Cankat Kaplan

AN ANTI-IBN 'ARABĪ (D. 1240) POLEMICIST IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN ISTANBUL: IBRĀHĪM AL-ḤALABĪ (D.1549) AND HIS INTERLOCUTORS

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

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by

Cankat Kalpan

(Turkey)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Cankat Kaplan**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to rethink the term *heresy* in the context of the sixteenth-century Mamluk and Ottoman mindset. From a theoretical perspective, it tries to go beyond the supposed dichotomy between heresy and orthodoxy that informs many studies of Islamic history. It argues that in the sixteenth-century Damascus, Cairo, Aleppo, and Istanbul heresy was not a universal term, but a context-bound one. In many studies, heresy is the synonym for heterodoxy and heretical ideas are generally understood as ideas that do not suit the sharia and sunna. The problem with this dichotomy is that scholars approach it as timeless and universal. However, as I show in this thesis, the controversial Sufi shaykh Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) was accepted as a true saint in the Ottoman realm while his veracity was highly debated in the Mamluk lands. Furthermore, even in the Mamluk lands, being an Ibn ʿArabī supporter was seen as appropriate at certain points in time, but in a later period it could be the grounds for the execution.

In this thesis, I have attempted to contextualize two polemical, anti-Ibn ʿArabī works by Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 1549), *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīh Ibn ʿArabī*, in the changing social, political and religious dynamics of the early modern Islamic eastern Mediterranean. Examining the debate about Ibn ʿArabī in the sixteenth-century Ottoman state, I have argued that Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī had a great influence on the new, more critical stance of the Ottoman ulema vis-à-vis Ibn ʿArabī starting after the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk lands.

The sixteenth century was an age of change for the Ottomans. The period also witnessed important developments in the evolution of Ottoman Sunnism. Recent scholarship has interpreted this change as a result of the conflict between the Ottomans and their rival to the east, the Safavids, and the Ottomans' pursuit of legitimacy in this context. However, the role of the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk Sultanate has not attracted the attention it deserves. This thesis concetrates on this overlooked aspect of early moderm Islamic history and explores the Mamluk scholars' perception of the Ottomans as newcomers to the Sunni tradition. According to them, the Ottomans were not "Sunni enough" and they were exceeding the limits of the sharia and sunna. At least, according to al-Ḥalabī, the doctrine of the Oneness of Being (waḥdat al-wujūd) of Ibn ʿArabī that was widely accepted in the Ottoman lands by sultans and the chief jurisprudents was definitely out of the limit.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to my thesis advisor, Tijana Krstić for her priceless guidance, support, encouragement, and patience throughout the preparation of this thesis. She did not only teach me how to become a good scholar but also a good person. I am also thankful to all the faculty members and coordinators of Medieval Studies. They all deserve credit for maintaining an excellent atmosphere in this department. It is necessary to mention a few names that made my time in CEU an experience to remember. From the Medieval Studies Department, I am deeply thankful to Johanna Tóth, Professor Katalin Szende, Professor Günhan Börekçi, Professor Gábor Klaniczay, Professor József Laszlovszky, and Professor Zsuzsanna Reed. I also would like to acknowledge Rashed Daher and Agnes Nemeth from the Source Language Teaching Group. Above all, I want to thank Central European University Medieval Studies department for providing me with a chance to meet such wonderful personalities.

I would like to express many thanks to the staff of the manuscript library of Süleymaniye, especially to Murat Serdar Saykal who made possible for me to acquire most of the primary sources. During the process of writing this thesis, many dear friends and colleagues encouraged and supported me with their priceless friendships, helps, and advice. I am grateful to all of them and pleased to be able to express my thanks to Cevat Sucu, Flora Khazarian, Samuel Huckleberry, Halit Serkan Simen, Teodora Miljojković, Mutlu Duvarcı, Yusuf Selman İnanç, Mehmet Erken, İrfan Ağaçayaklar, and many others.

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To Elif…

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List of Abbreviations

DİA: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (online)

Fuṣūṣ: Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*

Futūḥāt: Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*

IJMES: International Journal of Middle East Studies

Nafaḥāt: Lami Çelebi, Translation of *Nafaḥāt al-Uns min Haḍarāt al-Quds*

Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa: Ibāhim al-Ḥalabī, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa*

Shaqā'iq: Ahmed Taşköprizade, *Al-Shaqāʾiq al-Nuʿmāniyya fī ʿUlamāʾ al-Dawla al-ʿUthmāniyya*

Tanbīh al-Ghabī: Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī bi-Tabriʾati Ibn ʿArabī*

Tasfīh al-Ghabī: Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīhi Ibn ʿArabī*

Notes on Usage

1) Arabic, Persian, and Turkish words listed in the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and IJMES Word List appear in this book without italics - hence **Qur'an**, **ulama**, **fatwa**, **sunna**, **hadith**, **shaykh**, **sharia**, **haj**, and **madrasa**. However, *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Italics), ***Raqṣ*** (Italic).

2) Arabic terms, texts, and book titles are fully transliterated according to IJMES transliteration chart. Thus, ***al-Shaqāʾiq***, and *Nafaḥāt*.

3) Plurals of non-English terms use the English plural suffix s (e.g., ***rāfidhī*s**).

4) Arabic personal names are translated according to IJMES transliteration chart – for instance **Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī**, **Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī**, and **Ibn ʿArabī**. However, if the context relates to Ottoman dynasty or if the person lives during the Ottoman age in Anatolia, all personal names appear in their modern Turkish rendering, as in **Molla Fenari**, **Süleyman** etc.

5) The modern Turkish version of place names is used (e.g., Konya and Bursa) unless there is an established Anglicized form, as there is for Istanbul, Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo.

6) All dates are given according to the Common Era. In cases of lunar dates for which the month is not known, the lunar year may extend into two years of the Common Era. Then, the two years are shown with a virgule (/). For example, 1548/49 is given for the lunar year 955.

7) All translations from Qur'an belongs to ʿAbd Allah Yūsuf Ālī (d. 1953) cited from http://www.islam101.com/quran/yusufAli/

Introduction

Statement of the Problem and the Argument

The famous hadith scholar and historian Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī (d. 1449) records in his *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr* an interesting story about Molla Fenari (d. 1431), who was one of the most important members of the "textual and interpretative community" of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), a controversial Andalusian Sufi who settled in Seljuk Anatolia and produced a massive corpus of works. [1] These works not only systematized metaphysical Sufism but also breathed new life into the concept of Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) that many modern scholars have described as pantheism.[2] Molla Fenari held three important posts in Bursa, the first Ottoman capital and the first center of learning in Ottoman polity: the head of the Manastır Madrasa, qadi of Bursa, and mufti.[3] According to the record, when Molla Fenari was on his journey to

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[1] For Ibn Ḥajar see *DİA*, s.v. "İbn Hacer el-Askalânî," https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ibn-hacer-el-askalani [Last accessed May 12, 2019]; Zildzic uses this "textual and interpretative community" term so as to refer Ibn 'Arabī's student and stepson Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunawī (d. 1274) and his direct pupils. See Ahmed Zildzic, "Friend and Foe: The Early Ottoman reception of Ibn 'Arabi" (PhD diss., University of California, 2012), v.

[2] Ibn 'Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, ed. by Michel Chodkiewicz, translated by William C. Chittick and James W. Morris, Vol. I. II vols. (New York: Pir Press, 2005); Ibn 'Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, ed. by Michel Chodkiewicz, translated by Cyrille Chodkiewicz and Denis Grill, Vol. II. II vols. (New York: Pir Press, 2004); Veysel Akkaya, "Muhyiddin İbnü'l-Arabî'de Arş Tasavvuru ve İstivâ Meselesi," *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 379-92; Hamid Algar, "Reflections of Ibn ʿArabi in Early Naqshbandî Tradition," *Journal of Islamic Research* 5, no. 1 (January 1991): 1-20; Abdul Haq Ansari, "Ibn 'Arabi: The Doctrine of Wahdat al-Wujud," *Islamic Studies* 38, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 149-92; Titus Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn 'Arabi* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2001); William C Chittick, "The Central Point Qunawi's Role in the School of Ibn 'Arabi," *Journal of Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 35 (2004): 25-46; William C Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From Al-Qunawi To Al-Qaysari," *The Muslim World* 72, no. 2 (April 1982): 81-158; Michel Chodkiewicz, "İbn Arabi'nin Öğretisinin Osmanlı Dünyasında Karşılanışı," in *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014): 97-121; Mahmud Erol Kılıç, *Şeyh-i Ekber İbn Arabi Düşüncesine Giriş* (İstanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2017); Mahmut Erol Kılıç, *İbnü'l-Arabi* (İstanbul: İSAM, 2015); Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999); Şükrü Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism: Settling the Conflict on The Ibn al-Arabi's Legacy by Fatwas," in *El Sufismo y las normas del Islam* (Murcia: Congreso Internacional de Estudios Juridicos Islamicos, 2006): 309-342; Mustafa Tahralı, *A General Outline of the Influence of Ibn 'Arabi on The Ottoman Era,* http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/ottomanera.html (accessed May 15, 2019); Abdurrezzak Tek, "İbnü'l-Arabi'yi Müdafaa Etmek Amacıyla Kaleme Alınan Fetvalar," *Tasavvuf (İbnü'l-Arabi Özel Sayısı 2)* 23 (2009): 281-301.

[3] Ahmed Taşköprizade, *al-Shaqāʾiq al-Nuʾmāniyya fī ʿUlamāʾ al-Dawla al-ʿUthmāniyya*, ed. Ahmed Subhi Furat (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1985), 25.

perform the haj, he was passing through the Mamluk lands. He was invited by the sultan of the Mamluks, al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī (r.1412-1421), to Cairo and met with the religious elite there. Keeping the advice of one of his best friends in mind, Molla Fenari did not reveal his support for the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī in that meeting. In this way, he did not risk being accused of heresy, apostasy, or infidelity; on the contrary, he was able to gain the respect of the Cairene ulama.[4]

This story raises some questions: Why did Molla Fenari's friend warn him about manifesting his ideas related to Ibn ʿArabī? Why did Molla Fenari feel obliged to listen to this warning? Would Cairene ulama still respect Molla Fenari if he openly discussed his support for Ibn ʿArabī? Why was Ibn ʿArabī such an important figure that believing in his sainthood or rejecting it could determine whether one was seen as a heretic or a pious person?

At the center of these questions is a larger question of what makes a Sufi a heretic. This question, drawing on the age-old tension between Sufism and law-based conceptualizations of Islam, is at the center of my thesis. I am focusing particularly on the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and I trace the debate about Ibn ʿArabī that occurred in both Mamluk and Ottoman lands. The reason for my temporal and geographical focus is the shift that occurred in the Ottoman lands regarding the perceptions of Ibn ʿArabī and his teachings in the aftermath of Selim I's capture of the Mamluk lands.

Selim I won the battle of Marj Dabiq against Mamluks in 1516 and conquered Damascus and the rest of the Mamluk lands afterward.[5] After he captured Damascus, the first thing he did was to "find" the tomb of Ibn ʿArabī, who was reported to have been burried there, and turn it into a huge religious complex. Selim I's aim was, first, to vivify the controversial Sufi's reputation that was highly neglected in this territory, and second; to

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[4] Michael Winter, "Egyptian and Syrian Sufis Viewing Ottoman Turkish Sufism: Similarities, Differences, and Interactions," in *The Ottoman Middle East,* ed. Eyal Ginio and Elie Podeh (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 97.
[5] Michael Winter, "The Ottoman Occupation," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. I, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 498-99.

manifest his own authority and that of the Ottoman dynasty through this construction. Selim I was successful in his aim; however, his actions and focus on Ibn ʿArabī as well as other related factors set off the debate among the Ottoman intellectuals, and triggered first fatwas about Ibn ʿArabī issued in the Ottoman realm.

Before the Mamluk campaign, Ibn ʿArabī was a highly prestigious figure in the Ottoman world. He was respected by Ottoman sultans, Sufis, and scholars to a great extent. Even if he was debated by the scholars, he was not perceived as a problematic figure to the extent that the head of the bureaucracy, chief jurisprudents (*shaykh al-Islam*) or military judges (*qadi asker*) did not feel the need to issue a fatwa about any aspect of his teachings. However, after Selim I's conquest of the Mamluks, we get eighteen fatwas and one Sultanic decree issued about Ibn ʿArabī in the Ottoman lands.[6] Between Selim I's campaign and the tenure of the famous chief jurisprudent Ebussuud Efendi (d. 1574), four out of seven chief jurisprudents, Ibn Kemal (d. 1534), Sadi Çelebi (d.1539), Çivizade (d.1547) and Ebussuud issued a fatwa about Ibn ʿArabī. Two of them, Sadi Çelebi and Çivizade, refuted Ibn ʿArabī, while Ibn Kemal and Ebussuud defended him. In addition to that, a sultanic decree was written by Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566) during the same period.

In the Mamluk context, however, things looked quite differently. By the early 1500s, there was a vehement debate in these lands about Ibn ʿArabī already for a long time, and both detractors and supporters had their own argumentative tradition. Scholars, Sufis, and even sultans could be affiliated with either of these groups. After the conquest of Selim I, though, the situation changed because of Selim's pro-Ibn ʿArabī policies.

In this thesis, I focus on a Mamluk scholar from Aleppo, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī al-Ḥanafī (d. 1549). After his education in the Mamluk lands, he came to Istanbul around 1500. Here,

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[6] Şükrü Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism: Settling the Conflict on The Ibn al-Arabi's Legacy by Fatwas," in *El Sufismo y las normas del Islam*, ed. Alfonso Carmona (Murcia: Congreso Internacional de Estudios Juridicos Islamicos, 2006): 310.

he established a relationship with high officials of the Ottoman state such as Sadi Çelebi and Çivizade. Beside al-Ḥalabī's famous legal manual, *Multaqā al-Abḥur*, a text that entered the madrasa curriculum and became a standard reference work for judges, he also wrote two polemical books, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa (The Blessing of the Argument in Support of the Sharia)* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīh Ibn ʿArabī (Despising the Stupid Ones Who Exonerate Ibn ʿArabī)*, against Ibn ʿArabī. I suggest that one of the main triggers of the Ibn ʿArabī debate in Ottoman lands were his texts because of his network in Istanbul and his influence on the Ottoman high-ranking officials who were members of this network.

Literature Review

To date, there are only two studies on Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī, neither of which have been published in their entirety: Şükrü Selim Has' 1981 PhD thesis entitled "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halebi with Special Reference to the *Multaqa*,"[7] and Aamir Shahzada Khan's MA thesis, "*Multaqā al-Abḥur* of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 1549): A Ḥanafī Legal Text in Its Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Context."[8] Has' PhD thesis at the University of Edinburgh is an excellent introduction to the works and life of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī. Has examines al-Ḥalabī's famous legal manual in seven chapters. After giving a brief biography of al-Ḥalabī, Has tries to contextualize his life in the Mamluk and Ottoman lands. However, his overview of al-Ḥalabī's career leaves much wanting; this is primarily because of scarcity of the sources, but Has does not explore even these sources fully. Instead, he examines the general structure of the empire and scholars in both empires, to be able to understand the environment that raised Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī. He also examines the works of al-Ḥalabī, checking them against Brockelmann's famous bibliographical work *Geschicte der Arabischen Litteratur* and

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[7] Şükrü Selim Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halebi with Special Reference to the *Multaqa*," (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1981).
[8] Aamir Shahzada Khan, "*Multaqā al-Abḥur* of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 1549): A Ḥanafī Legal Text in Its Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Context" (MA thesis, Central European University, 2014).

correcting it based on the manuscripts belonging to al-Ḥalabī. The main focus on Has's thesis, however, is *Multaqā al-Abḥur*; he, therefore, meticulously examines this famous legal manual, its sources and commentaries, with the goal of assessing its influence on Ottoman legal scholarship.

Khan's MA thesis, "*Multaqā al-Abḥur* of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 1549): A Ḥanafī Legal Text in Its Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Context," sets out to complement Has's work in the light of the recent scholarship on the development of Islamic law in the Ottoman period. According to Khan, *Multaqā* can be understood better by the context these new studies provide. In addition to that, Khan focuses on the issue of genre—specifically on the genre of legal epitome (*mukhtaṣar*)—in his study of *Multaqā*. This is an approach, according to Khan, neglected by Has in his work. Khan suggests that, without taking the legal genres into consideration, *Multaqā* cannot be understood properly.

Both the works of Has and Khan focus on Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's *Multaqā al-Abḥur*. However, al-Ḥalabī was a prolific author who wrote about eighteen separate works. In addition to that, his books on Sufism had a great influence on Ottoman intellectuals. For this reason, in my thesis I chose to focus on al-Ḥalabī's two other works, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa (The Blessing of the Argument in Support of the Sharia)*[9] and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīh Ibn ʿArabī (Despising the Stupid Who Exonerate Ibn ʿArabī)*[10] , both of which go against the central influence on Ottoman Sufi culture, Ibn ʿArabī. *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* is the most voluminous of al-Ḥalabī's works after *Multaqā al-Abḥur* and consists of 82 folios. In this work, al-Ḥalabī's main target is Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ* and he criticizes almost every line of this work. In my thesis I use Has' translation of this work, because I have

[9] Ibrāhīm Al-Ḥalabī, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa*, Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Fatih, no. 2280, 1a-82a.

