

# Between Salafi and Sufi: Ibn Taimiyyah's critique of al-Qusyairi's Views on Sufism

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## Abstract

This article discusses two sects that are often contrasted: Salafi and Sūfī. It focuses on the views of Ibn Taimiyyah al-Harrānī as a representative of Salafi and 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qusyairī of Sūfī-sunnī on Sufism. By analyzing the works of Ibn Taimiyyah and al-Qusyairī on Sufism, this article explores Ibn Taimiyyah's critical notes on al-Qusyairī's views on Sufism. Ibn Taimiyyah wrote no less than thirty-eight treatises on Sufism and cited more than forty Sūfī texts in explaining and analyzing his views on Sufism. Al-Qusyairī, on the other hand, describes in detail the Sūfī figures and their views in his *Risālah*. He also included his Sufistic analyses in *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*. Using an interpretative approach and content analysis, this article finds that Ibn Taimiyyah did not reject Sufism. He rejected the practice of Sufism that he thought was not intertwined with the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This is evident from his respect for al-Qusyairī, whom he called *al-Syaikh al-Ustāḏ*, and *Mutaṣawwif al-Ahl al-Kalām*, a term of honor within the Sūfī order. Nonetheless, Ibn Taimiyyah notes that al-Qusyairī's quotations in his work are not followed by references and explanations. In explaining the practice of *ḥudūd*, al-Qusyairī did not provide examples from the *ṣahābah* and *tābi'īn* to strengthen his argument.

**Keywords:** *Ibn Taimiyyah, al-Qusyairī, Sufism*

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## Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas tentang dua tokoh aliran yang seringkali dipertentangkan; Salafi dan Sūfi. Fokus dari artikel ini adalah pendapat Ibn Taimiyyah al-Ḥarrānī sebagai representasi dari salafi dan ‘Abd Karīm al-Qusyairī dari Sūfi-sunnī tentang tasawuf. Dengan menganalisa karya Ibn Taimiyyah dan al-Qusyairī tentang tasawuf, artikel ini mengeksplorasi catatan kritis Ibn Taimiyyah terhadap pandangan al-Qusyairī tentang Tasawuf. Ibn Taimiyyah menulis tidak kurang dari tigapuluh delapan *risālah* yang membahas tema tasawuf dan mengutip lebih dari empatpuluh teks Sūfi dalam menjelaskan dan menganalisa pandangannya tentang tasawuf. Sedangkan al-Qusyairī, menjelaskan dengan rinci para tokoh Sūfi dan pandangan mereka dalam *Risālah*. Ia juga menuangkan analisa sufistiknya pada kitab *Laṭā’if al-Isyārāt*. Dengan pendekatan interpretatif dan analisa isi, artikel ini menemukan bahwa Ibn Taimiyyah tidak menolak tasawuf secara mutlak. Ia hanya menolak praktik tasawuf yang menurutnya tidak berkelindan dengan al-Qur’ān dan Sunnah. Hal ini terlihat dari penghormatannya terhadap al-Qusyairī yang ia sebut dengan *al-Syaikh al-Ustāz*, dan *Mutaṣawwifih Abl al-Kalām*, panggilan penghormatan dalam lingkungan para Sūfi. Meskipun demikian, Ibn Taimiyyah memberi catatan atas kutipan al-Qusyairī dalam karyanya yang tidak diikuti dengan rujukan dan keterangan. Dalam menjelaskan praktik *ḥud*, al-Qusyairī tidak memberikan contoh dari para sahabat dan tābi’in untuk menguatkan argumentasinya.

**Kata Kunci:** *Ibn Taimiyyah, al-Qusyairī, Tasawuf*

## Introduction

Sufism has been present in the scientific treasures and spiritual life of Muslims since the third-century hijriyyah,<sup>1</sup> and many diverse opinions of scientists about the history of birth, origin, and development. There is agreement that the practice of tasawuf in the sense of *tazkiyah al-nafs* has been present since the beginning of the arrival of Islam, but tasawuf as a term was never known until

<sup>1</sup> This is the majority opinion, but there are also those who conclude that the practice of Sūfi has emerged since Muḥammad took shelter in the cave of Ḥirā’ for contemplation (*tahannuṣ*) before being appointed as Prophet and Rasūl. See, Farzana Moon, *Prophet Muhammad: The First Sufi of Islam* (Garnet Publishing, 2013). However, the terms Sūfi and Taṣawuf explicitly only appeared around the third century hijriyyah. See, Qāsim Ghānī, *Tārīkh Al-Taṣawwuf Fī Al-Islām* (Damaskus: Dār Ninawā, 2017); Muṣṭafā ‘Abd Al-Rāziq and Louis Massignon, *Al-Taṣawwuf* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1984). Lloyd Ridgeon, ed., *Routledge Handbook on Sufism* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Ahmet T Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (University of California Press, 2007).

after the second-century hijriyyah,<sup>2</sup> and became a standardized term at the end of the second and early third centuries hijriyyah.

Because of this difference, there is no agreement on the factors that led to the birth of Sufism in Islam. However, there are at least three main factors that scholars agree were the causes of the birth of Sufism: *first*, Sufism came as a reaction to the luxurious lifestyle that began to emerge slowly after the leadership of *al-khulafā' al-rāsyidūn* on the one hand, and the recurring slander and political divisions on the other.<sup>3</sup> *Secondly*, there are hadīṣ that show that *lubs al-ṣūfī* (the clothing of the ṣūfīs) at the time of the Prophet was closely related to *faqr* (poverty), weakness, and distress, so that after the Prophet, this model and style of clothing became an indication of humility, worship, away from the favors of the world. So that the distinctive clothing of the Ṣūfīs then became a special indication for them, and the Imām maẓhab such as Mālik who were considered as one of the representative figures of the *zuhd* life described by the researchers.<sup>4</sup> *Third*, there was a new phenomenon of *zuhd* practice that did not exist during the time of the Companions. This trend emerged in Kufah and Basrah that was different from the practice of Muslims in general,<sup>5</sup> as well as the emergence of specific terms and terminology in this trend that had never existed in the previous period, this then became a factor in the formation of a community called Sufism, This was followed by the emergence of the works of scholars who discussed the details of the teachings and main themes in Sufism,<sup>6</sup> followed by the birth of *al-ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyyah* (Ṣūfī tariqahs) which obliged each ṭarīqah to study

