

Al-Azhar University  
Bulletin of the Faculty  
Of  
Languages & Translation



جامعة الأزهر  
مجلة كلية اللغات والترجمة

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## Early Islamic Sufism and *Sharī'ah* Sciences: Status and Inter-relationships

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Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Muḥammad Aḥmad

## Early Islamic Sufism and *Sharī'ah* Sciences: Status and Inter-relationships

Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Muḥammad Aḥmad  
Al-Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism, Cairo, Egypt.  
Email: m\_al\_ayyaat@yahoo.com

### Abstract:

The early Islamic Sufism has long been subject to fierce criticism. Some argue that it is completely non-Islamic, philosophical fantasy, powerlessness, total isolation or escaping from the real life and the struggle therein. Besides, some other researchers separate Sufism from other disciplines of *Sharī'ah* knowledge, namely *Fiqh*, *Ḥadīth* and *Qur'ānic* Exegesis, arguing that Sufism and Sufis were both rejected and degraded by scholars of these *Sharī'ah* disciplines. In tracking the historical sources, books of biographies and classes, this paper investigates these assumptions and discusses the position and the status of the early Islamic Sufism (from 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century of *Hijrah*) compared to other disciplines of *Sharī'ah* knowledge. It also provides examples of the Sufi scholars' contributions in these disciplines of *Sharī'ah* knowledge. Moreover, it investigates the inter-relationships between the Sufi masters and the scholars of *Fiqh*, *Ḥadīth* and *Qur'ānic* Exegesis.

**Keywords:** Sufism, *Fiqh*, *Ḥadīth*, *Qur'ān*, *Sharī'ah*

### التصوف الإسلامي: موقعه من علوم الشريعة وصلته رجاله ببقية العلماء

محمد عبد الحميد محمد أحمد

مرصد الأزهر الشريف لمكافحة التطرف، القاهرة، مصر .

البريد الإلكتروني: m\_al\_ayyaat@yahoo.com

### المخلص:

تعددت الكتابات والدراسات التي تناولت التصوف الإسلامي، إلا أن هذه الكتابات والدراسات جعلت من أصل التصوف وتطوره وتأثره بالعوامل الأجنبية أو أصلته في الإسلام محوراً مهماً ورئيساً لها. وعلى الرغم من أهمية هذه الجوانب في ميدان البحث العلمي، إلا أن مسألة أثر الحركة الصوفية في الميدان العلمي، وارتباط رجال هذا العلم بغيرهم من علماء الأمة، لم يحظ بكثير من الاهتمام من قبل الباحثين؛ بل إن بعض الدراسات، عن تعمد أو غيره، قللت من الأثر الفكري والسلوكي للتصوف الإسلامي إلى تلك الدرجة التي كونت حاجزاً بين ذلك التراث العظيم واستفادة الإنسان منه. وهذا البحث هو محاولة لفهم موقع التصوف الإسلامي من علوم الشريعة مبرزاً اهتمام الصوفية بتعلم تلك العلوم كالفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضاً على انخراط كثير من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضاً منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبين الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التصوف الإسلامي وشيوخه بغيرهم من علماء الأمة لا سيما الأئمة الأربعة والحفاظ والمحدثين. ويختبر هذا الفصل الفرضية القائلة إن الصوفية لم يكونوا بعيدين عن علماء الأمة، وأنهم حرصوا على تعلم علوم الشريعة المختلفة، وأن الروابط بينهم وبين غيرهم من علماء الفقه والحديث والتفسير كانت قوية، وأن منهم محدثون ومفسرون وفقهاء برعوا في تلك العلوم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التصوف، الفقه، الحديث، القرآن، الشريعة

The Arabic word *Taṣawwuf* literally means “to become a Sufi,” and it is generally translated as Sufism.<sup>1</sup> The etymologies for the term are various and researchers have greatly differed concerning the source word of this term and the etymological derivations to which the “Sufi” is attributed. Some researchers connect the term *Ṣafā'* (Purity), a moral trait and quality which Sufis are always contending with themselves to attain.<sup>2</sup> Others refer the term *Taṣawwuf* to the root word *Ṣaff* (line), emphasizing the excellence of Sufis in devotion and piety.<sup>3</sup> A third opinion, however, links the term to *Ṣuffah*, i.e. the long, covered portico or vestibule which formed part of the Mosque of the Prophet (ﷺ) at Medina and which the Prophet built for the poor people who later on came to be identified as *ahl al-Ṣuffah* (People of the Bench).<sup>4</sup> For Sufis, those people are typifying the ideal of asceticism and piety.<sup>5</sup>

With these suggestions, which all denote attributes and qualities assumingly culminated in the character of the Sufis, into consideration, the opinion that connects the term *Taṣawwuf* to the etymological derivation *Ṣūf* (wool or the woollen cloth) has found a wide acceptance among researchers of Sufism, past and present.<sup>6</sup> It is noted that this opinion is more accurate from a morphological point of view. Besides it is supported given the history of Sufis and their well-known practice of wearing the woollen cloths in the early times of evolution.<sup>7</sup>

Having discussed all the aforementioned suggestions, al-Qushayrī (d. 465 A.H.) –who authored “*Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*” which is held by Sufis as the most authoritative source in Sufism– took a unique direction when he noted that the term *Taṣawwuf* has no root word neither linguistically nor etymologically. He

<sup>1</sup> Carl W. Ernst “*Taṣawwuf*”, in: *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim world*, Edited by Richard C. Martin (New York: Gale Group, 2004), Vol. 2, p. 684.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ṭūsī (Abū Naṣr 'Abdillāh ibn 'Alī al-Sarrāj), *Al-Luma' fī Tārīkh al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī*, ed. 'Imād Zakī al-Bārūdī (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tawfīqīyah, undated), p. 31; Al-Kalābādhī (Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm), *Al-Ta'arruf li-Madh-hab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Nagāḥ 'Awaḍ Ṣiyām (Cairo: Dār al-Muqaṭṭam li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2009), p. 13; Muḥammad Kamāl Ja'far, *Al-Taṣawwuf: Ṭarīqan wa-Tagrubatan wa-Madh-haban* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Jāmi'īyah, 1970), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 'Abd al-Qādir 'Īsā, *Ḥaqā'iq 'an al-Taṣawwuf* (Cairo: Dār al-Muqaṭṭam li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 2013), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Kalābādhī, *Al-Ta'arruf li-Madh-hab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 13-14; Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī, *'Awāriḥ al-Ma'āriḥ*, ed. Nagāḥ 'Awaḍ Ṣiyām (Cairo: Dār al-Muqaṭṭam li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2009) p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> W. Montgomery Watt “Ahl Al-Suffa”, in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*, Edited by H. A. R. GIBB and others (Leiden: E. J. Brill, New Edition, 1986), Vol. I, p. 266.