[10] Ibrāhīm Al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīhi Ibn ʿArabī*, ed. Ibn al-Faḍl Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah al-Qunawī (Cairo: Dar al-Maarij, 2008).

compared it with the manuscript copy and found it reliable.[11]

Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's *Tasfīḥ al-Ghabī* is supplementary to his *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* and engages in a polemic against Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d.1505) *Tanbīh al-Ghabī bi-Tabriʾati Ibn ʿArabī* (Warning to the Stupid [who attacks him] to Acquit Ibn ʿArabī)—a text which I also discuss in detail in order to provide a clear sense of what al-Ḥalabī was writing against. Al-Suyūṭī's *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* consists of twelve folios.[12] In this work, Suyūṭī responds to the famous Shafiʿi scholar Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī's (d. 1480) *Tanbīh al-Ghabī ila Takfīr Ibn ʿArabī* (*Warning to the Stupid for Declaring the Infidelity of Ibn ʿArabī*). Suyūṭī tries to demonstrate the veracity of the sainthood of Ibn ʿArabī. He uses two main strategies to this effect. Firstly, he suggests that to be able to understand the real intention of Ibn ʿArabī, one should know how to interpret (*taʾwīl*) his ideas. Secondly, Suyūṭī quotes estimations of earlier reliable Sufis and scholars to document their positive perception of Ibn ʿArabī. In contrast, in his *Tasfīḥ al-Ghabī* al-Ḥalabī asserts that Ibn ʿArabī's words cannot be interpreted (*taʾwīl*) in a way that they comply with the sharia and sunna, and that Ibn ʿArabī was not a true saint but an infidel and heretic.

By focusing on these heretofore largely ignored texts, my thesis contributes to broadening the research on this relatively neglected but very important Mamluk-Ottoman scholar who thrived in the first half of the sixteenth century. From a theoretical perspective, it tries to go beyond the supposed dichotomy between heresy and orthodoxy that informs many studies of Islamic history.[13] As Alexander Knysh put it in his critique of this approach, which

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[11] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 118-31.

[12] Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī bi-Tabriʾati Ibn ʿArabī*, Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Aşir Efendi, no. 445, 38b-48b.

[13] For such works that exploit the dichotomy of orthodoxy vs. heresy, please see for example: H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohemmadinism a Historical Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969); Nikki R. Keddie ed., *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in The Middle East Since 1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler 15-17. Yüzyıllar* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı

he finds Eurocentric and Christianity-centric: "… the development of Muslim societies is often seen as a constant struggle of 'scripturalist' Islam against 'heterodox' tendencies, often associated with allegedly 'non-Islamic' influences."[14] In many studies, heresy is the synonym for heterodoxy and heretical ideas are generally understood as ideas that do not suit the sharia and sunna. The problem with this dichotomy is that scholars approach it as timeless and universal. However, as we see in this thesis, Ibn ʿArabī was accepted as a true saint in the Ottoman realm while his veracity was highly debated in the Mamluk lands. Furthermore, even in the Mamluk lands, being an Ibn ʿArabī supporter was seen as appropriate at certain points in time, but in a later period it could be the grounds for the execution. So, is Ibn ʿArabī an orthodox Sufi or heterodox? How are we going to determine it and which period should be the basis for our argumentation?

Alexander Knysh proposes the term "orthodoxy-in-the-making."[15] Different from a timeless and ahistorical notion of "orthodoxy," the term "orthodoxy-in-the- making" is amorphous and spontaneous. According to Knysh, this concept becomes relevant when the religious and political establishment perceives itself to be in danger from a minority group that is then claissified as deviant. Because of its local and spontaneous character this term is more suitable for making sense of the Muslim thinkers's statements about heretics in their time and place. The important thing here, according to Knysh, is not to project what is considered "authentic Islam" at a given point in time to earlier ages. This process of orthodoxy-in-the-making often goes hand in hand with the support of the state. Knysh asserts

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Yurt Yayınları, 2013). And some other works that imply the term "orthodoxy" yet openly address "heterodoxy:" Keith Lewinstein, "The Azariqa in Islamic Heresiography," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 54, no. 2 (1991): 251-268; Keith Lewinstein, "Notes on Eastern Hanafite Heresiography," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, 4 (1994): 583-98; H. A. R. Gibb, "Interpretation of Islamic History," *The Muslim World* 45 (1955): 4-15; Christopher Melchert, "Sectaries in the Six Books: Evidence for Their Exclusion from the Sunni Community," *Muslim World* 82 (1992): 287-95.

[14]Alexander Knysh, "'Orthodoxy' and 'Heresy' in Medieval Islam: An Essay in Reassessment," *The Muslim World* LXXXIII, no. 1 (1993): 48.

[15] Knysh, "Orthodoxy and Heresy," 64.

that scholars who manage to acquire the support of the state usually succeeded in suppressing their rivals.[16]

This thesis adopts Knysh's notion of "orthodoxy-in-the making." In this sense, I try to conceptualize the term's reference to various meanings in different political, religious, and intellectual contexts of the Mamluk and Ottoman lands. In addition to that, I discuss an important scholar's accusation of heresy against Ibn ʿArabī in Istanbul where he was accepted as a highly respected Sufi and the reactions of Ottoman scholars and sultans.

In order to shed light on heresy as a time- and context-bound term, in my thesis I give considerable space to the political, religious, and intellectual dynamics of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which are discussed primarily in Chapter 1. The aim of the first chapter of the thesis, "The Controversial Legacy of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) in the Late Medieval Era," is to give background to the Ibn ʿArabī debates both in the Mamluk and Ottoman lands, and it consists of three subchapters focusing, respectively, on the scholarly attitudes towards Ibn ʿArabī in the Ottoman lands prior to Selim I's conquests, on the perceptions of his teachings in the Mamluk lands in the same period, and finally on the role of Ibn ʿArabī as a patron saint, so to say, of the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk territories.

The aim of the second chapter, "A Mamluk Scholar in the Ottoman Capital: Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī, His Works and Career," is to introduce Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī, the scholar who, I argue, initiated the Ibn ʿArabī debates in the Ottoman world. In thic chapter I evaluate the tensions between the Mamluk and Ottoman ulama after the conquest to highlight how Ottoman scholars could have perceived al-Ḥalabī as a Mamluk scholar in the Ottoman capital. I also reconstruct his career, for which few sources exist, and I outline his scholarly network in the Ottomans lands, focusing especially on his connections with the Ottoman scholar-bureaucrats who later produced writings critical of Ibn ʿArabī.

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[16] Knysh, "Orthodoxy and Heresy," 64-6.

The third chapter, "al-Ḥalabī Against Ibn ʿArabī," is where I examine the key sources for my thesis: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d.1505) *Tanbīh al-Ghabī bi-Tabriʾati Ibn ʿArabī* (Warning to the Stupid [who attacks him] to Acquit Ibn ʿArabī), Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's response to it, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīhi Ibn ʿArabī* (Despising the Stupid About Acquitting Ibn ʿArabī), and al-Ḥalabī's *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa* (The Blessing of the Means for Supporting the Sharia). Afterwards, I argue that the debate between Suyūṭī and al-Ḥalabī was inherited by Ottoman scholars who formulated their arguments along the lines first set by these two Mamluk scholars, who in turn built on many earlier Mamluk scholars. In the last part of this chapter I discuss the positions of supporters of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī and the supporters of Ibn ʿArabī by evaluating various fatwas that were written by Ottoman scholars on Ibn ʿArabī in the wake of al-Ḥalabī's work.

Chapter 1. The Controversial Legacy of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) in the Late Medieval Era

In this chapter, my main aim is to provide the background for the following two chapters, by focusing on how Ibn ʿArabī's teachings were received and perceived in the Mamluk and Ottoman lands prior to and on the eve of the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt in 1516-1517. I the first subchapter, I will focus on how Ibn ʿArabī's works were read and debated in the Mamluk Lands in order to sketch out the intellectual tradition in which Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī was raised and to which he later reacted in his polemical works. For this reason, I will briefly discuss how earlier authoritative scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn, argued against Ibn ʿArabī. As we will see in the last chapter when I examine al-Ḥalabī's polemical work *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, al-Ḥalabī greatly benefited from these scholars' work in terms of both argumentation and terminology.

In the second subsection I will turn to the Ottoman reception of Ibn ʿArabī prior to the sixteenth century. By examining Ibn ʿArabī's legacy in Anatolia and showing his unparalleled popularity among key Ottoman scholars, I aim to provide the background for Selim I's embracing Ibn ʿArabī as one of the main "supporters" in his campaign against the Mamluks.

In the third subsection I will focus on how Selim I used the spiritual prestige of Ibn ʿArabī during his conquest of Mamluk Syria. The debates about whether or not Ibn ʿArabī was a heretic began in the Ottoman context after Selim I's campaigns and this section will examine what may have provoked them.

1.1. Reading and Debating Ibn ʿArabī in the Mamluk Lands

The second half of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century was an era when the Islamic community was under a great threat from the outside world. Mongols were the principal source of this threat, and the Mamluks were not exempt from it.

Local ulama were more political and anxious than ever about the wellness of the Islamic community.[17] This anxiety pushed them to work to preserve the integrity of the Islamic community. In Egypt and Syria, local ulama viewed the Mongol invasion as a divine punishment resulting from their weak faith, low morals, practicing the strange beliefs, and neglect of the shariah. Although some Mongol leaders had become Muslim, neither the people nor the local ulama saw their conversion as sincere and their belief as "orthodox" enough since they were continuing their previous "strange" practices to some extent. In the eyes of the ulama, they were the reason for the corruption of the "true faith" in the Islamic community yet they were not the only one.[18]

Sufism was a vital part of the Mamluk society and it was not a new phenomenon during the Mamluk period. There are historical records that mention Sufi institutions starting from the tenth century. Yet, what was new for the era was Sufis' unprecedented activity and spread. Their number increased enormously especially after the beginning of the thirteenth century.[19] Sufis' customs and appearance made them highly discernable in society. They walked on the streets of the cities with their distinctive dresses and hats and they conducted loud and well-attended ceremonies. These performances of chanting and dance as well as the claim of representing the only solid path that is connecting someone to God attracted the attention of many Muslims. In cities and countryside, Sufis' lodges attracted numerous visitors from different spheres of society.[20]

The rapid spread of the Sufi institutions across the Mamluk lands caused diversification of not only the practices but also the doctrine of different Sufi orders. The

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[17] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition,* 50.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Yehoshua Frenkel, "Mutasawwifa versus Fuqara: Notes Concerning Sufi Discourse in Mamluk Syria," in *El Sufismo y las normas del Islam*, ed. Alfonso Carmona (Murcia: Congreso Internacional de Estudios Juridicos Islamicos, 2006): 293-94.

[20] Frenkel, "Mutasawwifa versus Fuqara," 293-94. See also Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1325* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

audience demanded a more elaborate doctrine that went counter Sufism of the seventh or eighth centuries. Sufis, accordingly, introduced a complex and heterogeneous system. For example, a Maghrebi Sufi, Muḥammad Zarrūq (d. 1493), divided the Sufis of his age into ten orders. According to him, each of these ten orders had their own distinctive doctrine, discipline, and textbooks.[21]

A difference between the Sufism of the Mamluk period and the earlier ages was also the rise in the texts that were written by the Sufis. In the earlier periods, the knowledge was transmitted orally between the shaykh and the novice. To some extent, this was preserving the ideas of the Sufis among the Sufis only. In spite of that, during the Mamluk reign, Sufis wrote many texts for spreading their orders and identifying their own way of Sufism. One result of that was the increase in members of Sufi orders as well as growing concern of the ulama about Sufis' disposition and ideas.[22]

There were many controversial issues about Sufis debated among the Muslim learned population at the time. Among them were Sufi practices such as spiritual dancing (*raqṣ* and *dawrān*), music, and standing up (*qiyām*) during the recitation of the name of Prophet Muḥammad, and some teachings such as Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), levels of existence (*marātib al-wujūd*), superiority of the seal of saints (*khatm al-awliyā*) over the seal of Prophets (*khatm al-anbiyā*, i.e. Prophet Muḥammad), pro-Alidism, and veneration of the household of the Prophet (*ahl-i bayt*). Debating all of these controversial issues goes beyond the scope of this thesis; henceforth, I will limit myself to the Mamluk views on the controversial character of Ibn ʿArabī.

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[21] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 52.
[22] Ibid, 52-3.

The debate on Ibn ʿArabī was never a conflict of the ulama versus Sufis.[23] It should be noted that almost all the critics of Ibn ʿArabī accepted or practiced Sufism to some degree. During the age, some practices and certain problematic issues related to Ibn ʿArabī may have been subject to censure, yet Sufism, in general, was always an accepted practice.[24] It was not a conflict between Sufis and ulama because of the simple fact that society could not be reduced to certain separate groups such as ulama and Sufis. While some ulama were also practicing Sufism, in the Sufi lodges it was a custom to study Islamic law as well as other religious (*sharʿī*) sciences, such as exegesis, hadith, logic, etc.[25] Thus, the core of the debate was not about Sufism *per se*, but about the veracity of the controversial figures such as Ibn ʿArabī. The question was whether Ibn ʿArabī and his followers were real Sufis or heretics.

The question above divided the Islamic community starting already when Ibn ʿArabī was alive and it continues until today. The debate on Ibn ʿArabī reached fever pitch in Mamluk Syria and Egypt. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, ten full-scale refutations were written against Ibn ʿArabī. And in the fifteenth century only, there were at least nineteen refutations and countless fatwas issued against him. In turn, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, followers of Ibn ʿArabī wrote around ten apologies and ten fatwas defending him.[26]

The debate was shaped by several prominent scholars. With respect to the Mamluk lands, this was, first of all, the famous scholar of the fourteenth century Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), and second of all, the famous scholar, historian, and statesman Ibn Khaldūn (d.

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[23] On discussion of polemics about various Sufi practices in the late Mamluk context see Eric Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les Derniers Mamelouks et les Premiers Ottomans; Orientations Spirituelles et Enjeux Culturel*s (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1995), section five, accessible at https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/2447, Unfortunately, my limited French does not allow me to engage with this work in detail.

[24] Th. Emil Homerin, "The Study of Islam within Mamluk Domains," *Mamluk Studies Review* IX, no. 2 (2005), 18.

[25] Frenkel, "Mutasawwifa versus Fuqara," 294.

[26] Knysh, *Ibn ʻArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 1.

1406).[27] Knysh, in his important book *Ibn ʿArabī and the Later Islamic Tradition*, provides a brief table that shows the detractors and followers of Ibn ʿArabī starting from the thirteenth century until the twentieth century. The names included from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are the names of scholars who lived under the Mamluk reign and are hence important to the argument of this subsection. Knysh divides these names into anti- and pro-Ibn ʿArabī scholars.[28] When these names are examined, it is possible to see that they are connected. This aspect is clearer for the anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholars: For example, al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) was a friend of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) was a student of al-Dhahabī.[29]

As mentioned above, neither Ibn Taymiyya nor Ibn Khaldūn was against Sufism. On the contrary, they accepted Sufism as something compatible with the sharia and sunna.[30] However, both were ardent detractors of Ibn ʿArabī. As for Ibn Taymiyya, he was against everything he saw as a threat to the Islamic community. He preached jihad against Christians, Shiʿis, and Mongols. In addition to that, for Ibn Taymiyya, religious innovation of any kind was as dangerous for the Islamic community as these external threats, if not more, since this threat was coming from within the Islamic community itself. Among these religious innovations were Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the Oneness of Being and other issues related to his teachings, such as divine incarnation (*ḥulūl*), mystical union with the divine (*ittiḥād*), and monism.[31]

More specifically, Ibn Taymiyya finds Ibn ʿArabī guilty of seven issues and claims that he is a heretic and infidel. The first problematic topic is Ibn ʿArabī's immutable entities

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[27] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 4.

[28] These names are actually scholars who use two different versions of the stance of prominent scholar Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 1262) towards Ibn 'Arabī. Yet, the categorization given in this table is also valid with respect to the stance of these scholars toward Ibn 'Arabī. Since, the issue of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām will be debated in the subsequent pages, I take this table as a categorization that shows the names that are anti- and pro-Ibn 'Arabī. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 64.

[29] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 60.

[30] Homerin, "The Study of Islam," 18.

[31] Ibid, 16.