<sup>2</sup> Some argue that the term Sufism has been around since the Jāhiliyyah, but this opinion is weak and has few supporters. See, Naṣr 'Abd Allāh bin 'Alī bin al-Sarrāj Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma'*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīṣah, 1960), 41; Al-Suhrāwardī, *Awāriḥ Al-Ma'Ārif*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥīm Al-Sāyih and Taufiq 'Alī Wahbah (Kairo: Maktabah al-Ṣaqāfah al-Dīniyyah, 2006), 1:208.

<sup>3</sup> Abū Bakr Ibn Al-'Arabī, *Al-'Awāṣim Min Al-Qawāṣim* (Saudi Arabia: Wazārah al-Syu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Awqāf wa al-Da'wah wa al-Irsyād, 1998), 80.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma'*, 40; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī et al., *Fath Al-Bārī Bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.), 1:269; Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al Ḥalīm Ibn Taimiyyah, *Majmū'ah Al-Rasā'il Wa Al-Masā'il*, ed. Muḥammad Rasyid Riḍā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Abū al-Qāsim Al-Qusyairī, *Al-Risālah Al-Qusyairiyyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Kairo: Dār al-Ta'lif, 1966), 1:54; Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh Al-Aṣḥānī, *Ḥilyah Al-Awliyā'*, ed. Sa'īd Sa'īd Al-Dīn Al-'Arabī Al-Iskandarī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-'Turāṣ al-'Arabī, 2001), 7:367; Al-Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā and 'Abd al-Waḥhāb Al-Sya'rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥīm Al-Sāyih and Taufiq 'Alī Wahbah (Kairo: Maktabah al-Ṣaqāfah al-Dīniyyah, 2005), 1:81.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma'*, 409–58.

only one Ṣūfī syaikh.<sup>7</sup>

Another important factor that made Sufism stronger and spread in Muslim societies was the writings and works of scholars on Sufism, such as: al-Hārīṣ al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) with *al-Ri'āyah*,<sup>8</sup> al-Kalābāzī (d. 380/990) with *al-Ta'arruf li Maḏhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*,<sup>9</sup> Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (w. 386/996) with *Qūt al-Qulūb*,<sup>10</sup> al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988) with *al-Luma'*,<sup>11</sup> then there was *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*<sup>12</sup> by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, then al-Qusyairī with *al-Risālah al-Qusyairīyyah*<sup>13</sup> and many more works on Sufism after him. Thus, Sufism emerged as a phenomenon of spiritual practice that later became a specialized term, then spread and gave birth to various ṭarīqahs in the Muslim community.

### Ibn Taimiyyah and Sufism

The Ṣūfīs have played a major role throughout history in defending Islam, refuting the enemies of Islam on matters of creed and so on, as some of them spread *syubḥāt* such as the *syāḥāt*<sup>14</sup> which led to new controversies in Muslim society. This continued unabated in the following period.<sup>15</sup> These kinds of practices that began to deviate a lot also occurred during the time of Ibn Taimiyyah.<sup>16</sup> It was in this

<sup>7</sup> Al-Hujwiri, *Kasyf Al-Maḥjūb*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥīm Al-Sāyih and Taufiq 'Alī Wahbah (Kairo: Maktabah al-Ṣaḡāfah al-Dīniyyah, 2007), 209.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Hārīṣ ibn Asad Al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Ri'āyah Li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Atā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> Abū Bakr Al-Kalābāzī, *Al-Ta'arruf Li Maḏhab Al-Taṣawwuf* (Kairo: Dār al-Ittiḥād al-'Arabī, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Abū Ṭālib Al-Makkī, *Qūt Al-Qulūb*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Al-Riḍwān (Kairo: Maktabah Dār al-Turās, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma'*.

<sup>12</sup> Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Ṣūfiyyah*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Atā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Al-Qusyairī, *Al-Risālah Al-Qusyairīyyah*.

<sup>14</sup> *Syāḥāt* is an expression of ecstasy uttered by the lisān due to the spiritual vibration of a Ṣūfī. It is derived from sy-ṭ-h which means to detach and move away, to shake. See, Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma'*, 312. *Shaḥāt* is a verbal expression that comes from the soul when it feels the presence of God during meditation, so that it feels God and feels that it is God. See, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Syāḥāt Al-Ṣūfiyyah* (Kuwait: Wakālah al-Maṭbū'āt, 1987), 9–10.

<sup>15</sup> For further discussion on the medieval Ṣūfīs of Damascus and its environs, see, Daphna Ephrat, *Sufi Masters and the Creation of Saintly Spheres in Medieval Syria* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2021).