<sup>6</sup> Ḥasan al-Shāfi'ī, *Fuṣūl fī al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> 'Abd al-Karīm al-Takrūtī, “*Risālah fī Ta'rīf al-Taṣawwuf wa-'Ishtiqāq al-Ṣūfīyah*”, Majallat al-Buḥūth wa-al-Dirāsāt al-Ṣūfīyah (Cairo: Al-Markaz al-'Ilmī al-Ṣūfī bi-al-'Ashīrah al-Muḥammadiyah, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2006), p. 351s.

concluded that *Taṣawwuf* is rather a name which has been originated to describe this specific category of people..<sup>8</sup>

As far as the technical meaning of the term *Taṣawwuf* is concerned, scores of definitions are also offered. Sufism, al-Sarrāj, al-Suhrawardī and others argue, has been defined with more than a hundred definitions.<sup>9</sup> In his book “*Awārif al-Ma'ārif*”, al-Suhrawardī even concluded that the Sufi masters' statements defining Sufism exceed a thousand.<sup>10</sup>

With such multiplicity of definitions, many researchers concluded it is not as easy task to reach a comprehensive technical definition which would give a general overview of Sufism.<sup>11</sup> Al-Qushayrī included in his “*Risālah*” (Epistle) many of the early Sufis' definitions of Sufism.<sup>12</sup> Reviewing the definitions he quoted and the other definitions quoted by other Sufi researchers are not within the scope of this paper. Yet, there is a need to spot light on a definition with a much wider scope for Sufism, and the the definition of Ibn 'Ajībāh (d. 1224 A.H) is suggested here; it tells “Sufism is the knowledge through which one can know how travelling (*sulūk*) [in Allah's path] is commenced, how the inwards are cleansed [from the whims and evils] and how they are then adorned with the various kinds of good moral traits. Its beginning stage is knowledge, its middle stage is practice and its final stage is the bestowed miracle”.<sup>13</sup>

With this definition of Ibn 'Ajībāh in mind, some of the collective efforts that have been exerted by the Sufi scholars and masters in thought, knowledge and practice will be discussed in this paper.

### The Sufis' Encouragement to master the Disciplines of *Sharī'ah* Knowledge

Evidently, Sufis were very much keen to learn the other sciences of *Sharī'ah*. They confirmed that learning these sciences before setting out on the spiritual path of Sufism forms a protective shield for the Sufi novices and pupils against misconceptions and pernicious innovations. Therefore, many Sufi scholars made it

<sup>8</sup> Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*, Trans. professor Alexander D. Knysh (UK: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2007), p. 288.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma' fī Tārīkh al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, 72.

<sup>11</sup> Abū al-'Ilā 'Afīfī, *Fī al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī wa-Tārīkhīh: Translated studies of Reynold Alleyne Nicholson* (Cairo: Lagnat al-Ta'lif wa-al-Nashr, University of Farūq I, undated ), pp. 27-41.

<sup>12</sup> Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*, Trans. Alexander D. Knysh, p. 23; 73; 289; 290; 291.

<sup>13</sup> 'Abdullāh Aḥmad ibn 'Ajībāh, *Mi'rāj al-Taṣawwuf ila Ḥaqā'iq al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. 'Abd al-Majīd khayyālī (Casablanca: Markaz al-Turāth al-Thaqāfī al-Maghribī, undated), p. 25.

a condition for the Sufi novice (*mūrīd*)<sup>14</sup> to learn *Sharī'ah* sciences such as *Fiqh*, *Tafsīr* and *Ḥādīth* first. Sufis also consider that adherence to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) and abidance by the rulings of *Sharī'ah* are prerequisites for commencing their Path and a threshold to polishing the heart and purifying the soul.

This is made crystal clear by Al-Junayd, who says: “In this affair [of ours] one must not follow anyone who has not learned by heart the Qur’ān and written down the reports of the Prophet, because our knowledge is bound by the [Holy] Book and by the [Prophet’s] custom.”<sup>15</sup> In his twenties, al-Junayd – who is known as the master of the community of Sufis – used to study the *Sharī'ah* sciences under the renowned scholars of his time. Al-Qushayrī emphasized that he mastered the principal sciences of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) and that he was a well established jurist in the *fiqh* school of Abū Thawr.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī in his book “*Qūt al-Qulūb*” reported that al-Junayd used to hear his maternal uncle al-Sarrī al-Saqāfī praying for him every time he left his assembly: “May Allah make you a qualified person in *Ḥādīth* (*Muḥaddith*) who, afterwards, becomes a Sufi and may He not make you a Sufi who, afterwards, becomes a qualified person in *Ḥādīth*.”<sup>17</sup> Commenting on al-Sarrī’s saying, al-Makkī explained:

He means that if you start with (learning) the science of *Ḥādīth* and Reports (*Āthār*), and, then, you commence the spiritual way of renunciation and devotion, you will excel in Sufism and attain the status of the [Divine] Gnostics (*al-‘Ārifīn*). But, if you start with devotion and Sufism, you will be entirely preoccupied with that and as a result you will neglect [the learning of] the Sunnah and consequently [you will get used to] uttering paradoxical or blasphemous sayings (*shath*)<sup>18</sup> or committing mistakes.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Mūrīd* (pl. *Mūrīdūn*) literally means “seeker” or “aspirant”, followers of a Sufi master. The word is derived from “desire” (*irādah*), as *mūrīd* is the one who desires. According to the usage of Sufis, the *mūrīd* is someone who has no desire; he who has not stripped himself from desire, cannot be counted among *mūrīdīn*; See Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism*, pp. 213-214.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism*, Trans. Alexander D. Knysh, p. 44.