(*al-aʿyān al-thābita*). According to Ibn Taymiyya, the concept of immutable entities ignores the God's role as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe since, in this model, God seems to be in need of the immutable entities for manifesting his perfection. In reality, Ibn Taymiyya argues, God needs nothing and ascribing Him a need for something is infidelity. Secondly, according to Ibn Taymiyya, accepting things in the phenomenal world as the manifestation of the existence of God means unification and incarnation (*ittiḥādiyya wa ḥulūl*). This idea stems from Christians and has no place in Islam. With respect to Islamic theology, the notions of unification and incarnation are heresy. Third, for Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn ʿArabī suggests that God created the universe according to a definite and pre-established model. This clouds the omnipotence of God. Fourth, Ibn ʿArabī sees the unveiling and divine inspiration (*mukāshafa wa ilhām*) above the sharia and sunna. This is a very dangerous idea since sharia and sunna are the core of the integrity of the Islamic community. This approach, according to Ibn Taymiyya, contains another heresy. Since Ibn ʿArabī upholds unveiling and inspiration over sharia and sunna, he interprets (*taʾwīl*) the Islamic scripture according to his own inspirations blurring the true meaning of it as it was understood and practiced by the pious predecessors (*salaf al-ṣaliḥīn*). According to Ibn Taymiyya, in this way, Ibn ʿArabī legitimizes his heretic ideas. The fifth problematic issue related to Ibn ʿArabī is his suggestion of being the seal of the sainthood. Sixth, the very definition of sainthood made by Ibn ʿArabī is wrong. And lastly, according to Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn ʿArabī's suggestion that Pharaoh died as a believer is wrong.[32]

The real problem about Ibn ʿArabī, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is that he damages the true meaning of Sufism and threatens the integrity of the Islamic community. This was a general accusation frequently used by the Mamluk scholars to indoctrinate public in the

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[32] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 101-7.

normative Sunni order and reject the other ways of thinking.[33] For Ibn Taymiyya, Sufism as understood and practiced by the pious predecessors is an ascetic practice and world-renouncing piety aiming to achieve self-reflection and the purification of the soul. Sufis' real effort is to understand the true knowledge of his Command, in other words, sharia, and be a perfect servant of God. However, heretics like Ibn ʿArabī damage the authentic Sufism by polluting it with philosophy.[34]

Ibn Khaldūn's critique of Ibn ʿArabī is in line with that of Ibn Taymiyya. Like Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Khaldūn also suggests that the authentic Sufism does not include philosophy yet Ibn ʿArabī and his followers introduced it. Ibn Khaldūn was familiar with the practices of Sufism. He elaborately describes the concepts that are peculiar to Sufism, such as the remembrance of God (*dhikr*), asceticism (*zuhd*), and spiritual retreat (*khalwat*).[35] According to him, the true Sufi path includes strictly obeying the orders of sharia and the contemplation of the knowledge that has been acquired by the unveiling and divine inspiration. This is the path of the earlier Sufis. However, Ibn Khaldūn asserts that some recent Sufis who defend the doctrine of the Oneness of Being turned Sufism into an intellectual trend that is opposite of what it was originally. Because of the pollution of Sufism with the mystical philosophy, Sufism became something hard to understand. Hence, this new Sufism is far from helping common Muslims connect with the divine, which was the goal of the authentic Sufism of old. Ibn Khaldūn asserts that the doctrine of the Oneness of Being and priority of unveiling and divine inspiration has its roots in the Greek philosophy of Plato and Socrates. In this sense, Ibn ʿArabī follows them strictly and his ideas are actually unification and incarnation. This is heresy according to Islamic belief.[36]

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[33] Amalia Levanoni, "*Takfir* in Egypt and Syria during the Mamluk Period," in *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam*, ed. Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro, and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 158.
[34] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 87.
[35] Richard McGregor, "The Problem of Sufism," *Mamluk Studies Review* XIII, no. 2 (2009), 75.
[36] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 187-90.

Defending the idea of the incarnation was a serious crime in the Mamluk lands. For example, Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) in his *al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya* (The Beginning and the End) records that a Sufi, ʿUthmān al-Dakkakī, was accused of believing in the incarnation and was sentenced to death.[37] In this trial, qadis asked for the opinions of prominent scholars who were also, not surprisingly, members of the same network with Ibn Taymiyya. These scholars were Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, and Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn.[38] As mentioned above, the historian who records this event is Ibn Kathīr who was a student of al-Dhahabī, and al-Dhahabī was a close friend of Ibn Taymiyya. Shayk Zayn al-Dīn, in turn, was Ibn Taymiyya's brother, and al-Mizzī was another of his close friends (so close that when Ibn Taymiyya was imprisoned for his allegedly radical ideas, al-Mizzī was also imprisoned because of his protests in the name of Ibn Taymiyya). Another interesting connection is that, again, the historian Ibn Kathīr was also a student and the son-in-law of al-Mizzī.[39]

Ibn Taymiyya had many followers in his refutation of Ibn ʿArabī and was working in a certain network whose members are mentioned above. He was charging Ibn ʿArabī with the same crime as committed by the executed Sufi, the incarnation. Not only did leading scholars as al-Mizzī and al-Dhahabī support him in his cause, but also some of the government officials as well.[40] But, in spite of all the efforts of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Khaldūn, and their followers, Ibn ʿArabī's books, especially *Fuṣūṣ*, continued to be copied and read in the Mamluk lands.

In every sphere of the society it was possible to find followers of Ibn ʿArabī, including among the government officials. For example, during the reign of Mamluk sultan Ẓāhir al-Barquq (r. 1382-1399), it is known that there were some pro-Ibn ʿArabī scholars among the entourage of the Sultan. They used their political power for preventing the

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[37] Levanoni, "*Takfir* in Egypt and Syria," 159.

[38] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 59.

[39] Ibid, 303, n65.

[40] Ibid, 4.

vilification of Ibn ʿArabī by powerful and charismatic anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholars and officials such as Shafiʿi scholar ʿUmar al-Burqinī (d. 1403) who was the qadi of Damascus.[41] Later on, the Mamluk Sultan Qaytbay (r. 1468-1496) showed his support to scholars and Sufis who were the followers of Ibn ʿArabī.[42] There is even a case that an-anti Ibn ʿArabī scholar was almost going to be executed because of his open reprimand against Ibn ʿArabī took place during the reign of Qaytbay in 1483. While a certain Shams al-Dīn al-Ḥulaybī was registering the property included in the bequest of Yaḥyā Ibn Hijī, he saw the book of *Fuṣūṣ* of Ibn ʿArabī and asserted that this book should be burnt for it contains heresy worse than the Jews and Christians. Witnesses who heard him saying that decided to accuse al-Ḥulaybī of heresy. But he moved quickly and pleaded with Abu Bakr b. Muzhir, who was a high official and also thinks in the same way with al-Ḥulaybī about the issue of Ibn ʿArabī, for protection. To appease the accusers, Muzhir reprimanded al-Ḥulaybī and shamed him by uncovering his head. Al-Ḥulaybī confirmed his belief in Islam and his life was spared.[43] His support made ideas of Ibn ʿArabī spread more easily in the Mamluk lands.

Beyond the government circles the support for Ibn ʿArabī was also widespread. For instance, we know that the jurist and exegete Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Labbān (d. 1349) who was the preacher (*khātib*) of the mosque of Amrin al-Fustat and a Sufi from the Shadhiliyya Sufi order was frequently quoting from Ibn ʿArabī's books in his sermons.[44] A striking example of pro-Ibn ʿArabī sentiments comes from an earlier period: One prominent Sufi, who was also from Shadhiliyya Sufi order, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allah al-Iskandarī (d. 1309), in 1307 or 1308, joined the shaykh of Saʿīd al-Suʾadā Sufi lodge and they marched with 500

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[41] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 128-9.
[42] Homerin, "The Study of Islam," 20.
[43] Levanoni, "*Takfir* in Egypt and Syria," 176-7.
[44] Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 52.

commoners to the Cairo citadel protesting the attacks of Ibn Taymiya on Ibn ʿArabī.[45] This situation clearly shows the support of the common people and authoritative Sufis for Ibn ʿArabī.

The strife around Ibn ʿArabī cannot be reduced to a clash between certain classes of the society. There were Sufis who were against as well as those who followed Ibn ʿArabī, and the same is true for the ulama, the government officials as well as the commoners. In short, that means that being a critic of Ibn ʿArabī does not necessarily mean being a member of the ulama, and vice versa, being a supporter of Ibn ʿArabī does not necessarily mean being a Sufi. If not the social background, what delineates the sides in this conflict? How did people determine their position on Ibn ʿArabī? And more importantly, what makes the debate about Ibn ʿArabī so important? Can the dispute be explained in purely religious terms?

One clue comes from Knysh's *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*. He suggests, as it was the case with all other controversial theological issues that Ibn ʿArabī debate served as a useful rallying point for various religio-political factions vying for power and supremacy.[46] There has never been a universal consensus about Ibn ʿArabī, yet his legacy continued to be discussed for ages. For many theological issues, during the Mamluk period at least, the debate occurred between different and often short-lived and changing alliances that involved Sufis and ulama on both sides.[47] Perhaps one difference between those debates and the Ibn ʿArabī dispute was that the alliances were not really short-term. As we will see in the subsequent pages, at least for the Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's case, an anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholar could continue to debate against Ibn ʿArabī even if he moved to another imperial domain such as

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[45] Linda S. Northrup, "The Bahri Mamluk Sultanate, 1250-1390," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. I, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 267-8.

[46] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 273-4.

[47] For a detailed analysis of another disputed issue in the Mamluk lands, the debate between Ibn Qadhi Ajlūn and Ibn Maymūn, see Torsten Wollina, "Between Beirut, Cairo, and Damascus: *Al-amr bi-al-maʿruf* and the Sufi/Scholar Dichotomy in the Late Mamluk Period (1480s–1510s)," *Mamluk Studies Review* XX (2017), 57.

the Ottoman Empire where Ibn ʿArabī was widely accepted as the greatest master by Sultans, ulama, and of course, the Sufis.

1.2. The Ottoman Reception of Ibn ʿArabī Prior to the Sixteenth Century

The legacy of Ibn ʿArabī was a major part of the intellectual and religious landscape in the Ottoman polity from its very beginning. Important scholars and the Sufis of the early Ottoman period were not just followers of Ibn ʿArabī, but also the exegetes and systematizers of his intellectual legacy. Ottomans became exposed to Ibn ʿArabī's teachings via scholars, Sufis, and institutions from the Anatolian Seljuk domains.[48] The earliest Ottoman scholars such as Davud-i Kayseri (d. 1350) and his student Molla Fenari (d. 1431) were the members of the textual and interpretative community, a community that links them directly to Ibn ʿArabī through a chain of initiation. By theirs and many others' efforts, Ibn ʿArabī became one of the most prominent figures that dominated Ottoman intellectual tradition.

Perhaps, the area that was most influenced by Ibn ʿArabī was Anatolia because of this group of his students.[49] Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunawī (d. 1274) who was Ibn ʿArabī's student and stepson, and the most important representative of the Ibn ʿArabī School,[50] built this textual and interpretative community in Konya, Anatolia. Furthermore, Ibn ʿArabī's ideas, at least until the reign of Selim I (r. 1512-1520), were never subject to a debate since through this community his ideas were interpreted in a way compliant with the sharia and sunna. One of the most prominent Timurid scholars and Sufis, ʿAbd al-Raḥman Jāmī (d. 1492), in his famous biographical book *Nafaḥāt*, emphasizes that Qunawī's central role in systemization of Ibn ʿArabī's Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) doctrine in Anatolia was interpreting it in a

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[48] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 81-2.

[49] Ibid, 52-3.

[50] *DİA*, s.v. "Sadreddin Konevî," https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sadreddin-konevi [Last accessed May 12, 2019].

way that corresponded to reason and sharia. According to Jāmī, it is impossible to understand Ibn ʿArabī's complex ideas without reading Qunawī's texts.[51]

There were many important scholars who were trained in the Qunawī's lectures and they introduced Ibn ʿArabī's ideas to Ottoman lands. One of them was a scholar and Sufi Jandī (d. 1292), who decided to write a commentary on Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ* after a divine vision he experienced. This was the first commentary on *Fuṣūṣ* and its influence on Ottoman society was great. It constituted a model and source for all later commentaries. In this way, it shaped the way of understanding Ibn ʿArabī's most debated and complex work. This commentary was widely used by Ottomans. For example, Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed (d. 1451), who was the disciple of famous Sufi Hacı Bayram Veli (d. 430), wrote a super-gloss (*hāshiya*) to Jandī's text. Mehmed's brother Ahmed Bican (d. after 1466) translated his brother's text into Turkish. Jandī is also the commentator on another important work of Ibn ʿArabī, *Mawāqiʿ al-Nujūm*. A famous Ottoman Sufi, Abdullah Salahi el-Uşşaki (d. 1783), wrote another commentary on that work, *Tawāli Manāfi al-ʿUlūm min Matāli al-Mawāqiʿ al-Nujūm* in the eighteenth century, but most probably greatly benefited from Jandī's book.[52]

ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (d. 1335), a student of both Qunawī and Jandī,[53] was another key figure in dissemination and acceptance of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas in Anatolia. Davud-i Kayseri who was the head (*başmüderris*) of the first Ottoman madrasa in Bursa, Orhaniye, was Kāshānī's student. Kayseri, after finishing his education in the Islamic sciences, entered the service of Kāshānī. In this sense, Kāshānī was the link between the textual and interpretative community of Ibn ʿArabī and the Ottoman scholars. He carried the ideas of Ibn ʿArabī, by taking them from Qunawī's students, Farghānī and Jandī, to Ottoman scholars

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[51] Lami Çelebi, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns min Hadharati al-Quds,* ed. Süleyman Uludağ (İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları), 632.

[52] Ekrem Demirli, *Tasavvufun Altın Çağı Konevî ve Takipçileri* (Istanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2015), 38.

[53] William C. Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From Al-Qunawi to Al-Qaysari," *The Muslim World* 72, no. 2 (April 1982), 107.

starting from Kayseri. Furthermore, he contributed to the intellectual legacy of Ibn ʿArabī by writing new commentaries. For example, his commentary on *Fuṣūṣ* was one of the pioneering works that was widely copied and read by the Ottomans.[54]

Kāshānī's student Kayseri wrote a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, *Matlaʿ Khuṣūṣ al-Kilām fi Maʾāni Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. This was also another model for the subsequent commentaries. Introduction of this commentary has been used as a separate book that sheds light on Ibn ʿArabī's complex ideas. Kayseri was well aware of the content of the accusations against Ibn ʿArabī and his followers and he tried to refute them. One of the most oft used arguments against Ibn ʿArabī and his followers was that they believed in incarnation (*ḥulūl*). In his books, Kayseri dealt with this accusation widely trying to show that "the unitive and divine experience of Sufi is actually the experience of God," which is not the same to what some heretics argued about incarnation.[55] In the Ottoman realm, Kayseri's interpretations were largely accepted and Ibn ʿArabī was never perceived as problematic in the ways we see in the Mamluk lands. Both the traditional and modern scholars accepted his commentary and its introduction as the best work on the topic. Kayseri was competent in simplifying and clarifying the difficult and sometimes contradicting ideas of Ibn ʿArabī. His books made many prominent scholars and Sufis follow his path, including Molla Fenari, Kutbuddin İzniki (d. 1418), Bedreddin Simavi (d. 1420), Şeyh Vefa (d. 1491), and many more.[56]

The followers of Ibn ʿArabī in the Ottoman lands were not only scholars but they also served as state officials. For example, Kayseri's student Molla Fenari was assigned to three important posts in Bursa: head of the Manastır Madrasa, qadi of Bursa, and mufti.[57] Because of these duties, many modern scholars view Molla Fenari as the first chief jurisprudent

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[54] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 69-71.

[55] Tim Winter, "Ibn Kemāl (d.940/1534) on Ibn ʿArabī's Hagiology," in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 139.

[56] *DİA*, s.v. "Dâvûd-i Kayserî," https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/davud-i-kayseri [Last accessed May 9, 2019].

[57] Taşköprizade, *al-Shaqāʾiq*, 25.

(*shaykh al-Islam*) of the Ottoman state.[58] Molla Fenari was a prolific author, but one of his most famous works is the commentary he wrote on *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb* of Qunawī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*.[59] Kutbüddin İzniki was the student of Molla Fenari at the Orhaniye Madrasa. He also wrote a commentary on the *Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*, entitled *Fatḥ-i Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*. In this work, İzniki frequently quotes his teacher Molla Fenari.[60]

Unfortunately, we do not know what the curriculum of the Orhaniye Madrasa looked like. However, because of the intellectual inclinations of Kayseri and Molla Fenari, we can surmise that this madrasa served as an important intellectual center for dissemination of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings, leaving a deep imprint on the intellectual formation of the future officials of the Ottoman state. Furthermore, the stance of the early sultans supports this argument.

Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) also appointed a follower of Ibn ʿArabī, a disciple of Hacı Bayram Veli, Akşemseddin (d. 1459) as his advisor. Mehmed II also commissioned three commentaries on Qunawī's books, including İzniki's *Fatḥ-i Miftāḥ al-Ghayb*. He also ordered translation of Qunawī's books into Persian and acquired Jandī's commentary on *Fuṣūṣ* for his library.[61]

Ottoman Sultans almost always protected and exalted Sufis and scholars who were members of the textual and interpretative community of Ibn ʿArabī. Until Egypt and Damascus campaigns of Selim I, no fatwas were issued about Ibn ʿArabī, either defending or discrediting him. That means that until this time Ibn ʿArabī's thought was likely never a subject of controversy. Yet, this does not mean that Ottoman scholars and Sufis were not aware of the controversial issues related to Ibn ʿArabī, since there were many scholars who traveled around the Islamic world for education, including to the Mamluk lands. It simply

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[58] Winter, "Ibn Kemāl," 140.

