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## MORE ON IBN al-FĀRĪD'S BIOGRAPHY

by

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### A. Overview of Biographical Sources

The Egyptian Sufi poet ʿUmar Ibn al-Fārīd (576/1181-632/1235) is without doubt one of the most outstanding Sufis not only in Arabic literature but in the Islamic world as well. He has always been very much appreciated as the cantor of Sufi love and for this reason he has been known as the "Prince of lovers" (*sultān al-ʿāshiqīn*)

whose poems are very much loved in Sufi sessions<sup>1</sup>. However, in spite of such a large renown, not much is known about his life since his biographical sources do not yield much information about him. Moreover, in time Ibn al-Fāriḍ has been the object of violent polemics among Muslim scholars who assimilated him in their condemnation of Ibn ʿArabī's school of Sufi monism. Such polemics had a large influence on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biographers who took position either in his defense or against him giving an image of him according to their own personal stand rather than based upon an objective inquiry. Hence, their biographical accounts about Ibn al-Fāriḍ cannot be accepted without a careful and critical scrutiny. A preliminary step to any study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems must be that of clearing the image of the poet handed down in biographical sources in order to reach a more objective picture of his life and character. This is the first purpose of the present research. It starts examining the evidence found in the earliest biographical accounts of the Egyptian poet. Then, it will examine the changes his image underwent in time, highlighting the causes of such changes. In the end, some conclusive assessments on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life will be drawn.

One must acknowledge that some work has already been done in this area by scholars who dealt with Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Sparse biographical notes are found in studies such as those of Ignazio Di Matteo, Carlo Nallino, Alleyne Reynold Nicholson, Émile Demergem and John Arthur Arberry<sup>2</sup>. However, the first thorough inquiry into Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography has been worked out by the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī in his study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism in 1945<sup>3</sup>. After that, in 1982, Issa J. Boullata has dedicated an article to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life adopting a more critical approach to the biographical sources<sup>4</sup>. Recently, another Egyptian scholar ʿAbd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Khāliq has dedicated much of his work to the Sufi poet. He has studied and edited Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* without adding any important information to the poet's biography. On the contrary, a very recent work done by Th. Emil Homerin, professor at the University of Rochester (USA), has given a lot of new information about Ibn al-Fāriḍ through a careful reading of the historical sources<sup>5</sup>. The present research intends to summarize the most important data known of Ibn al-Fāriḍ through his biographical sources from which the 'exterior' image of the poet can be composed. Such an image will be compared with the 'interior' image of the poet drawn from his poems if we want to have a more complete image of the "Prince of lovers".

## 1. The First Biographers.

### a. Al-Mundhirī (581/1185-656/1258)

Contrary to what Boullata says at the beginning of his article, Ibn Khallikān's account is not the first biographical record of Ibn al-Fāriḍ<sup>6</sup>. Before him there is

another very important witness, who was a personal acquaintance of the poet and directly reported from him, Zakī al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm ʿAbd al-Qawī al-Mundhirī. He was a well-known Shafiite scholar and a transmitter of hadith<sup>7</sup>. He outlines a basic pattern of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography which will be followed by later biographers saying:

“And on the second of Jumādā al-Ūlā, died in Cairo the most virtuous Sufi master (*shaykh*) and man of letters (*adīb*) Abū l-Qāsim ʿUmar Ibn *al-shaykh* Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn al-Murshid Ibn ʿAlī, of Ḥamāt (*al-ḥamawī*) by origin, but Egyptian (*al-miṣrī*) by birth and residence. He was of the Shafiite school (*al-shāfiʿī*) and became known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ. He was buried the day after [his death] at the foot of Muqaṭṭam under the [mosque] of al-ʿĀriḍ. He received the hadith from al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim Ibn ʿAlī al-Dimashqī. He composed excellent poems in the manner of Sufis and non-Sufis and was also a transmitter of hadith (*ḥaddatha*). I heard from him some of his poetry. I inquired from him the date of his birth and he answered: ‘In Cairo, at the end of the fourth [day] of Dhū al-Qaʿda the year seventy six’, understood ‘and five hundred’. He succeeded in blending in his poetry the sublimity (of meaning) with the sweetness (of expression). He composed quite a number of poems”<sup>8</sup>

From al-Mundhirī's brief account we can gather some basic information about Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and character.

**Ibn al-Fāriḍ's name, birth and death.** Al-Mundhirī mentions the poet's name as Abū l-Qāsim ʿUmar Ibn *al-shaykh* Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn al-Murshid Ibn ʿAlī. He records that the poet was known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ, because of his father's profession and that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's family came from Ḥamāt (Syria)<sup>9</sup>. Neither al-Mundhirī nor later sources give any explanation on the circumstances of the immigration of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's family to Egypt. Al-Mundhirī reports to have directly inquired from Ibn al-Fāriḍ himself the date of his birth: “I asked from him the date of his birth and he answered: ‘In Cairo, at the end of the fourth [day] of Dhū al-Qaʿda the year seventy six’, understood ‘and five hundred’<sup>10</sup>. According to al-Mundhirī's account Ibn al-Fāriḍ was born in Cairo on the 4th Dhū al-Qaʿda 576/22nd March 1181 and died also in Cairo on the 2nd of Jumādā al-Ūlā 632/23rd January 1235, about twenty four years before al-Mundhirī's own death (d.656/1258). He mentions the precise place of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's burial at the foot of the Muqaṭṭam, a chain of mountains east of Cairo, under the mosque called al-ʿĀriḍ. There Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine (*ḍarīḥ*) is still extant and has become in time an important shrine of pious visits (*ziyāra*).

**Ibn al-Fāriḍ's theological school.** Al-Mundhirī mentions that Ibn al-Fāriḍ belonged to the Shafiite school (*shāfiʿī*) and learned hadith from one of the highest authorities

of that school: al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim Ibn ʿAlī al-Dimashqī Ibn al-ʿAsākir, who died in Damascus in 600/1203, and that Ibn al-Fāriḍ himself was a known transmitter of hadith “*ḥaddatha*”<sup>11</sup>. Al-Mundhirī was a personal acquaintance of Ibn al-Fāriḍ since he relates that he listened to him and inquired from him about the date of his birth, apparently with the intention of writing about Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as he did about many other Sufis in his biographical compilation.

**Ibn al-Farid’s poetry and Sufism.** Al-Mundhirī extols the poetic talent of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, because in his collection of poems (*Dīwān*) he was able to blend the splendor of form with the sweetness of expression. Al-Mundhirī mentions that some of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poems have a Sufi meaning and some do not without lingering on his mystical life<sup>12</sup>.

**Conclusion.** Al-Mundhirī’s account is very important because it is the earliest and the closest source to Ibn al-Fāriḍ himself, since he personally heard from the poet. Though not extensive, this account provides an essential picture of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s birth and death, life and character, which will be repeated by later biographers. Al-Mundhirī seems to have been more interested in Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetry and theological school than in his Sufi way of life. In fact, he underlines that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was a Shafiite, well acquainted with some eminent scholars of that school, as al-Mundhirī himself, and that he also became a transmitter of hadith.

#### b. Ibn Khallikān (608/1211-681/1282)

Some twenty years after Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s death a well-known scholar in Islamic historiography, Shams al-Dīn Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Khallikān, usually known as Ibn Khallikān, wrote another brief account on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s life. His record is the first to be mentioned in M.Ḥilmī and I. Boullata’s works<sup>13</sup>.

**Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s name:** Ibn Khallikān confirms the name of the poet as given by al-Mundhirī saying that: “He is Abū Ḥafṣ or Abū l-Qāsim ʿUmar Ibn Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn al-Murshid Ibn ʿAlī; his family was from Ḥamāt (Syria), but he was born, lived and died in Egypt. He was known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ and was given the title ‘the Honor’ (*sharaf*)”<sup>14</sup>. Ibn Khallikān attributes to Ibn al-Fāriḍ two agnomina (*kunya*), Abū Ḥafṣ or Abū l-Qāsim, without giving any explanation. Later authors will quote them both. He mentions that the poet was known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ, because of his father’s profession and adds the title (*naʿt*, *laqab*) by which Ibn al-Fāriḍ will be known in the following: *Sharaf*, that is *Sharaf al-Dīn* (which means ‘the Honor of Religion’)<sup>15</sup>. Like al-

Mundhirī, Ibn Khallikān, states that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's family was of Syrian descent, from Ḥamāt (*ḥamawī*) without giving any information about the reason of their immigration to Egypt. Ibn Khallikān also confirms the dates given by al-Mundhirī: Ibn al-Fāriḍ was born in Cairo on the 4th of Dhū l-Qa'ada, 576 /1181 and died also in Cairo on Tuesday, the 2nd of Jumādā al-Ūlā 632/1235 and was buried on the next day at the foot of Mount al-Muqaṭṭam. Consequently, these dates of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life must be held as the surest ones as they are agreed upon by biographers who were very near in time to the poet<sup>6</sup>.

**Ibn al-Farid's poetry.** Like al-Mundhirī, Ibn Khallikān does not spare his praise for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's excellent poetry. He extols Ibn al-Fāriḍ's style as being "fine and exquisite" and attributes to him an ode of about six hundred verses (he is most probably referring to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's famous *al-Tā'iyyat al-Kubrā* which is actually of seven hundred sixty one verses). Though Ibn Khallikān describes Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry as composed in the manner of the Sufis (the poor, *al-fuqara*) and in their terminology (*iṣṭilāḥāt*), but none of the quoted verses has any explicit Sufi meaning. On the contrary, he quotes two verses in colloquial Egyptian (*mawāliyā*, a kind of poetic rhyming verses used in popular poetry), in which Ibn al-Fāriḍ complains of his unrequited passion towards a handsome young butcher. These verses are not included in the poet's collection. Ibn Khallikān adds that Ibn al-Fāriḍ composed many verses according to other popular meters as the rhyming couplets (*dūbayt*) and the riddles (*alghāz*). Some of them, in fact, have been preserved at the end of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's collection (*Dīwān*).

**Ibn al-Farid's character and Sufism.** Contrary to al-Mundhirī, Ibn Khallikān shows no interest in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's theological school, he does not mention it, focusing on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism instead. He knows, but only by hearsay (*sami'-tu*), not by a direct witness, that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was a virtuous man (*ṣāliḥ*), generous (*kathīr al-khayr*), living an ascetic life (*tajarrud*), and that he went for a period of time to Mecca (*jāwara Makka*), a practice quite common among Sufis. From these words we can gather that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was already known in his lifetime as a very pious spiritual master (*shaykh*). Boullata highlights the fact that Ibn Khallikān does not mention any of the extraordinary phenomena attributed to the poet by later biographers as 'Alī, *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's story<sup>17</sup>. However, one should note that also Ibn Khallikān does record, on the witness of some friends of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, a strange incident that occurred to the poet. One day, while reciting alone a verse of al-Ḥarīrī's stories (*maqāmāt*), Ibn al-Fāriḍ came across the question: "Who never did wrong but only good?". At that instant, he heard a voice of somebody he could not see answering

on the same rhyme “Muḥammad, the right guide, on whom Jibrīl’s revelation descended”<sup>18</sup>. From such a report one can infer that also Ibn Khallikān knew that strange stories on Ibn al-Fāriḍ were already circulating among his closest friends creating around him an aura of supernatural and miraculous events. However, Ibn Khallikān, though recording this account, seems to have paid very little attention to such biographical material. In the end, Ibn Khallikān portrays Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s character in few but significant traits: “this companionship was pleasant and his familiarity praised”<sup>19</sup>. In sharp contrast to later biographies, one finds Ibn Khallikān’s account very sober and realistic.

**Conclusion.** Ibn Khallikān’s witness is very important because he is known for his fairness, sobriety and objectivity, qualities that will be rare in later biographers. It seems to us, however, that Boullata exaggerates when he concludes: “that is all we are able to know about Ibn al-Fāriḍ and all we can hope to know with certainty”.<sup>20</sup> Surely, Ibn Khallikān’s account, confirming the one given by al-Mundhirī, provides the most reliable information on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s life with which later accounts must be confronted. But, some additional information will be gathered from later sources too.

### c. Ibn al-Ṣābūnī (604/1208-680/1282)

Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Ṣābūnī, an Egyptian Sufi and historian, contemporary of Ibn Khallikān, wrote a brief biographical account on Ibn al-Fāriḍ without adding any new information<sup>21</sup>. He repeats almost literally al-Mundhirī’s story with some minor additions taken from Ibn Khallikān, e.g. when he says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s character was pleasant and sociable. His account confirms the first two main sources of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s life and work, namely that of al-Mundhirī and Ibn Khallikān.

**Conclusion.** The biographical accounts on Ibn al-Fāriḍ recorded by al-Mundhirī, Ibn Khallikān and Ibn al-Ṣābūnī are of special importance. These authors lived in a time very close to the events and provided brief, objective and impartial accounts of them. In their reports nothing of the bitterness of later detractors nor of the exaltation of later supporters of Ibn al-Fāriḍ appears. Moreover, the reports of al-Mundhirī and Ibn Khallikān seem to be independent from one another: this fact corroborates their credibility and authenticity, and al-Ṣābūnī shows that he was acquainted with both records, confirming their witnesses. On the whole, these first biographers have highlighted Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetical achievement as the most prominent aspect of his character, but they do mention his Sufi and ascetic life.

In conclusion, one can say that these three authors provide the essential and most reliable data about Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s life and work as they were known in Cairo some

twenty or thirty years after the poet's death. Later data, on the contrary, appear to have been deeply influenced by the bitter polemics that flared around Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism and for this reason they must be carefully and critically scrutinized.

## 2. Onset of Polemics on Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

By the end of the seventh/thirteenth century, that is thirty or forty years after the first biographies of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, one notes that the atmosphere around the Egyptian poet has changed into a violent controversy on account of his orthodoxy. Ibn al-Fāriḍ had always enjoyed respect and esteem from the Ayyubid sultans, especially from his contemporary al-Malik al-Kāmil, as well as veneration by common people. Yet, the change of dynasty from the Ayyubids to the Mamlūks in 648/1250 brought about also a change in attitude toward Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Very early Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry was linked with Ibn ʿArabī's school, especially because some of the first commentators of his poems belonged to that school, known as the monistic school or of the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). From that time on Ibn al-Fāriḍ has often been considered as the poet of Ibn ʿArabī's school and accused of upholding the heretical doctrines of 'unity' or 'union' (*waḥda* or *ittiḥād*) or the 'oneness of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and incarnationism (*ḥulūl*)<sup>22</sup>

A story reported by ʿAlī, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson in his biographical introduction to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* heralds this new mood towards the poet<sup>23</sup>. This story is about a chief judge of Cairo, Taqīyy al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz (d.695/1296), who became minister (*wazīr*) under the sultan Qalāwūn, who ruled of Egypt in the years 678/1279-689/1290. During a public session held in a place for Sufi gathering called *al-ṣalāḥiyya* this *wazīr* accused Ibn al-Fāriḍ of the heresy of incarnation (*ḥulūl*). This happened in the presence of the venerable sheikh Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī (d.697/1298), a disciple of al-Qūnawī (d.673/1274) and a known lover of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems<sup>24</sup>. Al-Aykī invoked God's curse upon the *wazīr*, who, shortly afterwards, was relieved of his office and imprisoned for a time. After the release of Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz, ʿAlī *sibṭ* Ibn al-Fāriḍ himself went to visit him to prove that his grandfather was not an incarnationist, quoting a few verses from the *al-Tāʾiyya* (vv. 279-285). Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz publicly repented of what he had said against Ibn al-Fāriḍ as well as against Sufis in general. Then he went to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. On his return, he was reinstated to his office which he held till his death in 695/1296.

This episode signals the new atmosphere of accusation and suspicion that surrounded Sufis in general at the end of the seventh/thirteenth c. By this time in fact, Sufis came under the unflinching attacks of the great Hanbalite theologian Taqīyy al-



Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (661/1263-728/1328), known in Islam as the leading archenemy of Sufism<sup>25</sup>. He pretended to defend the purity of Islam fighting any kind of innovation (*bid'a*) that, in his view, had corrupted it, aiming in particular at Sufism and popular devotions. Such innovations were, in his view, against the strict tradition of the Prophet and his Companions. He struggled in particular against the new trend of Sufism, which was represented by Ibn 'Arabī (d.638/1240) and his school. Among these Sufis he listed Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d.673/1274), Najm al-Dīn Ibn Isrā'īl (d.677/1278), 'Afif al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (d.690/1291) and others as well as some early Sufis as al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d.285/898) and al-Ḥusayn Ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d.309/922). Ibn Taymiyya accused them of upholding the heretic doctrine of monism, known at the time as the doctrine of 'unity' or 'union' (*waḥda* or *ittiḥād*) or the 'oneness of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and the doctrine of incarnationism (*ḥulūl*). In his view those Sufis pretended to reach unity with God removing all difference between Creator and creature. He compared their thought to the Christian idea of incarnation and to the Shiite ideology of Imamism. Moreover, he regarded them as even worse than Christians and Shiites, because, while these ones restricted the union with God to some definite persons (the *Messiah* or the *Imām*), those heretical Sufis pretended to extend it to all. Besides these heretical thoughts, many common practices in Sufi orders were equally condemned by him, in particular the sessions of religious music and dance (*al-samā' wa-l-raqs*). Ibn Taymiyya had a far reaching influence in Islamic thought in general. He has become a very important reference for those who oppose Sufis in the name of the strictest fidelity to the original Islamic tradition and he has also become the inspirer of many Islamic reformist movements.