<sup>16</sup> Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb fī Mu‘āmalat al-Maḥbūb wa-Waṣf Ṭarīq al-Qawm ilā Maqām al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Riḍwānī (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Tūrath, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 2001), vol. 1, p. 437.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> The original meaning of *shath* (pl. *Shataḥāt*) in Arabic is “overflow of a pot.” In Sufi terminology, *Shataḥāt* are “seemingly blasphemous words and expressions uttered by Sufis who often in the state of ecstasy.”

<sup>19</sup> Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, Vol. 1, p. 437.

According to al-Sarrī al-Saqāfī and Abū Ṭalib al-Makkī, it is better not to tread on the Sufi Path without having studied the sciences of *Sharī'ah* as this is the foundation upon which worship and devotion are built.

### The Status of Sufism Compared to other Disciplines of *Sharī'ah* Knowledge

In the course of Islamic history, different *Sharī'ah* sciences have come under severe attacks. Attempts to distort *Fiqh*, *Tafseer* and *Ḥadīth* and their respective, specialized scholars were relentlessly made, and Islamic Sufism was not an exception. Some have tried to isolate and separate Sufism and Sufi scholars from other branches of Islamic knowledge and competent scholars, arguing that Sufism was something alien to and unaccepted by the scholars of *Sharī'ah*.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the need arises for investigating the position and status of Islamic Sufism compared to *Sharī'ah* fields of inquiry, namely *Fiqh*, *Tafseer* and *Ḥadīth* and the inter-relationships between the Sufi scholars and the scholars of those *Sharī'ah* disciplines.

The relationship of Sufism to other Islamic sciences has long been the subject of many discussions. Since Sufism is considered by some as the science that is mainly concerned with correcting the intentions and adhering to sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) in all deeds, some scholars, like Aḥmad ibn 'Ajībah in his introduction to the book *al-Hikam al-'Aṭā'iyah*, hold the opinion that it is a condition for the perfectness and acceptance of all other sciences.<sup>21</sup> Ibn 'Ajībah also quoted al-Siyūfī as saying: "Sufism to other Islamic sciences is as important as the science of eloquence (*'ilm al-bayān*) to Arabic Grammar,"<sup>22</sup> meaning that it perfects and improves it.

Moreover, Zarrūq is reported to have been exemplifying the relationship of Sufism to Islamic faith as the relationship of the soul to the body.<sup>23</sup> Although these opinions suggest the importance of Sufism to other Islamic sciences theoretically, the need arises to probe the inter-relationship developed between Sufism and these sciences and the link that connects scholars of both sides. For the purpose of investigating this, the following part explores the inter-relationships between Sufism and Sufis on one hand, and *Fiqh*, *Tafsīr*, and *Ḥadīth* and their competent scholars on the other hand.

<sup>20</sup> 'Abd al-Ḥafīdh al-Makkī, *Mawqif A'imat al-Ḥarakah al-Salaḥiyah min al-Taṣawwuf wa-al-Ṣūfīyah*; 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl, *Hādhihī Hīya al-Ṣūfīyah*; Iḥsān Ilāhī Zahr, *Al-Taṣawwuf: Al-Mansha' wa-al-Maṣādir*; Sa'īd 'Abd al-'Azīm and Muḥammad Jamīl Ghāzi, *Al-Ṣūfīyah: Al-Wajh al-Ākhar*.

<sup>21</sup> *Īqāz al-Hlmām fī Sharḥ al-Hikam* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, undated), pp. 22-23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## Sufism and *Fiqh*

The word "*Fiqh*" was originally used as a comprehensive term referring to a number of sciences, such as jurisprudence, doctrines of theology, morality, ethics etc. This is concluded by Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān in his encyclopedic book *Abjad al-'Ulūm*.<sup>24</sup> Khān also quoted Abū Ḥanīfah as saying: "*Fiqh* is the science that was originally concerned with the soul and spirituality". Al-Ghazālī also suggested that the term *Fiqh* was originally put to denote the knowledge of the Hereafter and the principles of diagnosing the subtle faults of one's self (*āfāt al-nafs*); and in the course of time, the originally intended meaning of the term has been expanded to become connotative of the knowledge of issuing *Fatwas* (non-binding legal rulings).<sup>25</sup>

Although both disciplines became distinctive from each other, they are considered interrelated and complementary to each other. Some Sufi scholars even argue that Sufism complements the study of *Fiqh* as it helps Muslims to fulfill Allah's Commands in a way that allows them to taste the sweetness of belief and that would lead them to a stronger commitment to following Allah's commands. This explains Zarrūq's statement: "Jurisprudence and Sufism are partners in guiding people to Allah, His Rulings and His Commands."<sup>26</sup>

Zarrūq's previous statement can be understood in the context that both *Fiqh* and Sufism deal in most cases with the same rulings, yet the former deals with the principles and conditions of perfecting the deeds, while the later, however, details the principles and conditions which lead to the acceptance of these deeds and therefore attaining the pleasure of Allah and drawing nearer to Him.

For example, books of *Fiqh* usually begin with a chapter entitled "purification" (*al-ṭahārah*), but rarely do they dwell upon its inner aspects and spiritual dimensions the same way Sufism tackles it. By the same token, the books of *Fiqh* expounds on the rulings related to performing prayer: its prerequisites, pillars, required actions, recommended actions, disliked actions, actions that invalidate it, etc.; but they usually do not discuss internal states that should be adhered to during observing prayers and they also lack discussions on how one can attain humility before Allah (*khushū'*) in prayer, and what actions lead to its realization. As such, Sufism and *Fiqh* complement each other.

<sup>24</sup> *Abjad al-'Ulūm* (Damascus: Publications of Culture and National Guidance Ministry, 1978), Vol. 2, p. 400.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> *Qwā'id al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 16.