[59] Jane Clark, "Early Best-sellers in the Akbarian Tradition: The Dissemination of Ibn 'Arabi's Teaching Through Sadr al-Din Qunawi," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* XXXIII (2003), 14, http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlespdf/bestsellers.pdf [Last accessed May 8, 2019].

[60] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 80-1.

[61] Clark, "Early Best-sellers," 13-4.

means that these debates did not take a center stage in the Ottoman realm until Selim I's campaign against the Mamluks.

1.3. The Ottoman Conquest of the Mamluk Lands: Ibn ʿArabī in the Policy of Selim I

The holy war against infidels (*ghazāʾ* in Ottoman Turkish) was a driving power and a means of legitimization for the Ottomans vis-à-vis other Muslim polities.[62] Beginning in the sixteenth century, however, during the reign of Selim I, two important events reshaped the fate of the Near East: the conquest of the lands that we call Iran today by the Safavids and the conversion of its people to Twelver Shiʿism, on the one hand, and on the other the Ottomans' defeat of the Mamluks resulting in the annexation of the old Islamic centers in Syria, Egypt, and Hijaz where the two holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, were located.[63] Since the campaigns of Selim I against the Safavids and Mamluks targeted Muslims, the propaganda of *ghazāʾ* was not useful as a means of legitimization.

The rivalry between the Safavids and Ottomans could be characterized as a sectarian war between Sunni Ottomans and heretical *qizilbash*, which is why it was easier for Selim I to legitimize his campaign against them when compared to the campaign against the Mamluks. Ottomans were suggesting that Safavids and their *qizilbash* followers were cursing the first three Muslim caliphs, which was considered a blasphemy and, if one persisted in it, a heresy.[64] It was a duty incumbent on all Muslims (*farḍ al-ʿayn*) to kill those heretics and take their women and property. The Mamluks, on the other hand, were a different issue. Selim I,

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[62] For a debate on the role of *ghazāʾ* in the rise of the Ottomans see Gibbons, H. A. *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire*. New York: The Century Co., 1916; Köprülü, M. F. *Les Origines de l'empire Ottoman*. Paris: E. D. Boocard, 1935; Wittek, P. *The Rise of The Ottoman Empire*. London: B. Franklin, 1938. For a critical evaluation of the *ghazāʾ* thesis see Kafadar, Cemal. *Between the Two Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

[63] Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 261.

[64] Abdurrahman Atçıl, "The Safavid Threat and Juristic Authority in The Ottoman Empire During The 16th Century," *IJMES* 49 (2017), 299-300, 303.

when preparing for the campaign on Mamluks, summoned the ulama of Rum (i.e. Anatolia) and the judges (qadi) of the four Sunni madhabs to obtain fatwas legitimizing the campaign by the Sunni law. According to these fatwas, the fault of the Mamluk Sultan, Qansuh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501-1516), was aiding and abetting the Safavids. Selim sent twelve envoys carrying these fatwas to al-Ghawrī, but the latter killed ten of these envoys and sent two of them back to Selim I with a message to meet him at Marj Dabiq for the war.[65]

This accusation of allegedly aiding the Safavids was most probably not sufficient for the legitimization of the war against the Mamluks. Two important cities that belonged to the Mamluks, Baghdad and Damascus, enjoyed prestige among Sunni Muslims for once being the seat of the Muslim caliphate, while the caliph of that time still held court in Mamluk Cairo. Furthermore, these lands were home to the centuries-old scholarly and religious centers of Islam where the ulama were a lot more independent from the government than the Ottoman ulama. Arab ulama in the Mamluk lands depended more on the income from pious endowments than on governmental stipends.[66] This situation was making them a source of authority in itself. If he wanted to consolidate his power after the conquest of the region, Selim I had to convince these traditionally independent ulema to support him. However, before he had a chance to court their favor, he needed the support of his own subjects in "diyar-ı Rum" for the campaign against the Mamluks. As we will see, he found this support in the Sufi master most revered by the Rumi scholars and common people alike, Ibn ʿArabī.

Sultan al-Ghawrī was also in pursuit of the legitimization for his cause against the Ottomans. He entered the plain of Marj Dabiq surrounded by the grandees who were carrying

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[65] Michael Winter, "Sultan Selim's Obsession with Mamluk Egypt According to Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname*" in *Developing Perspectives in Mamluk History*, ed. Yuval Ben-Bassat (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 234-235; Michael Winter, "The Ottoman Occupation," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. I, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 495.

[66] Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 264.

the copies of the Quran on their heads.[67] In addition to that, al-Ghawrī was accompanied by al-Mutawakkil, the last Abbasid caliph as well as the judges (qadi) of each of the four Sunni madhabs, and heads of the Sufi order of Aḥmad al-Badawī and that of the Rifāʿiyya, and the Qādiriyya Sufi orders that were highly popular in Egypt during the period.[68] Al-Ghawrī, as Selim I, was in need of the support of the religious figures, for he was also fighting against a Sunni Muslim state. He had to show to his own subjects that he was on the right side of the conflict by taking on his side the heirs of the Prophet Muḥammad, firstly the political heir, the caliph, and the religious heirs, ulama and Sufis.

The war of Marj Dabiq (May 24, 1516) was over very quickly. Ottoman army was three times more numerous than that of the Mamluks. The Mamluk historians were astonished by the size of this army suggesting that it was the greatest army anyone had ever seen. Furthermore, Ottomans used modern weapons such as cannons and arquebuses, weapons that the Mamluks were wanting.[69]

The Mamluk sultan al-Ghawrī was killed by the Ottoman troops. Prince Kasım who was the son of deceased Ottoman prince Ahmed, and nephew of Selim I, was executed upon Selim's order.[70] The Ottoman soldiers killed many of the Mamluks including the commander of the army, and the governors of Damascus, Tarabulus, Safad, and Hims. The survivors escaped to Aleppo but inhabitants attacked them because of their mistreatment before the battle. Remaining Mamluk soldiers escaped to Damascus. Selim treated the caliph with respect and promised him that he will return to Baghdad but reprimanded the judges of the four Sunni sects of Cairo accusing them of corruption.[71]

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[67] Winter, "The Ottoman Occupation," 498.

[68] Bruce Masters, *The Arabs of The Ottoman Empire 1516-1918 A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 112.

[69] Winter, "The Ottoman Occupation," 498-9.

[70] Cihan Yüksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 178. Also for a discussion of asylum of Prince Ahmed who was Selim I's prime competitor for throne see page 176.

[71] Ibid, 499.

After Selim appointed a military governor and a qadi for Aleppo province, he headed to Damascus. He reached the outskirts of Damascus on August 23. Selim entered the city twelve days later and showed his respect for religious leaders and sites. The important example of that respect, in the context of this thesis, was that he ordered the construction of a mosque and a Sufi lodge near the tomb of Ibn ʿArabī who was buried in the Salihiyya district of Damascus.[72]

Restoration of the old religious sites such as the tomb of a prominent Sufi was a way of consolidating the power in the Mamluk lands. For example, one of the recent Mamluk sultans, Qaytbay (r. 1468-1496) made the shrine of famous Sufi Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (d. 1277) the beneficiary of a pious endowment consisting of real estate in Dasuq, incorporating the old endowment into his new endowment. He also built a number of new buildings near this tomb. These renovations gave the site new prestige and turned the shrine into a complex that included a mosque where the Friday prayers could be held in his name as the sultan.[73] In this way, Qaytbay took advantage of the fame of a local Sufi by constantly reminding people of himself in this prestigious religious site that was visited by Muslims from all over the Mamluk lands.[74]

Could the reason behind Selim's construction of a complex near Ibn ʿArabī's tomb be same as that of Qaytbay? I suggest it was exactly the same and more. When Selim's focus on Ibn ʿArabī's tomb is examined in depth, it is possible to see that Selim not only tried to consolidate his power in the newly conquered lands but he also asserted that the old centers of the Mamluk lands have now become a province of the Ottoman state.

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[72] Winter, "The Ottoman Occupation," 499-500.

[73] Helena Hallenberg, "The Sultan Who Loved Sufis: How Qaytbay Endowed A Shrine Complex in Dasuq," *Mamluk Studies Review* IV (2000), 149.

[74] Hallenberg, "The Sultan Who Loved Sufis," 166.

Selim's conquest of Damascus opens an epoch of dense and concentrated focus on Ibn ʿArabī's authority.[75] This epoch started with the miraculous discovery of the grave of Ibn ʿArabī. As was recorded by Evliya Çelebi, the Military Judge of Anatolia (*kadıasker*) of the time, Ibn Kemal (d. 1534), initiated the search for Ibn ʿArabī's grave. He was studying a book attributed to Ibn ʿArabī, probably *al-Shajara al-Nuʿmāniyya fī al-Dawla al-ʿUthmāniyya* (*The Genealogical Tree in the Ottoman State*), when he came across an enigmatic statement: "When the letter *Sin* comes and enters the letter *Shin*, then the letter *Mim* appears." Ibn Kemal believed that the letter *sin* stood for Selim, the letter *shin* for Damascus (Sham), and the letter *mim* for Muḥyī al-Dīn, which was the name of Ibn ʿArabī. Ibn Kemal suggested that the grave of Ibn ʿArabī would be discovered by Selim. Evliya Çelebi continues, in his *Seyahatname*, Selim saw Ibn ʿArabī in his dream telling him, "I have been expecting your arrival in Syria. I herald your conquest of Egypt. Tomorrow, a black horse will take you and bring to me. When you found me in the Salihiyya district, build a tomb, a Sufi lodge, a mosque, a soup kitchen, a madrasa, a primary school, a bath, a law court, a fountain with running water."[76]

According to the story, Selim indeed rode a black horse to the graveside. The horse stood where Selim found a stone with the inscription that said, "This is the grave of Muḥyī al-Dīn." The place was littered because of the negligence. Selim brought workers and builders to the site for removing the garbage and starting the construction of the buildings as asked by Ibn ʿArabī. Selim himself joined in the cleaning of the graveyard.[77]

There are some important points that need evaluation in this record of Evliya Çelebi. First is the book, *Shajara al-Nuʿmāniyya*, supposedly studied by Ibn Kemal. Ottoman scholars of the later ages suggested that the book was written by Ibn ʿArabī himself as well as

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[75] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 116.
[76] Winter, "Sultan Selim's Obsession," 236.
[77] Ibid, 236.

his most important disciple Qunawī wrote a commentary on it, *al-Lama al-Nurāniyya fī Mushkilāt al-Shajara al-Nuʿmāniyya*.[78] In *Shajara al-Nuʿmāniyya*, Ibn ʿArabī was predicting the appearance of the Ottoman State and claiming that they will conquer Egypt and will become the only and universal Muslim state until the arrival of the Mahdi, which means the end of the world. This aspect of giving a strong authority to Ottoman dynasty manifests itself clearly at the part where the author speaks of the story of the discovery of Ibn ʿArabī's tomb. After the author suggested the mentioned prophecy that is "When the letter *Sin* comes and enters the letter *Shin*, then the letter *Mim* appears," pseudo-Ibn ʿArabī continues, "God unveiled to us directly that our death will take place in Damascus." He states that this tomb will be neglected at first and hence will be ruined referring to Mamluk period. The state of desolation will continue "until the time when a *qaim*[79] arises, coming from Constantinople, the letter *Sin* of the family of ʿUthmān. He will be the cause of our tomb's reappearance and the construction of our mausoleum." According to the author, this leader will act on the orders of God, and by permission of the Prophet and the agreement of "the men of the time, masters of the hierarchical degrees, men of the Unseen (*rijāl al-ghayb*)."[80] So, *Shajara al-Nuʿmāniyya* depicts Selim I as a sultan supported by God, the Prophet, the men of the time, masters of the hierarchical degrees, and men of the Unseen. Furthermore, since the book was "supposedly" written around 300 hundreds years before the Mamluks were conquered by the Ottomans, a former Mamluk subject were supposed to concede and accept the authority of Ottoman state.

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[78] Denis Gril, "The Enigma of the *Shajara al-nu'māniyya fī'l-dawla al-'Uthmāniyya*, attributed to Ibn 'Arabī," The Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/shajaranumaniyya.html#ref7 [Last accessed on: May 15, 2019]. Gril debates about the authenticity of the attribution of authorship to Ibn ʿArabī, and proves that it is not possible as it is the case for Qunawī as well.

[79] It literally means "one who arises," however, here in the text, an inspiring leader whose mission presages the advent of the end of time and the Resurrection. Gril, "The Enigma of the *Shajara*."

[80] Gril, "The Enigma of the *Shajara*."

Even though the book first circulated only during the sixteenth century,[81] Ottoman sultans, scholars, or Sufis never doubted the authenticity of the text.[82] The copies of *Shajara* are scattered throughout the manuscript collections and libraries of Turkey as well as Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad.[83] Furthermore, in the pseudo-Qunawī commentary, religious and messianic terminology is associated with Selim I, such as The Lord of Conjunction (*Sahib al-Qirān*), the Lord of Time (*Ṣāhib al-Zamān*), Mahdi, The Renewer (*Mujaddid*), and The Second Imam (*al-Imām al-Thāni*).[84] In this way, Selim was portrayed in *Shajara* as the divinely guided ruler, not only of the Mamluks but of all the Muslim world, including the Safavids. In *Shajara*, Selim was also designated as the "Seal of the Ottoman dynastic lineage."[85] Based on thes texts, thus, the seal of the Ottoman dynasty, i.e. Selim, discovered the seal of the Muḥammadan sainthood, i.e. Ibn ʿArabī. In short, *Shajara* is a great example of how the official Ottoman imperial propaganda coopted Ibn ʿArabī for projecting the supremacy of the Ottoman dynasty over all other Muslim dynasties.

The construction of the complex of Ibn ʿArabī's tomb had the same message. The Salihiyya district, as it is reported by the famous traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 1368-69) during his visit there in 1326, was an important center of Islamic sciences where thirty madrasas are located. This district was also mostly inhabited by Ḥanbalī scholars.[86] In the Ḥanbalī doctrine, the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of the unclear (*mutashābih*) Quranic verses and hadiths are prohibited. They accept only the external meaning of Islamic scripture.[87] The famous scholar Ibn Taymiyya was also a follower of the Ḥanbalī doctrine, and as it was mentioned in

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[81] Masters, *The Arabs of The Ottoman Empire*, 116-117.

[82] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 83; Mustafa Tahralı, "A General Outline of the Influence of Ibn 'Arabi on The Ottoman Era," The Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/ottomanera.html [Last accesed on: May 15, 2019].

[83] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 175.

[84] Ibid, 94-5.

[85] Ibid, 95.

[86] Toru Miura, "The Salihiyya Quarter in The Suburbs of Damascus: Its Formation, Structure, and Transformation in The Ayyubid and Mamluk Periods," *Bulletin d'etudes Orientales* 47 (1995), 130, 136.

[87] Zübeyrir Bulut, "Hanbeli Akaidinin Teşekkülü," *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* VI, no. 5 (2017), 2947.

the first section of this chapter, one of the faults of Ibn ʿArabī, according to Ibn Taymiyya,

was the legitimization of his own heretical ideas by interpreting (*taʾwīl*) the Islamic scripture.

Correspondingly, according to famous Mamluk historian Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 1548),[88] who himself

was most probably an anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholar,[89] the day when Selim I entered Damascus, he

went to the site of Ibn ʿArabī's grave accompanied by Mamluk and Ottoman grandees. They

asked the inhabitants for the place of the "The Greatest Shaykh (*Shaykh al-Akbar*) Ibn

ʿArabī." Some of the people answered, "Do you mean the grave of the Greatest Infidel

(*Shaykh al-Akfar*)?"[90] After that, Selim ordered the construction of the complex. This was a

huge complex with an enormous endowment and current expenses.[91]

After the construction of the mosque was finished, Selim I ordered the hanging of Ibn

Kemal's fatwa about Ibn ʿArabī on the wall of this mosque. The fatwa says:

> In the name of Allah, the Merciful the Compassionate
> Praise be to Allah who among His bondsmen placed honest and honorable
> scholars and made them legatees of the prophets and messengers, and may
> God's blessings and peace be upon Muḥammad who was dispatched to guide
> those who were led astray and those who lead astray, and may peace be with
> his family and his Companions who strove to implement the noble sharia, and
> then:
> O you people, may it be known to you that the greatest shaykh, the noble one
> who follows the Right Path, who is the Pole of all *arif*s and imam of all
> monotheists, Muḥammad Ibn Ālī Ibn al-Arabī al-Taī al-Ḥatamī al-Andalusī is
> a perfect *mujtahid* and virtuous guide to the Right Path; he has many and
> wondrous feats and many supernatural powers; his students and disciples are
> numerous and acknowledged by the ulama. Whosoever defamed him, he erred
> and if he persists in his denial he has let himself be led astray; the Sultan's
> duty is to correct him and dissuade him from this belief, because the Sultan
> has been ordered to command the good and forbid the wrong. He [Ibn ʿArabī]
> has many writings, among them: *al-Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikamiyya* and *al-Futūḥāt al-
> Makkiyya*. Some points in them are familiar in expression and meaning, and in
> accord with the divine command and prophetic law code, while some other
> points are hidden from the comprehension of those who outwardly follow and
> are reserved for those who follow the pathway of unveiling (*kashf*) and inward

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[88] See Stephan Conermann, "Ibn Tulun (d. 955/1548): Life and Works," *Mamluk Studies Review* VII, no. 1 (2004): 115-140 for a detailed biography and bibliography of Ibn Tulun.