<sup>16</sup> Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, eds., *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Al-'Imrān, *Al-Jāmi' Li Sirah Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah (661-728) Khilāl Sab'a*

context that Ibn Taimiyyah reconstructed the notion of Sufism in order to put it back into the bosom of the Qur'ān and Sunnah.<sup>17</sup>

Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halīm ibn 'Abd al-Salām ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Khiḍr ibn Muhammad ibn al-Khiḍr ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Taimiyyah<sup>18</sup> was born at a time when Muslim societies were experiencing a tumultuous period of political uncertainty.<sup>19</sup> Born in the city of Harrān (present-day southeastern Turkey bordering Syria) in 661/1263,<sup>20</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah's family fled to Damascus in 667/1269

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*Qurūn*, ed. Muḥammad 'Uzair Syams and 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Al-'Imrān (Riyād: Dār 'Aṭā'āt al-'Ilm, 2019); Ṭariq al-Sayyid Muṣṭafā Al-Bakrī, *Ibn Taimiyyah Wa Mauqifuhu Min Al-Turāṣ Al-Ṣūfī* (Riyād: Dār Ibn al-Jauzī, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Hamdan Maghribi, Alfina Hidayah, and Arikhah, "Ibn Taimiyyah Dan Rancang Bangun Taṣawuf Salafī," *Esoterik: Jurnal Akhlak Dan Tasawuf* 08, no. 02 (2022): 193–216, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/esoterik.v8i2.16509>.

<sup>18</sup> It was narrated by al-Zahabī that Ibn Taimiyyah's fifth grandfather, Muḥammad ibn Khiḍr, went on a pilgrimage, and when he reached the gate of Taimā', he saw a girl, and when he came home from the pilgrimage, he found that his wife had given birth to a baby girl. Then he said: "Yā Taimiyyah! Yā Taimiyyah!". Since then his descendants have been called Ibn Taimiyyah. See, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd Al-Hādī, *Al-'Uqūd Al-Durriyyah Min Manāqib Syaikh Al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taimiyyah*, ed. 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Al-'Imrān and Muḥammad 'Uzayr Syams (Riyād: Dār 'Aṭā'āt al-'Ilm, 2019), 4. According to another narration, his fifth grandfather had a mother who was a famous *dā'iyyah* named Taimiyyah, and his descendants were attributed to this Taimiyyah. But according to Ibn Taimiyyah's students, the first opinion is the most popular and strongest. He was also called Abū al-'Abbās and given the titles Taqī al-Dīn and Syaikh al-Islām.

<sup>19</sup> For a review of the political background of Ibn Taimiyyah's time, see, Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382* (London and Sydney: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986); Linda Northrup, "The Bahārī Mamlūk Sultanate, 1250–1390," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Volume 1: 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry, vol. 1, The Cambridge History of Egypt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 242–89. On the Mongol invasion on Syria in 700/1300, see, Reuven Amitai, "The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. A. Levanoni and M. Winter (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 21–41. On the socio-cultural background, see, Jonathan Berkey, "Culture and Society during the Late Middle Ages," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Volume 1: 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry, vol. 1, The Cambridge History of Egypt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 375–411. And on religious life at the time of Ibn Taimiyyah, see, Donald P. Little, "Religion under the Mamluks," *The Muslim World* 73, no. 3–4 (October 1983): 165–81. Rā'id Al-Samhūrī, "Al-Mukhtalif' Fī Al-Fikr Al-Islāmī: Muqārabah Tārikhiyyah Taḥlīliyyah Fī Mauqif Ibn Taimiyyah Min Al-Mukhtalaf Al-Dīnī Al-Qarīb Wa Al-Ba'Id" (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2021).

<sup>20</sup> The most comprehensive and authoritative source on Ibn Taimiyyah's biography are, Al-'Imrān, *Al-Jāmi' Li Sirah Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah (661-728) Khilāl Sab'a Qurūn*; Ibn 'Abd Al-Hādī, *Al-'Uqūd Al-Durriyyah Min Manāqib Syaikh Al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taimiyyah*. Ibn Taimiyyah's biography was written by seventeen scholars who were his contemporaries and interacted with him; both students and companions. This is a very rare fact to find in biographical references to a medieval Muslim figure. His biography was also written by ten contemporaries who did not meet him in person. Interestingly, Ibn Taimiyyah's

before the Mongol advance to the West, which by then had reached the gates of northern Syria when Ibn Taimiyyah was six years old. Most of Syria was divided and ruled by weak Amīrs, who were certain to be defeated when the Mongols invaded, while Egypt -due to distance, still generally safe from the Mongol threat- was under the rule of the Bahrī Mamlūk dynasty.<sup>21</sup>

After fleeing from Harrān, the family settled in the Hanbalī school in Damascus, where Ibn Taimiyyah's father served as the director of the Hanbalī Sukkariyyah madrasa. It was at this madrasa that Ibn Taimiyyah received his primary education in religion from his family who were authoritative Hanbalī scholars at the time.<sup>22</sup> Ibn