Practically speaking, many Sufis learned *Fiqh* and became well established in its rulings and principles. Many of them were even reported to have studied under the renowned scholars of four famous schools of *Fiqh* and have attained advanced levels in their learning circles. As a way to examine and explore the involvement of Sufis in the circles of *Fiqh* and the inter-relationships between Jurists and Sufis, this paper presents the following examples, highlighting, first and foremost, the relationships which the early Sufis developed with the founders of the four famous schools of *Fiqh*; and the opinions of the four *Imāms* of the famous *Fiqhi madh-habs* concerning Sufism and the Sufis.

It is a noteworthy to find that the major Sufi biographical works, such as "*Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*", "*al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah*", "*al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*", "*Kashf al-Mahjūb*" and many others include entries for the four founding *Imāms* of the famous *Fiqhi* schools, thus counting them among the early masters of Sufism given their embodiment of the principles of the sound and authentic Sufism that is basically defined as *khuluq* (good moral traits). In addition, the early Sufi encyclopedic works, like "*Qūt al-Qulūb*", "*Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*", and "*al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*" are ample with reports and anecdotes about their moral traits. These Sufi sources also included their statements, virtues and actions.

**First: *Imām* Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150 A.H/767 A.D):** He was known for his asceticism and piety. Most of his students were proven to be symbols and masters of Sufism. The most prominent among them were 'Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak, Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī, al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iād and Shaqīq al-Balkhī. It is reported that the Sufis' peculiar way of worship, devotion and asceticism really appealed to Abū Ḥanīfah and that he used to advise those who tread on this path to seek *Sharī'ah* knowledge first before they commence their spiritual journey.

One time, he reportedly met Ibrāhīm ibn Ad-ham and said to him: "O' Ibrāhīm, you have been bestowed a good manner in devotion and dedication to worship, yet I advise you to pay attention to seeking knowledge as it is the principal of worship and the support of things."<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, Sufi masters and scholars boast that their link of transmission (*sanad*) in Sufism goes all the way back to him. Ibn 'Ābidīn stated in his book "*al-Durr al-Mukhtār*" reported a chain of transmission proving that the Sufi master Abu 'Alī al-Daqqāq received the knowledge of the spiritual path from Abū al-Qāsim al-Naṣrabādhī, who received it from al-Shiblī, who received it from al-Sarrī al-Saqāṭī who received it from Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, who received it from Dāwūd al-

<sup>27</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *Al-Khayrāt al-Ḥisān fī Manāqib al-Imām al-A'zam Abī Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān* (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam, undated), p. 115.

Ṭa'ī, who took from Abū Ḥanīfah.<sup>28</sup> Based on this, it is clear that *Imām* Abū Ḥanīfah was so close to the circles of Sufism and that the early Sufi masters used to frequent him for receiving knowledge in both Fiqh and Sufism.

**Second: *Imām* Mālik (d. 179 A.H/795 A.D):** The renowned Sufi shaykh 'Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak was one of *Imām* Mālik's studious disciples and he related some of Mālik's spiritual states (*aḥwāl*). Moreover, there is a well-known statement attributed to *Imām* Mālik in which he refers to the correlation between Sufism and *Fiqh*: "He who follows the path of Sufism while neglecting jurisprudence is a heretic; and he who learns jurisprudence while neglecting the Path commits transgression. But he who combines both has attained the Truth."<sup>29</sup>

**Third: *Imām* al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204 A.H/819 A.D):** Al-Shāfi'ī confirmed the Sufis' steadfastness in devotion. It is reported that al-Shāfi'ī accompanied some of the Sufis of his time and benefited from them. In his book "*Madārij al-Sālikīn*", ibn al-Qayyīm (d. 571 A.H.) quoted al-Shāfi'ī's famous statement: "I accompanied the Sufis and received from them but two statements: 'Time is as a sword. If you do not cut it, it cuts you'; and 'if you do not keep yourself busy with truth, it will keep you busy with falsehood'."<sup>30</sup>

Al-Shāfi'ī has also been quoted as saying: "Three things in this world have been made beloved to me: avoiding affectation, treating people kindly, and following the ways of the people of *Taṣawwuf*".<sup>31</sup>

**Fourth: *Imām* Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H/855 A.D):** *Imām* Aḥmad was known for his vast knowledge of the mystical facts and realities, and he used to discuss the subtle matters of Sufism with Sufis. It is even argued that his fame in asceticism (*zuhd*) is as great as his fame in the sciences of *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*.<sup>32</sup> He had been reported as saying about Sufis: "I do not know people on earth better than them."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibn 'Abidīn (Muḥammad Amīr, *Radd al-Muḥtār 'alā al-Durr al-Mukhtār Shrḥ Tanwīr al-Abṣār*, ed. 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwaḍ (Riyadh: Dār 'Alam al-kutub, 2003), Vol. 1, pp. 156-157.

<sup>29</sup> This statement of *Imām* Mālik is found in many sources, including: Zarrūq, *Qwā'id al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 7; Mullā 'Alī al-Qārrī, *Sharḥ 'Ayn al-'Ilm wa-Zayn al-Ḥilm* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīnīyah, undated), Vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Siyūṭī (Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr), *Ta'yīd al-Ḥaqqīqah al-'Alīyah wa-Tashīyid al-Ṭarīqah al-Shādhulīyah*, ed. 'Āṣim al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 2006), p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Al-'Ajlūnī (Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad), *Kashf al-Khafā' wa-Muzīl al-Ilbās 'ammā ushtuhirah min al-Aḥādīth 'ala Alsinat al-Nās* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Quds, 1351 A.H.) Vol. 1, p. 341.