[89] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 311.

[90] İbrahim Ceylan, "Yavuz Sultan Selim'in Şam'da Yaptırdığı İlk Osmanlı Vakfı ve Vakfiyesi," *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* II (1986), 158.

[91] Ibid, 160.

interpretation. Whosoever is not confident he has attained the intended meaning in them, he should remain silent in this regard, as Almighty asserts: "O man, follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! The hearing and the sight and the heart – of each of these it will be asked."[92]

Only God is who guides towards the Right Way of Truth and the final return of all of us is unto Him, Exalted. What is in this text is confirmed by and in accordance with the noble sharia. Written by the needy Aḥmad b. Sulayman b. Kamal, may God forgive him.[93]

In this fatwa, Ibn Kemal described Ibn ʿArabī with the titles of "the great shaykh, leader of the gnostics (ʿārif), and the imam of the Muslims," asserting that he is a perfect mujtahid and shaykh. Additionally, according to Ibn Kemal, whoever denies the spiritual station of Ibn ʿArabī and whoever insists on his denial, he is the one who is straying. In this situation, the duty of the Sultan is to discipline this person, since the sultan is obliged to do the right thing and prevent the bad. The last part of this fatwa is even more intriguing. Ibn Kemal suggests that some parts of the famous books of Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt*, are in line with the Quran and the Sunna. The meaning of other parts, however, is not clear for the ordinary Muslim scholars who understand the Islamic scripture according to the external meaning only. The ones who are not able to comprehend the real intention of Ibn ʿArabī should keep silent about Ibn ʿArabī.[94]

Ibn Kemal's fatwa reflects the official imperial view. In a district where Ḥanbalīs were the majority while the tomb of Ibn ʿArabī was neglected and he was seen as the greatest infidel, the fatwa stood for precisely the opposite view, proclaiming that Ibn ʿArabī's ideas were in line with the interpreted version (taʾwīl) of Quran and Sunna. Furthermore, the fatwa also implied that under the new government of the Ottomans, whoever reprimands Ibn ʿArabī, the Sultan will discipline him through punishment. This is a proactive and offensive approach that made it clear to the people of Salihiyya district as well as the old Mamluk

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[92] Isra 17/36.
[93] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 137-138.
[94] Abdurrezzak Tek, "İbnü'l-Arabi'yi Müdafaa Etmek Amacıyla Kaleme Alınan Fetvalar," *Tasavvuf (İbnü'l-Arabi Özel Sayısı 2)* 23 (2009), 296-7. The Arabic text and its Turkish translation can be found on these pages.

subjects that there is a new power in the town. That did not simply mean that people should venerate Ibn ʿArabī as of that moment. As I mentioned above, the scholars of the Mamluks were more independent from the state because of their income from the pious endowments than the Ottoman scholars who were to a great extent dependent on the stipends from the state. That is why Mamluk scholars were probably freer to assert their ideas about the debated issues of Islamic theology and Sufism, including Ibn ʿArabī's teachings. This fatwa on the wall of the Ibn ʿArabī mosque challenged this convention by trying to assert an official view.

Selim's offensive policy about Ibn ʿArabī was not limited to this fatwa. When he opened the mosque in 1518, he appointed the historian Ibn Ṭūlūn as the imam.[95] This is an interesting choice, since Ibn Ṭūlūn's position toward Ibn ʿArabī was quite ambiguous. Ibn Ṭūlūn, who was the son of a Turkish mother in Damascus, categorizes people according to their attitude toward Ibn ʿArabī under four categories. The first group are the people who believe that Ibn ʿArabī was a true saint. According to Ibn Ṭūlūn, most of the Persians, all of the Ottomans, and the Bauni family in Damascus fall into this category. The second group names Ibn ʿArabī an infidel. Most of the fuqahāʾ (s. *fāqih*) and the scholars of the hadith belong to this category. The third group is uncertain about Ibn ʿArabī. Among them is al-Dhahabī (d. 1348). The last group keeps silent about Ibn ʿArabī and suggests that God will judge him. Ibn Ṭūlūn asserts that he belongs to this group.[96] However, his actions reported in the sources suggest otherwise. For example, once a pro-Ibn ʿArabī shaykh Ibn Ḥabīb visited the tomb of Ibn ʿArabī with his followers. Afterwards, when he went to the Umayyad Mosque, Ibn Ṭūlūn yelled at him "Stupid!" in front of everyone because he visited the tomb. The same year, Ibn Ṭūlūn and his friends took the *Fuṣūṣ* of Ibn ʿArabī from a scholar's hand

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[95] Michel Chodkiewicz, "İbn Arabi'nin Öğretisinin Osmanlı Dünyasında Karşılanışı," in *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler*, ed. A. Y. Ocak (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 106.
[96] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 310-1.

and washed it so as to clean and remove the writing.[97] Furthermore, Ibn Ṭūlūn asserted that the construction of the mosque had to be done under the cover of the night since he believes that this construction was not a good act.[98]

During the night prayer, after Selim appointed Ibn Ṭūlūn as imam of the mosque, Ibn Ṭūlūn recited the seventeenth verse of *Tawba* (Repentance) Sura that says, "It is not for such as join gods with Allah, to visit or maintain the mosques of Allah while they witness against their own souls to infidelity. The works of such bear no fruit: In Fire shall they dwell."[99] This was an open protest against the new power and it would appear that Selim I appointed an anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholar as the imam. It is possible that in this way he tried to "convert" a well-known critic of Ibn ʿArabī. Certainly, there were other possible candidates for the post of Imam at the Ibn ʿArabī mosque. Even though Ibn Ṭūlūn protested the situation, he seems to have changed his attitude toward Ibn ʿArabī, or at least stopped the public condemnation of him since during the reign of Süleyman I he accepted to write a biography of Ibn ʿArabī in which he positively evaluated the shaykh's teachings.[100]

What else did Selim try to communicate by building a tomb and a mosque in the name of Ibn ʿArabī in a district inhabited mostly by Ḥanbalī scholars where Ibn ʿArabī was underrated? One answer can come from the perspective of architecture. An Ottoman geographer and traveler Aşık Mehmed (d. after 1598) in his visit to Damascus late in the sixteenth century, singles out four mosques built during the Ottoman era that were not in the style of Arab mosques bur rather in the style of Ottoman mosques. Some decades later, Evliya Çelebi counts several mosques built in the "image of Rum," i.e. in Ottoman style.[101] These mosques were the centers of large complexes sponsored by the governors and Ottoman

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[97] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 311.
[98] Winter, "Egyptian and Syrian Sufis," 98.
[99] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 311.
[100] Ibid, 311.
[101] Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, "'In The Image of Rum': Ottoman Architectural Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Aleppo and Damascus," *Muqarnas* 16 (1999), 70.

sultans. And building a mosque in the Rumi style in these Arab lands was not an easy work; first of all, the sponsor had to bring the architects from Anatolia so as to build them. The mosques featured an Ottoman architectural tradition that also prevailed in other parts of the imperial domains: "a formal and functional vocabulary and syntax originating in the center was implemented in the provinces, providing the institutional settings for social and political interaction and at the same time visually proclaiming the power and the hegemony of the center."[102]

Selim I's intention with his offensive Ibn 'Arabī policy in the Damascus region was also to proclaim the power and hegemony of the center. As it was mentioned in the second section of this chapter, Ottomans were followers of the Ibn 'Arabī tradition, primarily because of their first madrasas and teachers such as Kayseri and Molla Fenari. Furthermore, as mentioned above, when Ibn Ṭūlūn was categorizing the attitudes toward Ibn 'Arabī, he asserted that all the Ottomans recognized him as a true saint. This was probably the judgment about the Ottomans in the public opinion of the Mamluk subjects as well. In this sense, when Selim I upheld Ibn 'Arabī in such a striking way, he was actually trying to proclaim the Ottoman way.

That this symbolism of the Ibn 'Arabī mosque was clear to the Mamluk grandees is obvious from the actions of the Ottoman-appointed governor of Damascus, and a former Mamluk, Janbirdi al-Ghazalī (d. 1521). After Selim I died, he started a great rebellion against the young Ottoman sultan Süleyman I in 1520. Al-Ghazalī destroyed the dome of the Ibn 'Arabī mosque since it was a symbol of the Ottoman state.[103] He also seized the things of value that were located in the tomb.[104] Janbirdi and his followers clearly targeted the tomb for its link with the Ottoman dynasty. The revolt was suppressed quickly. Ferhad Paşa restored

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[102] Kafescioğlu, "In The Image of Rum," 70.
[103] Winter, "Sultan Selim's Obsession," 237.
[104] Ceylan, "Yavuz Sultan Selim'in Vakfiyesi," 165.

the Ottoman rule in Damascus and he quickly moved to repair the dome. Ferhad Paşa died in 1522 while he was still the governor of Damascus, and was buried on the ground of the mosque. This became a tradition afterward, and Ottoman governors of Damascus who die while still on duty were buried in this graveyard making the mosque an unmistakably Ottoman locus.[105]

As a result of the policy of Selim I, Ibn ‘Arabī became highly valued in the eyes of the former Mamluk subjects, not only in Damascus but also in Aleppo and Egypt. After Selim I, Sufis started to visit the tomb of Ibn ‘Arabī and organize Sufi ceremonies there freely. To be buried in the area of the tomb became prestigious among the Sufis. An illustrative example of the changing perception toward Ibn ‘Arabī is provided by six fatwas located in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library. A preacher from Damascus, Shams al-Dīn b. Ālī al-Fallūjī al-Shafī al-Dimashqī visited Aleppo in 1535. The rumor that he declared Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers infidel spread. He was summoned to court and faced with the death penalty, but he escaped from Aleppo and went into hiding. After that, he found an intermediary to ask for forgiveness, asserting that he actually quoted from the critics of Ibn ‘Arabī and those were not his own ideas. In this way, he managed to obtain a pardon.[106] This example manifests a radical change in the attitude toward Ibn ‘Arabī after Selim's policies. However, it was not just the conqueror who changed the conquered. As we will see, the reaction of the periphery affected the center as well.

A famous *Fuṣūṣ* commentator, Abdullah Bosnevi (d. 1644) makes an interesting remark regarding the effect of the conquest of Arab lands, namely Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo, on Ottoman lands. According to him, the heated debates focusing on Ibn ‘Arabī were invigorated after this conquest because of the increased influx of scholars and ideas coming

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[105] Masters, *The Arabs of The Ottoman Empire*, 117.
[106] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 314-5.

from there.[107] Indeed, there are eighteen fatwas and one Sultanic decree issued about Ibn ʿArabī in the Ottoman lands, all of them after Selim I's conquest of the Mamluks.[108] Yet, I do not believe that this new debate on Ibn ʿArabī's legacy in Istanbul was merely the outcome of the Mamluk scholars pouring into town or of Selim I's policies.

The suggestion that increased influx of scholars and ideas coming from Arab lands triggered the debate of Ibn ʿArabī is a little ambiguous. Who were these people? In what sense did they start the Ibn ʿArabī debate? How did they build their argument? What were their concerns that made them transmit the Ibn ʿArabī debate into another context? How did the Ottoman Sufis, scholars, and sultans react to their criticism?

The answer to these questions requires a thorough examination that this thesis suggests to do. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 1549), who was originally from Aleppo, came to Istanbul around 1500. He was a harsh critic of Ibn ʿArabī who also wrote two polemical works against him, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa (The Blessing of the Argument in Support of the Sharia)* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīh Ibn ʿArabī (Despising the Stupid Who Exonerate Ibn Arabī)*. He found support from the high officials of the Ottoman State. Even though he was not among those who came to Istanbul after the conquest, he wrote his works about Ibn ʿArabī after the conquest, he was originally from Mamluk lands and, in this sense, he was one of the earliest polemicists against Ibn ʿArabī in the Ottoman realm. I suggest that one of the main triggers of the Ibn ʿArabī debate in Ottoman lands were his texts because of his network in Istanbul and his influence on the Ottoman high-ranking officials who were members of this network.

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[107] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 1.
[108] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 310.

Chapter 2: A Mamluk Scholar in the Ottoman Capital: Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī, His Works and Career

In this chapter, I will first discuss the tension that arose between the Ottoman and Mamluk scholars after the campaign of Selim I. I will provide a context and background for al-Ḥalabī's attitudes towards Ottoman customs and the issue of Ibn ‘Arabī. Secondly, I will give a brief biography of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī based on the very few sources that recorded details about his career. The most detailed among these is *Shaqā'iq* of Taşköprüzade, yet even in this source he is only mentioned as the author of *Multaqā al-Abḥur.* Lastly, I will try to reconstruct the scholarly and political network that he was a member of. I will do that so in order to show that al-Ḥalabī's arguments about Ibn ‘Arabī could directly influence high ranking officials of the Ottoman state and cause these debates to occupy an important place in the Ottoman intellectual milieu.

2.1. The Interaction and the Conflict between the Ottoman and Mamluk Scholars

After the conquest of the Mamluk lands, perhaps one of the greatest challenges the Ottomans faced was to ensure the integrity of the society. In the first chapter, I tried to show the difference between the Ottoman and Mamluk contexts for the transmission and understanding of Ibn ‘Arabī's views, as well as the ways in which Selim I tried to establish the Ottoman rule in Mamluk lands by trying to capitalize on Ibn ‘Arabī's charisma. However, the differences and tensions between two societies entailed more than just Ibn ‘Arabī's legacy.

Perhaps the most important tension was that between the Ottoman and Mamluk scholars. The inhabitants of Arab lands, especially the members of scholarly circles, had

often looked down on the Ottomans. From the perspective of the Mamluk Empire, the Ottomans were newcomers to Islamic high culture. And the scholarly tradition of Anatolia, known as "the lands of Rum," was perceived by other Muslims as a marginal region that is unfamiliar with the scholarly and religious developments of these old intellectual centers. [109]

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Rumi scholars struggled to meet the intellectual standards of the local Arab scholars. Ottoman scholars who were sent there for state affairs were the best educated and prestigious men in Anatolia. However, in Cairo, Damascus or Aleppo they did not see the respect they enjoyed in Anatolia. Many high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrats such as Çivizade Mehmed Efendi (d. 1587), Mehmet Bostanzade (d. 1598), Fevri Efendi (d. 1571), Kınalızade Ali (d. 1572), and others studied in these cities. Thus, it was a hard mission to go back to rule a place where they were once students. [110]

A concrete illustration of this tension between the local scholars and the newcomer Ottomans was the reaction of locals toward the Ottomans efforts to limit juridical practice to only one Sunni legal school, namely the Hanafi madhab. Prior to the Ottoman conquest, the legal situation in Egypt was pluralistic: during the Mamluk reign each of the four legal schools had a chief judge representing them. The Mamluk sultan Bay-Bars (r. 1260-1277) was the one who made the decision to appoint four chief judges in Cairo in 1265.[111] Bay-Bars' intention was to provide flexibility to the legal system. A few decades before Bay-Bars' decision, Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) in his *Futūḥāt* chastised the jurists who were trying to prevent lay people (*ʿawām*) from following the permissions (*rukhṣat*) of legal schools. Ibn ʿArabī

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[109] Helen Pfeifer, "Encounter After the Conquest: Scholarly Gatherings in 16th-Century Ottoman Damascus," *IJMES* 47 (2015), 219-20.

[110] Pfeifer, "Encounter After the Conquest," 220-21. Pfeifer asserts that Ottoman scholars overcame this problem during the second half of the sixteenth century.

