His law."[78] However in the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, the scribe makes no claim whatsoever and it is after his son ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz asks him about his illness to which Jīlānī replies, "Nobody knows about my illness, and no human, jinn or Angel can comprehend it. The knowledge of God is not diminished by the law of God. The law changes but the knowledge does not change. Reports of the attributes should be left as they have come."[79] They are more or less the same words, albeit in a slightly different order. The import of the words, however, takes us back to Jīlānī's quote of "the judgment of knowledge over the legal ruling" that we claimed gave evidence that Jīlānī relied on an inner knowledge. It can also be taken to mean that the truth behind the law and the *sharīʿa* is constant, though the laws and rulings themselves may change. The addition of "the attributes should be left as they come" is an interesting one, perhaps added here to explain that God's attributes are as they are described and related, even though the human faculty of reason may not comprehend them. It is thus to the inner knowledge, or real knowledge that one's attention must be turned, a knowledge that is unchanging. Perhaps this was some advice, not only to his sons and the others present at his deathbed, but to those who would read it after them.

Both books also report that he exclaimed, "Woe unto you! I am not worried by anything, not by any angel and not by the Angel of Death. O Angel of Death, He who cares for us has bestowed us with something other than you," and this was said in the late evening of the day on which he died.[80] We have already related above that Jīlānī claims to have witnessed the Angel of Death after protesting to God to take his soul Himself.

The moment of his actual passing is reported in exactly the same way in both books except that before his final words, in the *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* he is recorded as repeatedly saying, "Wait!" while in the *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* he says, "Be gentle, be gentle!"[81] The difference is probably due to an error by either one of the manuscript copyists or by the publisher because the two different Arabic words are nearly identical in how they are written except for a single dot exchange.[82] The last statement that he made was:

78 al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

79 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 122.

80 Ibid. 121, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

81 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* p. 122, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

82 The difference is between the Arabic words ارفقوا and اوفقوا (it is necessary to write them in Arabic to discern the possible confusion) whereby the second letter in both words would be very easy to confuse with one another, and the three dots over the second and

> I seek help with the words: There is no god but Allāh, the Ever Living, the Everlasting, who neither dies nor fears extinction. Glory be to the one who is exalted in his omnipotence and who subjugates his servants with death. There is no God except Allāh, and Muḥammad is his messenger.

He had difficulty pronouncing the word 'exalted' (*taʿazzaza*) and kept stuttering it until he was able to pronounce it fully. After saying this, he kept repeating God's name, "Allāh," until his voice grew faint and his tongue became stuck to the roof of his mouth, at which point he finally passed away.[83]

6 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to illustrate the personality and character of Jīlānī, as extracted from his works. Each separate point that was given was of course based on very bitty and disjointed information, but as a whole, the chapter paints a picture of Jīlānī even more interesting than that found in the biographies. Here we have Jīlānī as someone who is unafraid to speak his mind—whether to those in authority or just the general public—who makes predictions about events and claims to know people's hidden secrets, who claims to converse with angels, has access to the unseen, and claims for himself a unique spiritual position. This Jīlānī does not seem to fit the picture of the 'sober Ḥanbalī preacher' described in the introduction, but does correspond very well with the Jīlānī venerated by Muslims all over the world.

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third letters could also be confused with two belonging to either one of the letters and the one belonging to the other.

83 al-Jīlānī, *Futūh al-Ghayb* 122, al-Jīlānī, *al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī* 364.

Concluding Remarks

This work has set out to introduce the 12th century scholar and Sufi Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and to specifically explore his ideas on theology and Sufism as found within three of his most popular and recognised works, *al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*, *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, and *Fatḥ al-Rabbānī*.

The research concentrating on these works has provided much information on his general teaching, thought and practice. Jīlānī believed that the Islamic aim in its totality was nothing short of the personal realisation of 'The Truth' or God, both of which are synonymous. An analysis of the structure of the *Ghunya* revealed that everything discussed in that book fitted into an overall picture: attaining proximity to God. Theology and the *sharīʿa* played a vital role in the realisation of this aim, but one was not to be distracted and treat either of them as the objective itself. With that in mind, theology for Jīlānī was shown to represent the picture that God has presented of himself as He revealed it, without the need for further elaboration. When compared to an earlier Ḥanbalī, Ibn Baṭṭa, and a work of the famous Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī that claimed to represent the theological doctrine of Ibn Ḥanbal himself, Jīlānī's theology was shown to be in clear agreement with both, while there was nothing odd in all that was surveyed that might lead one to suggest that he was a Ḥanbalī or traditionalist who held irregular ideas.