<sup>32</sup> Muṣṭafā Ḥamdū 'Alyān al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Ḥanābilah wa-Ikhtilāfihimma 'a al-Salafīyah al-Mu'āṣirah* (Oman: Dār al-Nūr al-Mubīn, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2014), p. 678.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Moreover, *Imām* Aḥmad wrote a book entitled "*al-Zuhd*" (asceticism) in which he included the statements of the Prophet's companions and their followers and the masters of Sufism, like Ibrāhīm ibn Ad-ham, Mālik ibn Dīnār, al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād and many others. Some scholars consider this book as the earliest authenticated source on Sufism in its early stages.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, *Imām* Aḥmad was a contemporary of a group of Sufi scholars and masters, and his relationship with them was evidently based on mutual respect, appreciation and veneration. He lived at the time of the Sufi master Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith (d. 227 A.H.). When he was asked about him, Aḥmad said: "He is the fourth of the seven substitutes<sup>35</sup> (*abdāl*)".<sup>36</sup> Moreover, when Bishr died, Aḥmad said: "He, may Allah be pleased with him, died and there is nobody equal to him in this nation (*ummah*) but 'Āmir ibn 'Abd Qays, for both of them died and left nothing behind them, and he continued, 'Had he (Bishr) got married, he would have been achieved a loftier status."<sup>37</sup>

Another case in point indicating the good relationship between *Imām* Aḥmad and the Sufi masters is when 'Abdullāh, the son of *Imām* Aḥmad, asked his father about the Sufi master Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 200 A.H.): "Did Ma'rūf have something of knowledge?" To which *Imām* Aḥmad replied: "He had the head of knowledge, and it is the fear of Allah's wrath (*khashyat Allah*)".<sup>38</sup> It is even said that Ma'rūf al-Karkhī was one of Aḥmad's masters (*shuyūkh*) in *sulūk* (spiritual journey of Sufism) as Aḥmad used to frequent him and ask him<sup>39</sup> on matters related to *sulūk*, and this could explain why Ma'rūf al-Karkhī has entry in Ibn Abī Ya'lā's biographical work of the Ḥanbalis, as he considered him one of Aḥmad's masters or *shuyūkh*.<sup>40</sup>

It is even related that *Imām* Aḥmad frequently met with many Sufi masters like al-Sarrī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253 A.H.) and Abū Ḥamzah al-Ṣūfī (d. 269 A.H.) as *Imām* Aḥmad used to refer to the latter concerning the juristic issues and he would say to

<sup>34</sup> Ḥasan al-Shāfi'ī, *Fuṣūl fī al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 133.

<sup>35</sup> *Abdāl* (Sing. Badal), literally means "substitute", one of the degrees in the Sufi hierarchical order of saints. See Goldziher, I. and H. J. Kissling, "Abdāl", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 28 March 2019 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_0132](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0132)

<sup>36</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī), *Tārīkh Baghdād aw Madīnat al-Salām*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2004), Vol. 7, P. 76; 'Abd al-Fattāh Abū Ghuddah, *Al-'Ulamā' al-'Uzzāb alladhīna ātharū al-'Ilam 'alā al-Zawāj* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmīyah, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1982), pp. 33-34.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, Vol. 7, p. 76.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 13, p. 202.

<sup>39</sup> Muṣṭafā Ḥamdū 'Alīān al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Ḥanābilah wa-Ikhtilāfihimma 'a al-Salafīyah al-Mu'āṣirah*, p. 692.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, Vol. 1, p. 381.

him: "What would you say concerning such and such matter O' Sufi?"<sup>41</sup> Moreover, al-Zirikly, in his biographical work "*Al-A'lām*", argued that *Imām* Aḥmad met with Abū Turāb al-Nakhshabī (d. 245 A.H.), Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246 A.H.) and Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 254 A.H.) and benefited from them.<sup>42</sup>

Based on the aforementioned discussion, it becomes clear that mutual respect and veneration were the normal case with regard to the relationship between the Sufi masters and the founders of the famous four schools of *Fiqh*. Nevertheless, if this was the case with the masters and founders of both sides, i.e. the Sufis and the Jurists, a careful investigation is needed for examining if this has also been the case with the scholars of later generations and classes. This paper made a careful review of the biographical books of Jurists to investigate the inter-relationships between both sides and found that the books of the Jurists' classes and biographies are replete with the Sufis who were proven to excel in the study of Jurisprudence. The following is a quick review of some cases:

#### a. The Ḥanafī Sufis:

- Al-Balkhī (Shaqīq ibn Ibrāhīm Abū 'Alī) (d. 194 A.H/810 A.D): He was a Sufi master of Khurasan and one of the Sufis whom al-Qushayrī included in his Epistle on Sufism.<sup>43</sup> He was well known for his much elucidation on the mystical station of Trust in God (*tawakkul*). He was also one of the teachers of the Sufi master Ḥātim al-Aṣamm (d. 237 A.H/851 A.D). Besides, he was one of the masters of *Ḥanafī* school of *Fiqh*, and he accompanied the famous jurist Ya'qūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, better known as Abū Yusuf (d. 182 A.H/798 A.D), who was a direct student of Abū Ḥanīfah and who served as the Chief Judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāh*) during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Shaqīq learned under Abū Yusuf and read some books on the *Ḥanafī Fiqh* to him.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, Vol. 1, p. 407.

<sup>42</sup> Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Al-A'lām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 15<sup>th</sup> edition, 2002), Vol. 4, p. 233.

<sup>43</sup> "He is one of the men of al-Qushayrī's *Risālah*" (*min Rijāl al-Risālah*) is a phrase researchers of Sufism usually use to denote the authenticity and authority of the person quoted. Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah has long been accorded a high esteem among the researchers of Sufism, some even called it "the constitution of Sufism" as a way to convey that the status it commands to Sufism is just like the status al-Shāfi'ī's *al-Risālah* commands to the science of Principles of *Fiqh*. From this, the Sufi masters mentioned in al-Risālah derives their authority and authenticity.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism*, p. 30; Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyah*, p. 61; 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad ibn Naṣrullāh al-Qurashī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍīyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyah* (Karachi: Mīr Muḥammad Kutub Khānah, undated), Vol. 1, p. 258; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Qāyḥāz al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ūṭ (Beirut: Mu'asasat al-Risālah, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1405 A.H.), Vol. 9, p. 313.