[111] Yossef Rapoport, "Legal Diversity in the Age of Taqlid: The Four Chief Qadis under the Mamluks," *Islamic Law and Society* 10/2 (2003): 210-28; Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim, "Al-Sharani's Response to Legal Pluralism: A Theory of Legal Pluralism," *Islamic Law and Society* 20/1-2 (2013): 110-40.

wrote acerbically about a Maliki mufti who did not allow a Maliki layperson to use permission of the Shafiʿi School. Accordingly, another important figure of the thirteenth century, Izz al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 1262), asserted that following both the permission of another legal school and solid commands of one's own legal school was correct.[112]

The Ottomans did not respect this custom of plurality and tried to uphold the position of one legal school, the Hanafite, in these lands. Ottomans pursued a policy attempting to reverse Mamluk legal pluralism and adopt Hanafism as the state madhab. In accordance with this purpose, they demoted or dismissed the non-Hanafi chief judges.[113] Increasing numbers of the books related to the bases of the Hanafite tenet can be perceived as a result of Ottomans' policy of Hanafite School. The most famous example of these books is perhaps Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's *Multaqā al-Abḥur* that had a significant influence in the Ottoman lands. *Multaqā al-Abḥur* became an essential part of the curriculum in Ottoman madrasas and was used as the main reference manual for judges (qadi) and jurisconsults (mufti).[114] Another example is Kınalızade's (d. 1572) *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafiyya*. As the grandson of the tutor of Mehmet II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) and a relative of senior members of the Ottoman bureaucrats, Kınalızade served at the various positions. He was the judge of Damascus, Cairo, Aleppo, Bursa, Edirne, and Istanbul. Since he sat at the position of justiceship in former Mamluk cities of Damascus, Cairo, and Aleppo, his book *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafiyya* could not be separated from the Ottomans' Hanafite policies in these lands. The most important goal of Kınalızade when writing this text was perhaps to establish the authority of the Ottoman learned hierarchy within the Hanafi tradition. With this purpose in mind, Kınalızade

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[112] Ibrahim, "Al-Sharani's Response to Legal Pluralism," 116.
[113] Ibid, 118.
[114] Khan, "*Multaqā al-Abḥur* of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī," 2.

elaborated a chain that connected the chief judge (shaykh al-Islam) Ibn Kemal (d. 1534) with Abu Hanifa (d. 767), the founder of the Hanafi legal school.[115]

Another example of the rise in the numbers of Hanafite texts in this period was Mahmud b. Süleyman Kefevi's biographical text (*Ṭabaqāt*) (d. 1582) *Katāʾin Aʿlām al-Akhyār min Fuqahāʾ Madhab al-Nuʿmān al-Mukhtār*. In this book, Kefevi shared the aim of Kınalızade to establish the authority of the Ottomans in the Hanafite School. However, Kefevi tried another approach: he starts his biographical work with the first Prophet Adam and then moves on to the Quranic prophets, Prophet Muḥammad, his companions, the founders of the four Sunni legal schools, to finally reach the biographies of the Hanafite legal scholars in general and Ottoman Hanafi scholars in particular.[116] Kefevi thus sketched the true path as one connecting the first Prophet Adam to Ottoman Hanafi scholars. In this way, Ottomans were styled as following the rightest path among the Sunni schools, and being the most powerful center of the Hanafite school.

Still, Ottomans never succeeded to entirely demolish the legal pluralism in the lands previously under the Mamluk reign[117] nor was it likely their primary concern. People never gave up going to non-Hanafite chief judges[118] and prominent scholars reacted against this homogenization attempt.[119] One of the figures who reacted against Ottoman policies was the famous Sufi and scholar ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Shaʿrānī (d. 1565). Shaʿrānī, in his treatise *Kashf al-Ghummā*, provided the lay people with access to the ideas and permissions (*rukhṣat*) of four different legal schools and advised them not to feel guilt or doubt in case of following

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[115] Guy Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law* (Cambrigde: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 74-6.

[116] Khan, "*Multaqā al-Abḥur* of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī," 81.

[117] This may never have been the real intention of the Ottomans. For a detailed debate about Ottomans' long-term intensions and results of this approach see Ibrahim, "Al-Sharani's Response to Legal Pluralism," 117-9. See also Abdurrahman Atcil, "Memlükler'den Osmanlılar'a Geçişte Mısır'da Adlî Teşkilât ve Hukuk (922-931/1517-1525)," *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi* 38 (2017): 89-121. For the early consequences of this policy see Timothy Fitzgerald, "Murder in Aleppo: Ottoman Conquest and the Struggle for Justice in the Early Sixteenth Century." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 27 2 (2016): 176-215.

[118] Ibrahim, "Al-Sharani's Response to Legal Pluralism," 118.

[119] For the strategies used by Ottomans for elevating the Hanafism against other Sunni madhabs, see Fitzgerald, "Murder in Aleppo," 190.

the regulations of another school. In this way, he rejected the Hanafization policy of the Ottomans and defended the plurality, which was once *de facto* practice during the Mamluk reign.[120] Shaʿrānī's contradiction to the Ottomans was not limited to the homogenization issue. Shaʿrānī also asserted the primacy of the local saints over the Anatolian saints.[121] The reaction of the common people was not different from that of Shaʿrānī. Whenever Ottomans appointed a new judge or governor, they went to the tombs of local saints to pray for the new official to have mercy. In this age of change, for the people who believed that the end of the world is near, the only shelter was the tomb of saints who were believed to hold the safety of the country in their hands.[122]

During the first half of the sixteenth century, Ottomans faced various challenges in the Arab lands that were once under the Mamluk rule. Anatolia and these lands were representing two different scholarly and religious traditions of the Islamic world and after the conquest what happened there was actually the confrontation of these two different traditions. Mamluk scholars and subjects reacted against the Ottoman interventions in various fields: they rejected the Ottomans policy of one legal school and they, in a way, complained about the newcomer and foreigner Ottomans to the tombs of local saints. Perhaps, one of the reasons of the enmity against the tomb of Ibn ʿArabī was that Arab grandees such as Janbirdi, who destroyed the dome of the tomb mosque, viewed Ibn ʿArabī as an Anatolian saint.

The reaction against the Ottoman policies and traditions by the Arab scholars did not transpire only in Cairo, Damascus and Aleppo. Some scholars came to Anatolia and Istanbul and criticized the traditions and approaches here. One of these Arab scholars was Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī. He criticized the ideas of Ibn ʿArabī and challenged the various Sufi practices in Anatolia and Istanbul.

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[120] Ibrahim, "Al-Sharani's Response to Legal Pluralism," 139-140.

[121] Ibid, 140.

[122] Adam Sabra, "Illiterate Sufis and Learned Artisans: The Circle of Abd al-Wahhab al-Sharani," *Institut Français d'archeologie Orientale, Cahier des Annales Islamologiques* 27 (2006), 167-8.

2.2. al-Ḥalabī as a Scholar between Two Empires

Even though Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī played a significant role in the construction of the Hanafite identity of the Ottomans through his work *Multaqā al-Abḥur*, his biography does not occupy a notable place in the sources. The most detailed information about Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī is in the famous Ottoman biographical dictionary, *al-Shaqāʾiq al-Nuʿmāniyya* of Taşköprizade. However, even *al-Shaqāʾiq*, does not contain more than cursory information about al-Ḥalabī. The absence of information extends to other sources as well.[123] What could be the reason behind the absence of sufficient information about the author of a really famous and important fiqh text? Could it be out of ignorance of details of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's life or a conscious choice?

A clue for the absence of sufficient information on al-Ḥalabī in the biographical sources comes from the area of biographical dictionaries of poets (*tadhkira*). Kuru, in his "The Literature of Rum," remarks on the relation between the rise in the number of biographical dictionaries of poets in the sixteenth century and the construction of Rumi identity in Anatolia. Biographers, when they were writing their dictionaries, took into consideration certain aspects, such as poets' language, religion, etc. In this sense, Kuru quotes an interesting phrase from one of the biographers, Aşık Çelebi (d.1572). When Aşık Çelebi is explaining the reason of inclusion of a non-Rumi poet into his dictionary, *Mashari al-Shuʿarā*, he says, because "he [Bāsirī] did not despise Rum and the Rumis like other Persians did."[124] A similar process, but in reverse, is evident in the Hanafi *Ṭabaqāt* literature produced by the Arab Hanafi scholars from Greater Syria in the aftermath of the Ottoman conquest, as

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[123] Khan, "*Multaqā al-Abḥur* of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī," 21.

[124] Selim S. Kuru, "The Literature of Rum: The Making of a Literary Tradition (1450-1600)," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453-1603*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 591.

Guy Burak has demonstrated.[125] Could biographers like Taşköprizade have seen Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī as a scholar who despised the Rumi culture of Sufism because of his severe opposition to Ibn ʿArabī? Perhaps, it would not be wrong to assert that since, otherwise, there should be more information about a scholar who is the author of an important legal text, *Multaqā al-Abḥur*.[126]

Al-Ḥalabī was born in Aleppo. There is no information regarding his date of birth, yet Taşköprizade records that al-Ḥalabī was over ninety years old when he died in 1549, which means he was probably born in the 1460s.[127] Al-Ḥalabī started his education in the Islamic sciences in Aleppo, under various teachers. He most probably studied hadith with the famous hadith scholar Burhān al-Rūḥāwī (d. 1488) as well as the chief qadi Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad (d. 1477). Al-Ḥalabī also may have met Abu Dharr b. al-Ḥāfiẓ Burhān al-Dīn b. al-Quf (d. 1479), another prominent contemporary scholar who is depicted as the teacher of hadith in the sources.[128] These three names indicate that al-Ḥalabī received a good education in hadith. After holding the post of imam and *khātib* for some time in Aleppo, he decided to leave and move to Cairo, an important center of Islamic education, to continue his studies.[129]

Al-Ḥalabī participated in the classes on fiqh, exegesis (*tafsīr*), hadith, and reciting (*qirāʾa*).[130] Probably because of his education in Cairo, in the *Shaqāʾiq* he is depicted as the master in the sciences of Arabic grammar, exegesis, hadith, the sciences of reciting the Quran, fiqh, and the methodology of fiqh (*uṣūl*). According to this record, he specialized in the last two.[131]

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[125] Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law*, 102-11.
[126] See also Burak's analysis of Taşköprüzade's motivation for writing the *Shaqāʿiq* in *The Second Formation of Islamic Law*, 94-8.
[127] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 2.
[128] Ibid, 3.
[129] Ibid, 3-4.
[130] Ibid.
[131] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīḥ al-Ghabī*, 31.

One of al-Ḥalabī's teachers in Cairo is especially noteworthy and important in the context of this thesis. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī was teaching in the Khanqah al-Shaykhūniyya and in the Barbarsiyya. In addition to that, Suyūṭī counts the name of al-Ḥalabī among the scholars of hadith. Al-Ḥalabī, most probably, participated in Suyūṭī's classes.[132] This is an interesting relation since Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī wrote his *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* as a polemical text against Suyūṭī's *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*. Al-Ḥalabī insults Suyūṭī by using severe language, including words such as stupid, ignorant, and infidel, and he finds al-Suyūṭī guilty of defending a heretic Sufi such as Ibn ʿArabī.

Al-Ḥalabī went to Istanbul sometime around 1500. As a scholar who was trained very well in the Islamic sciences, he was appointed as the imam and preacher of the Fatih mosque.[133] At the same time, he taught in the Dār al-Qurrā madrasa established by the chief jurisprudent (*shaykh al-Islam*) Sadi Çelebi (d. 1539).[134] al-Ḥalabī lived in Istanbul fot fifty years, and if he arrived around 1500, he witnessed the reign of three sultans, Bayazid II (r. 1481-1512), Selim I (r. 1512-1520), and Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566), and eight chief jurisprudents, Efdalzade Hamidüddin Efendi (1496-1503), Zenbilli Ali Efendi (1503-1526), Ibn Kemal (1526-1534), Sadi Çelebi (1534-1539), Çivizade (1539-1542), Abdülkadir Hamidi Çelebi (1542-1543), Fenarizade Muhyiddin Çelebi (1543-1545), and Ebussuud Efendi (1545-1574). Four of these chief jurists, Ibn Kemal, Sadi Çelebi, Çivizade, and Ebussuud Efendi, issued fatwas about Ibn ʿArabī. Two of them, Sadi Çelebi and Çivizade, held a negative view of the controversial Sufi shaykh.

Al-Ḥalabī died in 1549 in Istanbul and was buried in the Edirnekapı cemetery.[135] His *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* and his teacher Suyūṭī's *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* capture an interesting debate that lies at the heart of this thesis. Both Suyūṭī and al-Ḥalabī were scholars who were educated in

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[132] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 6.
[133] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 101.
[134] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 150.
[135] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 11.

the Mamluk lands. In these lands, as it was remarked in the first chapter, the legacy of Ibn ʿArabī was a lot more debated and problematic than in the Ottoman lands. After al-Ḥalabī came to Istanbul, he wrote two books suggesting that Ibn ʿArabī was a heretic. One of them was *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* in which he refuted his teacher's argumentation about the veracity of Ibn ʿArabī's sainthood. In a way, al-Ḥalabī carried the debates about Ibn ʿArabī into the Ottoman lands. There were, of course, scholars in Ottoman lands who denied the sainthood of Ibn ʿArabī since many scholars, even before Selim I's campaign, were going to Mamluk lands, and vice versa. They were not completely unaware of each other's views. However, arrival of al-Ḥalabī in Istanbul carried these debates to the heart of the empire—that is the high bureaucracy and the court—because of the network that al-Ḥalabī became part of in his new milieu.

2.3. al-Ḥalabī and His Scholarly Network in the Ottoman Lands

Al-Ḥalabī came to Istanbul around 1500s, before Selim I's Mamluk campaign. This was a time, as mentioned in the first subchapter, when Ottomans were perceived as foreigners to Islamic high culture. Al-Ḥalabī was well-educated in the Islamic sciences and, in this sense, he was probably feeling the responsibility for correcting the faults of his new collagues, the Ottoman scholar-bureaucrats. As a representative of the oldest intellectual centers of Islamic lands he wrote many treatises that criticized certain customs of the Ottoman society: *raqṣ*,[136] *samā*,[137] *mash*,[138] music and standing up when the Prophet's name

[136] "Rhythmic movement (commonly called *raqṣ*), whether elaborately choreographed or allowing for spontaneity, that is an element in the paraliturgical ritual of many orders. Although the whirling dance that has become the hallmark of the Mawlawiyya is by far the best known example of Sufi dance, there are other important examples as well. Many involve some form of circle formation with oscillating, swaying movement, around, into and out of the circle. Occasionally an individual participant will step into the middle of the circle. It may be that, for example, a member of the Mawlawiyya attends an audition of, say, the Halveti-Jerrahi order and performs his whirling in the middle while the members of the host group form concentric circles around him. Simpler forms may involve little more than rhythmic lilting back and forth, or from side to side, while chanting a *dhikr* text or syllable. Sacred movement has been an important medium in which Sufis have sought to involve themselves more fully in the experience of prayer, and it has in some cases been employed explicitly as

was mentioned during the recitation of Mawlid.[139] The issue of Ibn ʿArabī is also among these polemical topics; however, books he wrote on the Ibn ʿArabī issue should not be treated in the same way since they are substantially longer than other treatises.

Perhaps because of his competence in Islamic sciences, al-Ḥalabī built a close relationship with the high officials of the Ottoman state. These friendships caused him to be appointed in the important positions such as that of imam of the imperial Fatih mosque and teacher in the Dār al-Qurrā Madrasa. This madrasa was established by the chief jurisprudent Sadi Çelebi. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī was most probably a close friend not only with Sadi Çelebi, but also successor the latter's successor in the post of chief jurisprudent, Çivizade (d. 1547). What all three of these men shared was fierce disapproval of Ibn ʿArabī.[140] In this sense, they were supporting each other. For example, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* was signed in endorsement by both of Sadi Çelebi and Çivizade.[141]

However, some tensions among these men did occur from time to time. The issue of *mash* was central to one such disagreement. Çivizade issued a fatwa denouncing the permissibility of *mash* by leaning on the sources of Shafiʿi legal school. However, during this period the Ottoman State was increasing its commitment to Hanafite legal school, which could cause a disagreement among the scholars. Furthermore, Çivizade's fatwa was contrary

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a means to altered consciousness or ecstasy." For this, see John Renard, *The A to Z of Sufism* (Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2009), 68.

[137] "A category of Sufi ritual much contested because it involves the use of music, which mainstream Muslim tradition has generally condemned because of its emotional power and soul-altering properties. Audition (*samā*) often also incorporates the recitation of sacred text and poetry as well as various forms of ritual movement or dance. While some Sufis have argued against the practice, many Sufi organizations have regarded audition as an essential ingredient of spiritual practice and have evolved their own distinctive forms. Perhaps the best known is the whirling dance of the Mawlawiyya, set to the music of an instrumental group with the reed flute (*ney*) as its lead voice. Some Sufis have considered audition as a reliving of the Day of Covenant." See Renard, *Sufism*, 39-40.

[138] The wiping of a wet hand over leather socks in ritual ablution, as an alternative to removing the socks and washing the feet. Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 104.

[139] For al-Ḥalabī's contradiction to standing up during the mawlid ceremonies, see, Ibrahim al-Ḥalabī, *Risāla* (Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Hacı Mehmed Efendi, 4474), 2.

[140] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 325-7.

[141] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 150.

to the earlier Ottoman chief jurists' fatwa. Hence, it was rejected in the Divan by Ebussud Efendi, who was the Rumeli Military Judge (*kadıasker*) of the time. When Sultan heard of this disagreement, he asked ulama to investigate this issue. The ulama stated that Çivizade's fatwa was contradicting the views of earlier Ottoman muftis. al-Ḥalabī was among the opponents of Çivizade on this issue. He wrote a separate treatise about the issue of *mash* and defended its permissibility as one of the key tenets of Sunni Islam, in contrast to the views of the Shiites.[142]

We do not know, unfortunately, what the relationship was between al-Ḥalabī and the chief jurists who were supporters of Ibn 'Arabī, Ibn Kemal and Ebussuud. However, it is possible to say that he may have felt some pressure coming from them, at least on the issue of Ibn 'Arabī, since, as mentioned in the first chapter, Ibn Kemal was playing a vital role in the Ibn 'Arabī strategy of Selim I. One clue may be the time of the composition of the books of *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*. Al-Ḥalabī finished composing *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* at the end of July 1538.[143] At the beginning of this book, he says that this book was supplementary to *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa*,[144] hence, he probably did not write *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* long before *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*. During 1538, Sadi Çelebi was the chief jurist of the empire (*shaykh al-Islam*). So the question here is whether al-Ḥalabī waited for Sadi Çelebi to acquire this post in order to write these two anti-Ibn 'Arabī books and whether he felt threaded by Ibn Kemal's views before. This was probably not the case, since al-Ḥalabī was not a scholar who avoided controversy.