All five theological doctrines that were examined were the subject of debate amongst different theological schools, and this made them a useful gauge with which to measure Jīlānī's theology. In addition to the two traditionalist works just mentioned, the five doctrines were also compared to a third theological work, the *Irshād* of the Ashʿarite, ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī. Any ideas that Jīlānī disagreed with, and specifically claimed to be a belief of the Ashʿarites, were found to be presented, and often argued for by Juwaynī. This difference with the Ashʿārites—perhaps the closest school to the traditionalists—established further the identification of Jīlānī within the school of the latter. The methodology used by Jīlānī was also shown to be that of the traditionalisists. For the establishment of each doctrine, he relied upon verses of the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth, along with statements of predecessors who were considered orthodox. Furthermore, an analysis of these persons upon whom he relied and quoted revealed them on the whole to be other Ḥanbalīs and Ḥadīth scholars, with Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal being by far the most quoted person. Jīlānī, when presenting an individual doctrine, and unlike Ibn Baṭṭā, did sometimes give a rational argument, although not as often as did Ashʿarī. However, they were used in order to defend a doctrine rather than to establish it, and it was found that some of these arguments were in fact not original to Jīlānī, one of them even being traced back

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to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal himself. This seemed to suggest that he merely continued to present theology as had been done previously by earlier proponents of the same school. We can therefore conclude that his theology was traditionalist or Ḥanbalī, both in methodology and in the individual doctrines that were espoused.

As regards the nomenclature that Jīlānī himself employed, then we can be sure that he would have considered himself to be a Ḥanbalī in terms of the school of *fiqh* or law (*madhhab*) that he adhered to. This was clear from him regularly mentioning 'our colleagues in the Ḥanbalī School' when referring to matters of *fiqh*, especially when highlighting any differences with another *madhhab*. However, with regard to theology, it was found that he preferred the name 'Ahl al-Sunna,' although he was also found to use the names 'Ahl al-Athar' and 'Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth' interchangeably with 'Ahl al-Sunna,' indicating that all three of these were acceptable names for the people whom he considered to represent the orthodox.

Everything in the works of Jīlānī that was considered in this study seemed to be geared towards the Sufi path and its end. The *Ghunya* began by teaching the complete basics of Islam and the *sharīʿa*, followed by a detailed description of the *ādāb* that one was required to stick to at all times. This in turn was followed by a theological exposition and an account of extra prayers and practices that one could observe in order to get closer to God. All the knowledge that was given in the *Ghunya* was thus for a purpose, and this was highlighted in Jīlānī's instructions elsewhere that one needed this outer knowledge—especially of the *sharīʿa*—in order to proceed properly on the spiritual path. In keeping with this, the *Ghunya* ended with some information on the fundamentals and prerequisites of the Sufi path. An analysis of the persons who were quoted in the *Ghunya* produced interesting results, with more than two thirds of the occurrences being Sufis (this being another good indicator of the book's intent) and perhaps unsurprisingly, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal being by far the most quoted person overall. Ibn Ḥanbal was presented as a paragon throughout the *Ghunya*, not only as the founder of the school of *fiqh* that Jīlānī belonged to, but moreover as a perfect example of piety, and a Sufi from whose model life much benefit could be derived.

The Sufi path itself, in as much as could be extracted from these works, was shown to consist of four very general states; nature, *taqwā*, *wilāya* and *badaliyya*. The natural state was considered a sort of default that all humans started in, and by following the ordinances of the *sharīʿa*—even in its easiest interpretation—one could move out of this state and into the next state of *taqwā*. Following the *sharīʿa* in its stricter interpretation in addition to practicing asceticism, extra worship and litanies could lead to the love of God entering and intensifying in one's heart, which would then allow one to move into the state

of *wilāya*, where one would follow the commands of their heart. The fourth state of *badaliyya* required passing through *fanā'*, which was understood as the extinction of one's free choice or *ikhtiyār* in all matters contrary to the divine decree. Advancement in all these stages was also through means of the Prophet, whether this meant following his *sharī'a* and *ādāb* in the early stages, or in being guided personally by him through dreams and visions in the latter stages. However, although the above description was extracted from Jīlānī's works, he was clear in asserting that one needed a guide or shaykh in this venture, and that the path could not—except in rare cases—be traversed on one's own.