• Al-Sulamī (Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Alī) (d. 409 A.H/1018 A.D): He was a well known Sufi and ascetic who authored the famous biographical book “*Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah*”. He is counted as one of the *Ḥanafī* scholars and his biography is founded in the biographical books of *Ḥanafī* Jurists.<sup>45</sup>

#### b. The *Mālikī* Sufis

• Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (Abū al-Fayḍ Thawbān ibn Ibrāhīm al-Miṣrī) (d. 245 A.H/1053 A.D): On the one hand, he was one of the Sufi masters whom al-Qushayrī included in his *al-Risālah*; and on the other hand, he was a *Mālikī* Jurist and one of the famous narrators of the renowned book “*Mwaṭṭa’ al-Imam Mālik*”. His teacher and master in Sufism was Shaqraṇ al-Qayrawānī, in addition, Sahl ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Tustarrī was one of his disciples and students.<sup>46</sup>

• Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (Abū Muḥammad Makkī ibn Abī Ṭālib) (d. 386 A.H/996 A.D): He was a *Mālikī* scholar, Ḥāfidh (i.e. one of the grades of the scholars of Ḥadīth) and Muqri’ (the one who teaches people to recite Qur’ān). He authored the voluminous book of Sufism “*Qūt al-Qulūb*”.<sup>47</sup>

#### c. The *Shāfi’ī* Sufis

• Al-Muḥasibī (Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Baghdādī) (d. 243 A.H/857 A.D): He is one of the Sufi Masters whose biographies are included in al-Qushayrī’s Epistle. He has many books in asceticism and Sufism. He is one of the early disciples and students of *Imām* al-Shāfi’ī and one of the renowned *Shāfi’ī* Jurists.<sup>48</sup>

• Al-Qushayrī (Abu al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Naysābūrī) (d. 465 A.H/1072 A.D): He was a renowned *Shāfi’ī* Jurist and a Sufi master. He

<sup>45</sup> Al-Qurashī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍīyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyah*, Vol. 1, p. 92; Abū Is-ḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Azhar al-Ṣṣarīfīnī, *Al-Muntakhab min Kitāb al-Siyāq li-Tārīkh Naysābūr*, ed. Khālid Ḥaydar (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1414 A.H.), p. 87.

<sup>46</sup> Makhluḥ, *Shagarat al-Nūr al-Zakīyah*, Vol. 1, P. 90; Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle on Sufism*, p. 40.

<sup>47</sup> Makhluḥ, *Shagarat al-Nūr al-Zakīyah*, Vol. 1, p. 160; Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, Vol. 17, p. 591; Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abī Bakr ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-A’yān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1994), p. 274.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle on Sufism*, p. 51; Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah*, p. 56; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, Vol. 12, p. 110; Ibn al-Ṣṣalāh, Abū ‘Amr Uthmān ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Ṭabaqāt Fuḡhā’ al-Shāfi’īyah*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Alī ‘Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmīyah, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1992), Vol. 1, p. 438; Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-Wahāb ibn ‘Alī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi’īyah al-Kubrā*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Tanāḥī and ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Ḥilw (Giza: Hagar li-al-Ṭibā’ah wa-al-Nashr, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1992), Vol. 2, 275.

compiled his famous book “*al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*” which is held among the researchers of Sufism as the “constitution of Sufism”.<sup>49</sup>

- Al-Ghazālī (Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī) (d. 505 A.H/1111 A.D): He was described as the Second great *Shāfi'ī* scholar right after *Imām* al-Shāfi'ī. He fame in both sciences, namely, *Fiqh* and Sufism were so considerable. Moreover he authored and compiled voluminous books in both sciences.<sup>50</sup>

#### d. The Ḥanbalī Sufis

- Abū Ḥamzah al-Ṣūfī (d. 289 A.H/1095 A.D): He was one of the disciples and companions of *Imām* Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and he used to accompany him and attend his classes. *Imām* Aḥmad is reported to had frequently asked him about *Fiqh* issues saying: “what is your opinion in such and such O' Ṣūfī”. He was one of the Sufi masters whose biography was included by *Imām* al-Qushayrī. He was also well-learned and deeply established in the science of *Qirā'āt* (the variant modes of recitations of the Qur'ān).<sup>51</sup>

- Abū Ismā'īl 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Ja'far ibn Mansūr al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481 A.H/1088 A.D): He authored the famous book “*Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*” which is considered one of the early and authoritative books in Sufism. He was also a *Ḥanbalī* scholar.<sup>52</sup>

The examples mentioned above are selective and connotative. This paper is not indented to, and practically cannot, be inclusive and comprehensive. It nevertheless aims at indicating that Sufism has never been away from or alien to *Fiqh* nor *Fiqh* was opposing to Sufism. Both sides used to show respect and to attend to one another, and in this way, the sciences of Islam were emerged interdependent, correlated and harmonized. These were some glimpses and examples that would provoke thinking and drive other researchers to delve deep into this topic.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrā*, Vol. 5, P. 153; Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kāthīr, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah*, ed. Aḥmad 'Umar Hāshim and Muḥammad Zinḥum (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīnīyah, 1413 A.H.), p. 451.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrā*, Vol. 6, PP. 201-2017; Ibn Kāthīr, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah*, p. 533.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism*, 88; Ibn Abī Ya'la, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, Vol. 1, p. 268; Al-Khaṭīb al-Baḡhdādī, *Tārīkh Baḡhdād aw Madīnat al-Salām*, Vol. 1, p. 407.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol. 18, p. 503; Al-Salāmī, *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, Vol. 1, p. 115; Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Hādī al-Dimashqī, *Ṭabaqāt 'Ulamā' al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Mu'asasat al-Risālah, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1417 A.H.) Vol. 3, p. 376.

## Sufism and *Ḥadīth*

Sufis gave a special and tremendous care to the science of *Ḥadīth*. Their keen advice to their disciples to learn *Ḥadīth* and involve themselves in recording and preserving the Prophetic traditions was evident many sources. Besides, many pieces of advice found in the books of Sufism prove that Sufis held the science of *Ḥadīth* and its scholars in a high esteem.

A quick look into the books of classes and biographies of both *Ḥadīth* and Sufi scholars clearly demonstrate how Sufis were very much engaged in this field, and would also gauge the degree of respect and appreciation that scholars of both sides used to show to one another.