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biographers came from four different schools of fiqh: four from the Ḥanafīyyah, seven from the Mālikīyyah, twenty-eight from the Syāfi'īyyah, and eleven from the Ḥanābilah. Some of these biographers wrote Ibn Taimiyyah's biography in more than one book. Broadly speaking, over the course of seven centuries, from the seventh century to the fourteenth century Hijrī, there have been eighty-eight biographies of Ibn Taymiyyah written by sixty-four scholars. See, Al-'Imrān, *Al-Jāmi' Li Sīrah Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah (661-728) Khilāl Sab'a Qurūn*. For other important references on Ibn Taimiyyah's biography, see, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Ḍahabī, *Kitāb Taẓkirat Al-Huffāz* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998); Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Ḍahabī, *Al-I'lām Bi-Wafayāt Al-A'lām*, 1993; Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl Ibn Kaṣīr, *Al-Bidāyah Wa Al-Nihāyah*, ed. Riyād 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Murād and Muḥammad Ḥassān 'Ubaid (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kaṣīr, 2010); Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Khar'ān, *Sīrah Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah Kamā Rawāhā Tilmūzudu Ibn Kaṣīr Fi Kitābihi: Al-Bidāyah Wa Al-Nihāyah* (Riyād, 2021); Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Aibak Al-Dawādārī, *Kanz Al-Durar Wa Jāmi' Al-Gharar*, ed. Ulrich Hermann et al. (Kairo: Qism al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah al-Ma'had al-'Almānī lil-Āṣār, 1982); 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Syihāb Ibn Rajab, *Kitāb Al-Ḍail 'alā Ṭabaqāt Al-Ḥanābilah* (Kairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah, 1952); Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān and Iḥṣān 'Abbās, *Wafayāt Al-A'yān Wa-Anbā' Abnā' Al-Zamān* (Dār Ṣādir, n.d.); Ibn Ḥajar Al-'Asqalānī, *Al-Durar Al-Kāminah Fi A'Yān Al-Mi'an Al-Ṣāminah* (Hyderabad: Dāirah al-Ma'ārif al-'Uṣmāniyyah, n.d.); Muḥammad b 'Alī al-Shawkānī, "Al-Badr Al-Ṭālī Bi Maḥāsin Man Ba'd Al-Qarn Al-Sābi'" (Maṭba'at al-sa'āda Cairo, 1930). For a fairly detailed discussion of the classical Arabic references to Ibn Taimiyyah's biography, see, Donald P. Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 3 (1973): 313–18. For the contemporary studies, see, Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Ibn Taimiyyah: Ḥayātuhu Wa 'Aṣruhu Wa Ārā'Uhu Wa Fiqhuhu* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabī, 1991); 'Azīz Al-'Aṣmah, *Ibn Taymiyyah* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books Ltd., 2000). Juga, Caterina Bori, "A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 3 (October 2004): 321–48; Rodrigo Adem, "The Intellectual Genealogy of Ibn Taymiyya" (The University of Chicago, 2015); Henri Laoust, "La biographie d'ibn Taimiyya d'après Ibn Kaṣīr," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 9 (1942): 115–62; Khaled El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar Al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr Al-Dīn Al-Ālūsī (d. 1899): Changing Views of Ibn Taymiyya among Non-Ḥanbalī Sunni Scholars," in *Times*, n.d., 269–318. 'Alī ibn Ḥasan al-Ḥalabī Al-Aṣārī, *'Asyru Rasā'il Ḥaula Syaikhīyyah Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah Wa Turāṣuhu Al-'Ilmī* (Ammān: Al-Dār al-Aṣariyyah, 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Mar'ī ibn Yūsuf al-Karmī Al-Ḥanbalī, Muḥammad Al-Baiṭār, and Muḥammad Khalīl Harās, *Ṣalāṣah Kutub Fi Tarjamah Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah* (Doha: Dār al-Imām

Taimiyyah studied with a large number of scholars (including a number of women).<sup>23</sup> After his father passed away, he took over as director of the Sukkariyyah madrasa and began giving public lectures at the age of twenty-one. A year later, he began teaching regular tafsīr of the Qur'ān at the famous Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, and a few years later, taught at the Hanbaliyyah Madrasah in Damascus following the death of one of its teachers. At the same time, he was offered the prestigious and coveted position of *qāḍī al-quḍāt* (grand judge) by many scholars, but he declined.<sup>24</sup> In addition to a strong foundation in Hanbalī fiqh, Ibn Taimiyyah also studied and mastered other schools of thought from the authoritative sources of each school at the time. So he never discussed legal issues only with scholars in one maẓhab. In fact, many of Ibn Taimiyyah's discussion partners and debaters across maẓhabs actually gained a lot of knowledge about their maẓhabs from Ibn Taimiyyah.<sup>25</sup>

Ibn Taimiyyah was also familiar with Ṣūfī and the practice of Sufism since he was young. In fact, he often followed the activities of the Ṣūfīs of his times.<sup>26</sup> This two-way interaction then gave birth to an analysis that was not only based on the theory he absorbed from Ṣūfī literature, but also from the practice of Sufism that he attended and witnessed. Ibn Taimiyyah saw that some of the practices of Sufism in his time were far from the authoritative sources of Islam; the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Ibn Taimiyyah's criticism and attack on some of these deviant practices of Sufism are often misunderstood, resulting in a bad stigma against Ibn Taimiyyah and the Ṣūfīs. In fact, if you read Ibn Taimiyyah's works, he praised the Ṣūfīs whom he called *al-Ṣiddīqūn*. Ibn Taimiyyah, who had been familiar with the Ṣūfīs, their works

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al-Bukhārī, 2016); 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Al-Barrāk, *Al-Manṣūr Min Sīrah Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah: Syaẓarātun Mustalatun Min Ghairi Maṣ-ānnihā* (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Muḥaddiṣ, 2022); Al-Khar'ān, *Sīrah Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah Kamā Rawāhā Tilmīzūdu Ibn Kaṣīr Fī Kitābihī: Al-Bidāyah Wa Al-Nihāyah*; Badr ibn Sa'īd Al-Ghāmīdī, *Masrad Al-Dirāsāt 'an Ibn Taimiyyah Wa 'Ulūmih: Ma'a Laṭā'if Fī Sīratih* (Riyāḍ: Markaz al-Bayān, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Abdul Hakim Al-Matroudi, "Ibn Taymiyyah's Evaluation of Istihsan in the Hanbali School of Law," *Islamic Studies* 47, no. 2 (2008): 200; Mohammad Akram Nadwi, *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam* (Oxford: Interface Publications Ltd., 2007), 99–100.

<sup>24</sup> Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, ed., *Usbū' Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmī Wa-Mahraġān Al-Imām Ibn Taimiyyah (1380/1961: Damascus)* (Kairo: al-Majlis al-A'lā li-Ri'āyat al-Funūn wa-l-Ādāb wa-l-'Ulūm al-Ijtīmā'iyya, 1963), 718.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn 'Abd Al-Hādī, *Al-'Uqūd Al-Durriyyah Min Manāqib Syaikh Al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taimiyyah*, 10; Adem, "The Intellectual Genealogy of Ibn Taymiyyah," 467–80.