A clear example of the courageous character of al-Ḥalabī is his treatise about the impropriety of standing up during the recitation of Prophet Muḥammad's name. Ottoman

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[142] Khan, "*Multaqā al-Abḥur* of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī," 11.

[143] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 101.

[144] Ibid, 37.

Mawlid [145] ceremonies entailed customs and envisioned roles for all the participants, including sultans and high officials.[146] One of these customs was standing up while the name of Prophet Muḥammad was recited. The custom was motivated by respect for the Prophet. However, al-Ḥalabī opposed this custom by suggesting that it was an innovation.[147] A scholar who argued that a custom accepted and fulfilled by sultans was probably not afraid to write against Ibn ʿArabī during the age of Ibn Kemal, although he may have waited to acquire a sufficient reputation for learning before doing so.

By the time he wrote *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* and *Tasfīḥ al-Ghabī*, al-Ḥalabī likely gained a considerable reputation and respect of the scholars and sultans: his *Multaqā al-Abḥur* became an essential part of madrasa curriculum and a reference manual for qadis. There is no record of arguments against him in the sources as opposed to the case of Çivizade, for example. Çivizade was the first chief jurist who was dismissed from his post by the Sultan's order. One of the reasons for his dismissal was apparently his fatwa written against the two patron saints of Ottomans, Mawlana Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) and Ibn ʿArabī.[148] Because of al-Ḥalabī's prestige in the Islamic sciences, he may have not experienced any official oppression; yet, Ottoman literati responded to his attacks. The Ibn ʿArabī debate that he started and the reactions of Ottoman scholars to his arguments will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[145] The day that is believed to be the birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad.

[146] Erman Harun Karaduman, "The Royal Mawlid Ceremonies in the Ottoman Empire (1789-1908)" (master's thesis, Bilkent University, 2016), 66.

[147] al-Ḥalabī, *Risāla*, 2-3.

[148] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 105-6.

Chapter 3: al-Ḥalabī against Ibn ʿArabī

The main focus of this chapter is al-Ḥalabī's engagement with Ibn ʿArabī's understanding of Sufism and his intellectual inheritance. I will focus on two texts: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d.1505) *Tanbīh al-Ghabī bi-Tabriʾati Ibn ʿArabī* (Warning to the Stupid for Acquitting Ibn ʿArabī) and Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's response to it, entitled *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīhi Ibn ʿArabī* (Despising the Stupid About Acquitting Ibn ʿArabī). I will also refer to Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa* (The Blessing of the Means for Supporting the Sharia), which has been translated by Şükrü Selim Has.[149] By focusing on these texts, I will show that Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī labeled Ibn ʿArabī and his followers as heretics and infidels (*zindiq* wa *kāfir*) while defending another type of Sufism that he saw compatible with the sharia and the sunna. Furthermore, as I will suggest in the last subchapter, al-Ḥalabī wrote both his *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* and *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* while Sadi Çelebi (d. 1539), an anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholar, was at the post of the Ottoman chief-jurisprudent (*shaykh al-Islam*). I will argue that Al-Ḥalabī's text started a vehement debate among Ottoman scholars who tried to refute al-Ḥalabī's as well as other critiques of Ibn ʿArabī by issuing fatwas and treatises on this subject.

The chapter will be divided in three sections. The first subsection will focus on the arguments of al-Ḥalabī's teacher al-Suyūṭī in his *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* to which al-Ḥalabī was responding when he wrote *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīhi Ibn ʿArabī*. Interestingly, al-Ḥalabī attacks his teacher harshly and accuses him of being ignorant and stupid. Furthermore, as I will argue, Suyūṭī's perspective on the issue is very similar to the Ottoman scholars' defense of Ibn ʿArabī.[150]

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[149] I decided to rely on Has' translation upon comparing it with the manuscript and finding it reliable. See Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 118-31.

[150] *DİA*, s.v. "Halebî, İbrahim b. Muhammed," https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/halebi-ibrahim-b-muhammed [Last accessed on: May 12, 2019].

In the second subsection, I will describe al-Ḥalabī's work and trace his opposition to both his teacher Suyūṭī and Ibn 'Arabī. In this section I intend to show that al-Ḥalabī was not against Sufism as such, but that he had a different perspective on what kind of mysticism was acceptable. According to him, Ibn 'Arabī and his followers mixed Sufism and philosophy and their ideas did not comply with Sharia and Sunna, and were hence heresy. Al-Ḥalabī's views were very similar to those of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn described in the first chapter.

In the third subsection of this chapter, I will discuss how al-Ḥalabī's work resonated in the Ottoman realm. I will debate the positions of supporters of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī and the supporters of Ibn 'Arabī by evaluating certain fatwas that were written on Ibn 'Arabī in the wake of al-Ḥalabī's work.

3.1. Suyūṭī in Defense of Ibn 'Arabī: *Tanbīh al-Ghabī bi-Tabriʾati Ibn 'Arabī*

Suyūṭī wrote his *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* as a polemic against famous Shafi'i scholar Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī's (d. 1480) *Tanbīh al-Ghabī ila Takfīr Ibn 'Arabī* (*Warning to the Stupid to Declare the Infidelity of Ibn 'Arabī*). Al-Biqāʿī, who was born in a small village in the valley of Biqa, lived most of his life in Damascus and Cairo, where he studied under prominent anti-Ibn 'Arabī scholars such as Muḥammad Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 1430) and Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī (d. 1449), and died three decades before Selim's campaign against Mamluks. He became famous for his opposition to Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). All efforts of Biqāʿī were devoted to the destruction of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas. In his book *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, and in many other works, he criticized Ibn 'Arabī severely. *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* was a collection of views expounded by earlier anti-Ibn 'Arabī scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyya, Taftāzānī, and Ibn Khaldūn, mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis.[151]

[151] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 117-8.

In his polemic against Biqāʿī's *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, Suyūṭī tried to demonstrate the veracity of the sainthood of Ibn ʿArabī. He used two main strategies to this effect. Firstly, he suggested that to be able to understand the real intention of Ibn ʿArabī, one should know how to interpret (*taʾwīl*) his ideas, since the external meaning of his writings does not reflect his real intention. Secondly, Suyūṭī quotes estimations of earlier reliable Sufis and scholars to document their positive perception of Ibn ʿArabī. Suyūṭī's *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* elicited significant attention of Ottoman scholars, judging by the number of manuscripts located in the libraries and manuscript collections of today's Turkey.[152]

Suyūṭī was a prominent Shafiʿi scholar who was born in Cairo in 1445. He memorized the Qurʾan when he was only eight and then started to study Islamic sciences from several scholars of his age. When he was sixteen, he wrote his first book, *Sharh al-Istiʿadha wa al-Basmala* (Commentary on the *Istiadha*[153] and *Basmala*[154]) and introduced it to his shaykh al-Bulqinī (d.1463). In a short time, he specialized in many Islamic sciences and became a respected scholar and well known polymath not only in the Mamluk lands but also in the Ottoman realm. This was in part due to his being a very prolific author. In his *Ḥusn al-Muhādhara*[155] (The Beauty of the Presence Before God) he says that he wrote 300 books. Among them, at least ten were about Sufism.[156]

Tanbīh al-Ghabī bi-Tabriʾati Ibn ʿArabī was one of these books. It can be divided into three main chapters. In the first chapter, Suyūṭī cites accusations against Ibn ʿArabī and

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[152] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 118.

[153] Appealing for refuge of God. There are certain wordings for appealing for refuge such as "*aʿudhu* and *maʿādhallah*." For further information, please see, *DİA*, s.v. "İstiâze," https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/istiaze [Last accessed on: May 9, 2019].

[154] The utterance of "In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful." For further information, please see, *DİA*, s.v. "Besmele," https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/besmele [Last accessed on: May 9, 2019].

[155] "Presence. An aspect of spiritual experience implying perfect attentiveness to God, often juxtaposed with absence. Presence (typically called *hudur*, sometimes with cognates *hadara* and *muhadara*) paradoxically may involve a certain "absence" from created beings the better to focus on God. A variation of the concept is expressed in the term *hadra*, usually referring to the presence of the Prophet experienced in certain dance rituals." Renard, *Sufism*, 187.

[156] Ferzende İdiz, "İmâm Suyûtî Perspektifinden İbn Arabî," *EKEV Akademi Dergisi* 53 (Fall 2012), 145.

states his own position on these issues. In the second chapter, he counts twelve prominent scholars from all of the Sunni schools of law (madhab) who defended Ibn 'Arabī. After that, in the same chapter, Suyūṭī quotes some stories about other famous scholars and sufis, in which they interacted with Ibn 'Arabī himself. In the last chapter, Suyūṭī gives a short biography of Ibn 'Arabī. The last two chapters are constructed in a way that in each story Suyūṭī tries to prove at least one of these: Ibn 'Arabī was a true saint, he had miracles, or he was a very compassionate person.

Suyūṭī's *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* starts with a question: "What is the situation of the man who orders burning of Ibn 'Arabī's books and suggests that the latter is more inferior than the Jews, Christians, and the ones who attribute a son to God? What should be done in this situation?"[157] Suyūṭī does not directly respond to this question but he says that people have been in conflict over Ibn 'Arabī before as they are now. According to Suyūṭī, it is possible to divide people according to their stance toward Ibn 'Arabī in three separate groups. In the first group are the ones who accept Ibn 'Arabī's sainthood and, according to Suyūṭī, they are the right ones. Suyūṭī gives two names: al-Shaykh Taj al-Dīn b. ʿAṭāʾ Allah al-Isqandarī (d.1309) and al-Shaykh ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Yafāʿa (d.1366). In the second group are the people who suggest that Ibn 'Arabī deviated from the sunna and sharia. According to Suyūṭī, the majority of this group is the legal scholars (*fuqahāʾ*). The third group is suspicious about Ibn 'Arabī and they choose to keep silent about him. Among them is al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī (d. 1347) and al-Shaykh Izz al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 1262). Suyūṭī asserts that there are two distinct reports about the latter, one of which suggests he was a detractor of Ibn 'Arabī, while the other implied that he believed Ibn 'Arabī to have been the pole (*qutb*)[158] of his epoch.[159] The

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[157] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 38b.
[158] "Pinnacle of the Sufi cosmological hierarchy. Individual Sufi leaders have sometimes been identified as the cosmic axis, pivot, or pole (*qutb*) "of the age," suggesting that the cosmic hierarchy is subject to metaphorical renewal in that it is composed of living individuals. In that sense the term refers to the highest level of sanctity among Friends of God. Some consider the pole of each age to be the manifestation of the spirit of the Prophet

issue of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām is important since he was the contemporary of Ibn ʿArabī and also an authoritative scholar of his time.

Suyūṭī gives some context to the issue of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām by suggesting that he read from Tāj al-Dīn b. ʿAṭā Allah's *Laṭāʾif al-Minan* about these two contradicting reports about him. Suyūṭī quotes, "Shaykh Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām used to be among the fuqahāʾ who were against Sufism *per se*. When, the founder of the Shadhiliyya Sufi order, Shaykh Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), returned from his duty of haj, he went to Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām's house. Al-Shādhilī conveyed the Prophet Muḥammad's regards to him. Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām acknowledged this, and after this, he became a regular at the Sufi gatherings and ceremonies of Shaykh al-Shādhilī participating in their *samā* and *raqṣ*.

Suyūṭī, after counting these groups, asserts his own idea: "My final decision about Ibn ʿArabī is a perspective that neither supporters nor detractors of Ibn ʿArabī would agree with. I suggest that his sainthood should be accepted but the reading of his books should be forbidden. Furthermore, we have been told about him that he said, 'I am among the people whose books are forbidden to be read.'"[160]

Even though this assertion seems to be a bit confusing, it is actually not a rare approach, at least in the Ottoman realm. Ibn ʿArabī's books are complex texts and it is not an easy work to understand the real intention in his writings. Hence, scholars and Sufis suggested that understanding Ibn ʿArabī is only possible if someone knew the special terminology used by Sufis. Suyūṭī, too, thought along the same lines and said: "Sufis speak in a certain terminology giving different meanings to words. They usually do not intend the common meaning of a word when they are speaking. When someone understands their

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for that time, and in certain orders the *shaykh* is regarded as the pole. The term *ghawth*, Arabic for "assistance," is often used as virtually synonymous with *qutb*, but some theorists rank *ghawth* second to the pole." Renard, *Sufism*, 185.

[159] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 38b.

[160] Ibid, 39a.

statements by taking them at their face value, they either become an infidel or cause someone to become an infidel."[161] It is a dangerous thing to read Ibn ʿArabī's books since if the reader does not understand the real meaning in those seemingly contradictory sentences, he will become an infidel. But it is also dangerous to declare Ibn ʿArabī an infidel without understanding his real intention and the real meaning of his words. According to Suyūṭī, because Ibn ʿArabī intends different meanings than the literal reading of the text, the one who declares Ibn ʿArabī an infidel is the one who is not afraid of the Day of Judgment.[162]

For the issue of the usage of specific terminology, Suyūṭī adduces the statement of a prominent scholar Imam al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), suggesting that the unclear words of Sufis are similar to the unclear (*mutashābih*) verses in Quran. If someone accepts the meaning of these verses according to their external and common meaning, that person becomes an infidel. These words, according to Imam al-Ghazzālī, have other meanings. For example, whoever understands the words in some verses such as the face,[163] two hands,[164] or *istiwa*[165] according to their external meaning, he commits a certain blasphemy.[166] By referring to a prominent and authoritative scholar, Suyūṭī tries to prove that one should interpret (*taʾwīl*) the unclear statements of Ibn ʿArabī. And so as to be able to do that, that person should know the specific terminology used by them. Consequently, if that person does not know this terminology, he should not declare Ibn ʿArabī an infidel.

Declaring someone an infidel was a dangerous and highly debated issue among the Sunnis. In the reliable hadith books, there are many hadiths that highlight the dangers of

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[161] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 39a.

[162] Ibid.

[163] "But will abide (for ever) the Face of thy Lord,- full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour." Rahman 55/27.

[164] (Allah) said: "O Iblis! What prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with my hands? Art thou haughty? Or art thou one of the high (and mighty) ones?" Sad 38/75.

[165] (Allah) Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of authority). Ta-ha 20/5.

[166] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 39a.

declaring a Muslim an infidel. For example, in Abu Dawūd's *al-Sunan*, [167] Prophet Muḥammad says, "When a Muslim declares another Muslim an infidel, if the accused is not an infidel, then, the accuser becomes an infidel."[168] This is the reason why Suyūṭī asserts that the one who declares Ibn 'Arabī an infidel is the one who is not afraid of the Day of Judgment. By declaring Ibn 'Arabī an infidel, actually, the accuser becomes an infidel.

After giving his "final decision" that is accepting Ibn 'Arabī's sainthood but forbidding the reading his books, Suyūṭī continues with interrogating an imaginary detractor. He asks him, "Are you certain of Ibn 'Arabī being an infidel?" The imaginary detractor asserts, "His books are the evidence of his infidelity." Then, Suyūṭī answers by asking, "Then is it certain that Ibn 'Arabī wrote these sentences by intending the external meanings of those words?" We understand from this imaginary interrogation, first of all, Suyūṭī believes that those statements in Ibn 'Arabī's books seemingly contradicting the Sharia may have been inserted into his books by a heretic or one of his enemies.[169] Since it is impossible to know whether those problematic statements belong to Ibn 'Arabī or not, it is wrong to assert that Ibn 'Arabī is an infidel. Secondly, it is not possible that Ibn 'Arabī intends the external meaning of these words. The meaning of these words is in the heart but not in the reason. No one but God may understand the real meanings of these words. Then Suyūṭī transmits a story in which a scholar asks a Sufi, "What are those words with which you are speaking and nothing is acquirable from them?" The Sufi answers, "This is our protection for the order. We protect our order with these words so people who do not understand their meaning would stay away from our path because of their incapacity to understand."[170]

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[167] Abu Dawūd's *al-Sunan* is among the most reliable six books of hadith (*kutub al-Sitta*) used by Sunnis. For a detailed information see, *DİA*, s.v. "Sünen," https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sunen [Last accessed on: May 9, 2019].

[168] The book of *Sunna*, 15.

[169] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 39b.

[170] Ibid.