An attempt was also made to extract the personality and character of Jīlānī from his own works. In as much as could be found on his life, it seemed to concur with what was reported in the biographies, and furthermore his personality seemed to fit in very well with what he said and wrote. His sessions seemed to be animated occasions where everybody and anybody, whether rich or poor, important or average, could and would attend, and where they would see the figure of Jīlānī as living embodiment of the pious saint. He would call them to be like him, and constantly remind them that it was an attainable goal, if only they followed his guidance and advice. He also claimed to be able to see and converse with angels, have access to hidden knowledge, and to hold a unique spiritual position.

This study began with the observation that there exists for the person of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī a divergence between what has been understood and believed in traditionally by Muslims, and what has been understood in the little that has been written in modern Western scholarship. This latter scholarship—at the risk of oversimplifying—has had a very difficult time getting over the initial misunderstood picture of Ḥanbalīs as being gross literalists with an avid rejection of any spirituality or mysticism. The addition to this of the strange and more than usual Sufi role ascribed to Jīlānī, along with the customary problems that hagiographic material presents, has naturally led to confusion and perplexity over the entire subject. The question of how it was that Jīlānī came to embody this Sufi role presupposes that he was not a Sufi to begin with, and this was shown to be based upon nothing more than the initial fact that he was a Ḥanbalī. For this very reason it was thought prudent to attempt a study of his own works. Five elements or key ideas were enumerated in the introduction, and it was argued that these were sufficient conditions to consider any person who espoused them to be regarded as a Sufi. All five of these ideas—direct experience of God, travelling a path of states and stages, the master disciple relationship, *fanā'*, and the identification with the Sufi tradition—were found in the works of Jīlānī, and thus according to the criteria that was set it was thought sufficient to consider him a Sufi, and his works as being, at least for the most part, on the subject matter of Sufism.

It has also been shown that Jīlānī was a Ḥanbalī without any qualifications, and that this did not require him to tone down his Sufism in any way, while on the other hand, his Sufism did not require him to tone down his Ḥanbalism in any way either. From this these two primary results, that Jīlānī was a Ḥānbalī and a Sufi, we can draw two interrelated observations. Firstly, that what is often assumed to be Ḥanbalī—that is what and who can or cannot be Ḥanbalī—has been shown to be too narrow, and a wider understanding of those that come under this term must surely be allowed. Secondly, on the other side of this same coin, and in lieu of the fact that Jīlānī has been shown to be so normal and regular a Ḥanbalī, so it must be accepted that Ḥanbalīs can be complete Sufis without any reservations or conditions in either facet.

This study then, represents an attempt to provide a detailed analysis of some of the works of Jīlānī and hopefully will be only one of many studies in this regard. There are many further avenues of research that need to be pursued in order for us to be able to fully appreciate the importance, influence and impact that Jīlānī had on the history of Sufism and on Muslim society and culture after him. In looking at areas that require further study, one need look no further than to his texts that have not been considered here. In particular there is the recently published *Tafsīr al-Jīlānī*, whose authenticity needs to be examined, but which promises to be a very interesting study in its own right. There is also the famous statement that was apparently made by Jīlānī, which again was not considered here, where he claimed that his foot was on the neck of all the saints; the import of this statement having been given various interpretations by later scholars and Sufis. The issue of the Qādirī order, the mantle of spiritual inheritance and the *madrasa* that was passed down through his sons and into the various regions of the Muslim world, is also something that can be considered again and in more depth than has been done previously.

The importance of further studies to better understand Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī cannot be emphasised enough, and in order to illustrate his continuing legacy, one may do no better than to point to the recent spiritual leader of the modern day Taliban movement, Mulla ʿUmar, who relied upon spiritual dreams to guide his decisions and is reported to have had on his door a sign that read, "*yā ghawth al-aʿẓam dast-gīr*!"[1]

1 This is a Persian phrase and may be translated as "O greatest helper (referring to Jilani), take my hand!" Allāma Saʿīd Asad claims to have seen it when he visited Mulla ʿUmar. See audio talks of Asad in Urdu available at various websites such as www.nooremadinah.net. For Mullah ʿUmar having used dreams in his political decisions, see Iain Edgar, The 'True Dream' in contemporary Islamic/Jihadist dreamwork: a case study of the dreams of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, *Contemporary South Asia* 15/3 (2006), 263–272.

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