Ibn Taymiyya's polemics was continued after him by many scholars. One of the most outstanding was another Hanbalite, the great historian Ibn-Khaldūn (d.808/1406), who joined in condemning the same monistic trend of Sufism. Ibn-Khaldūn dedicated to Sufism a full chapter of his famous Introduction (*muqaddima*), in which he criticizes what he calls "later Sufis", making a special reference to al-Farghānī (d.699/1300), the first commentator of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as the most representative of what he calls "their abstruse and obscure thought". Among those Sufis he names explicitly Ibn al-Fāriḍ<sup>26</sup>. A severe sentence (*fatwā*) is also attributed to Ibn-Khaldūn, in which he condemns those Sufis and their works. This sentence, as reported by a Yemenite scholar, Ṣāliḥ Ibn Maḥdī al-Maqbalī (d.1108/1696), he himself a bitter opponent of the same monistic trend of Sufism sounds: "...the sentence on such books is to destroy them wherever they may be found, burning them by fire and washing (the remains away) by water so that any trace of their writing may disappear..."<sup>27</sup>. Another prominent polemicist entered the fight against Sufis, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī (d.885/1480), who bitterly and repeatedly attacked Ibn al-

Fāriḍ and Ibn ʿArabī in particular in a famous controversy that raged in Cairo in the years 874/1469-875/1470<sup>28</sup>. In these controversies Ibn al-Fāriḍ has always been strictly associated with Ibn ʿArabī's school to the point of making him a disciple of Ibn ʿArabī and his poetry was seen just as a poetical expression of Ibn ʿArabī's Sufism.

Against those opponents, a number of scholars who joined in the defense of Ibn al-Fāriḍ from any accusation of heresy. Among the most outstanding of them one finds Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d.911/1505). The controversy ended with the sentence (*fatwā*) of the Shafiite judge Zakariyā Ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī (d.926/1519), in 874/1469 in which he justified Ibn al-Fāriḍ from any suspicion of heresy. After those events, as Ibn al-Fāriḍ has always found strong support by many scholars, as the Egyptian Sufi and historian, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d.973/1565), and his shrine has always been much venerated by Egyptian people up to modern times<sup>29</sup>.

However, such an atmosphere of polemics and condemnation which flared around Ibn al-Fāriḍ had a great influence on his biographers who had to take sides finding arguments either in his favor or against him. This new attitude is evident from two biographical accounts at the beginning of the seventh/fourteenth c., that of ʿAlī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's and of al-Dhahabī. ʿAlī intended to defend his grandfather mentioning a number of miracles to prove that he was a very holy man, on the contrary al-Dhahabī saw in him a representative of that heretical Sufism which threatened Islamic orthodoxy.

#### a. Abū l-Fidā, ʿImād al-Dīn Ismaʿīl (d.732/1332)

A very brief mention of Ibn al-Fāriḍ is given by the historian Abū l-Fidā in his book *Al-Mukhtaṣar*. He mentions that in 632/1234 "al-Qāsim b. ʿUmar, known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ died in Cairo"<sup>30</sup> Ibn al-Fāriḍ has always been called 'Abū l-Qāsim' and no source has recorded Ibn al-Fāriḍ's name as al-Qāsim. As Abū l-Fidā's information depends on Ibn Khallikān's account, most probably there must be a mistake: Instead of "Abū l-Qāsim ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ" Abū l-Fidā wrote "al-Qāsim b. ʿUmar known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ".

#### b. Al-Dhahabī (673/1274-748/1347).

Al-Dhahabī was an outstanding Islamic scholar who wrote extensively on Islamic history. His sources of his account on Ibn al-Fāriḍ are al-Mundhirī and Ibn Khallikān. He makes no reference to the biography written by his contemporary ʿAlī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the grandson of the poet<sup>31</sup>. Al-Dhahabī, following Ibn Taymiyya's view, portrays Ibn al-Fāriḍ as: "The prince of the poets of his time and the spiritual leader (*shaykh*) of monistic Sufism (*ittiḥādīyya*)"<sup>32</sup>. adding his personal judgment with the words: "I say:" (*qultu*). Al-Dhahabī avows that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* has become very

famous for his extremely exquisite, sweet, brilliant and eloquent poetry, but he cannot help expressing his clear and sharp condemnation of its contents, because of the heresy of monism, saying that his poetry has been: "spoiled by the profession of the damned monism (*ittihād*) expressed in the most sweet and exquisite form"<sup>33</sup>. He sees that the sweetness of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry is similar to a honey pastry filled with viper poison and feels his duty to warn the unrefined reader from falling into such a trap. He quotes some verses of the *al-Tā'īyya* to prove the validity of his allegations<sup>34</sup>.

Such a negative judgment is repeated by al-Dhahabī in his *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, where he says in a more pathetic way: "O you, guides in religion (*a'imma*), will you continue to offend God? There is no support but God's (*lā ḥawla*)"<sup>35</sup> In *al-'Ibar* he calls Ibn al-Fāriḍ: "...the proof and authority (*ḥujja*) of the monistic thought (*waḥda*) and the banner of poetry"<sup>36</sup> In the *Mizān al-'Iṭidāl* al-Dhahabī adds that Ibn al-Fāriḍ, in spite of the fact that he learned the hadith such a famous Shafiite scholar as was Ibn al-'Asākir, clearly professed the idea of monism (*ittihād*) and has become a great calamity for Muslims from which the author warns his readers. Al-Dhahabī explicates that his intention is not to condemn Sufis altogether, but to warn that there are different kinds of Sufis: some of them have only the array of Sufis, hiding beneath their pious attire a philosophy as dangerous as viper poison<sup>37</sup>.

Al-Dhahabī's assessment shows both his appreciation of and attraction to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's exquisite poetry together with his unequivocal condemnation for the heresy of monism he sees expressed in it. Al-Dhahabī's account has always been considered a very authoritative witness of the atmosphere of condemnation that, a century after Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death, had already surrounded the poet in many Islamic circles for the alleged suspicious of monism. By such condemnation in matter of orthodoxy, al-Dhahabī intended to counteract to the increasing influence that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems were gaining in many Sufi circles, particularly those attached to Ibn 'Arabī's school.

### c. 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d.ca. 735/1335).

A hundred years after his Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death, his grandson from the part of his daughter (called in Arabic *sibt*), 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ, wrote the most comprehensive biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ called *Dībāja* (literally ornament), which he wrote as a preface to his own edition of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān*. 'Alī's text has become the most accepted and common reference for all later editions of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān*<sup>38</sup>. Not much is known about 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ; he reports about himself in his preface saying that he was a *shaykh* of a mosque in Cairo, but many questions have been raised about the trustworthiness of his account<sup>39</sup>. 'Alī adds that he edited Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* some forty years after the death of his uncle, the *shaykh* Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, son of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, around 735/1335, that is about hundred years after Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death<sup>40</sup>.

Compared with previous sources, ʿAlī's account is much more extensive and detailed: he clearly intended to leave a glorious memory (*tadhkira*) of his grandfather's deeds to the following generations. He was not a personal witness of his grandfather, but relates from his uncle, Kamāl al-Dīn, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's son, and some Sufi acquaintances. ʿAlī's story clearly reflects the family tradition about the poet which had been handed down among his closest friends in the form of pious and edifying anecdotes. This aspect must be taken into account for an assessment of ʿAlī's *Dībāja*. The main point of his story can be summarized as follows.

**Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father.** From ʿAlī's account, we know that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father was among the prominent men of science and piety of Cairo. He was offered the prestigious charge of chief judge, which he refused preferring to live in seclusion, near the mosque al-Azhar, in a place called "the house of the preachers" (*dār al-khaṭāba*), dedicating himself to a life of asceticism<sup>41</sup>.

It was Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father who initiated his son, ʿUmar, to the study of religious sciences and to the practice of spiritual life. At a very early age, Ibn al-Fāriḍ used to go for periods of retreat or spiritual wandering (*siyāha*) to the Muqaṭṭam mountain, east of Cairo, in a wadi called "of the helpless, poor (*muṣṭaḍ'afīn*)", probably a place of retreat for Sufis. But, at the same time, his father wanted him to attend lessons at the theological schools of Cairo. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's family must have been attached in a special way to al-Azhar mosque since Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father retired and died there, and so too did his son ʿUmar later on. However, ʿAlī does not elucidate on the reason of such relationship, neither does he give any account of the origin of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's family and the cause of their emigration to Egypt. Nothing more specific is said about his masters in the different fields of religious sciences, although from other sources we know that Ibn al-Fāriḍ learned hadith from the Shafiite scholar Ibn al-ʿAsākir and was himself a Shafiite scholar<sup>42</sup>.

**Ibn al-Fāriḍ's character.** ʿAlī describes his grandfather as a handsome, venerable man who just by his outward appearance would impress his audience<sup>43</sup>. A particular ascetic trait stressed more than once is Ibn al-Fāriḍ's generosity and detachment from possessions. ʿAlī reports that his grandfather repeatedly refused generous gifts of the sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil, who was one of his most fervent admirers<sup>44</sup>. This story is consistent with the well known generosity of the Ayyubids toward both religious scholars and Sufis since the time of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who favoured Sufi brotherhoods and theological schools<sup>45</sup>.

ʿAlī highlights more than once his grandfather's asceticism, fasting and prayer, and reports some curious stories resulting from his scrupulosity<sup>46</sup>. A particular character-

istic of the poet, only briefly mentioned in the *Dībāja*, is Ibn al-Fāriḍ's taste for beauty. 'Alī reports that Ibn al-Fāriḍ liked to go out of the town to the mosque of al-Mushtahā on the island of al-Rawḍa, along the Nile riverside, to contemplate the view of the river, especially at tide season<sup>47</sup>. However, this fine taste for beauty must have played in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life a role far more important than the simple enjoyment of nature, as his poetry witnesses. It seems that 'Alī has missed this point altogether, showing more interest in the supernatural events of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life.

**Ibn al-Fāriḍ's journey to Mecca.** Ibn al-Fāriḍ's journey to Mecca where he stayed for some time, is linked, in the *Dībāja's* account, with a mysterious person called the *shaykh* al-Baqqāl<sup>48</sup>. It is also at this point of 'Alī's account that the supernatural element (*karāmāt*) enters in full into the events of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life. This mysterious *shaykh* al-Baqqāl tells Ibn al-Fāriḍ that he will not receive the spiritual revelation (*fath*) until he goes to Mecca. To Ibn al-Fāriḍ's objection that Mecca was too far away the *shaykh* answered: "Look, there is Mecca, in front of you!". 'Umar saw the town before him, moved toward it and in a moment entered it. In Mecca, he lived in a valley ten days away from the sacred mosque, the Ka'ba. Nevertheless, he managed to go daily to the mosque for the five prescribed prayers. A huge beast would accompany him to and fro, asking him (in clear words) to mount, but Ibn al-Fāriḍ would always turn down its request. This fact was witnessed by many devotees present at that time in the mosque.

As miraculous was Ibn al-Fāriḍ's journey to Mecca, in a similar miraculous way his return to Cairo took place. After fifteen years, the same *shaykh* al-Baqqāl, already near death, called him in a vision to come back from Mecca to be present to his passing away. Ibn al-Fāriḍ came back to Cairo on time to witness al-Baqqāl's death. Following his instructions, the *shaykh* al-Baqqāl was buried at a place situated at the foot of the Muqattam mountain, east of Cairo, under a mosque called al-'Āriḍ, where Ibn al-Fāriḍ will be buried too<sup>49</sup>. At his burial extraordinary events took place: white and green birds, which are believed to take the souls of saints in paradise, were seen. Boullata dismisses all these events as fantastic and impossible to believe. However, they were important in 'Alī's view to state his grandfather's sanctity<sup>50</sup>. From 'Alī's account one gathers that Ibn al-Fāriḍ lived for a long time in Mecca and during that time he had an intense spiritual experience to which his spiritual life would be linked for ever. This fact is largely confirmed by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's minor poems in which the poet expresses his feelings of his stay in Mecca and his deep and lasting desire to go back to the place of his profound inspiration.

'Alī says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ lived in Mecca for fifteen years and that at the end he met the great master al-Suhrawardī, during the latter's last visit to Mecca, which is clearly fixed in 628/1230<sup>51</sup>. Consequently, we can construe that Ibn al-Fāriḍ went to

Mecca around 613/1216, when he was about thirty seven years old. These dates seem to be quite correct and fit Ibn al-Fāriḍ's spiritual journey. He went on his long spiritual wandering (*siyāḥa*) in Mecca when he was approaching the age of maturity, forty years, a number that always had a very significant bearings in many spiritual traditions. From there he came back in his fifties, the age of full maturity .

**Ecstasies, trances and visions.** Upon his return to Cairo, the series of extraordinary events continued. We read in 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's report that the life of the poet was a continuous sequence of ecstasies, trances and visions. He claims that even the composition of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's major poem *al-Tā'iyya* took place in the intervals of lucidity between one ecstasy another, most probably to prove that it came to him in state of inspiration<sup>52</sup>.

Ecstasies would occur in any place and at any time, triggered by the most innocuous incidents: a couplet chanted by some guards returning home, a woman weeping for her child, a verse proclaimed by a launderer during his tiring work, an encounter with other Sufis. In everything the poet's deep feeling was stirred by the perception of a presence that evoked in him the most overpowering emotions. Such states of ecstasy could find expression in the strangest and most picturesque outbursts: trances, loud cries, dances, stripping of clothes, sweat and loss of conscience. Such phenomena could become contagious, involving a number of people present, and continue for several days. One of the most picturesque ecstasies, described in the *Dībāja*, is that shared by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī with Ibn al-Fāriḍ at the end of his stay in Mecca<sup>53</sup>. The two Sufis were enraptured by such a violent excitement that all the people present were drawn into an exalted state of intoxication stripping off their clothes and dancing. The approval of a great Sufi as al-Suhrawardī was seemed very important for 'Alī in confirming his grandfather status as a spiritual man. States of trance and ecstasy were seen as proof that a person was in contact with the supernatural world. Muḥammad is said to have received the revelation in a similar state.

Also visions of the Prophet Muḥammad play an important role in Sufi life and 'Alī reports that they occurred quite frequently to Ibn al-Fāriḍ<sup>54</sup>. In one of these visions the Prophet told the poet that he belonged (*nisba*) to his family, while it was well known that the poet's family proudly related itself to the Arab tribe of Banū Sa'ad, the tribe of Ḥalīma, the wet nurse of the Prophet. The poet explained that the Prophet intended the relation of love, which is much more relevant than the relation of blood. In another vision the Prophet told Ibn al-Fāriḍ to change the title of his poem from "*Lawā'iḥ al-Janān wa-Rawā'iḥ al-Jinān*" (The Flashes of the Heart and the Scents of Gardens) to its definitive title "*Nazm al-Sulūk*" (The Order of the Way)<sup>55</sup>.

**Ibn al-Fāriḍ and other Sufis.** Ibn al-Fāriḍ met other Sufis of his time; some of them are recorded by his grandson. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's journey to Mecca was determined at its beginning and its end by the mysterious presence of *shaykh* al-Baqqāl. On the contrary, at the end of his permanence in Mecca, Ibn al-Fāriḍ is reported to have met a well-known Sufi of his time, *shaykh* Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d.632/1234), author of an important Sufi manual *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* and a recognized authority of Sufism<sup>56</sup>. Their meeting happened in a marvelous way. Ibn al-Fāriḍ appeared in a dream to al-Suhrawardī and assured him of his spiritual state. The two Sufis met and Ibn al-Fāriḍ proclaimed the verse:

“This is the good news for you: take off what is on you;  
you have been mentioned there (in the Beloved's presence) in spite of your  
crookedness”<sup>57</sup>

Then, everybody present fell enraptured in ecstasy dancing and stripping off his clothes. After that, al-Suhrawardī asked permission from Ibn al-Fāriḍ to have Ibn al-Fāriḍ's two sons wear the frock (*kbirqa*) of his order. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, after some reluctance, accepted this request. This does not mean that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was the head of a Sufi order<sup>58</sup>.

At the end of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life, another well known Sufi, Burhān al-Dīn al-Jaʿbarī (d. 687/1288), met the poet with a series of extraordinary events<sup>59</sup>. ʿAlī relates that, while on retreat along the river Euphrates in Iraq, al-Jaʿbarī was informed by a mysterious person that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was on the brink of death. Al-Jaʿbarī followed this person until he arrived in Egypt and met Ibn al-Fāriḍ. The two Sufis recognized each other and witnessed their personal spiritual states. Ibn al-Fāriḍ told al-Jaʿbarī that he had asked God to have some saints present at his death and that he, al-Jaʿbarī, was the first of them. He then expressed his intense desire for the vision of God in a verse that would contain his last words<sup>60</sup>:

I wish, after such a long time, to have a look of you,  
How much blood has been shed in vain short of my goal!