<sup>26</sup> Hamdan Maghribi, "Rekonstruksi Taṣawwuf Ibn Taimiyyah: Tinjauan Epistemologis" (UIN Walisongo Semarang, 2022).

and practices since he was a teenager, was not free from spiritual activities in his daily life.<sup>27</sup> According to his student, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Taimiyyah said that “*wird* and *ẓikr* for the heart is like food for the body, how would man live without food?”<sup>28</sup> Even Ibn Taimiyyah had a special *wird* and *ẓikr* that he recited every day.<sup>29</sup>

In discussing Sufism and its themes, Ibn Taimiyyah refers to the texts of the *Ṣūfīs* directly,<sup>30</sup> in addition to books of history, tafsir and hadīṣ. Ibn Taimiyyah seems to have tried to be objective in explaining Sufism in the *Ṣūfīs*, in that he consistently included authentic and credible references in the themes he discussed, as well as mastering them in depth and breadth. Ibn Taimiyyah read their works, listened to their explanations, and then criticized and commented.<sup>31</sup> Living at that time, the availability of references was still very difficult,<sup>32</sup> however, Ibn Taimiyyah was able to obtain them; both the works of the Sufis and the refutations of them.<sup>33</sup>

## 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qusyairī and Sufism

Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qusyairī,<sup>34</sup> was

<sup>27</sup> 'Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, *Al-Falsafah Al-Ṣūfiyyah Fī Al-Islām: Maṣādiruhā Wa Naṣariyyātuhā Wa Makānatuha Min Al-Dīn Wa Al-Ḥayāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1967), 136–48; Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Ibn Taimiyyah Wa Al-Taṣawwuf* (Alexandria: Dār al-Da'wah, 1982).

<sup>28</sup> Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, *Samā' Āt Ibn Al-Qayyim Min Syaikh Al-Islām Ibn Taimiyyah Wa Musyāhadātuhu Wa Ḥikāyātuhu Li Faḍā' Ilihi Wa Manāqibihī Wa Aḥwālīhi*, ed. Suhail ibn 'Abd Allāh Al-Sardī (Beirut: Dār al-Nawādir, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Ahmad ibn 'Abd al Ḥalīm Ibn Taimiyyah, *Al-Kalim Al-Ṭayyib*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn Al-Albānī (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif li al-Nasyr wa al-Tauzī', 2001); Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, *Al-Wābil Al-Ṣayyib Wa Raf' Al-Kalim Al-Ṭayyib*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasan Qā'id (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2019).

<sup>30</sup> Lihat, Maghribi, “Rekonstruksi Taṣawwuf Ibn Taimiyyah: Tinjauan Epistemologis.”

<sup>31</sup> Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al Ḥalīm Ibn Taimiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā Syaikh Al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taimiyyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Qāsim (Riyāḍ: Maṭābi' al-Riyāḍ, 2004), 4:58,60; Maghribi, “Rekonstruksi Taṣawwuf Ibn Taimiyyah: Tinjauan Epistemologis”; Maghribi, Hidayah, and Arikhah, “Ibn Taimiyyah Dan Rancang Bangun Taṣawwuf Salafī.”

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of the book and its intricacies in Mamlūk Egypt and Damascus at the time, see, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *The Book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250-1517)* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> There are at least forty-three books by *Ṣūfīs* quoted and analyzed by Ibn Taymiyyah in explaining the themes of Sufism. see, Maghribi, “Rekonstruksi Taṣawwuf Ibn Taimiyyah: Tinjauan Epistemologis.”

<sup>34</sup> His title was Zain al-Islām. See, Taj al-Dīn Al-Subkī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Al-Ṭanāhī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Syāfi'iyyah Al-Kubrā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Al-Ṭanāhī and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Al-Ḥulw (Faiṣal 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964), 5:94.



born in rabī' al-awwal 376<sup>35</sup> in the region of Ustuwā (or Ustawā), a district in northern Khurasan<sup>36</sup> famous for its fertile soil and abundant grain production.<sup>37</sup> His parents were of Arab origin whose ancestors had arrived in Iran with the Arab armies that conquered Iran and were given large tracts of land as compensation for their military service.<sup>38</sup> At the time of al-Qusyairī's birth his family was accustomed to Persian speech in their daily lives but as the son of a state guard he was well educated in the intricacies of Arabic language, poetry and *ādāb*. Like young men of similar social status, he was also trained in martial arts, horseback riding, and archery. al-Qusyairī traveled to Nishapur (Naisābūr), the political and administrative center of Khurasan and the center of Islamic scholarship and culture in the eastern part of the Muslim world until the Mongol conquest in the seventh/thirteenth century.<sup>39</sup>

In Khurasan he attended the lectures and sermons of the famous Ṣūfī Shaykh Abū 'Alī al-Hasan al-Daqqāq (d. 405/1015), the head of the famous madrasa of the time,<sup>40</sup> disciple of Ibrāhīm ibn Muhammad al-Naṣrabādī (w. 367/977), the leading Ṣūfī teacher in Khurasan at the time. al-Daqqāq belongs to a *lineage of Sufism* traditions from Baghdad, including al-Sarī al-Saqatī (d. 251/865),<sup>41</sup> al-Junaid al-Baghdādī (d. 297/910),<sup>42</sup> and Abū Bakr al-Syiblī (d. 334/946). With his intelligence, al-Qusyairī became al-Daqqāq's foremost disciple, married his teacher's daughter Fāṭimah and subsequently succeeded his father-in-law

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Al-Mulqin, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Auliyyā'*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Syarībah (Maktabah al-Khānjī, 1994), 1:43; Al-Subkī and Al-Ṭanāhī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Syāfi'iyyah Al-Kubrā*, 5:94; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Ṣābit Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnah Al-Islām: Tārīkh Baghdād Wa Żailuhu Al-Mustafād*, ed. Basyār 'Awād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 4:96.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Mulqin, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Auliyyā'*, 1:43.