It should be emphasized that not only the Sufis were keen to learn the science of *Ḥadīth*, scholars of *Ḥadīth* were also very much encouraged to adhere to Sufism and engage themselves in the Sufis' spiritual exercises that lead to purity and attainment of sublime moral traits. This is quite clear from al-Dhahabī's statement in which he concluded that the qualified scholar must feature both sciences, i.e. *Ḥadīth* and *Sufism*, for when a scholar of *Ḥadīth* lacks Sufism, on the one hand, his dedication to Allah may not be complete, and when the Sufi, on the other hand, is ignorant of the science of *Ḥadīth*, he might fall into errors and deviate from what is right.<sup>53</sup>

Many famous *Ḥadīth* scholars narrated *ḥadīths* from Sufis. Furthermore, statements of praise and appreciation were reciprocally released from the scholars of both sciences. On the one side, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405 A.H/1014 A.D) narrated some *ḥadīths* in his book "*al-Mustadrak*" from the Sufi master Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Khaladī (d. 348 A.H/959 A.D) and he used to describe him as "the master of Sufism of his time" (*Shaykh al-Taṣawwuf fī 'Aṣrihi*).<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Al-Ḥākim argued that Sufis following the footsteps of *Ahl al-Suffah* and actualize their conditions in every time given their way in asceticism and dedication to Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ).<sup>55</sup>

On the other side, the famous scholar of *Ḥadīth* and *Ḥāfiẓ* Abū Nu'aym al-Aṣfhānī (d. 430 A.H/1038 A.D) who enjoys a considerable fame as a scholar of *Ḥadīth*, was a Sufi. He wrote the voluminous book "*Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*" in which he collected the biographies of the Sufi masters, men and women, with a special focus on the manifestations of Sufism in the personality of every scholar he mentions.

<sup>53</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā*, Vol. 15, p. 410 (Ibn al-'Arābī's entry).

<sup>54</sup> Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1422 A.H.), Vol. 3, p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

After each biography, he used to mention a definition of Sufism that fits most to the spiritual and mystical status of the person in question.<sup>56</sup>

Another example that demonstrates the engagement of scholars of *Ḥadīth* in Sufism is the book written by the Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī al-Ishbīlī al-Mālikī (d. 453 A.H/1148 A.D) entitled "*Sirāj al-Murīdīn*" which Zarrūq argued to be a book on Sufism.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 320 A.H/869 A.D) was a well-known Sufi and scholar of *Ḥadīth*, who authored valuable books in both sciences. In Sufism, he authored "*Al-Akyās wa-al-Mughtarrīn*," "*Riyādat al-Nafs*," and "*al-Kasb*". And in *Ḥadīth*, he wrote his renowned book "*Nwādir al-Uṣūl fī Ma'rīfat Akhbār al-Rasūl*".<sup>58</sup>

Also, Ibn al-A'rābī (d. 340 A.H/951 A.D) authored "*Ṭabaqāt al-Nasā'ī*," and "*Tārīkh al-Baṣrah*" in the science of *Ḥadīth* and, in Sufism, he wrote "*Manāqib al-Ṣūfīyah*".<sup>59</sup> In addition, al-Kalābādhi's (d. 384 A.H/994 A.D) works in Sufism and *Ḥadīth* are very popular. In *Ḥadīth*, he wrote "*al-Arba'ūn fī al-Ḥadīth*"; and, in Sufism, he authored "*al-Ta'arruf li-Madh-hab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*". Besides, he was known for his attentive and unique memory, and al-Siyūṭī described him as having the most attentive memory in Transoxiana. Al-Ḥākīm and al-Dāraquṭnī furthermore praised him for his vast knowledge and attentive memory.<sup>60</sup>

Based on the aforementioned, it can be said that Sufism-related topics (ethics and morality) were the preoccupation of many scholars of different branches of Islamic knowledge and this, again, indicates the importance of Sufism and its subject matter, namely ethics.

### Sufism and *Tafsīr*

Mostly all Islamic schools of knowledge have contributed their share in the service of the Qur'ān through *Tafsīr* or *Ta'wīl*, and Sufism was not an exception.

<sup>56</sup> Abū Nu'aym al-Aṣḥānī, *Hilyat al-Awlyā'*, for example pages 27; 35; 37; 103; 318.

<sup>57</sup> Zarrūq, *Qwā'id al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol. 13, p. 439; Ḥajjī Khalīfah, *Sullamal-Wuṣūl ilā Ṭabaqāt al-Fuḥūl*, Vol. 3, p. 195; Al-Dimashqī, *Ṭabaqāt 'Ulamā' al-Ḥadīth*, Vol. 2, p. 352; Kaḥalah, *Mu'jam al-Mu'alifīn*, Vol. 10, p. 315; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Wafāyāt al-Mashāhīr wa-al-A'lām*, ed. 'Umar Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1991), Vol. 21, p. 176; Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Siyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥuffāz* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1994), p. 286.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol. 15, p. 407; Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah*, p. 320; Kaḥalah, *Mu'jam al-Mu'alifīn*, Vol. 2, p. 1.3; Ibn Nuṣṭah, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī, *Al-Taḥqīd li-Ma'rīfat Rwāt al-Sunan wa-al-Masānīd*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.; 1988) p. 166.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, Vol. 13, p. 439; Al-Siyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥuffāz*, p. 286; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, Vol. 6, p. 814; al-Dimashqī, *Ṭabaqāt 'Ulamā' al-Ḥadīth*, Vol. 2, p. 352.

Sufis started interpreting the Qur'ān according to their religious experience and their general view of faith. As mentioned earlier, Sufis always liken religion to a seed composed of a kernel and a husk or shell. and their way in approaching the Qur'ān was not so far from this conviction as they believe that every verse of the Qur'ān features an outer meaning and inner meaning as well. This view is usually substantiated by a Prophetic *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet (ﷺ) states that the Quran has an inner meaning, and that this inner meaning conceals a yet deeper inner meaning, and so on (up to seven successive levels of deeper meaning).<sup>61</sup>

The Sufi's intrinsic goal in approaching the Qur'ān is to manifest the inner dimension of it without being oblivious to the *Sharī'ah* or the outer and apparent meaning of the text.<sup>62</sup> Thus they were so concerned with discovering the hidden meanings of the Qur'ānic phrases as opposed to other scholars who directed their attention to the apparent meaning (*al-Zāhir*) of the verses. This inner method or esoteric interpretations of the Qur'ān does not usually contradict the conventional or exoteric interpretations; rather, it discusses the inner levels of meaning of the Quran.