After these words, the poet rejoiced, smiled, as if he had a vision, and in this state passed away. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's burial was very solemn, attended by a large crowd of people and many Sufis. Al-Jaʿbarī was sure that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had attained his desired goal, but some were still perplexed about Ibn al-Fāriḍ's exit, till al-Jaʿbarī saw in a vision the Spirit of Muḥammad leading the spirits of angels and saints, men and *ginn*s, praying over Ibn al-Fāriḍ, while green and white birds appeared in the sky. Al-Jaʿbarī, having witnessed all these events, stayed at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb for three days, then went back to Iraq. It seems difficult to hold as historically reliable all those miraculous phenomena that surrounded Ibn al-Fāriḍ's meetings with his fellow Sufis.

There is an evident intention to magnify Ibn al-Fāriḍ's stand and to gain him veneration from the Sufi circles. Also Boullata comments saying: "...the way in which this event is presented by the poet's grandson on the alleged authority of his uncle seems to be calculated to demonstrate the poet's sainthood and to show the heavenly approval of him"<sup>61</sup>.

On the other hand, the short account about al-Qūnawī's sessions seems more reliable, based as it is on the witness of another venerable *shaykh* of that time, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ayḳī<sup>62</sup>. This latter relates that al-Qūnawī used to close his sessions of instructions to his disciples quoting and commenting on some verses of *al-Tā'iyya* and urging them to learn it by heart. One of his disciples, Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī, took notes of his master's comments and composed his famous commentary, first in Persian, then in a more extensive edition of two volumes in Arabic. This account is in agreement with what we know from other sources about al-Farghānī's work<sup>63</sup>. 'Alī mentions that another scholar, chief judge in Damascus and in Cairo, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī al-Shāfi'ī (d.683/1283), commented on *al-Tā'iyya* in a number of volumes<sup>64</sup>. All these annotations seem to be historically correct.

**Ibn al-Fāriḍ' birth and death.** 'Alī's story agrees with previous accounts on the date and place of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death. He reports that Ibn al-Fāriḍ died in Cairo in 632/1235, in his residence near al-Azhar mosque and that he was buried the next after at the foot of al-Muqāṭṭam, near a wadi called *al-Sayl*, that is torrent bed, under the mosque called al-'Āriḍ. 'Alī fixes the date of the poet's birth in 577 instead of 576 saying that he heard it from al-Mundhirī and Ibn Khallikān. His account in this instance is clearly inaccurate since it contradicts what al-Mundhirī and Ibn Khallikān themselves have recorded in their own accounts. 'Alī's story cannot be accepted, while al-Mundhirī and Ibn Khallikān's seem more accurate<sup>65</sup>.

**Conclusion.** 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's account of his grandfather's life has been differently evaluated. The supporters of Ibn al-Fāriḍ have accepted 'Alī's story as historically trustworthy, while the opponents of Ibn al-Fāriḍ have tried to discredit it. Among them Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī (d.885/1480) must be mentioned, who discarded altogether Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson account as not trustworthy, "...it is all lies and slanders.... and he ['Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ] is an unknown guy whose testimony can not be accepted"<sup>66</sup>

Modern scholars have been more cautious in their approach of 'Alī's account. Ḥilmī, a modern Egyptian scholar, acknowledges that there are many exaggerations in such a story, because Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson took a clear apologetic stand in favor of his grandfather<sup>67</sup>. But, in the end, Ḥilmī too accepts its basic data. A more criti-



cal attitude is the one adopted by Boullata in his biographical article on Ibn al-Fāriḍ. After a thorough analysis he comes to the drastic conclusion: "To sum up, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson cannot be considered a reliable source for the poet's life except regarding very few data which must, at any rate, be treated with great caution and only if they are corroborated by other evidence". Boullata's assessment is based on the contradiction he finds between 'Alī's story and what we know from the earliest sources. More cautious is Homerin who has approached these stories in their historical context concluding: "'Alī's reliable stories are probably those that had been transmitted directly to him from his uncle or from known individuals such as Ja'barī"<sup>68</sup>.

It seems to us that in 'Alī's account one has to take into consideration some data of the religious psychology and sociology. The reliability of such stories depends on their different sources and their purpose. The general historical pattern of 'Alī's account seems quite accurate when compared with other historical sources. On the whole, names of people and places correspond to what we know from other historical sources: e.g. the events at sultan al-Malik's time, al-Malik's esteem for men of religion and culture, reference to other Sufis such as al-Suhrawardī, al-Qūnawī, al-Ja'barī as well as other characters of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's time. The story of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's journey to Mecca fits into the general pattern of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and poetry as well as into the common customs of Sufis of his time.

On the other hand, reports based on family records, especially those based on the authority of his uncle Kamāl al-Dīn, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's son, and the recollection of other Sufi friends, seem more prone to exaggeration. Here, the desire to magnify and extol his grandfather becomes quite evident and has been recognized by all. In 'Alī's mind his grandfather had to fit into the stereotype of the ideal saint (*walī*), the friend of God, endowed with special graces and gifts. Propagating such a holy image of the poet was the best defense against all accusations of impiety thrown on him by his opponents, as seen above. For this apologetic reason, miraculous events are extolled. In such instances, we may agree with Boullata's statement that the frequency, the plateal and public display of such extraordinary events as related by 'Alī are in sharp contradiction with the absolute absence of similar hagiographic elements in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's earliest biographers<sup>69</sup>.

Moreover, we think that a more objective assessment of such miraculous events can be made too. One has to keep in mind what is known about the religious psychology of saints and the influence they can exert on other persons. Such events are so common in many mystical traditions of different religions and countries that it seems quite difficult to discard them as mere fabrications. It is known that spiritual persons can reach a high level of clairvoyance, going beyond the common level of experience and exerting a profound influence on people around. People are easily

prompted by a deep feeling of expectation, awe and marvel at anything said and done by such spiritual persons and they cannot help expressing it in the most dramatic way. In the description of such events it is always difficult to assess what are the actual facts of experience and what is their expression. Surely, 'Alī's accounts witness the atmosphere of enthusiasm that surrounded his grandfather in familial and Sufi circles. One should also remark that 'Alī records some facts that could endanger Ibn al-Fāriḍ's reputation in strictly traditional, law abiding minds, e.g. states of extravagant ecstasies and trances with cries, dances, stripping of clothes etc. Yet, such phenomena mattered in Sufi circles and fitted in with the idea of a spiritual man such as Ibn al-Fāriḍ was held in their minds. We have pointed out that Ibn Khallikān too reports an anecdote which shows that such an atmosphere of marvelous and miraculous expectations had already surrounded Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his lifetime<sup>70</sup>. In conclusion, we can say that 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's account relates many elements of various degrees of historical value which he merged together in order to present his grandfather's life as holy as possible.

The two accounts of al-Dhahabī and 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ represent two opposite positions with regard to al-Fāriḍ as a Sufi and a poet: the first represents the opponents and the second the supporters of the Sufi poet. At any rate, they both witness the new atmosphere of bitter controversy that surrounded Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and work a century after his death. Such an atmosphere will largely influence later biographers.

### 3. Ibn al-Fāriḍ between Supporters and Opponents

After Ibn al-Fāriḍ's first biographers a number of authors wrote on Ibn al-Fāriḍ' life and Sufism. On the whole, they show more interest in taking side either in favor or against his orthodoxy than in providing new biographical material. Their records depend basically on earlier sources and no important new material is added to what we already know. However, it is interesting to examine their stories according their chronological order. In fact, their positions with regard to the Egyptian poet witness the various trends present in the Islamic world from which they have been influenced

Al-Yāfi'ī (700/1300-768/1367), was a Sufi biographer and a later contemporary of al-Dhahabī and 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ<sup>71</sup>. He wrote about Ibn al-Fāriḍ depending to a large extent on 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn Khallikān's accounts focusing on two events of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life: his journey to Mekka at sheikh al-Baqqāl's indication and his meeting in Mekka with the great sheikh al-Suhrawardī. Some minor inaccuracies are found in al-Yāfi'ī's account. He says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ stayed in Mekka

twelve years instead of fifteen years as reported by 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ. He calls the place where al-Baqqāl was buried (and Ibn al-Fāriḍ too) 'al-Fāriḍ', while all the other sources call it as 'al-Āriḍ'. Al-Yāfi'ī enjoys quoting a long passage from one of his poems in which he expresses the same idea of love as that found in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems. He knows that the number of Sufis who were caught up in ecstasy in Mecca at al-Suhrawardī's proclamation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's "*al-Jīmīyya*" was four hundred. Al-Yāfi'ī praises Ibn Khallikān's report in favor of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, remarking, however, that it falls short of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's true value. He fixes Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death in 631 H. instead of 632 H., as reported by earlier sources. The mountain at whose foot Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grave is located is called by him "al-Mu'azzam", instead of al-Muqaṭṭam. In any case, al-Yāfi'ī shows beyond doubt his enthusiastic support for Ibn al-Fāriḍ as a poet and a Sufi.

'Imād al-Dīn Ibn Kathīr (700/1300-774/1373), a contemporary of al-Yāfi'ī, dedicates only few lines to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography in his large historical work *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*<sup>72</sup>. With al-Dhahabī he lists Ibn al-Fāriḍ among those Sufis who uphold monism. Ibn Kathīr describes Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father's job vaguely as "...the one who fixes the due of women and men". He is quite inaccurate where he says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was nearly seventy years old when he died. From all accounts Ibn al-Fāriḍ was around fifty six at his death (that is 632-576=56). Ibn Kathīr was among Ibn al-Fāriḍ's opponents.

Ibn al-Mulaqqin (723/1323-804/1402) gives a short but accurate biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, based on Ibn Khallikān's story<sup>73</sup>. Ibn al-Mulaqqin mentions that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was accused of monism (*ittihād*), but defends him (*uwwila*, that is his expressions have been explained in an orthodox meaning) and praises Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry. He too was a supporter of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

Ibn Khaldūn (732/1332-808/1406) has been already mentioned among Ibn al-Fāriḍ's opponents<sup>74</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773/1272-852/1449) give a long account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ depending to a large extent on al-Dhahabī's which he quotes almost literally<sup>75</sup>. He mentions the biography written by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson without adding any comment. Ibn Ḥajar too acknowledges that Ibn al-Fāriḍ has gained a large audience through his exquisite poetry, but at the same time renews al-Dhahabī's condemnation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's heresy of monism, which is as dangerous as viper poison in a honey sweet. At this point, Ibn Ḥajar quotes some verses of the *al-Tāʿīyya* in order

to prove his statement and relates the authority of some sheikhs who condemned him. He concludes reporting an old story from "*Kitāb al-Tawhīd*" of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Qūṣī with the clear intention of casting some shadow on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's moral integrity<sup>76</sup>. Al-Qūṣī reports from another sheikh, a contemporary of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Munūfī (d.703/1304) who heard from an unnamed young man the following story about Ibn al-Fāriḍ. One night this young man was asked by Ibn al-Fāriḍ to accompany him to a town on the Nile, al-Bahnasā, to a house where many women singing and dancing were gathered. Ibn al-Fāriḍ danced with them as much as he could, then they both returned to Cairo<sup>77</sup>. This story has been reported by Ibn Ḥajar with the clear purpose of casting some suspicion on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's moral integrity suggesting that he used to entertain a group of dancing girls and often paid them visits at night. Al-Qūṣī's original story, on the contrary, was reported in defense of the Sufi audition (*samā'*) and as a warning from suspecting Sufis without knowledge. Since those women were the poet's legal property, they were licit to him. However, such a report (never mentioned before even by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's opponents) based on the witness of an unknown young man can be given little credibility. It does not fit the general pattern of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life. Ibn Ḥajar was a well-known opponent of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism.

Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf Taghrī Birdī (813/1410-873/1470) gives a biographical account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his history of Egypt *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira* totally depending on Ibn Khalikān's and quoting even his wrong spelling "al-Fāraḍ" instead of "al-Fāriḍ"<sup>78</sup>. He praises Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry witnessing that it had become very popular among all kinds of people. However, he describes Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry as "love poetry", without any mention of its Sufi meaning. In the end Taghrī Birdī quotes forty one verses from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's "*al-Yā'yya*" as an example of poetic art, very much appreciated in his time. No new information is provided in his account and he is surely among Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters.

Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī (809/1406-885/1480) has been already mentioned as a polemicist who, on the line of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn, has bitterly opposed Ibn 'Arabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism<sup>79</sup>.

'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (827/1414-898/1492), a Persian Sufi and historian, dedicates in his biographical work on Sufis a long paragraph to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life, essentially depending on 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ and al-Yāfi'ī's account with no any new information<sup>80</sup>. Jāmī mentions the beginning of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's ascetic life under the guidance of his father, his journey to and from Mecca at the advice of the sheikh al-Baqqāl, his meeting with al-Suhrawardī and his death in the presence of the sheikh al-Ja'barī. He

highly praises Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān*, especially the *al-Tā'iyya*, and confirms 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's account that this poem was commented orally by al-Qūnawī and that later on al-Farghānī, one of al-Qūnawī's disciples, composed his famous commentary. Jāmī was among Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters.

**Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī** (849/1445-911/1505) has been, as already mentioned, a strong supporter of both Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn 'Arabī. He gives a brief account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life in his book *Husn al-Muḥādara* depending on previous sources; he mentions al-Mundhirī. Al-Suyūṭī quotes one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's student al-Rashīd Yaḥyā al-'Aṭṭār (d.662/1264), who in his biographical dictionary says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was: "A virtuous and learned sheikh who composed excellent verse and had an very alert mind. He followed the ways of Sufis and embraced the Shafiite school. He stayed in Mecca for a time and was the companion of a number of sheikhs". No any new information is found in it<sup>81</sup>.

**Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Iyās** (852/1448-930/1524) mentions Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his historical work in relation to sultan al-Mālik al-Kāmil's life<sup>82</sup>. He records that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine lies "at the foot of the *shaykh* Muḥammad al-Baqāḷ". Ibn Iyās is the first to mention that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father held the title of Shams al-Dīn, confirming that he was an expert in the science of heritage rights (*farā'id*). He mentions some of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's contemporaries, prominent men of science (*'ulamā'*), with whom Ibn al-Fāriḍ probably associated. However, nothing more specific is said about his relationships with them. Some of these names have already been mentioned in the present overview. Ibn Iyās lists: Abū l-Qāsim al-Manfalūṭī (mentioned also in the *Dibāja*); Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn Abū al-Manṣūr; Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī (d.697/1298), sheikh of the convent of *Sa'ad al-Su'adā'*; Sa'ad al-Dīn al-Ḥārithī al-Ḥanbalī, a transmitter of hadith, the judge Amīn al-Dīn Ibn al-Ruqāqī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Asyūṭī, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d.632/1234), Burhān al-Dīn al-Ja'barī (d.687/1288), the judge Shams al-Dīn Ibn Khallikān (d.681/1282, the biographer of Ibn al-Fāriḍ), Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khiyamī (d.685/1286) and Najm al-Dīn Ibn Isrā'īl (d.677/1278). Ibn Iyās remarks that they were all very learned and respected men of science and never objected to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and thought. Ibn Iyās strongly defends Ibn al-Fāriḍ against all sorts of accusation and suspicion. He praises Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry and ends with an anecdote taken from 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography to highlight Ibn al-Fāriḍ's extreme generosity, but nothing new is added to what we know of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography.

**Nūr Allāh al-Shushtarī** (d.1019/1610) refers to Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his biographical work "*Majālis al-Mu'minīn*"<sup>83</sup>. His information is taken basically from Jamī's account.

However, strangely enough, he calls Ibn al-Fāriḍ "al-Andalusī al-Maghribī" implying that Ibn al-Fāriḍ came from Andalus and Maghreb. Such a statement contradicts all other sources and it is not clear where al-Shushtarī could have possibly found such curious information. He calls Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father Ḥasan instead of Abū l-Ḥasan. He praises Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry, particularly Ibn al-Fāriḍ's "*al-Tā'īyya*" and "*al-Mīmiyya*" which he says have been commented on by many Sufis. Al-Shushtarī highlights the fact that Ibn al-Fāriḍ mentions 'Alī Ibn Abū Ṭālib as endowed with a special knowledge to interpret the Koran, based on a special legacy (*waṣīyya*) of the Prophet. It seems that al-Shushtarī wanted to see in Ibn al-Fāriḍ a supporter of some Shiite ideas about 'Alī and his family.

Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maqqarī (986/1578-1041/1632) dedicates to Ibn al-Fāriḍ only few lines in his large historical work *al-Andalus*<sup>84</sup>. Quoting al-Maqqarī (d.845/1442), al-Maqqarī reports that Ibn 'Arabī would have asked from Ibn al-Fāriḍ permission to comment on his *al-Tā'īyya*, but Ibn al-Fāriḍ would have answered to him that his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* were already the comment on his *al-Tā'īyya*. Such information, however, is considered by most scholars as historically unreliable, since no other earlier source mentions such a meeting between the two Sufis<sup>85</sup>.