<sup>37</sup> Currently located in Quchan District, Iran. See, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aibak Al-Ṣafādī, *Al-Wāfi Bi Al-Wafayāt*, ed. Aḥmad Al-Arnaūṭ (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāṣ al-'Arabī, 2000), 2:224; Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnah Al-Islām: Tārīkh Baghdād Wa Żailuhu Al-Mustafād*, 4:96; Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Mufasssīrīn* (Kuwait: Dār al-Nawādir, 1960), 1:61.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Subkī and Al-Ṭanāhī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Syāfi'iyyah Al-Kubrā*, 5:95.

<sup>39</sup> Some sources say that al-Qusyairī's age when he arrived in Nishapur was fifteen, but this information is difficult to confirm. It is also related to the purpose of his journey, which was to reduce taxes from the village he owned. See the introduction in, Abū al-Qāsim Al-Qusyairī, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism*, trans. Alexander D Knysh (U.K.: Garnet Publishing, 2007), xxi-xxvii.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism* (Leiden: BRILL, 2000), 48-66.

<sup>41</sup> Knysh, 48-66.

<sup>42</sup> Aḥmad Farīd Al-Mazīdī, *Al-Imām Al-Junaid: Sayyid Al-Ṭāifatain* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2006).

as head of the madrasa. al-Qusyairī repeatedly acknowledged his teacher's great role in his Sufism career, often expressing admiration for him in his Sufism *treatises*. al-Daqqāq was instrumental in introducing al-Qusyairī to another prominent Khurasan Ṣūfī authority, Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (412/1021), a Ṣūfī whom al-Qusyairī cites in almost every page of his *Risālah*. As a prominent writer and scholar, al-Sulamī is considered one of the main architects of the classical Ṣūfī tradition along with Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Tūsī (d. 378/988), . 378/988),<sup>43</sup> Abū Bakr al-Kalābāzī (d. 380/990), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān al-Hujwiri (d. 465/1072), and 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481/1089).<sup>44</sup>

Despite his love for Sufism and Ṣūfī literature, al-Qusyairī did not limit himself to studying themes outside Sufism. He studied Syāfi'ī fiqh under Muhammad ibn Bakr al-Ṭūsī (d. 420/1029) and theology (kalām) with some of the leading Asyā'irah scholars of the time, such as Abū Bakr ibn Furak (d. 406/1015) and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarainī (d. 418/1027). He went on pilgrimage with the famous mufasssirs and hadīṣ collectors Abū Muhammad al-Juwainī (d. 438/1047) and Ahmad al-Baihaqī (d. 458/1066). al-Qusyairī "studied hadīth with at least seventeen different scholars, and in turn transmitted hadīth to sixty-six disciples."<sup>45</sup> While his teacher al-Daqqāq was still alive, al-Qusyairī did not travel outside Khurasan. After the city fell under the control of the Saljūq dynasty in 429/1038, al-Qusyairī became involved in the factional struggle between the Hanafiyya and Shāfi'iyya factions vying for official ideological power.<sup>46</sup>

In 436/1045 al-Qusyairī asserted his position as the spokesman of the Syāfi'ī-Ash'arī school of Nishapur by issuing a manifesto in defense of his school. His defense of the principles of Asy'arī theology angered his Hanafiyyah opponents. When the vizier Saljūq 'Amīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī who was fighting a joint Hanafiyyah-Mu'tazilah war, al-Qusyairī was arrested and held for a week in the fortress of

<sup>43</sup> Al-Qusyairī juga sering menyebutnya dalam al-Risālah

<sup>44</sup> Knysht, *Islamic Mysticism*, 116–35; Al-Subkī and Al-Tanāhī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Syāfi'iyyah Al-Kubrā*, 5:96; Khallikān and 'Abbās, *Wafayāt Al-A'yān Wa-Anbā' Abnā' Al-Zamān*, 3:205–206.

<sup>45</sup> Hamid Algar, "Introduction," in *Principles of Sufism*, trans. B. R. von Schlegel and 1990 (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990).

<sup>46</sup> Martin Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar, Abu'l-Qasim Al-Qushayri and the Lata'if Al-Isharat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Martin Nguyen and Matthew Ingalls, "Introduction: Al-Qushayri and His Legacy," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–6; Martin Nguyen and Francesco Chiabotti, "The Textual Legacy of Abū L-Qāsim Al-Qūshayrī: A Bibliographic Record," *Arabica* 61, no. 3–4 (April 23, 2014): 339–95.

Nishapur, and was released after his followers threatened to revolt. In 448/1056 he accepted the invitation of caliph al-Qāsim to hold hadīth lectures at the caliph's court in Baghdad. Upon his return to Khurasan, al-Qusyairī was forced to settle in Ṭūs,<sup>47</sup> because Nishapur was still controlled by the Hanafiyyah authorities who were hostile to him. In 455/1063, Niṣam al-Mulk, the new Saljūq vizier, reversed al-Kundurī's policy and attempted to re-establish the balance of religious authority between the Syāfi'is and the Hanafīs, al-Qusyairī, then seventy years old, was allowed to return to his native city where he remained until his death in 465/1072. His six sons by his first wife Fāṭimah became respected scholars and spread the scholarly influence of the al-Qusyairī family further and wider.<sup>48</sup>

Despite his fame as a Ṣūfī Syeikh,<sup>49</sup> al-Qusyairī left behind only a handful of disciples. Of these Abū 'Alī Faḍl ibn Muhammad al-Farmaḍī (d. 477/1084), the teacher of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), is by far the most famous. This lack of spiritual successors can perhaps be attributed to al-Qusyairī's character who tended to be academic and methodical rather than a charismatic figure who had many disciples and followers. The written legacy of al-Qusyairī is a tafsīr of the Qur'ān entitled *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*.<sup>50</sup> Here, as in *al-Risālah*, he expounds at length on the fiqh, teachings and practices of al-Junaid al-Baghdādī's 'moderate' Sufism with a view to demonstrating his consistency with the Asy'ariyyah, which al-Qusyairī regarded as the only 'traditionalist' faith.