With this in mind, Sufis usually affirm that their commentary of the Qur'ān is no more than "allusions" (*ishārat*) or "striking similitudes" (*ḍarb al-mithāl*) that are bestowed to the perfectly devoted masters, and this does not necessarily mean averting the apparent meaning of the text because the exoteric meaning of the text is evident and well established and is not placed in contradiction with these allusions and illuminations. This is asserted by Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh al-Sakandarī in his book "*Laṭā'if al-Minan*" and al-Siyūfī in his book "*al-Itqān*".<sup>63</sup>

To illustrate, the following are few examples of the Sufis who contributed to the commentary of the Qur'ān. It is noteworthy to mention here that most of the Sufi commentaries of the Qur'ān are still manuscripts and have not been published yet:

- Abū Muḥammad Sahl ibn 'Abdillāh al-Tustarī (d. 273 or 283 A.H/886 or 896 A.D): He was one of the students of the Sufi master Ma'rūf al-Kharkhī. His book in *Tafsīr* entitled "*Tafsīr al-Tustarī*" and it was printed in Egypt in a middle-

<sup>61</sup> The *ḥadīth* tells "No verse of the Qur'ān has been revealed which has not an external aspect and an inner aspect. Every letter has its definite sense (*ḥadd*) and every definition implies a place of ascent (*maṭla'*)." This hadith is related by ibn Ḥibān and ibn 'Abd al-Barr and al-Ṭabarānī and ibn Ḥazm and many others, and reported by ibn Mas'ūd.

<sup>62</sup> "TAFSIR", in: *The Qur'an: An encyclopedia*, Edited by Oliver Leaman (NY: Routledge, 2006), p. 632.

<sup>63</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Siyūfī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Authority, 1974), Vol. 4, 224; Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh al-Sakandarī, *Laṭā'if al-Minan*, p. 103.

sized volume under the name of “*Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*” in 1908.<sup>64</sup> This book includes al-Tustarī’s teachings and commentaries compiled by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Baldī. Al-Tustarī’s Tafsir is held as the oldest completed Sufi commentary on the Qur’ān.<sup>65</sup> The book does not include the commentary of all the Qur’ānic verses, but rather it deals with specific verses of the Qur’ān. Apparently these commentaries were Sahl’s answers to questions he was asked.

- Al-Samarqandī (Abū al-Layth Naṣr ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm) (d. 372 A.H/983 A.D): He was a Sufi master and an exegete. He wrote in Sufism “*Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*”, and in Tafsīr, he authored “*Baḥr al-‘Ulūm*”.<sup>66</sup>

- Al-Sulamī (Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Hussayn) (d. 412 A.H/1021 A.D): He was a prolific writer. There are more than 100 books are attributed to him, with about 30 of which are extant. His *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, the oldest extant Sufi hagiographical collection, and his two compilations of Sufi exegesis, “*Ḥaqā’iq al-Tafsīr*” and “*Ziyadāt Ḥaqā’iq al-Tafsīr*” are invaluable because they preserve the oral and written teachings of the Sufis of his time. In the introduction to his *Tafsīr*, al-Sulamī states that he included two types of quotations in his compilation: *Āyāt* (verses), in which he included the interpretations of specific verses; and *Aqwāl* (statements), in which he included the Sufi sayings related to key Qur’ānic terms.<sup>67</sup>

- Al-Qushayrī (Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāẓin al-Naysabūrī) (d. 465 A.H/1053 A.D): He authored *al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah* which is considered by many as the classic formulation of the Sufi doctrine. As for the Qur’ān commentary, he wrote “*Latā’if al-Ishārāt*” which includes al-Qushayrī’s own commentaries of the Qur’ānic verses and the commentaries of other Sufis as well. He also wrote “*al-Taysīr fī al-Tafsīr*” and “*al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*”.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> There are two editions of the book: One of them edited by Maḥmūd Jiratullāh and it was published by Dār al-Qāfiyah li-al-Nashr in 2002; and the other edition was edited by Muḥammad Basil ‘Yūn al-Sūd and was printed by Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah in Beirut, 2002.

<sup>65</sup> Kristin Zahra Sands, *Sufi Commentaries on the Qur’an in Classical Islam* (NY: Routledge, 2006), p. 68.

<sup>66</sup> Al-Qurashī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍīyah*, Vol. 2, p. 196; Ḥājjī Khalīfah, *Sullam al-Wuṣūl ilā Ṭabaqāt al-Fuḥūl*, Vol. 3, p. 3687; Nwayhiḍ, *Mu’jam al-Mufasssīrīn*, Vol. 2, p. 700; Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*, Vol. 2, p. 346.

<sup>67</sup> Nwayhiḍ, *Mu’jam al-Mufasssīrīn*, Vol. 2, p. 520; Sands, *Sufi Commentaries on the Qur’an in Classical Islam*, p. 69.

<sup>68</sup> Nwayhiḍ, *Mu’jam al-Mufasssīrīn*, Vol. 1, p. 299; Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi’īyah al-Kubrā*, Vol. 5, p. 153; Ibn Kāthīr, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi’īyīn*, Vol. 1, p. 451; Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, Vol. 19, p. 63.

## Conclusion

Throughout this research paper, the position and the status of Islamic Sufism compared to other branches of *Sharī'ah* knowledge, namely *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence), *Ḥadīth* (Prophetic Traditions) and *Tafsīr* (Qur'ānic Exegesis) is established. Inter-relationships between the Sufi masters and scholars of *Fiqh*, *Ḥadīth* and *Qur'ānic Exegesis* have been put to investigation and selective, but connotative, examples of the Sufis' involvement and contributions in these Islamic disciplines of knowledge have been provided.

Considering these inter-relationships and examples, the study concludes that Sufism has never been away from or alien to other disciplines of *Sharī'ah* knowledge, nor the scholars of other disciplines of were opposing to Sufism and Sufis. Both sides have been proven to show respect and to attend to one another, and in this way, the sciences of Islam arguably emerged interdependent, correlated and harmonized.