'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī (952/1545-1031/1622)'s account is found in his biographical work *al-Kawākib al-Durriyya*<sup>86</sup>. Abū l-Falāḥ Ibn 'Imād (1032/1623-1089/1679) relates al-Munāwī's story in his *Ṭabaqāt*<sup>87</sup>. Later on, the same account has been reported by al-Nabhānī (1265/1849-1350/1931)<sup>88</sup>.

Al-Munāwī's story shows a close dependence on 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's account with few new data. He is the first to mention the title "Prince of the lovers" (*sultān al-muḥibbīn wa-l-'ushshāq*), by which the poet will be known. Al-Munāwī knows also that, besides his known poetical collection (*nazm*), Ibn al-Fāriḍ has written some prose (*nathr*), also envied by everyone. Such a statement is highly improbable, since no other source mentions any kind of prose attributed to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and nothing of this kind has come to us. Following 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's account, al-Munāwī mentions Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufi life in Cairo and in Mecca. He knows that the "huge beast" which used to accompany the poet was a lion. Al-Munāwī highly praises the poetical qualities of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* celebrated by everybody, even by his adversaries and mentions some of the many commentaries written on it, especially on his *al-Tā'īyya* and *Khamriyya*<sup>89</sup>. He defends Ibn al-Fāriḍ against the narrow interpretation given by legalistic theologians who are, in his view, too much attached to the literal, exterior meaning of words (*abl al-zāhir*) and cannot understand the language of love and experience. A special taste, not given to everybody, is needed to understand Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry. Al-Munāwī

relates that one of the legalistic theologians wanted to explain Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tā'iyya* and sent his comment to a well-known Sufi who answered:

"It [the poem] went east, you went west:  
what a distance between the Orient and the Occident!"<sup>90</sup>.

Al-Munāwī extols Ibn al-Fāriḍ's love for absolute beauty and for everything beautiful in nature and animals, noting that the poet was particularly fond of going to visit the Mushtahā mosque on the Rawḍa island to contemplate the river in the evenings at tide season. He also mentions the strange anecdote about Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the dancers, which he says has been recorded by al-Qūṣī in his book *al-Wahīd*<sup>91</sup>. Al-Munāwī does not discuss the authenticity of that story but justifies the poet stating: "Everybody has his own resource and purpose. The dancing of a libertine is not as that of the Prince of Lovers"<sup>92</sup>. Al-Munāwī mentions that a large controversy had developed around Ibn al-Fāriḍ as well as other Sufis like Ibn 'Arabī: some people have accused them of unbelief (*kufī*), while others have attributed to them the lofty state of Poles (*quṭbāniyya*). He himself considers those Sufis to be orthodox, but warns people, not prepared, from reading their ecstatic utterances (*shataḥāt*). Al-Munāwī is surely a great supporter of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

Ibn 'Imād, on his side, concludes al-Munāwī's story expressing his admiration for some verses of Ibn al-Fāriḍ in which the best praise of the Prophet is found. He says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ died in Jumādā al-Ūlā, 632H, at the age of almost fifty six, confirming the earliest date of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's birth that is in 576H.

Al-Munāwī's account can be considered as the conclusion of the long history of opinions on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and Sufism. He was very accurately informed on the data handed down in the historical tradition about Ibn al-Fāriḍ. He discussed the controversy on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's orthodoxy taking a positive stand versus the poet, warning people from the danger of hasty judgments in such a difficult field as that of Sufism in general and of Ibn al-Fāriḍ in particular.

No new information is found in later works such as that of Al-Khwansārī (d.1313/1895) and that of Ibn al-Alūsī al-Baghḍādī (d.1317/1899); they repeat earlier sources<sup>93</sup>

#### 4. Recent Studies on Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ has also been the object of many researches in modern times and attempts have been made to draw a more accurate picture of his life and to reach a new understanding of his mystical experience.

In his large bibliographical dictionary "*Kashf al-Zunūn*" Ḥājji Khalīfa (1017/1609-1067/1657) lists the Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* and some odes with their commentaries: *al-*

*Tā'īyya al-Kubrā, al-Tā'īyya al-Ṣuḡhrā, al-Khamriyya*; among them an ode entitled *al-Durr al-Naḍīd*, unknown to other sources. In its supplement, the *Īdāb*, a collection of "riddles" (*alghāz*) is mentioned<sup>94</sup>.

In his "*Gechichte der arabischen Litteratur*" Carl Brockelmann (1868-1956) has gathered a large list of manuscripts, editions and commentaries of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's works<sup>95</sup>. Short biographical and bibliographical notes are found in al-Nabhānī, Kaḥḥāla and al-Ziriklī's works, but no new information<sup>96</sup>.

The Egyptian scholar M. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī has produced the first thorough study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism in his book "*Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the Divine Love*" (*Ibn al-Fāriḍ wa-l-Ḥubb al-Ilāhī*) with an important biographical introduction<sup>97</sup>.

Arthur John Arberry (1905-1973) has made a major contribution publishing and translating Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān*, based on an unedited manuscript of the Chester Beatty Collection. This manuscript differs in many respects from all Eastern editions, which are all based on the recension made by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson. Arberry adds some short biographical notes on Ibn al-Fāriḍ<sup>98</sup>.

Issa Boullata's article on Ibn al-Fāriḍ has attempted a new critical approach of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biographical sources. He has questioned in particular the credibility of 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's account<sup>99</sup>.

Then, other two contemporary Egyptian scholars have dealt with Ibn al-Fāriḍ: 'Āṭif Naṣr Jawdat, who gives a monistic interpretation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism, and 'Abd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd 'Abd al-Khāliq, who has dedicated much of his research to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's work<sup>100</sup>. 'Abd al-Khāliq has edited Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* on the basis of a large number of manuscripts which, however, all depend on the same recension, that of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson. 'Abd al-Khāliq seems to ignore Arberry's edition. Also in these authors no new biographical material is found and they draw understanding of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism from previous works.

Very recently, a new study on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography has been produced by an American scholar, Th. Emil Homerin. He has done an extensive and thorough study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ biographical sources through an almost exhaustive inquire in the available documents, many of them still manuscripts. He has focused on the changing of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's image according to the various contextual readings: from an outstanding poet, as he was perceived at the beginning, to a much venerated saint, whose shrine played an important role in Egyptian history, and, finally, back again to an inspired poet, as he is perceived by some modern writers (e.g. Naguib Maḥfūz)<sup>101</sup>.

On our part, we have studied Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem *al-Tā'īyya* from a semantic point of view to find its inner structure and to highlight the textual meaning of its terms trying a more accurate interpretation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufi experience. Our conclusion, on the basis of the linguistic evidence, shows that, contrary to a long



biographical tradition, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufi experience appears to be independent from a direct influence of Ibn 'Arabī. From now on, we intend to review the traditional commentaries on the Egyptian poet, starting with that of al-Farghānī on order to outline the history of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's interpretations<sup>102</sup>. In the present research we intend to reach an objective assessment of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and work as a premise for a better approach to his *Dīwān* and Sufi experience.

## B. Ibn al-Fāriḍ: His Time, Life and Work.

From the previous overview of the biographical historical sources, we can gather now some more reliable information about Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and draw a more likely picture of his life and work.

### 1. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Time.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life spanned through a time that witnessed some major events in Islamic history, the Ayyubid epoch<sup>103</sup>. Ibn al-Fāriḍ was born in 576/1181, ten years after the end of the Fatimids' rule over Egypt, and with it the dominance of the Ismailite Shiism, in 566/1171 at the hand of the rising star of Islam, al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Ayyūbī. Ibn al-Fāriḍ died in 632/1235 just on the eve of the end of the Ayyubids's dynasty in 647/1250.

Some of the most memorable dates that marked the Islamic history of that time:

567/1171: the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt comes to an end and al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf Ibn Ayyūb, known as Saladin in Western chronicles comes to power.

576/1181: Ibn al-Fāriḍ is born.

583/1187: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn strikes a decisive victory over the crusaders at Ḥaṭṭīn and reconquers Jerusalem.

587/1191: in Aleppo at Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's order Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī, the outstanding representative of the Sufi school of 'Enlightenment' (*ishrāq*), is executed and for this reason he is called "the Executed" (*al-maqtūl*).

589/1193: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn dies and his dominions are divided among his family's members.

597/1200: the Ayyubid dominions are reunited under the rule of Sayf al-Dīn al-Malik al-ʿĀdil, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's brother.

615/1218: Sayf al-Dīn dies; his son, al-Malik al-Kāmil, takes over in Egypt; the Crusaders are defeated at Damiette; the historical encounter between the sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil and S. Francis of Assisi takes place.

632/1235: Ibn al-Fāriḍ dies.

635/1238: al-Malik al-Kāmil dies; his son al-ʿĀdil succeeds him in ruling over Egypt.

637/1240: Al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ, al-ʿĀdil's brother, usurps his brother's throne.

638/1240: Ibn 'Arabī dies.

- 647/1249: al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ dies. His wife, Shajarat al-Durr, manages in putting her son Ṭūrānshāh on the throne, but, after a short time, he is murdered by his soldiers, the Mameluks (*al-Mamālik*); Shajarat al-Durr rules Egypt for a while.
- 647/1250: ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybek, the chief of the Mamelouks, marries Shajarat al-Durr. This signals the end of the Ayyubid epoch and the beginning of the Mameluks' rule.

The Ayyubid epoch was a time of struggle (*jihād*) against foreign invasions, the Crusades, as well as a period of economic, cultural and religious renaissance. The civil society under the Ayyubid rule was structured according to the pyramidal conception of Medieval society. On the top of it there was the Sultan's ruling family. In second rank came the nobles, most of them army chieftains, who were brought in as slaves (*mamālik*) and then fought their way through to the top of the army. After the nobles the influential class of the religious scholars (*rijāl al-dīn*) came; these enjoyed special care and protection from the Ayyubid rulers. At the bottom of the social pyramid the associations of different trades and crafts, and, last of all, the miserable peasants were found.

The story related by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson about al-Malik al-Kāmil's high esteem for Ibn al-Fāriḍ is consistent with the general Ayyubid policy toward Sufis and religious scholars, to whom Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father belonged. Religious scholars represented the intellectual class of society and their loyalty was very much needed by the sultans to fight the Shiite influence of the former rulers of Egypt, the Fatimids. Against them the Ayyubids used two important weapons in order to reach out to all levels of society: the Sunnite schools of law and the Sufi brotherhoods. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn reintroduced in Egypt the four schools of law (*madhāhib*), which had been banned by the Fatimids and founded for their teaching many colleges (*madāris*). In 569/1173, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn also provided Sufis, especially those coming from abroad, with a place, called the *ṣalāḥiyya* convent (*khānqāh al-ṣalāḥiyya* or *sa'īd al-su'adā'* or *duwayrat al-ṣūfiyya*) and endowed it with funds (*awqāf*) for its maintenance. The head of this college had the title of "the chief of the Sufi masters" (*saykh al-mashāyikh*) and this title has been handed down to the present day<sup>104</sup>. For a time, the head of this convent was an admirer of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī al-Fārisī (d.697/1298), disciple of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī and mentioned in ʿAlī *sibṭ* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography in conflict with the powerful *wazīr* Taqiyy al-Dīn Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz<sup>105</sup>. Continuing Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's policy, al-Malik al-Kāmil too, founded in 622/1225 a college for hadith (*dār al-ḥadīth*), named after him (*al-madrassa al-kāmiliyya*). ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm al-Mundhirī, an outstanding Shafiite transmitter of hadith and the first biographer of Ibn al-Fāriḍ was for a time at the head of this college. A number of scholars and Sufis of that period, with whom Ibn al-Fāriḍ was probably acquainted, are recorded by Ibn Iyās<sup>106</sup>. However, two Sufis,

contemporaries of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, are to be mentioned for their far reaching influence in the Islamic world. The first is Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥaḥṣ̣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (539/1145-632/1234), who wrote a widely used Sufi manual “The Gifts of Knowledges” (*Awʿārif al-Maʿārif*). The second is Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn ʿArabī known as *Muḥyī al-Dīn*, “The Revivifier of the Religion”, and *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, “The Greatest Spiritual Master” (560/1165-638/1240). He has become the undisputed leader of esoteric Sufism exerting an extensive influence over many Sufi paths (*ṭuruq*). While it is quite likely that Ibn al-Fāriḍ met Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥaḥṣ̣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, as reported by ʿAlī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s biography, there is no historical evidence that Ibn al-Fāriḍ met Ibn ʿArabī<sup>107</sup>. The story reported by al-Maqqarī seems most unlikely since no mention is done of Ibn al-Fāriḍ in Ibn ʿArabī’s works and no Sufi is directly or indirectly named in Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poems<sup>108</sup>. On the whole, historical evidence provides us with very little information about Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s Sufi acquaintances and it seems they were quite limited, in spite of the fact that his century has been particularly rich in Sufi personalities and movements.

## 2. Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s Name and Family.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s complete name, as given by the earliest and surest sources, is Sharaf al-Dīn (title, *laqab*) Abū l-Qāsim or Abū l-Ḥaḥṣ̣ (agnomen, *kunya*) ʿUmar (proper name, *ism ʿalam*) Ibn ʿAlī (patronymic, *nasab*) Ibn al-Murshid Ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥamawī al-Miṣrī (relational names of the place, *nisba*). Ḥilmī remarks that al-Murshid, Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s grandfather, is not a proper name, but a title usually given to a spiritual guide. This information may imply that Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s family had a Sufi tradition, continued by Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s father and by Ibn al-Fāriḍ himself. Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s father, ʿAlī Ibn al-Murshid, was called ‘*al-Fāriḍ*’ because of his job as a jurist consultant in legal matters of heritage fixing the rights of women over men. He became well known among the learned people of Cairo to the point that he was offered the high charge of ‘Chief Judge’ (*qādī al-quḍāt*), but he refused the offer preferring a life of seclusion, in the Sufi way of life, in the Dār al-Khaṭāba, a place near the al-Azhar mosque. The Sufi background of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s father may well explain his care in initiating his son ʿUmar into ascetic life, as Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s grandson reports<sup>109</sup>. The reason for Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s father’s emigration from Ḥamāt to Egypt remains unknown. Ḥilmī puts forward some hypotheses, among them an earthquake that destroyed Ḥamāt around ten years before Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s birth, in 565/1170<sup>110</sup>. On the other hand, Ḥilmī’s argument to prove Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s pure Arab descent seems to us a too far fetched assumption. Ibn al-Fāriḍ felt himself to be Egyptian and clearly expressed his love for Egypt in a famous verse <sup>111</sup>:

"Egypt is my homeland and in it are my desires,  
to my eye its (Egypt) most desired place is its *Mushtabā*".

### 3. The Stages of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Life.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life can be divided into three main periods.

#### a. First Period: Cairo 576/1181-613/1216.

This period includes the poet's childhood and his first initiation into the ascetic life. Ḥilmī discusses at length the different dates of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's birth given by the historical sources to conclude that the surest ones are those given by the earliest sources, al-Mundhirī and Ibn Khallikān. Ibn al-Fāriḍ was born in Cairo on the fourth of Dhū l-Qa'da 576/22nd March 1181<sup>112</sup>. No information is available about the first period of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life except what his grandson reports in his *Dībāja*<sup>113</sup>. At an early age, Ibn al-Fāriḍ was introduced by his father into Sufi life and, under his guidance, he used to take increasingly longer periods of retreat in the solitude of the Muqaṭṭam mountain, east of Cairo, in a place of Sufi gatherings, known as the 'valley of the helpless, poor (i.e. of Sufis)' (*wādī al-mustad'afīn*). This kind of spiritual journey is called in Sufi terminology 'spiritual wandering' (*siyāḥa*). However, his father did not neglect to initiate his son 'Umar also into the religious sciences common in his time<sup>114</sup>. We know for sure that Ibn al-Fāriḍ learned the hadith from a famous Shafīite scholar of the time al-Qāsim Ibn 'Alī Ibn 'Asākir (527/1132-600/1203) and that he became an acquaintance of another famous transmitter of hadith al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-Aẓīm 'Abd al-Qawī al-Mundhirī (581/1185-656/1258), who later became Ibn al-Fāriḍ's first biographer. Ibn al-Fāriḍ not only learned the hadith but, according to al-Mundhirī's report, became himself a transmitter of hadith<sup>115</sup>. At a very early age, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, under his father's guidance, received the traditional religious formation of his time and showed a special inclination toward the ascetic and mystical way of life. Such an inclination will grow to become his absolute, dominant characteristic.