Written in 410/1019, this work consistently draws parallels between the gradual shift of tafsīr from the literal to the 'subtle' (*laṭā'if*) meaning of the Quran and the stages of a ṣūfī's spiritual and experiential journey towards God. The success of a mufassir in his tafsir and a sālik in his sulūk depends on the ability of the traveler and sālik to combine spiritual practices and the spirit of the true Islamic doctrine (*al-naṣ al-ṣāriḥ*). Giving an unequal share to both will result in failure. Even when this balance is achieved, a mufassir still needs God's *ilhām* in understanding the intricacies of His revelation. The

<sup>47</sup> Medieval city, now close to Masyhad, Iran

<sup>48</sup> Besides this, al-Qusyairī also had three sons from a second wife. See, Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, xxii.

<sup>49</sup> He lived in a Ṣūfī hut in Nishapur, where he taught his disciples.

<sup>50</sup> For further discussion, see, Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar, Abu'l-Qasim Al-Qushayri and the Lata'if Al-Isharat*; Abū al-Qāsim Al-Qusyairī, *Laṭā'if Al-Ishārāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm Al-Basiyūnī (Kairo: Hai'ah al-Kitāb, 2000).

same is true for *sāliks* seeking the path to God. A *sālik* will not succeed in *his sulūk without God's* constant guidance and assistance.

Most prominent in al-Qusyairī's intellectual sketch is his notion of the intuitive knowledge of God and his word that God grants only to his chosen "lovers," the *awliyā'*. This idea is clearly stated in the introduction to *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*: "[God] has honored the chosen ones (*aṣfiyā'*) among His servants by [giving them] the understanding of His gentle secrets (*laṭā'if asrārihi*) and His light, so that they may see the secret allusions and hidden signs contained in it [the Quran]. He has shown their innermost souls the hidden things so that with the radiance that He has given only to them, they can realize what is hidden. Then they begin to speak according to their *maqāmāt* (degrees) [spiritual attainments] and abilities and God -all praise be to Him- inspires in them those things by which He glorifies them [to the exclusion of others]. Thus, they speak on His behalf, inform about the subtle truths He conveys to them, and point to Him..." This shift in the mufassir's understanding towards the deepest meaning of the scripture is explained by al-Qusyairī as a movement from the intellect (*al-aql*) to the heart (*al-qalb*), then to the spirit (*al-ruh*), then to the innermost secret (*al-sirr*) and, finally, to the secret of secrets (*sirr al-sirr*) of Qur'anic revelation.

As is evident from the Ṣūfī masters, al-Qusyairī had little interest in [explaining] the historical and legal aspects of the Qur'anic texts. For him, they only served as windows into the all important spiritual and mystical ideas and values of Sufism. So, for example, in discussing the spoils of war mentioned in Q. S. 8:41,<sup>51</sup> al-Qusyairī argues: "Jihād is of two types: external jihād [waged] against the disbelievers and internal jihād against [one's] soul and Satan. Just as minor jihād involves [the seizure of] the spoils of war after victory, major jihād also has its own spoils of war, which involves the possession of his soul by the servant of Allah after his soul has been held by his two enemies; lust and Satan." A similar interpretation is drawn between ordinary fasting which involves abstinence from food, sex, and drink and Ṣūfī spiritual abstinence from the temptations of the world and from seeking the pleasure of its inhabitants. Despite its overall "moderate" nature, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* is not without monistic elements that are often described as "daring" and "esoteric" trends in Ṣūfī literature. This esoteric aspect in al-Qusyairī's tafsir is apparent in his interpretation of Q.S. 7:143,

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<sup>51</sup> Q.S. al-Anfāl:41

<sup>52</sup> where Mūsā comes to God at the appointed time and asks Him to appear to him so that the mountain before him crumbles to dust upon seeing God's greatness. al-Qusyairī comments: "Mūsā came to God as [only] those who are deeply yearning and in love can do. Mūsā came without Mūsā. Mūsā came, yet nothing of Mūsā remained for Mūsā. Thousands of people have traveled great distances, yet no one remembers them. While Mūsā [only] made a few steps and the children will read until the Day of Judgment: 'When Mūsā came..'" Apart from its esoteric side, al-Qusyairī's tafsīr became an ideal example of a "moderate" form of Ṣūfī literature, since the author's main aim was to strike a delicate balance between the mystical, esoteric aspects of Scripture, between *shari'ah* and *haqīqah*. al-Qusyairī also wrote a tafsīr entitled *al-Taisir fī al-Tafsir*, which scholars say was written before 410/1019. This is clear evidence of al-Qusyairī's status as a Ṣūfī who was also a Shāfi'ī faqīh.<sup>53</sup>

Although in his works, al-Qusyairī discusses a wide variety of objects,<sup>54</sup> he is more widely known for *his al-Risālah*.<sup>55</sup> Written in 437/1045, it has been the primary text for many generations of Ṣūfīs until today and is considered essential reading for every Ṣūfī. *Al-Risālah al-"Qusyairīyyah* carries a clear message of portraying Sufism as a legitimate and respectable science within the Islamic scholarship, intertwined with the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and in harmony with *syarī'ah* and *haqīqah*. Al-Qusyairī seems to be careful in distinguishing between true Ṣūfīs and Ṣūfīs who are just imitators. In his view, their spiritual adventures and irresponsible statements had tarnished the image of Ṣūfīs in the eyes of outsiders, especially Sunnī scholars of the time. In his book, al-Qusyairī consistently sought to cleanse Sufism of what he considered to be "inappropriate" beliefs and practices and *heresy*. He also did not hide his disagreement with some of the teachings and practices of Ṣūfī at the time.