However, it was the appearance of the mysterious *shaykh* al-Baqqāl that must have unleashed in Ibn al-Fāriḍ hidden and still unknown spiritual potentialities. It has been already remarked that figures of hidden saints play an important role in the life of many Sufis. Such persons are Sufis who prefer to live unknown, despised by men, known only to God and to those to whom God wants to reveal. They are called 'blameworthy' (*malāmatiyya*), because many times their behavior is considered reprehensible in the eyes of common religious people. But, in spite of their miserable aspect, they are often a means through which other Sufis can come to a new awareness and open (*fath*) unto the Divine Reality. The most famous of these cases is the meeting between the great Sufi poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and the vagabond dervish

Shams al-Dīn Ṭabrīzī<sup>116</sup>. The relationship between Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the *shaykh* al-Baqqāl is clearly that of disciple-master. In death, as often happens in these cases, Ibn al-Fāriḍ wanted to be buried near his master, the *shaykh* al-Baqqāl<sup>117</sup>. One can doubt about the miraculous circumstances of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's trip to Mecca, as reported in his grandson's account, but one can reasonably suppose that Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his meeting with the *al-shaykh* al-Baqqāl received an interior illumination that prompted him toward Mecca, the center of Islamic life. Only there, as his master had told him, would he obtain the desired revelation of the Divine Reality, the ultimate goal of his Sufi life. Such an unexpected series of events may well have been experienced as 'miraculous' and expressed in the hagiographic style of the marvelous. During this first period of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life the great Sufi, Ibn 'Arabī, passed through Egypt on his trip to the east which started in 597/1200, culminated in the pilgrimage to Mecca 599/1202 and ended in Damascus where he settled in 620/1223 and died in 638/1240. It seems, however, unlikely that the two Sufis ever met, since Ibn al-Fāriḍ was, at that time, still a young novice and his trip to Mecca took place many years after Ibn 'Arabī's pilgrimage. Nevertheless, one can reasonably guess that Ibn al-Fāriḍ must have heard something about the Andalusī Sufi, whose fame had spread all over the Islamic world.

**b. Second Period: Mecca 613/1216-628/1231.**

Ibn al-Fāriḍ remained in Mecca for quite a long time. This fact is witnessed in Ibn Ḥallikān's account and Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson specifies that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's stay in Mecca lasted about fifteen years. Such data seem quite likely. First of all, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's minor poems are saturated with his souvenirs and descriptions of the places around Mecca: in them the poet expresses his unrelenting longing to go back to those sacred places and to his Sufi friends. These poems witness of a real, long and deep spiritual experience the poet lived in Mecca, the land of prophetic inspiration. There, as he was foretold, he obtained the 'revelation' (*fath*) of the Divine Reality, as he witnesses:

"In it [Mecca] I obtained my intimacy [with God] and realized my spiritual ascension (*mi'rāj*) to my holiest state (*quds*),  
my station was [Abraham's] station (*maqām*) and my revelation (*fath*) became manifest"<sup>118</sup>

However, if we want to know something about such revelation (*fath*) the best witness is surely Ibn al-Fāriḍ's own great poem *al-Ta'īyyat al-Kubrā*. This poem is both the expression of his spiritual experience and the description of the way to his high state. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson claim that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems became so popular in Ḥijāz that they were proclaimed from the top of the minarets seems quite unlikely<sup>119</sup>. In fact, he says that, when Ibn al-Fāriḍ was introduced to al-Malik al-Kāmil, he was still an unknown poet to the sultan, who marveled that such a poet existed in his

time and he did not know him<sup>120</sup>. From the poet's deep, continuous longing to go back to Mecca, one can guess that he did not leave Mecca voluntarily, but due to some circumstances forced upon him. The *Dībāja* says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ returned to Cairo on a mysterious call from his master al-Baqqāl. This account, though reported in a hagiographic style, could explain his forced departure from the place of his desires. It is commonly assumed that Ibn al-Fāriḍ lived in Cairo the last four years of his life. Consequently, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's stay in Mecca must have taken place between 613/1216-628/1231<sup>121</sup>. He went there in the middle of his thirties, at the beginning of his spiritual journey, and came back in his fifties, when he had reached his full maturity as a Sufi and as a poet. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson reports a number of miracles (*karamāt*) that occurred during Ibn al-Fāriḍ's stay at Mecca<sup>122</sup>. We have already discussed the question of the historical value of such miraculous stories. They seem to express best the aura of holiness and extraordinary clairvoyance that surrounds people who have reached a high degree of sainthood.

It is likely that Ibn al-Fāriḍ met in Mecca many Sufis who traveled there during that period, but the only meeting recorded is that with Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhrawardī in 628/1231 in the latter's last trip to Mecca. The theatrical and dramatical description of their meeting, as given in the *Dībāja*, seems to us to contain many hagiographic traits.

### c. Third Period: Cairo 628/1231-632/1235

Ḥilmī believes that the divine revelation (*fatḥ*), which Ibn al-Fāriḍ enjoyed in Mecca, ceased upon his return to Cairo and that the poet lived afterwards in a continuous regret for its loss. This statement seems to us quite unlikely. First of all, Sufi revelation (*fatḥ*) is not an experience limited to a definite place or time, even though it may be stirred by some particular external circumstances of place and time. Moreover, the mystical experience described in the *al-Tā'īyya*, which must be considered Ibn al-Fāriḍ's truest expression of his interior state, does not suggest by any means that his mystical experience was limited to the external circumstances of place and time. On the contrary, Ibn al-Fāriḍ describes his mystical union as being well above any kind of limitation: it is the union with the Absolute.

Back in Cairo, having witnessed the passing away of his master al-Baqqāl, Ibn al-Fāriḍ continued his Sufi way of life. He preferred to live in seclusion, near the mosque al-Azhar, in a place called "the house of the preachers" (*dār al-khaṭāba*), as his father did<sup>123</sup>. His main concern seems to have been collecting and dictating his poems, composed partly in Ḥijāz and partly in Cairo. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson states that he received the text of the *Dīwān* from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's son who received it from Ibn al-Fāriḍ himself. But a more careful analysis of this report shows that the origi-

nal copy written by Ibn al-Fāriḍ was lost or kept away from him, as his son says, by a certain sheikh Abū l-Qāsim al-Manfalūṭī, from Manfalūṭ, a town in Upper Egypt<sup>124</sup>. Moreover, it seems that the collection was not complete at that time since Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson spent forty years looking for a poem, composed in Hijāz, not present in the Cairo collection. In fact, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson admits that he himself completed the lost poem patching together pieces chosen from the other poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ to fit the meter of first verse of the lost poem, the only one he remembered, adding his own composition to his grandfather's collection. Eventually, he found the lost poem. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson also states that changes had already entered the collection of poems, for this reason he made his own recension. Considering all this information, one can assume that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* probably was not complete at his death. This fact might shed some light on the difference between two extant recensions of it. One is the recension edited by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson which has become the mother recension of all eastern editions of the *Dīwān*. The other is the text edited by A.J.Arberry from a manuscript of the Chester Beatty Collection. This recension is older and shorter than the one edited by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson<sup>125</sup>.

During his last four years in Cairo, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's renown both as a Sufi and a poet spread widely throughout Egypt attracting general attention from the sultan to the common folk. However, the numerous, frequent and extraordinary events as described in his grandson's report seem not to fit the historical context. First of all, none of the earliest biographers, contemporary to Ibn al-Fāriḍ, mentions any such events. Secondly, such uncontrolled emotions seem to contradict the surest document we have of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's own mystical life, that is his own *Dīwān*. In his *al-Tā'īyya* he expresses a deep, mature mystical experience which is far beyond the superficial and ecstatic raptures which are likely to drive away the inexperienced novices of the path. These kinds of ecstasies are considered by expert and mature sheikhs rather signs of weakness and immaturity than of a high degree of mysticism. Ibn al-Fāriḍ often states such a view in his *al-Tā'īyya*, as he does in v. 484:

“Whoever in sobriety loses [the contemplation of the Beloved] (*fāqīd*) and find it (*wājid*) in the blotting [of his own awareness]

because of his changing [of states] (*talwīn*) is not worthy of the stability (*tamkīn*) of the propinquity [of the Beloved]<sup>126</sup>.

In many other verses he states quite clearly that he has overcome the stage of intoxication (*sukr*). From the reports of his first biographers and from the witness of his own *Dīwān* that Ibn al-Fāriḍ appears as a mature, self-controlled sheikh (*mutamakkīn*), who had grown into a very deep and mature religious experience. So, it seems very unlikely

that he could be so easily driven away and so theatrically exalted by some superficial happenings or emotions such as the ones reported by his grandson. On the other hand, one can expect that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's personal sainthood and clairvoyance might have aroused in his audience states of enthusiasm that very likely found their expression in those stories of such theatrical displays of ecstasies. For common folk such extraordinary events were, and still are, the surest signs of sainthood. A good instance in point is also Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson's claims that his grandfather would have composed his great poem *al-Tā'iyyat al-Kubrā* in intervals of lucidity between one state of trance and unconsciousness and another, and that such states could last several days. This report seems to us inconsistent with the very structure of the poem<sup>127</sup>. A careful study of *al-Tā'iyyat al-Kubrā* has proved to us that this poem is a highly elaborated piece of Sufi literature, constructed in a very knitted and consistent way both on a linguistic and speculative level, in which the poet reaches many times the highest linguistic level of virtuosity. It seems very difficult to imagine that such a work can be the fruit of disconnected moments of lucidity between one state of trance and another. We think that it can only be the product of a clear and speculative mind, guided both by the deepest mystical feeling and the finest artistic taste and technique<sup>128</sup>.

On the other hand, the report of the relationship between Ibn al-Fāriḍ and al-Malik al-Kāmil seems more reliable<sup>129</sup>. On one side, we see the Ayyubid sultan eager to draw the already famous Sufi poet into the circle of his supporters. On the other side, we see Ibn al-Fāriḍ, an already mature sheikh, weathered by years of solitude and ascetic life, desirous to preserve his life away from public attention and able to keep the Sultan at bay by a clear and unmovable stand.

The end of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life, as reported by his grandson, is also mixed with many hagiographic details such as the mysterious coming of the sheikh al-Ja'barī and the events at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's burial. The last words reported as having been said by the dying poet are a verse quoted from his own poems: it well expresses the poet's long and deep desire for the vision of his Beloved, which has been the purpose of his whole existence<sup>130</sup>:

"I wish, after such a long time, to have a look of you,  
How much blood has been shed in vain short of my goal!"

The most certain date of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death is that reported by the earliest sources: Ibn al-Fāriḍ died in Cairo on Tuesday, the second of Jumādā l-Ūlā 632/23rd January 1235, when he was fifty four years old, a still relatively young sheikh. Although we have no sure information of the place of his birth in Cairo, the place of his burial has been clearly recorded by the sources and his shrine (*darīh*) has been preserved to the present day. Ibn al-Fāriḍ was buried at the foot of al-Muqattam



mountain, east of Cairo, beneath a mosque called al-‘Āriḍ, in a place called ‘the stream bed of the torrent’ (*majrā al-sayl*). The shrine has been enlarged and embellished by different sultans. The present structure, that of a mosque surmounted by a dome (*qubba*) and surrounded by a courtyard, was built in 1305/1889 by the Jamīla Hānum, wife of the Khedive of Egypt Ismā‘īl Pasha (ruler of Egypt 1280/1863-1290/1873). She also built another dome nearby for the burial of her son Ibrāhīm Jamāl al-Dīn so that he may rest under the blessing of her venerated sheikh. Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s shrine is situated inside a mosque, in an enclosure along the north wall, and it is a revered place of pious visits (*ziyāra*) up to the present day<sup>131</sup>.

We know that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was married and he had at least two sons, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, who are mentioned in the *Dībāja*, and a daughter, whose son was ‘Alī, the author of the *Dībāja*, for this reason called *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ<sup>132</sup>. But nothing else is known of his family life. On the whole, it seems to us that ‘Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ has not been always successful in conveying an objective and truthful report on his grandfather’s life. However, the verses he wrote for the his grandfather’s shrine can well express the mystery of the Sufi poet:

“Pass by the cemetery at the foot of al-‘Āriḍ,

Say: Peace upon you, O Ibn al-Fāriḍ!

You have shown marvels in your *Naẓm al-Sulūk*<sup>133</sup>

and revealed a deep, well-guarded mystery.

You have drunk from a Sea of love and friendship,

and quaffed from a bounteous, unlimited Ocean”<sup>134</sup>.

#### 4. Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s Character.

As shown by our research, the biographical sources do not provide much sure information on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s character. It is in his *Dīwān* that the poet has expressed his most intimate feelings and, therefore, it can be regarded as a kind of autobiography. In it the ‘internal’ perception or image the poet had of himself can be discerned. It seems to us necessary to compare and complete the external image of the poet as it has been handed down in the historical sources with his internal image as it has been described by himself in his own poems. From such a comparison a more complete picture of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s character can be drawn.

##### a. Ascetic Lifestyle.

In few but significant words Ibn Khallikān portrays Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s character, as it appeared to his contemporaries, saying that: “.. his companionship was pleasant and his familiarity praised”<sup>135</sup>. On the other hand, ‘Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ likes to highlight Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s ascetic virtues, especially his love for solitude and contemplation<sup>136</sup>.

These traits are consistent with the training imparted to novices in traditional Sufi circles. The novice (*murīd*) had to go through a number of rigorous exercises in order to acquire the Sufi manners (*ādāb*). The essential point of such a training was the reform of one's own character, or in Sufi terms, to pass from the 'the soul that orders evil' (*al-naḥs al-ammāra*) to 'the blaming soul' (*al-naḥs al-lawwāma*) that has the light to recognize evil and regret it, to the 'pacified soul' (*al-naḥs al-muṭma'inna*), so called because it has become free from all kinds of self-centered concern and has reached the state of permanent peace in a total surrender to God's will<sup>137</sup> Ibn al-Fāriḍ describes these ascetic exercises in many verses of his poem *al-Tā'īyya*, as in vv. 168-203, 268-276<sup>138</sup>. Sufi training also required a good knowledge of Islamic religious sciences through the study of the Koran, the hadith and the religious teaching of sound and recognized scholars belonging to one of the four official schools of law. We know that Ibn al-Fāriḍ learned the hadith from a famous Shafiite scholar of his time al-Qāsim Ibn 'Alī Ibn al-'Asākīr (527/1132-600/1203) and was the master of another important Shafiite scholar al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-'Azīm 'Abd al-Mundhirī (581/1185-656/1258), his first biographer. According to al-Mundhirī's account, Ibn al-Fāriḍ was not only a student of hadith of the Shafiite school, but a transmitter of it (*ḥaddatha*)<sup>139</sup>.

In conclusion, Ibn al-Fāriḍ received in his childhood a thorough Sufi training both in religious sciences and ascetic exercises.

#### b. Sufi and Poetic Taste (*dhawq*).

Deeper than all these ascetic manners there was in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's character an original quality that in time became the basic factor that shaped his personality and the predominant characteristic of his life. Such a quality was his inner sense of beauty both on poetical and mystical level. Rarely do we find some explicit reference to this characteristic in his biographers. For instance, his grandson 'Alī does report in the *Dībāja* that Ibn al-Fāriḍ liked to go out of the town to a mosque called al-Mushtahā, on the island al-Rawḍa along the Nile riverside, to contemplate the view of the river, particularly at tide season<sup>140</sup> 'Alī also mentions that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was fond of Sufi music (*samā'*) strenuously defended by the poet in his *al-Tā'īyya* in vv. 406-440<sup>141</sup>. But 'Alī does not highlight his grandfather's perception of poetic and Sufi beauty: he seems to have missed this point altogether. We think that perhaps the only true element in the plateal descriptions of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's trances and ecstasies, as reported by his grandson, may be the poet's deep feeling for every trace of beauty that could remind him of the presence of his Beloved. In fact, in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufism everything must be considered a trace (*athar*) and a reminder (*dhikr*) of his Beloved's presence and such a perception could stir in him the most intense emotion. No doubt

that the best witness of such an interior perception and taste is Ibn al-Fāriḍ's own *Dīwān*. In it the truest description of his inner world and the most faithful expression of his self-identity is to be found in a far more complete and trustworthy way than in any record of his biographers<sup>142</sup>. A good witness of his interior perception and feeling of everything as a manifestation and a presence of his divine Beloved could be these verses of his *al-Tā'īyya* (vv.420-423):

“At dawn her remembrance to my soul is brought  
by her sweet-scented breeze that from the north breathes;  
My ear is filled with joy in the morning light  
through her memory woken by doves, warbling on the green boughs;  
My eye is gladdened in the evenings by her presence  
brought to its pupil by flashes of glowing light;  
My lips are given a taste of her recollection  
by cups of wine passed round me at night”<sup>143</sup>

Only a thorough study of the *Dīwān* can fully highlight Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetical and Sufi taste and completely illuminate such a fundamental trait of his character, which is the core of his Sufi experience. In this way the exterior image of the poet as given by his biographers is completed by the interior image as given by himself in his own words<sup>144</sup>.

In conclusion, it seems to us that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was a mature sheikh who, having undergone a strict Sufi training, succeeded in developing to perfection his own original character: his poetical and Sufi taste for beauty. Such a profound feeling of the Divine Beauty, present and manifest in every being, seems to us to have been Ibn al-Fāriḍ's deepest source of inspiration that found its truest expression in his *Dīwān*, especially in his great poem *al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā*.

1. See the vivid description of a recital of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems in Émile Demerghem, *L'éloge du vin (al-khamriyya), poème mystique*, Ed. Las Vegas, Paris, 1931, pp. 64-67.
2. Ignazio Di Matteo, Ibn al-Fāriḍ. *Il gran poema mistico noto col nome di At-Tā'īyyah al-Kubrā* (polycopied manuscript), Rome, 1917, Introduction pp. 1-10; Carlo Alfonso Nallino, “Il poema mistico di Ibn al-Fāriḍ in una recente traduzione italiana”, in *La rivista degli studi orientali*, Rome, VIII (1919-1920) 1-106, also in *Raccolta di scritti editi ed inediti*, Istituto per l'Oriente, Rome, 1940, vol.2 pp. 191-287; “Ancora su Ibn al-Fāriḍ e la mistica musulmana” in *La rivista degli studi orientali*, Rome, VIII (1919-1920) 501-562, also in *Raccolta di scritti editi ed inediti*, Istituto per l'Oriente, Rome, 1940, vol.2 pp. 289-343; Reynold A. Nicholson, “The Odes of Ibnu'l-Fāriḍ”, in *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1921, pp.162-165. Arthur John Arberry, *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, edited in transcription, E. Walker, London, 1952, pp. 5-9; id., *The Poem of the Way*, translated, E. Walker, London, 1952, pp. 5-8; id., *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, translated, E. Walker, Dublin, 1956, pp. 5-10.
3. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ wa-l-ḥubb al-ilāhī*, Maṭba'a Lijnat al-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjamat wa-l-Nashr, Cairo, 1364/1945 (1st ed.); Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1971 (2nd ed.): “Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life” pp. 21-135. We shall always refer to the second edition. He has summarized his

- work in *Ibn al-Fāriḍ sulṭān al-ʿāshiqīn*, Al-Muʿassasat al-Miṣriyyat al-ʿĀmma li-l-Taʿlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Tibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, Cairo, 1963.
4. Issa J. Boullata, "Toward a Biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (576-632 AH /1181-1235 AD)", in *Arabica* 28/1 (1981) pp. 38-56.
  5. ʿAbd al-Khālīq Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Khālīq, *Dīwān Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, Dār al-Maʿārif, Cairo, 1984; id., *Shiʿr Ibn al-Fāriḍ fī dhawq al-adabī al-ḥadīth*, Dār al-Maʿārif, Cairo, 1984. The biographical account written by the poet's grandson, ʿAlī, *sibī* Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d.735/1335), called *Dībāja* is reported at the beginning of ʿAbd al-Khālīq's edition of the *Dīwān*, pp. 19-44. To this edition will be referred in the present research. Th.Emil Homerin, *From Arab poet to Muslim saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, his verse and his shrine*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia (South Carolina), 1994.
  6. "The earliest extant biographical notice of the Ṣūfī poet, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, is that contained in Ibn Khallikān's *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*", Boullata, "Toward a Biography", p. 38. Also Ḥilmī starts Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography with Ibn Khallikān's account. Homerin starts with this text adding a similar text found in al-Mundhirī's dictionary (*muʿjam*) and that of another Ibn al-Fāriḍ's student Yahyā al-ʿAṭṭār, Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 15-16.
  7. Zakī al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm ʿAbd al-Qawī al-Mundhirī (581/1185-656/1258) *Takmila li-wafayāt al-naqala*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, Baghdad, (1st. ed. 1388/1968), 4th ed. 1404/1988, 4 vol.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. 3 pp. 388-389. Al-Mundhirī, a Shafiite (*shāfiʿī*) scholar of Syrian descent, lived in Egypt and became a famous transmitter of hadith; he wrote also on Koranic readings, language and history. Moreover, he was a Sufī master with a large number of disciples and for over twenty years was at the head of the *kāmiliyya* school, a school of hadith founded by the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil in 622/1225
  8. Al-Mundhirī, *Takmila* n. 2587 pp. 388-389
  9. The name "*al-Fāriḍ*" is explained as "the person who knows and fixes the portions of heritage (not contracts, as said in Boullata, "Toward a biography" p. 39) due to women on the part of men", Ibn Ṣābūnī, *Takmila*, note No. 1, p. 270, Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* p. 28-29. Ḥilmī rightly rejects as wrong the spelling *al-Fāraḍ* given by some historical sources as Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt* III p.456, and Taḡhrī Birdī, *Al-nujūm al-zāhira*, vol. 6 p. 288.
  10. Al-Mundhirī, *Takmila* n. 2587 pp. 388-389.
  11. Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim Ibn ʿAlī al-Dimashqī was born in Damascus in 527/1132 and died also there in 600/1203. He was a scholar of the Shafiite school and wrote on hadith, biography and history. Al-Qāsim's father, ʿAlī Ibn al-ʿAsākīr (d.571/1176), a descendant of the Banū ʿAsākīr who were among the most eminent families of Damascus in the VII<sup>th</sup>/XIII<sup>th</sup> c., was also himself a prominent scholar of the Shafiite school and wrote the extensive history of Damascus "*Tārikh madīna Dimashq*". ʿAlī's son, Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim, under the Ayyubids, came to Cairo as a teacher of the Shafiite school. It must be during this period that Ibn al-Fāriḍ attended his lectures. For a more complete account of the Shafiite school in Damascus and the role of Banū ʿAsākīr see Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VI<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Vie et structure religieuse d'une métropole islamique*, Recherches Nouvelle Série A, Langue Arabe et Pensée Islamique, tome XV, Dar al-Machreq, Beyrouth, 1988: pp. 24-46, 191-192.
  12. In his dictionary, however, al-Mundhirī says more about Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical life. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry gained very soon a large renown in his time. It had a deep influence on some contemporary poets as ʿAlī al-Ḥarīrī (d.645/1248), Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Isrāʾīl (d.677/1278) and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khiyamī (d.685/ 1286), who were Ibn al-Fāriḍ's disciples, Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 16.20-26; see. Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VI<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. pp. 220-222. An interesting anecdote of poetical contention between the two poets, Najm al-Dīn Ibn Isrāʾīl and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khiyamī, in which Ibn al-Fāriḍ was called as judge, is recorded in Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Shākīr al-Kutubī (d.764/1363), *Fawāṭ al-wafayāt*, ed. Iḥsān

- Ibn ʿAbbās, Dār al-Thaqāfa, Beyrouth, 1973-1974, vol.2 pp. 413-424; reported by Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ sulṭān al-ʿāshiqīn*, pp. 59-93.
13. Shams al-Dīn Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Khallikān al-Barmakī al-Irbillī al-Shāfiʿī (608/1211-681/1282), *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Dār al-Thaqāfa 1968-1972, and Dār Ṣadr 1981, Beyrouth 8 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. III pp. 454-456; ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Maktabat al-Nahḍat al-Miṣriyya, Cairo 1948, 6 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. III pp. 126-127; trans. by MacGuckin De Slane, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, 4 vols., Paris 1843-1847: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. II pp. 388-390; reprinted as *Ibn Khallikan's Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, ed. S. Moinul Haq, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi (Pakistan), 6 vols. 1961-1967: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. III pp. 461-462. Born in a prominent family of Arbela (Syria) in 608/1211, Ibn Khallikān became one of the most outstanding Shafite scholars and occupied the important function of chief judge in Damascus and Cairo. He completed his biographical work around 655/1257, i.e. about twenty years after Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death, and revised it around 675/1276. His work has always been praised for its rigorous and thorough methodology; see also Boullata, "Toward a biography" pp. 38-41; Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 16-19.
  14. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt* III p.454.
  15. For the explanation of the name "*al-Fāriḍ*" see note No. 9.
  16. ʿAlī, *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ, reports in *Dībāja* p. 42 that Ibn Khallikān told him that the birth date was 577 H. This account, like the similar one attributed to al-Mundhirī, must be discarded because it contradicts their own records. ʿAlī's account is dismissed also by Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, p. 29-32.
  17. Boullata, "Toward a biography" p.40. We will discuss this question later on.
  18. It is interesting to compare how this same fact is reported in a more dramatic and picturesque way by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson, *Dībāja* p. 32.
  19. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt* III p.455.
  20. Boullata, "Toward a biography" p.40
  21. Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Ḥamīd Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Maḥmūd Ibn Aḥmad al-Ṣabūnī, (604/1207-680/1282), *Takmilat ikmāl al-ikmāl fī l-asmāʾ wa-l-ansāb wa-l-alqāb*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād, Maṭbaʿat al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī, Baghdad, 1377/1957: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" p. 270; ʿĀlam al-Kutub, Beyrouth, 1406/1986: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" p. 274-275. Ibn al-Ṣabūnī's family, of Iraqī origin, came to Egypt under the Ayyubid rule and his father was a learned and pious man He, Muḥammad, a contemporary of Ibn Khallikān, was born in Cairo in 604/1208, where he also died in 680/1282. He joined the Shafite school and became a known Sufi and a historian of Egypt.
  22. This controversy around Ibn al-Fāriḍ's orthodoxy should be put into the larger frame of the traditional quarrels between Muslim traditional scholars and Sufis. Such quarrels have become quite common in Islamic history, especially since the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn Ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d.309/922). Ḥilmī dedicates to it an important chapter of his work (*Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, pp. 111-135), in which he classifies the most outstanding supporters and opponents of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's orthodoxy. He takes the defense of the poet remarking that some verses of the *al-Tāʾiyya* (e.g. vv. 265-285) suggest that accusations of monism, incarnationism had already started in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's lifetime. These verses appear to be the poets' answer to his accusers. See also Boullata, "Toward a biography" pp. 43-44. Among the first commentators of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Al-Tāʾiyya* there are Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d.673/1274), who commented it orally, his disciples Saʿīd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d.699/1300) and ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (d.690/1291). For more on al-Farghānī's commentary see my article Giuseppe Scattolin, "Al-Farghānī's Commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Mystical Poem *al-Tāʾiyyat al-Kubrā*", in MIDEO 21 (1993) 331-383.
  23. *Dībāja* p. 30-32.

24. Shams al-Dīn Abū l-Ma'ālī Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr Ibn Muḥammad al-Aykī al-Fārīsī al-Shāfi'ī, a disciple of Ṣadr al-Qūnawī and codisciple of al-Farghānī, died in Damascus in 697/1298. In 684/1285 he was in Cairo at the head a Sufi convent, called *al-ṣalāhiyya*, because founded in 569/1173 by Ṣalāh al-Dīn for Sufis, especially for those coming from abroad. For more news about this important Sufi convent see note No. 104. This dispute was not for pure religious reasons, as 'Alī reports, but much more for the *wazīr's* political ambition and pride, see Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 39-44.
25. See in particular Taqīyy al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (661/1263-738/1338), *Al-furqān bayna awliyā' al-Rahmān wa-awliyā' al-Shayṭān*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥamdī Imām, Dār al-Madanī, Cairo, 1981; id., *Majmū'at al-rasā'il wa-l-masā'il*, Maṭba'at al-Manār, Cairo, 1341-1349/1923-1930, 5 vols.: cf. "Al-risālat al-rābi'a fī ibṭāl waḥdat al-wujūd wa-l-radd 'alā l-qā'ilīna bi-hā", vol. 1, pp. 61-121; id., *Majmū'at al-rasā'il al-kubrā*, Maktaba Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣubḥī wa-Awlādu-hu, Cairo, 1966, 2 vols. On Ibn Taymiyya's thought see: Henri Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya", in *El2* III, 951-953; id., *Les schismes dans l'Islam*, Payot, Paris, 1965: "Le néo-hanbalisme" pp. 266-276; Muḥammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle against Popular Religion*, Mouton, La Hague-Paris, 1976: Memon introduces and translates Ibn Taymiyya's "*Kitāb iqtidā' al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jahīm*"; George Makdisi, "Ibn Taymiyya: A Sūfi of the Qādiriyya Order", in *American Journal of Arabic Studies* I (1973), pp. 118-119. On the religious atmosphere of that period see also Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VII<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. ch. 1-4 pp. 23-243.; id., "Prise de positions autour du *samā'* en Orient Musulman au VII<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle", in *Studia Islamica*, LVII 1983, pp. 119-134; Paul Nwyia, "Une cible d'Ibn Taymiyya le moniste at-Tilmisānī m.690/1291", in *BEO* XXX (1978), *Mélanges H. Laoust*, pp. 127-145.
26. Abū Zayd 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn (732/1332-808/1406), *Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn, wa-hiya al-juz' al-awwal min tārikh Ibn Khaldūn al-musammā Dīwān al-mubtada' wa-l-khabar fī tārikh al-'Arab wa-l-Barbar wa-man 'āṣara-hum min dhawī al-shā'ni al-akbar*, ed. by Khalīl Shaḥḥāda, Dār al-Fikr, Beyrouth, 1408/1988 2nd ed.: al-bāb 6, al-faṣl 17: "Fī 'ilm al-ṭaṣawwuf", pp. 611-624; part. pp. 617-620; *Muqaddima li-kitāb al-'ibar*, Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, Beyrouth, 1975, pp. 470-472. The *Muqaddima* has been translated and commented by Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddima — An introduction to History*, Bollingen Series XLIII, Pantheon Books, New York, 1958, 3 vols.: "The science of Sufism" vol III, ch.6, Section 16, pp. 76-105, particularly pp. 87-92. On the various factors of the controversy on Ibn al-Fārīd see Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 55-75.
27. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Maḥdī al-Maqbalī, *Al-'alam al-shāmikh fī ithār al-ḥaqq 'alā al-ābā' wa-l-mashāyikh*, Cairo, 1324/1910, p. 478; see Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fārīd*, p. 121.
28. Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn 'Umar al-Biqā'ī (809/1407-885/1480), *Maṣra' al-ṭaṣawwuf aw: Tanbīh al-ghabī 'alā takfīr 'Umar Ibn al-Fārīd wa-Ibn 'Arabī — wa taḥdīr al-'ibād min ahl al-'inād bi-bid'at al-ittiḥād*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Wakīl, Maṭba'at al-Sunnat al-Muḥammadiyya, Cairo, 1372/1952. Al-Biqā'ī, a Shafiite scholar from the Biqā' valley (Lebanon), studied in Damascus, then lived for a time in Cairo and, later on, having been disgraced by his polemics against Ibn al-Fārīd, went back to Damascus where he died. He is the author of some apologetic works in defense of orthodox Islam. Following Ibn Taymiyya, he strenuously opposed such Sufis as 'Umar Ibn al-Fārīd and Ibn 'Arabī for their heretic views (*bid'a*). Al-Biqā'ī was the center of the polemics against Ibn al-Fārīd and wrote a lot against him and Ibn 'Arabī. See also Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fārīd*, pp. 22.26; Boullata, "Toward a Biography" p.48. On this famous controversy and its political implications see Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 62-73.
29. Jalāl al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Muḥammad al-Suyūṭī (849/1445-911/1505) an encyclopedic scholar who wrote on almost all Islamic sciences. He defended Ibn al-Fārīd and Ibn 'Arabī in *Tanbīh al-ghabī fī takhṭīyat Ibn 'Arabī*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān Ḥasan Maḥmūd, Maktabat al-Ādāb, Cairo, 1990. and *Qam' al-mu'arīd bi-nuṣṣat Ibn al-Fārīd*, Man-

- uscript at Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, n. 80 (Taṣawwuf), in which he sets the following criterion in assessing Sufi orthodoxy: "...we must accept the stand of those peoples [Sufis]; because we do not condemn anybody unless in case of evident error and whenever possible we interpret their utterances in a positive way. Never do we depart from this principle especially with those of them whom we know to have been good and faithful to the Sufi way, and afterwards it has been reported some points in which they failed or were wrong" ms. p.18. Besides this criterion, al-Suyūṭī mentions many scholars who wrote in defense of Sufis; some of them, such as Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Shuhrawardī, were contemporary to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and did not blame him. Also ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d.973/1565) wrote extensively in defense of Sufis especially in his two works, *Al-ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, Cairo, Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, sd., 2 voll.; *Al-yawāqīt wa-l-jawābir fi bayān ʿaqāʾid al-akābir*, Cairo, 1351/1932, 2 voll. In the first two chapters of *Al-yawāqīt* he defends particularly Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ laying the principle "It is not allowed to condemn those people [the Sufis] but on the ground of an understanding of their expressions in their own terms. Then, if we find anyone of them acting against the law, we will condemn", *Yawāqīt* vol. 1 p. 14. He remarks that the great majority of Sufis have always been models of observance of the religious law. See also Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, p. 130-133. On the popular cult for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine see Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 78-85.
30. ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl Abū l-Fidā (d.732/1332), *Al-mukhtaṣar fi akhbār al-baṣhar*, Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥusayniyya, Cairo, 1968, 4 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. III p. 157. Abū l-Fidā says that in 632/1234 died "...al-Qāsim b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī al-Ḥamawī". There is surely a mistake in Abū l-Fidā's record which is a summary of Ibn Khallikān's account: it should be "Abū l-Qāsim ʿUmar" not "al-Qāsim b. ʿUmar". Abū l-Fidā, a prince of Ayyubid descent, wrote on literature and history. His fame is linked especially with his historical book *al-Mukhtaṣar*.
31. Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn ʿUthmān al-Dhahabī al-Dimashqī al-Shāfiʿī, was an outstanding scholar of Damascus where he was born in 673/1274 and died in 748/1347. He became an eminent doctor in jurisprudence of the Shafiite school and wrote also in history. In this field he left his monumental work "The History of Islam" (*Tārikh al-Islām*), in which he records the events of Islamic history till the year 700/1300. He himself has made summaries of his great work in other works. We refer here to: *Tārikh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashābir wa-l-ʿlām*, ed. Bashshār Maʿrūf — Shuʿayb al-Arnaʿūṭ — Ṣāliḥ Mahdī ʿAbbās, Muʿassasat al-Risāla, Beyrouth, 1408/1988, 8 vols (non complete): "Ibn al-Fāriḍ: al-ṭabaqat al-rābiʿat wa-l-sittūn (631-640 H.)", vol 8, p.93-96 n.111.; *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf — Muḥyī Hilāl al-Sarḥān, Muʿassasat al-Risāla, Beyrouth, 1985/1405, 25 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", n.232 vol 22 p.368-369; *Al-ʿibar fi khabar man ghabar*, ed. Muḥammad al-Saʿīd Basyūnī Zaghlūl, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, Beyrouth, 1985/1405, 4 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", vol. 3 p. 213; *Mizān al-iʿtidāl fi naqd al-rijāl*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bijawī, Dār al-Maʿrifā, Beyrouth, 1382/1963 and ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, Cairo, 1382/1963, 4 vols: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", n. 6173 vol. 3 pp. 214-215.
32. id., *Tārikh al-Islām* p.93
33. id., *Tārikh al-Islām* p.94.
34. The quoted verses are vv. 151-153. 155. 213.219. 238-243. 245. 263-264. 280-281. 674-677. 730-732. 735-736. 738-742 of the *al-Tāʿīyya*.
35. id., *Siyar* p. 368
36. id., *Al-ʿibar* p. 213
37. id., *Mizān* pp. 214-215..
38. ʿAlī, *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ, (d.ca.735/1335). The text of his *Dībāja* is found at the beginning of many editions of the *Dīwān*. The most reliable ones are those reported at the beginning of the following editions: ed. *al-shaykh* ʿUqayl al-Zuwaytinī *al-mudarris* bi-Umawī in Alep, written for the *khawāja* Bilfantū al-Sardinī, lithography, 1257/1841(1-29 p.); ed. Rushayd Ghālīb al-Daḥḍaḥ