The multi-part *al-Risālah* opens with a brief chapter describing the doctrine of "this [Sufi] community (*tāifah*)". It unequivocally

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<sup>52</sup> Q.S. al-A'rāf:143

<sup>53</sup> Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, xxiv.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn Kaṣīr, *Al-Bidāyah Wa Al-Nihāyah*; Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi Bi Al-Wafayāt*, 6:224; Al-Suyūfī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Mufasssīrīn*, 1:61. Compare to Abū al-Qāsim Al-Qusyairī, *Das Sendschreiben Al-Qūṣayrīs Über Das Sufitum*, trans. Richard Gramlich (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1989), 12.

<sup>55</sup> According to Knysh, it is the most popular Sufi book to date. see, Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, xxiv.

demonstrates al-Qusyairī's firm allegiance to the Asy'ariyyah creed and seeks to affirm the relationship of Sufism to the most influential school of kalam in sunnī Islam. The *second section* contains eighty-three biographies of Ṣūfī Syaikh, starting from Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 162/778) to Ahmad al-Ruḍbarī (d. 369/960) who died six years before al-Qusyairī was born. These biographies are arranged in chronological order and correspond to the order of al-Sulamī's *ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyyah* (Sufi Generation), which contains one hundred and three biographies of Ṣūfī figures. Like al-Sulamī, al-Qusyairī provides a brief biographical sketch of each Ṣūfī, followed by their selected statements on various aspects of Sufism. In the introduction, al-Qusyairī attempts to explain the position of the Ṣūfīs as *waraṣah al-anbiyā'* (heirs of the Prophet) and the Companions.

Al-Qusyairī also expressed his concern over the decline of the Ṣūfī movement's standard of morality from earlier times. He also gave a detailed explanation of twenty-seven terms of Sufism (complete with etymological-terminological analysis). In his explanations, he also quotes the opinions of authoritative Ṣūfīs combined with his own interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah. He explains *maqāmāt* and *ahwāl*, followed by a good understanding and psychological analysis of the experiences of sāliks; from *murīd* to *murshid*. In closing, he discusses the moral dilemmas that Ṣūfīs face on their journey towards God, as well as the proper ethical rules that they must adhere to in order to succeed in their spiritual journey. In particular, al-Qusyairī examines Ṣūfī attitudes towards *samā'*, *sulūk*, death, *karāmah*, dreams, and other themes of Sufism. *Al-Risālah* concludes with al-Qusyairī's advice to novice sāliks.

In general, *al-Risālah* consists of two distinct parts: the biographies of the Ṣūfīs and the guidelines and teachings of the sāliks in their *sulūk* towards God. The book at least serves the function of *isnād*, connecting the lineage of the Ṣūfīs up to the time of al-Qusyairī.<sup>56</sup> Numerous quotations from the Qur'ān and Sunnah rich with al-Qusyairī's narratives support the validation of Ṣūfī concepts, terminology, practices, and behavior. Qusyairī's extensive knowledge of Sufism enabled him to apply it in diverse contexts. In al-Qusyairī's narrative, the poor are oppressed, but righteous, always victorious over the rich, powerful but not *ṣālim*. God always comes to the rescue of the former

<sup>56</sup> Jawid A. Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Ṭabaqāt Genre from Al-Sulamī to Jāmī* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), 123.

and ignores or denigrates the latter. In a sense, the Ṣūfīs are the “kings” of the world without crowns. Al-Qusyairī died in Nishapur on the morning of Sunday, 16 Rabī' al-awwal, 465 at the age of eighty.<sup>57</sup> He was buried next to his teacher and father-in-law, Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

Although Ibn Taimiyyah in some of his writings praised al-Qusyairī's Sufism, he did not hesitate to criticize al-Qusyairī's views which according to Ibn Taimiyyah were not in line with the Qur'ān and Sunnah; Al-Qusyairī often quoted without reference and explanation.<sup>59</sup> He also used Asy'ariyyan theological arguments about *ṣifāt* and then attributed them to Sufism.<sup>60</sup> In explaining the practice of *zuhd* in Sufism, al-Qusyairī did not give examples from the Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ.<sup>61</sup>

Ibn Taimiyyah noted al-Qusyairī's view on *samā'*. According to Ibn Taimiyyah, al-Qusyairī allowed the practice of *samā'* in general on the basis of Q.S. al-Zumar:17-18. Ibn Taimiyyah said that Allāh does not ask His servants to listen to *syā'ir* and praise and singing, which is not at all exemplified in the behavior of the Messenger of Allāh or the Companions.<sup>62</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah said: “What al-Qusyairī says contains good things that must be followed and taken as a basis, but it also contains abstract messages that cannot be taken as a basis. In al-Qusyairī's view, there are also weak quotations from which the source is unknown, and there are also quotations that are used but not in accordance with the original meaning.<sup>63</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah explained that al-Qusyairī in his works knew the words of the Ṣūfīs better than anyone else. About al-Qusyairī's tafsīr, Ibn Taimiyyah said that there were many weak points in his tafsīr although the content was generally correct.”<sup>64</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ibn Kaṣīr, *Al-Bidāyah Wa Al-Nihāyah*, 12:107.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnah Al-Islām: Tārīkh Baghdād Wa Żailuhu Al-Mustafād*, 4:96; Al-Mulqīn, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Auliya'*, 1:43; Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wafī Bi Al-Wafayāt*, 6:224; Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Mufasssīrīn*, 1:61.

<sup>59</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah, *Al-Istiqāmah*, 1:198;2:66;1:188.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā Syaikh Al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taimiyyah*, 11:42; 6:52.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah, 10:367.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah, *Al-Istiqāmah*, 1:90, 216–17.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah, 1:90.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn Taimiyyah, *Al-Istighāṣah Fī Al-Radd 'alā Al-Bakrī*, 1:79.

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