- (d.1889), Marseille, 1853 (1-24 p.); 'Abd al-Khāliq, *Dīwān*, Cairo, 1984 (p. 19-44). To this last we shall refer in our research being substantially identical with 'Uqayl al-Zuwaytī's edition. All these recensions of the *Dīwān* depend on that of 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ, except for a manuscript found by Arthur John Arberry (1905-1973) in the Chester Beatty Collection, copied by 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Maḥfūz al-'Alawī in 691/1292. This manuscript has been studied and edited in transcript by Arthur John Arberry (1905-1973), *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, edited in transcription, E. Walker, London, 1952; *The Mystical Poems*, London, 1952, pp. 5-9.
39. *Dibāja* p.30. His full name seems to be Abū al-Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Miṣrī (d.ca.770/1369), Homerin, *From Arab Poet* p. 107 note No.1. Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* p..2, points out the exaggerated praise of 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's of his grandfather and calls to caution in accepting his account. Also Boullata discards 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's account as not trustworthy, "Toward a biography" p.41-52.
40. *Dibāja* p.21; see Boullata, "Toward a Biography" p. 41. On 'Alī *sibt* Ibn al-Fāriḍ's edition see later note No. 128.
41. *Dibāja* p. 22. "*Dār al-khaṭāba*" is a place near a mosque reserved to the preachers, see. Pouzet, *Damas au VII<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* pp. 134-135. 'Alī does not explain the title '*al-Fāriḍ*' and he says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father was working in a Ḥanafite court.
42. see al-Mundhirī's account, see note No. 11.
43. *Dibāja* p.21-22. 'Alī clearly shows his personal veneration for his grandfather as well as his intention to magnify his image for his readers.
44. *Dibāja* pp. 21.34-36.
45. see notes No. 103-104.
46. *Dibāja* pp 32.36
47. *Dibāja* p.38.
48. *Dibāja* p. 22-23. Not much is known for sure about this *shaykh* He is mentioned by the topographer of Cairo Ibn al-Zayyāt (d.814/1411), *Al-kawākib al-sayyāra fī tartīb al-ziyāra*, Cairo, Būlāq 1325/1906, p. 299; Baghdad, Maktabat al-Muthannā, s.d., p. 297. Ibn al-Zayyāt says, describing Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb, that this one was: "...disciple of the *shaykh* Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Baqqāl, who was endowed with the Divine revelation and knowledge", *ibid.*, p. 297. Ibn Iyās (d.930/1524) says that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb is at the feet of a *shaykh* named Muḥammad al-Baqqāl, Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ī al-zuhūr fī waqā'ī al-duḥūr*, Cairo, Būlāq, 1311/1893, vol. I p. 81; ed. Franz Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1975, vol.I pt. 1 p.267; Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* p.46-47. 'Abd al-Khāliq remarks the contradiction between the names given by Ibn al-Zayyāt and by Ibn Iyās. This sheikh al-Baqqāl is described in such a mysterious way that Boullata doubts of the account's trustworthiness. We remark that with al-Baqqāl's appearance the miraculous element enters Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life. Ḥilmī notes that this sheikh al-Baqqāl could be one of the spiritual masters of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, from whom he might have received a spiritual blessing (*baraka*) and with whom he was linked for the rest of his life. This could explain his sudden return from Mecca at al-Baqqāl's death. Such master-disciple relationships are not unusual in Sufi's lives, one of the most famous and dramatic being that between the great Sufi poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d.672/1273) and the vagabond dervish Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī which completely changed Rūmī's life. Through Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī's encounter Rūmī received the revelation of the Truth, while others saw in him just a poor beggar; see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love. The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1983, pp. 3-5.
49. Al-'Ariḍ is a cave at the foot of al-Muqaṭṭam, *Dibāja* p 24 note 5.
50. Boullata, "Toward a Biography" pp. 44-46.
51. *Dibāja* pp. 24.36-37. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, ed. 'Abbās, vol. III, p. 447.
52. *Dibāja* pp. 29-34.
53. *Dibāja* pp. 36-38;



54. *Dībāja* pp. 25-27
55. *Dībāja* pp. 27; in another place, *Dībāja* p. 30, 'Alī says that the title of the poem was changed three times: from "Anfās al-janān wa-nafā'is al-jinān" (The Breaths of Hearts and the Pearls of Gardens) to "Lawā'ih al-janān wa-rawā'ih al-jinān" to "Nazm al-Sulūk". The Prophet's vision, a common trait of Sufi hagiography, seems to have been mentioned in order to give authority to the poem which had already come under the attack of anti-Sufi writers such as al-Dhahabī and Ibn Taymiyya. The poem is usually called "*al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā*", because its rhyme is in *tā'*, to distinguish it from a shorter poem also rhyming in *tā'* called "*al-Tā'īyyat al-Ṣuḡhrā*".
56. *Dībāja* pp. 36-37. Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (540/1145-632/1234) is recognized as one of the greatest authorities in Sufism. He belonged to one of the first Sufi Orders, *al-Subrawardiyya* and is the author of the important Sufi manual *The Gifts of Knowledges* (*Awārif al-ma'ārif*); see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975, pp. 244-46; Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, "The Suhrawardiyyah", in *Islamic Spirituality*, World Spirituality n. 20, Crossroad. New York: vol. II (Manifestations), pp. 241-245. A translation and introduction of this work has been done by Richard Gramlich, *Die Gaben der Erkenntnisse des 'Umar as-Subrawardī* (*Awārif al-ma'ārif*), überstetzt und eingeleitet von Richard Gramlich, Freiburger Islamstudien Band 6, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1978: Einleitung pp. 1-7.
57. This is the last verse of the "*Jimiyya*", *Dīwān* p. 196.
58. Here the name of the other son of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, 'Abd al-Rahmān, is given; while the other one, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, had already been mentioned before. The frock (*khirqā*) mentioned here is not that of novice (iṣṭiḥāq) but rather that of the blessing (*tabarruk*), because it was not in the tradition of the Sufi orders to allow the same person to be initiated into different orders; cf. Boullata, "Toward a Biography" 52; on the different kinds of *khirqā* cf. al-Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Cairo, Maktabat al-'Ālamiyya, 1358/1939, p. 53; J.-L. Michon, "Khirqā", in EI.2 V 17-18; Louis Gardet, "Dhikr" in EI.2 II 223-226. We must also point out that no Sufi order is attributed to Ibn al-Fāriḍ as its founder.
59. *Dībāja* p.39-41. Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn Mi'ḍād Ibn Shaddād Ibn Ḥamid al-Qushayrī al-Ja'barī (599/1202-687/1288), a Sufi from Cairo, author of beautiful poems and celebrated sermons, Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt* pp. 412-413; 'Abd al-Khāliq, *Dīwān*, p. 39.
60. This is the verse n. 50 of the "*al-Tā'īyyat al-Ṣuḡhrā*", *Dīwān*, p. 75.
61. Boullata, "Toward a Biography" p. 47. Also Homerin thinks that "...the tale ascribed to him (al-Ja'barī) is indeed fantastic... create an supernatural aura around Ibn al-Fāriḍ... to leave the unmistakable impression that his grandfather should be numbered among God's elect", *From Arab Poet* p. 53.
62. *Dībāja* pp. 27-29. Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī al-Fārisī see note 24
63. For more on al-Farghānī's commentary see Giuseppe Scattolin, "Al-Farghānī's Commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Mystical Poem *al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā*", in MIDEO 21 (1993) 331-383.
64. *Dībāja* p. 29. Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥamad al-Qazwīnī al-Shāfi'ī (d.683/1283), was a chief judge in Cairo, see Ibn 'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* vol. 5 p. 151.
65. *Dībāja* p.42. After an exhaustive discussion on the discrepancies of dates, also Ḥilmī reaches the conclusion that al-Mundhirī's and Ibn Khallikān's reports are the most trustworthy ones, Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* p. 29-32.
66. Al-Biqā'ī, *Maṣra' al-taṣawwuf* p. 258
67. Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* p.22.
68. Boullata, "Toward a Biography" p. 52.; Homerin, *From Arab Poet* p. 54.
69. Boullata, "Toward a Biography" p. 41.
70. see above note No. 16.

71. 'Afīf al-Dīn Abū al-Sa'āda 'Abd Allāh Ibn As'ad Ibn 'Alī al-Yamanī al-Yāfi'ī (700/1300-768/1367), *Mir'at al-jinān wa-ibrat al-yaqzān fi ma'rifa mā yu'tabar min ḥawādith al-zamān*, ed. Haydarabad, al-Dekkan, Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyya Press, 1337/1919-1339/1921 (1st. ed.); Beyrouth, Al-A'lamī, 1390/1970 (2nd. ed.), 4 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", vol.4 pp. 75-79; Cairo, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, sd, vol.1, pp. 27-33. Al-Yāfi'ī was born in Yaman ca.700/1300, but stationed most of his life in Mecca where he died in 768/1367. A Sufi himself, he met many Sufis in Mecca, visited Egypt and wrote on Sufism, especially Sufis' biographies.
72. 'Imād al-Dīn Abū l-Fidā' Ismā'il Ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dimashqī (700/1300-774/1373), *Al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, Cairo, 1351-1358/1932-1939, 14 vols.; Beyrouth, (1st. ed. 1966) 2nd. ed. 1977, 14 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", vol.13 p 143. Ibn Kathīr, born in Baṣra (Iraq), came to Damascus where he became a well known scholar in hadith and history. He was a disciple of al-Dhahabī and succeeded him in teaching.
73. Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar Ibn 'Alī Ibn Aḥmad al-Miṣrī, called Ibn al-Mulaqqin (732/1332-804/1402), *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Sharība, Maktabat al-Khānjī, Cairo, 1393/1973: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" pp. 464-465. Ibn al-Mulaqqin was born in Cairo in 723/1323 from a family coming from the Maghreb; he died also in Cairo in 804/1402. He was educated by his stepfather, a teacher of Koran (*mulaqqin*) and was named after him (*Ibn al-Mulaqqin*). Ibn al-Mulaqqin became a renowned scholar of hadith and fiqh in Egypt, taught in the *Kāmiliyya* school and wrote a lot on different subjects, among them a biographical dictionary of holy men (*awliyā'*).
74. see note No. 26.
75. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad Ibn 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (773/1272-852/1449), *Lisān al-mizān*, Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyya, Heydarābād, 1330-1331/1911-1913; al-A'lamī, Beyrouth, 1390/1971, 7 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. 4 p. 317-319 n. 902. Ibn Ḥajar was born in Cairo from the family coming from 'Asqalān (Palestine) and died also in Cairo, where he had become a well known scholar in the sciences of hadith and fiqh.
76. Ibn Ḥajar says that he read this story in "*Kitāb al-tawḥīd*" of 'Abd al-Qāder al-Qūṣī. Boulata, "Toward a Biography" p.53 n. 59 discusses the question of Ibn Ḥajar's source without reaching any conclusion. The full title is "*Kitāb al-wahīd fi sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd*" attributed to 'Abd al-Ghaffār, quoted by al-Suyūṭī in his, *Takḥīṭat al-ghabī*, p. 49 as "*Al-wahīd fi sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd*"; in GAL 2, 117 is attributed to 'Abd al-Ghaffār Ibn Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (al-Majīd) Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī al-Khazrajī (d.708/1309) with the title "*Kitāb al-wahīd fi sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd*". The manuscript in Dār Kutub (Cairo) n. 226 (ṭasawwuf), 2 vols., has the title "*Kitāb al-wahīd fi sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd wa-l-ṭasāwuf wa-l-īmān*" attributed to 'Abd al-Ghaffār Abū al-'Abbās Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *al-ma'rūf bi-Ibn Nūḥ*.al-Qūṣī called in the colophon *al-shaykh al-īmām al-'ālim al-'allāma* 'Abd al-Ghaffār Ibn Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī. See also another manuscript MS 1885 (ṭasawwuf), 2, pp. 73b-74a, Dār al-Kutub, Cairo. The book is also mentioned in R.A.Nicholson in JRAS, XXV (1906), 804 n.2. Abd al-Ghaffār was famous sheikh, born in Luxor, lived in Qūṣ in Upper Egypt, where he was head of a convent (*ribāṭ*), see Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt* pp. 448-449. He is said to have been a friend of 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Manūfi (d.703/1304). See also Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 24-26.
77. Al-Bahnasā is a town in Upper Egypt at 198 km. South of Cairo. It is the ancient Oxyrhynchos, called in Coptic Pemjé. It has been a prosperous town, renowned for its fabrics since ancient times till the Ayyubid era, that is Ibn al-Fāriḍ's time. Later on, it dwindled away and fell into ruin.
78. Jamāl al-Dīn Abū l-Maḥāsīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghrī Birdī Ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṭākī al-Zāhirī (813/1410-873/1470), *Al-nujūm al-zāhira fi mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, (1st. ed. 1375/1936) 1963, 16 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. 6, p. 288-290. Taghrī Birdī was born in Cairo from the Mamluki family of al-Zāhir and wrote on the history of Egypt.

79. see note No. 28.
80. Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Rahmān Jāmī (827/1414-898/1492), *Nafḥāt al-uns min ḥadarāt al-quds*, ed. Mahdī Tawhīdī Pūr, Ketābfurūshī-i Maḥmūdī, Teheran, 1337/1958: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" pp. 539-545. ʿAbd al-Rahmān Jāmī, a Persian Sufi poet from Herat, compiled his collection of Sufi biographies around 881/1476, modeled on Anṣārī's *Ṭabaqāt* and ʿAṭṭār's *Tadhkirat*.; see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "ʿAbd al-Rahmān Jāmī", in *Islamic Spirituality*, ed. Seyyed Hossein, New York, 1991, pp. 174-175.
81. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (849/1445-911/1505), *Husn al-muḥādara fī akhbār Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, Idārat al-Waṭan, Cairo, 1299/1881-2, 2 vols; ed Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, Cairo, 1387/1967-8: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", vol 1 p. 518 .Homerin, *From Arab Poet* p. 16.
82. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-Barakāt Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās al-Ḥanafī al-Miṣrī (852/1448-930/1524), *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duḥūr*, Būlāq, Cairo, 1311-14/1893-96, 3 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", vol. 1, pp. 81-82; ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, Franz Steiner, Wiesbaden, 8 vols (with indexes): "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", vol.1, pp. 266-267. Ibn Iyās wrote a history of Egypt from the beginning till the year 815/1412.
83. Nūr Allāh al-Shushtarī (d.1019/1610), *Majālis al-muʾminīn*, Ketābfurūshī-i Islāmī, 1375/1956, 2 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ", vol. 2, pp. 56-57.
84. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Maqqarī al-Tilmisānī (986/1578-1041/1632), *Nafḥ al-ṭīb fī ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb wa-dhikr wazīri-hā Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb*, ed. R.Dozy, G. Dugat, L. Krehl, Leiden, 1855-61; repr. Oriental Press, Amsterdam, 1967: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol.1 p.570; ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamid, Būlāq, Cairo, 1279/1862 and Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, Beyrouth, 1967, 10 vols.: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ" vol. 2. Born in Tlemcen (Margheb), al-Maqqarī came to the east and settled in Cairo and wrote the history of al-Andalus. He mentions al-Maqrīzī without naming the exact source of his information.
85. On the meeting between Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn ʿArabī: R.A.Nicholson states: "The two seem never to have met", *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, Cambridge, University Press, p. 164. Nallino had access to direct information from one of the best scholars of Ibn ʿArabī, Asin Palacios, who confirmed that Ibn ʿArabī never mentions Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his works: Carlo Alfonso Nallino, "Ancora su Ibn al-Fāriḍ e la mistica musulmana" in *La rivista degli studi orientali* VIII (1919-1920), reported in *Raccolta di scritti editi ed inediti* (Istituto per l'Oriente, Rome, 1940), vol. II pp. 292-293. However, one cannot exclude on principle that Ibn al-Fāriḍ might have heard of Ibn ʿArabī who had become quite a renowned Sufi in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's time. Surely, no clear allusion to Ibn ʿArabī can be found in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems. Moreover, the meeting between the two Sufis seems to us very improbable not only because of lack of historical evidence but also on the grounds of the difference existing between their language and concepts: see our semantic study note No. 102 ss.
86. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Ibn Tāj al-ʿĀrifīn Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn al-Munāwī al-Ḥadādī al-Qāhirī (952/1545-1031/1622), *Al-kawākib al-durriya fī tarājim al-sādat al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Rabīʿ, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-Zāwiya al-Tijāriyya, 1357/1938, 2 vols. Surprisingly, in this edition the Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography is missing. A French translation of the work has been done by René Khawwam, *Les astre étincellants dans les cieus de la mystique musulmane*, Paris, Orante, 1978. For Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography see the manuscript MS 1885 (Tārikh Ṭalaʿat), Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya pp. 561-567. Al-Munāwī, a descendant of one of the most prestigious families of Shafiite judges of Cairo, was a very pious and learned man who wrote in many fields of religious sciences. His Sufi biographical compilation *Al-kawākib* has been appreciated for its order and accuracy, superior to his master ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī's *Ṭabaqāt*. Al-Munāwī died, apparently empoisoned, in Cairo in 1031/1622.

87. Abū l-Falāh ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ibn Aḥmad Ibn ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī (1032/1623-1089/1679), *Shadharāt al-dhabab fī akhbār man dhahab*, Maktabat al-Qudsī, Cairo, 1351/1932, 8 vols: "Ibn al-Fārīd", vol. 5, pp. 149-153; al-Maktab al-Tijārī, Beyrouth, 1966, 8 vols., idem; translated in R.A. Nicholson, "The lives of ʿUmar Ibnū'l-Fārīd and Muḥiyu'ddīn Ibnū'l-'Arabī, in *JRAS* XXV (1906) p. 800-806. Ibn ʿImād was born in Syria and died there. He wrote in history, especially biographies. He completed his biographical history *Shadharāt al-dhabab* in 1080/1670.
88. Yūsuf Ibn Ismāʿīl al-Nabhānī (1265/1849-1350/1931), *Jāmiʿ karāmāt al-awliyāʿ*, Cairo, 1404/1984: "Ibn al-Fārīd" vol. 2, pp 412-413.
89. The *Tāʾīyyat*'s commentators mentioned by al-Munāwī are: Sirāj al-Dīn al-Hindī al-Hanafī, al-Shams al-Bisāṭī al-Mālikī, al-Jalāl al-Qazwīnī al-Shāfiʿī, al-Farghānī, al-Qāshānī, al-Qayṣarī.
90. Ibn ʿImād, *Shadharāt* vol. 5 p. 151.
91. mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar see. note No.76.
92. Ibn ʿImād, *Shadharāt* vol. 5 p. 153
93. Muḥammad Bāqir Ibn Amīr al-Mūsawī al-Iṣfahānī Al-Khwansārī (d.1313/1895), *Kitāb rawḍāt al-jannāt fī uṣūl al-ʿulamāʿ wa-l-al-sādāt*, Teheran, 1304/1887-1306/1889; ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Rawḍātī, Teheran, 1367/1947-8, 4 vols.; al-Mashhad, 1368/1948: "Ibn al-Fārīd" p. 483; Nuʿmān Khayr al-Dīn Abū l-Barakāt Ibn al-Alūsī al-Baghdādī (1252/1836-1317/1899), *Jalāʾ al-ʿaynayni fī l-muḥākamat al-aḥmadayni*, Cairo, Būlāq, 1298/1881, 362 pp.: "Ibn al-Fārīd" pp. 483. Ibn al-Alūsī belonged to a famous family of Baghdad, a stock of many illustrious scholars.
94. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd Allāh Ḥājji Khalīfa Kātib Čelebī (1017/1609-1067/1657), *Kashf al-zunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, Wikālat al-Maʿārif, Istanbul, 1360-1362/1941-1943 (repr. 1971), vol. 1 pp. 265-267; vol. 2 pp. 735-767.1338.; trans. by G.Flügel, *Lexicon bibliographicum et encyclopaedicum*, Leipzig, 1835-1858, 7 vols; completed by Ismāʿīl Bāshā Ibn Muḥammad Amīn, *Īdāḥ al-maknūn fī dhayl kashf al-zunūn*, Istanbul, 1364/1945 (repr. 1972), vol. 1 p. 118. Ḥājji Khalīfa was born in Istanbul and wrote extensively in history and geography: in his *Kashf al-zunūn* are listed more than 14500 titles.
95. Carl Brockelmann (1868-1956) *Gechichte der arabischen Litteratur* (GAL): *GAL 1*, Weimar, 1898, 2 vols.; *GAL S* (Supplement), Leiden, 1937-1942, 3 vols.; *GAL 2*, Leiden, 1943-1949, 2 vols.: "Ibn al-Fārīd" *GAL 1*, I pp. 262-263; *GAL S*, I pp. 462-465; *GAL 2*, I pp. 305-307.
96. ʿUmar Ridā Kahḥāla, *Muʿjam al-muʿallifīn wa-tarājim muṣannifi l-kutub al-ʿarabiyya*, Maṭbaʿat al-Taraqqi, Dimashq, 1378/1959: "Ibn al-Fārīd" vol. 7, pp .301-302; Khayr al-Dīn Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī al-Dimashqī al-Ziriklī (1310/1893- ), *Al-aʿlām. Qāmūs tarājim li-ashḥar al-rijāl wa-l-nisāʾ al-ʿarab wa-l-mustaʿribīn wa-l-mushṭariqīn*, Cairo, 1373/1954-1378/1959: "Ibn al-Fārīd" vol. 5, pp. 216-217.
97. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fārīd wa-l-ḥubb al-ilāhī*, Cairo, (1st ed. 1374/1945); Dār al-Maʿārif, Cairo, 2nd ed. 1971: "Ibn al-Fārīd's life" pp. 21-135.
98. Arthur John Arberry (1905-1973), *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fārīd*, edited in transcription, E.Walker, London, 1952: "Ibn al-Fārīd's life" pp. 5-9; id., *The Poem of the Way*, translated, E.Walker, London, 1952: "Ibn al-Fārīd's life" pp. 5-8; id., *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fārīd*, translated, E.Walker, Dublin, 1956: "Ibn al-Fārīd's life" pp. 5-10.
99. Issa J. Boullata, "Toward a Biography of Ibn al-Fārīd (576-632 AH/1181-1235 AD), in *Arabica* 28/1 (1981) 38-56.
100. ʿAṭīf Naṣr Jawdat, *Shīʾr Ibn al-Fārīd, dirāsa fī fann al-shīʾr al-ṣūfī*, Dār al-Andalus, Beirut, 1982; ʿAbd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Khāliq, *Dīwān Ibn al-Fārīd*, Dār al-Maʿārif, Cairo, 1984; id., *Shīʾr Ibn al-Fārīd fī dhawq al-adabī al-ḥadīth*, Dār al-Maʿārif, Cairo, 1984.
101. Th.Emil Homerin, *From Arab poet to Muslim saint: Ibn al-Fārīd, his verse and his shrine*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia (South Carolina USA), 1994.
102. Giuseppe Scattolin, *L'esperienza mistica di Ibn al-Fārīd attraverso il suo poema al-Tāʾīyyat al-Kubrā — Un'analisi semantica del poema*, PISAI, Roma, 1987, vols. 3, 730 pp. (not yet published).

- Summarized in *L'esperienza mistica di Ibn al-Fāriḍ attraverso il suo poema al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā*, PISAI, Roma, 1988, and "L'expérience mystique de Ibn al-Fāriḍ à travers son Poème al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā", in MIDEO 19 (1989) 203-223 and "The Mystical Experience of 'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ or the Realization of Self (*Anā*, I), in *The Muslim World*, LXXXII/3-4 (July-October, 1992) 274-286," 'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ wa-ḥayātu-hu al-ṣūfiyya min khilāl qaṣīdati-hi al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā", in *Mahmūd Qāsim, al-insān wa-l-faylusūf*, ed. by Ḥāmid Ṭāhir, Maktabat al-Anglū-al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, 1992, pp. 405-437; id. in *Mashriq* 67/2 (Juillet-Décembre, 1993) 369-403. In our research we have tried to find the center of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufi experience through the semantic analysis of the terms used in his poem without resorting to foreign concepts or ideas. It seems to us that the realization of self (*anā*, I) is the true core of his Sufism. On this ground his poem can be read as his true, interior autobiography. id., "Al-Farghānī's Commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Mystical Poem *al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā*", in MIDEO 21 (1993) 331-383. This is a study of al-Farghānī's commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tā'īyyat* with some critical remarks on his method and results.
103. For more about the Ayyubid time, Claude Cahen, "Ayyūbides" in *EI* 2 I 796ss.; Carl Brockelmann, *History of Islamic Peoples*, trans. J. Carmichael and M. Perlman, London (7th ed.) 1979 (1st. germ. ed. 1939) pp. 221-234; Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* pp. 36-42; 'Alī Šāfi Ḥusayn, *Al-adab al-ṣūfi fī Miṣr fī l-qarn al-sābi' al-hijrī*, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1964, pp. 1-53; idem, *Al-adab al-ṣūfi fī Miṣr: Ibn al-Šabbāgh al-Qūṣī*, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1971, pp. 19-75; Steven Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, Albany, 1977; R.J.C. Broadhurst, *History of the Ayyubi Sultans*, trans. from Maqrīzī, Boston, 1980; Muḥammad Zaghlūl Salām, *Al-adab fī l-'aṣr al-ayyūbī*, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1983, pp. 5-75; see also Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VI<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Beyrouth, 1988, passim; André Raymond, *Le Caire*, Fayard, Paris, 1993; "Le Caire Ayyubide" pp. 86-112; of special interest is Neil D. Mackenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo — A Topographical Study*, Cairo, American University Press, 1992; "The Ayyubids of Egypt" pp. 19-26.
104. This convent, called *khānqāh al-ṣalāhiyya* or *duwayrat al-ṣūfiyya*, had been the mansion of a Fatimid prince and was named after him *Dār Sa'īd al-Su'adā'*. The *shaykh* of this convent was given the title of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* (the chief of all Sufi masters), title handed down to the following generations. For more information about this important Sufi convent and other schools and convents during the Ayyubid time see Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* pp. 39-40; *Dibāja* p. 28, note No. 6; J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, p. 18; Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VI<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 234-235; André Raymond, *Le Caire*, Fayard, Paris, 1993; "Le Caire Ayyubide" pp. 86-112; Neil D. Mackenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo: "Religious Institutions"* (madaris, khawaniq, churches) pp. 103-154.
105. *Dibāja* p. 30.
106. see note No. 82
107. *Dibāja* p. 36-37.
108. see notes No. 85-86.
109. *Dibāja* p. 22.
110. Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* p. 34.
111. *Diwān* p. 211; notice the play of words: *mushtahā* means "what is desired" and is the name of a well known mosque on al-Rawḍa island, on the Nile near Cairo, where Ibn al-Fāriḍ loved to go to contemplate the beauty of nature, see *Dibāja* p.37 see also Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* p. 36 note. 2.
112. see Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* pp. 29-32
113. *Dibāja* pp. 22-23
114. A note of al-Mudhirī in his biographical dictionary says that he: "He pushed to the limits (*taṭarruf*) and then studied Sufism", quoted in Homerin, *From Arab Poet* p. 16.
115. see above pp. 3-4. Homerin has been able to track some students of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, besides al-Mudhirī. They are Yahyā al-'Aṭṭār (584/1188-662/1264) and Muḥammad Ibn al-Najjār

- (578/1182-643/1245), Ibn 'Amā (d.692/1293), and two poets were very close to Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Ibn Isrā'īl (603/1206-677/1278) and Ibn al-Khiyamī (602/1205-685/1286), *From Arab Poet* p. 16.20. 22-23.
116. see above note No. 48.
117. A clear example of this Sufi tradition is Ibn 'Arabi's tomb in Damascus around which many of his disciples and followers have been buried or wished to be buried, Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VIII<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 217-220, 234-235. Among those Sufis Pouzet mentions Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d.699/1299), Badr al-Dīn Ḥasan Ibn Hūd (d.699/1300), 'Afīf al-Dīn Sulaymān al-Tilmisānī (d.690/1291), Muḥammad al-Aykī al-Fārisī (d.697/1298). Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d.672/1274), Ibn 'Arabi's foremost disciple, desired to be buried near his master's tomb, but circumstances prevented him.
118. v. 34 of the *Dā'liyya*, *Dīwān* p. 184.
119. *Dībāja* p. 20.
120. *Dībāja* pp. 20.34.
121. Homerin speaks of two trips to Mecca, since by 620/1223 Ibn al-Fāriḍ was back in Cairo where he met his student Ibn al-Najjār, *From Arab Poet* p. 20.
122. see above p.12.
123. see note No. 41.
124. *Dībāja* pp. 19-21; see pp. 10-11.
125. Arberry, Arthur John (1905-1973), *The Mystical Poems Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, edited in transcription, E. Walker, London, 1952.
126. *Dīwān* .p. 141
127. *Dībāja* p. 30.
128. For this question see our semantic study on the *al-Tā'īyya* note No. 102. On this point we disagree with many scholars who have accepted the account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson, for example Nicholson, *Studies*, p. 167.
129. *Dībāja* pp. 34-35.
130. see. above p. 14.
131. Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ* pp. 54-55. For information about the tomb see 'Alī Bāshā Mubārak, *Al-khiṭaṭ al-tawfiqiyya al-jadīda*, Būlāq, Cairo, 1307/1889, 4 tomes, 20 parts, 5th part p. 58-59; 2nd ed. Cairo, Al-Ḥay'at al-Miṣriyyat al-'Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1967-1993, 11 tomes (not complete): "Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Tomb" t. 5 pp. 138-142. Ibn al-Zayyāt (d.814/1411), *Al-kawākib al-sayyāra fī tariḥ al-ziyāra*, Cairo, Būlāq 1325/1906, pp 299; Baghdad, Maktabat al-Muthannā, n.d., p. 297. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ī' al-zuhūr fī waqā'ī' al-dubūr*, Cairo, Būlāq, 1311/1893, vol. I p. 81; ed. Franz Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1975, vol. I pt. 1 p. 267. For the history of the Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine, its importance in Egyptian history and his decadence in recent times see Homerin, *From Arab Poet* pp. 76-92; Pierre-Jean Luizard, "Un mawlid particulier", in *Egypte/Monde Arabe*, CEDEJ. Le Caire, 14 (2e trimestre 1993) pp. 79-102.
132. *Dībāja* pp. 21.37. Homerin has found in al-Ṣafadī (d.764/1363) some information about Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad who became a hadith scholar and died in 689/1290, *Form Arab Poet* p. 20.
133. the title of his poem *al-Tā'īyyat al-Kubrā*.
134. *Dībāja* pp. 23.
135. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt* p. 455.
136. *Dībāja* p 32.36 and above p. 10.
137. These Sufi terms are taken from the Koran: K 12, 53; 75, 2; 89,27. see their explanation in 'Alī Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Al-ta'rifāt*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Qāḍī, Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, Beyrouth, 1991, p. 252.
138. *Dīwān* pp. 104-108, 115-116

139. see above pp. 2-3.
140. *Dībāja* p. 38.
141. *Dīwān* pp. 130-135.
142. Our research highlights such an inner self-perception see note No. 102.
143. *Dīwān* pp. 132-133
144. The thesis embraced by Th. Emil Homerin in his recent book *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint* is that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was considered at first a brilliant poet. Later on, due to the influence of his grandson's hagiography, he was exalted and venerated as a saint. Such thesis seems very interesting and with many positive evidence, nonetheless it appears to us too rigid in its exposition. We have found that interest in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems as "very important Sufi compositions" is witnessed very early. Al-Farghānī reports in his commentary *Mašāriq al-darāwī* pp. 6-5, and pp.77-78 that his master, al-Qūnawī, told him that he went to Egypt a first time in 630/1233, when Ibn al-Fāriḍ was still alive, but he could not meet him then. Afterwards, he returned to Egypt in 640/1243. This time he met a number of Sufis and agreed with them to write a commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tā'īyya*, which was highly praised by everybody. Back to Konysa, al-Qūnawī used to explain orally the *al-Tā'īyya* during his lessons. On al-Qūnawī's advise and following his explanations, al-Fargānī wrote his commentary in Persian and presented it to his master who approved and blessed the work. Later on, al-Fargānī reworked his commentary in Arabic. It seems that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was very soon appreciated as an outstanding Sufi poet and saint.