Suyūṭī's explanation as to why he favors forbidding the reading of Ibn 'Arabī's books is certainly an interesting one. According to Suyūṭī, neither reading nor teaching of Ibn 'Arabī's books is beneficial for Muslims. On the contrary, such a person harms both the Muslims and himself. Especially if this person is not an expert in the Islamic sciences, he deviates and makes other people deviate. And if this person is among the experts, he should know that the knowledge of Sufism cannot be obtained by reading books. This knowledge is not in the books.[171]

The important aspect of Sufism, in this context, is that the knowledge, i.e. the divine secret, could not be obtained by reading books but by following and obeying a shaykh. Sufis call the process of obtaining the knowledge the "unveiling" (*mukāshafa*). It is like tasting a portion of delicious food. Hence, it is not an analogical or rational process and it is earned as a result of sincere worship of God and as the beneficence of God.

In the later pages, Suyūṭī again mentions this aspect of Sufism by quoting a story from Burhān al-Biqāʿī's (d.1480) *Muʿjam*. According to this quotation, one of the greatest Sufis, Shaykh Taqi al-Dīn Abu al-Wafā al-Qudsā Shafi'i (d.1426) said, "Some of our friends were reading Ibn 'Arabī's books and others were prohibiting it. I consulted Shaykh al-Imām Yūsuf al-Safadī about this issue. He said, 'Know that the knowledge Ibn 'Arabī obtained is not created only for him. But he was a master. His followers say that to obtain this knowledge is impossible without the unveiling. Hence, there is no benefit in the effort of [reading or] proving their suggestions. Likewise, if both the teacher and the student are masters in this knowledge, their effort is vein since both of them have it. If the teacher is a master and the student is ignorant, it is impossible to teach this science by reading books. If both of them are ignorant of this knowledge, both of their efforts are meaningless. Then the path of the master is that to not talk about this knowledge, to keep going on the path that makes it possible for

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[171] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 39b.

him to acquire this knowledge and after something is unveiled for him, to continue towards the next step.'"[172]

After that story, Suyūṭī continues this line of argumentation. This time, Shaykh Taqi al-Dīn consults Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Khwafi (d. 1435). He transmits the words of Shaykh al-Imam Yūsuf al-Safadī's words to Khwafi and Khwafi expresses that he was pleased with al-Safadī's evaluations. Khwafi continues, "After the station of *taḥalluq*, comes the station of *taḥaqquq*.[173] In this station, God manifests himself to the Sufi clearly. Sufi sees God in everything he looks at. The Sufi does not see anything but God. He thinks that God is the essence of everything. However, there is a higher station after that in which Sufi understands that everything is actually grace (*fayḍ*) of God. If the Sufi speaks about what he saw during the station of *taḥaqquq*, God does not lead him to proceed to the next station."[174]

After these records, we understand the reason why Suyūṭī prohibits the reading of Ibn ʿArabī's books. First, it will make some uneducated people infidels since they will not understand the real intention of Ibn ʿArabī because of their ignorance of the Sufi terminology. Hence, they will suggest that Ibn ʿArabī is an infidel, and since Ibn ʿArabī is not actually an infidel, they as the accusers will become infidels as it is stated in the related hadith. Second, the knowledge of the mystical path is not something acquirable from the books but one can acquire it only from a master. That is why it is useless for a Sufi who is at the beginning of his spiritual journey (*sayr al sulūk*) to read those books.

After Suyūṭī mentions this peculiarity of Sufism, he answers the question posed at the beginning of the book. He says, "My answer to the young man who posed this question about burning of Ibn ʿArabī's books is that he should abstain from harming the saints of God,

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[172] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 41b.

[173] *Taḥalluq* and *taḥaqquq* are the Sufi terms. In the station of *taḥalluq*, Sufi tries to strengthen his morals. The station after that is the station of *taḥaqquq*. In this station, Sufi aims to acquire the divine secrets. For more information see Sema Özdemir İmamoğlu, "Davud Kayseri'ye Göre Sufi'nin Bilgisi ve İlm-i İlahi," *EKEV Akademi Dergisi* 51 (2012), 148.

[174] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 41b-42a.

repent and defer to God. Or else, God wages war on those who harm His saints. This young one should be deaf to what these critics say about Ibn ʿArabī. God's punishment is enough for them. This is my answer to the question. God knows best.[175]

After responding to the question with which he started, Suyūṭī counts twelve names of admirers of Ibn ʿArabī. These are Sufis and scholars who are members of each Sunni madhab and exegetes of Ibn ʿArabī's several books as well as authors of many other books in various Islamic sciences. In addition to that, these names are usually judges (qadi) of important Mamluk cities such as Damascus and Cairo. Suyūṭī also refers to some of the extraordinary events they experienced so as to show that these men were also saints. For example Shaykh Walī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Mawlawī (d. 1372) on his deathbed said: "The angels of God arrived and they are heralding. They brought some clothes from heaven and they are undressing me."[176] Suyūṭī quotes these short biographies from *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr* of a famous hadith scholar and his own teacher,[177] Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī (d. 1449), who was surprisingly an anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholar.[178]

The last name Suyūṭī gives as the follower of Ibn ʿArabī is Shams al-Dīn al-Bisāṭī al-Maliki (d. 1438). Suyūṭī quotes his record from Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr* as well. According to the record, during a scholarly gathering in Cairo in 1433, Ibn ʿArabī's name was mentioned. The leader of this gathering was ʿAla al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 1437) who was known for his opposition to "deviant" beliefs. Al-Bukhārī had strongly denounced Ibn ʿArabī and his followers and declared them infidels. Al-Bisāṭī defended Ibn ʿArabī, saying: "People deny his ideas by looking at the external meanings of his statements. However, if they interpret (*taʾwīl*) his statements in their essence, they would understand that what they are denying is actually not found in Ibn ʿArabī's books." Al-Bukhārī got very angry because of

[175] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 39b-40a.
[176] Ibid, 40a.
[177] See *DİA*, s.v. "Süyûtî," https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/Suyūtī [Last accessed on: May 12, 2019].
[178] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 135.

his words and took an oath to God that if the Sultan does not dismiss al-Bisāṭī from the judgeship, he will leave Egypt and never return. Sultan Bars-Bay (r. 1422-1438) decided to take al-Bukhārī's advice and to appoint Shihāb al-Taqī instead. Still, he wanted to consult the council of judges of Cairo. The decision of dismissal was disapproved by them. Suyūṭī suggests that this was a divine gift to his saints and al-Bisāṭī kept his post for further eleven years until he died.[179]

Suyūṭī includes the testimony of prominent scholars of Mamluk lands who believed in the veracity of Ibn 'Arabī's sainthood into his *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*. In this way, he tried to show that prominent Mamluk scholars and Sufis could be followers of Ibn 'Arabī, in contrast to the effort made by the detractors of Ibn 'Arabī who singled out only the Sufi's detractors, starting in his own era. Among them, especially Ibn Taymiyya was anxious to trace the signs of oppositions to Ibn ʿArabī already in the thirteenth century. However, any sign of opposition to Ibn ʿArabī from that age was hard to find, probably because of the ignorance of Ibn ʿArabī's contemporaries about the essence of his writings since, as we mentioned in the first chapter, the systemizations and dissemination of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas and the formation of his textual and interpretative community happened only later. Furthermore, Ibn ʿArabī's supporters were pointing out that because of the lack of opposition, Ibn ʿArabī's doctrines were wholly acceptable to the scholars of his own age.[180]

Suyūṭī's effort was similar to that of Ibn Taymiyya. In an intellectual environment where Ibn ʿArabī's ideas generally were seen as heresy by the prominent scholars, he remarks on the existence of some other prominent scholars who support Ibn ʿArabī. In this way, he tries to show that scholars who were well educated in the Islamic sciences could find Ibn ʿArabī's ideas suitable to sharia and sunna.

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[179] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 41a-41b.
[180] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 60.

The name of al-Shaykh Izz al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Salām appears in Suyūṭī's text many times because he was an authoritative scholar who was also the leader of Syrian Shafiʿis and known for his fearless criticisms against temporal rulers and "deviant" thinkers.[181] It was essential for detractors of Ibn ʿArabī to show Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām's opposition against Ibn ʿArabī. That is why ʿAbd al-Salām was referred to frequently in polemical works, such as in the texts of Ibn Taymiyya.[182] Suyūṭī, in contrast, tries to show that ʿAbd al-Salām was actually not a detractor of Ibn ʿArabī; even if he was such in the earlier period of his life, later he changed his mind. Suyūṭī says that he inclined away from Ibn ʿArabī because ʿAbd al-Salām was rejecting the interpretation (taʾwīl) of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas but accepting their external meanings.[183] After that report, Suyūṭī cites another story about ʿAbd al-Salām narrated by the latter's servant. According to the story, ʿAbd al-Salām and his servant went into a mosque in Damascus. The servant reminded ʿAbd al-Salām that he had promised to show him the pole (qutb). ʿAbd al-Salām points Ibn ʿArabī who was in the mosque. Servant responds, "But you were criticizing him harshly." ʿAbd al-Salām repeats his answer twice: "He is the pole, he is the pole!" Here, Suyūṭī intervenes and suggests this is not a discrepancy of ʿAbd al-Salām. He was criticizing Ibn ʿArabī according to the external meaning of his words for protecting the sharia and the integrity of the Islamic community. However, actually, he was aware of the inner meaning of his words and the highness of the station of Ibn ʿArabī.[184] After that, Suyūṭī repeats his argument about how Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām changed his attitude toward Sufism because of the influence of Shaykh Shādhilī. Then he suggests that ʿAbd al-Salām was a detractor of Ibn ʿArabī when he was in Damascus and still against Sufism. After he changed his mind about Sufism, he also started to support Ibn ʿArabī.[185]

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[181] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 61.

[182] Ibid, 61-2.

[183] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 44a.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid, 44a-44b.

Suyūṭī implies that Mamluk anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholars may change their minds about Ibn ʿArabī as well.

In order to strengthen his argument about the existence of supporters of Ibn ʿArabī from his own time, he refers to another name: Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Manūfī (d. 1262). Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghaffār al-Qūsī (d. 1308) reported al-Manūfī's statements about Ibn ʿArabī in his book *al-Wahid*. According to al-Qūsī, al-Manūfī reported many incidents about how people declared Ibn ʿArabī an infidel by evaluating his ideas only through their external meanings. They did not interpret (*taʾwīl*) Ibn ʿArabī's ideas in the right way. However, al-Manūfī himself witnessed the magnitude of Ibn ʿArabī's divine inspiration and comprehension many times.[186]

Al-Manūfī narrates one of his experiences as follows: There was a man in Damascus who used to curse Ibn ʿArabī ten times after every prayer. Then, the man died. Ibn ʿArabī participated in his funeral. Afterward, he went to his friend's house and sat in the direction of qibla. He did not eat and performed his prayers in this position. After the night prayer, he turned to me and asked for food. I asked him about the situation and he responded, "I made an oath to God that I will not eat or drink until He forgives this man who used to curse me. I recited 'la ilaha illallah'[187] seventy thousand times. Then I saw that the man is excused."[188]

Apart from Suyūṭī's aforementioned effort, these stories also suggest two things: Ibn ʿArabī was a saint who manifested miracles and he was a beneficiary of the unveiling and divine inspiration that is also only peculiar to saints. Suyūṭī also repeats his other argument that Ibn ʿArabī's true intention can only be understood when his seemingly problematic statements are interpreted in a way that they comply with the sharia and sunna.

Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 43b.
[187] There is no God but Allah.
[188] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 43b.

At the end of the book, Suyūṭī gives a brief biography of Ibn ʿArabī that is also full with miracles and stories that a number of prominent Sufis and scholars suggest that Ibn ʿArabī was the pole or *ghawth*.[189] Before his biography, Suyūṭī makes his final conclusion about the issue of Ibn ʿArabī. He suggests that acts and words of Sufis that are seemingly contradicting the sharia and sunna should be solved by using one of these three ways: first, we should not accept that these problematic statements are genuinely theirs unless they confirm it. Second, in case that these statements are certainly theirs, we should interpret (*taʾwīl*) them appropriately. If we are unable to find an appropriate interpretation, then, we should keep silent about it, leaving their interpretation to other Sufis who have a deeper understanding. Third, we should always keep in mind that statements as such emanate only when the Sufi is in a state of ecstasy (*sakr*).[190] These kinds of statements are called *shaṭḥiyya*. The state of ecstasy is not binding. That person is not responsible for the faults he did during this state.[191]

Suyūṭī, in his polemical work against the accusation of al-Biqāʿī, remarks certain points. First of all, his solution for the Ibn ʿArabī issue is to accept sainthood of Ibn ʿArabī yet prohibit the reading and studying his books. This is a moderate approach that accepts that Ibn ʿArabī's books include some problematic statements, however, these statements are

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[189] "The term *ghawth*, Arabic for "assistance," is often used as virtually synonymous with *qutb*, but some theorists rank *ghawth* second to the pole." Renard, *Sufism*, 185.

[190] "The experience of loss of self, of "standing out" of one's being, in the human encounter with the divine. Sufis most often refer to ecstasy with the multivalent term *wajd* (consonantal radicals in bold) and various cognates, from a root that means "to find." Ecstasy is thus paradoxically an experience of both "finding" and "being found" that is related to "being ecstatic" (*wujūd*). One must be wary of trying too hard to fabricate the condition through one's own effort, as described by the pejorative term "inducing ecstasy" (*tawajud*). Sufi authors use a variety of metaphors to hint at the elusive complexity of ecstatic experience. Some of their most famous, indeed notorious, verbal attempts to capture the meaning of ecstasy are called *shath*, from a root that suggests the overflowing that occurs when one tries to sift flour and has put too much into the sieve. Ecstasy runs the gamut from the feeling of the ultimate bewilderment and perplexity to perfect annihilation in the Beloved. In order to find one's Lord, one must lose oneself, and only in that process can the seeker be truly "found" and only in that condition does the seeker truly "exist." Theologically speaking, ecstasy is the condition in which one fully acknowledges and realizes the divine transcendent unity (*tawhid*), since in ecstasy all that is not God recedes into nothingness. Finally, ecstasy presupposes that one has been "drawn" (*majdhub*); that is, that the experience is a gift rather than precisely the result of human effort." Renard, *Sufism*, 78-9.

[191] Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, 45a-45b.

problematic only when their external meaning is considered. He asserts that Ibn ʿArabī's

books should be forbidden because when unspecialized Muslims read them they will not be

able to understand their real intention. Consequently, they will declare Ibn ʿArabī an infidel,

and since Ibn ʿArabī is a real saint, and definitely not an infidel, they will become infidels

and this will destroy their life on earth and in the hereafter. According to Suyūṭī, the proof of

Ibn ʿArabī's sainthood is the miracles he experienced and the testimony of famous Sufis and

prominent scholars of him being a *qutb* or *ghawth*. Among these testimonies, Suyūṭī singles

out the name of Izz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Salām for he was also used by the detractors of Ibn ʿArabī

frequently. He emphasizes that ʿAbd al-Salām, a scholar who was once against Ibn ʿArabī,

later became his supporter who even suggested that Ibn ʿArabī was the *qutb*. These remarks

will be rigorously criticized by al-Ḥalabī, but also accepted widely by the Ottoman scholars.

3.2. al-Ḥalabī's Answer to Suyūṭī: *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīhi Ibn ʿArabī*

Al-Ḥalabī directly charges Ibn ʿArabī and his followers with heresy and infidelity.

Furthermore, he insults not only Ibn ʿArabī but also Suyūṭī and other supporters of Ibn ʿArabī

as stupid, ignorant, enemies of God, and infidels. His main approach to Ibn ʿArabī is clearly

demonstrated in his *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa*. This is the main text in which al-

Ḥalabī made his point and the most voluminous of his works after his famous fiqh text

Multaqā al-Abḥur. *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* consists of 82 folios. In this work, al-Ḥalabī's main

target is Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ* and he criticizes almost every line of this work.

Al-Ḥalabī quotes a section from *Fuṣūṣ*, then, outlines his criticism about it. In both

Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, it is clearly seen that al-Ḥalabī is not against Sufism

per se, but he opposes Ibn ʿArabī. He does not accept the sainthood of Ibn ʿArabī and

suggests that Sufism is something entirely different from the doctrines of Ibn ʿArabī and his

followers. This type of Sufism that al-Ḥalabī favors does not contradict sharia and sunna, unlike Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ*. This aspect of *Fuṣūṣ* is the very reason why al-Ḥalabī decided to write such a polemical text. At the beginning of the book, al-Ḥalabī asserts that the ideas in this book, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa*, occurred to him when he was reading the *Fuṣūṣ*. With these ideas, al-Ḥalabī says, sharia is supported and the ignorance and heresy of the madhab of *wujūdiyya* are manifested.[192]

The term of the *wujūdiyya* is important here since it is a common term used by the detractors of Ibn ʿArabī such as Saʿd al-Dīn Masʿūd b. Fakhr al-Dīn ʿUmar b. Burhān al-Dīn ʿAbd Allah al-Harawī al-Khurāsānī al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390) and Ibn Taymiyya to indicate the followers of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the Oneness of Being. For example, prominent scholar Taftāzānī uses this term to indicate the "heresy" of Ibn ʿArabī as well. He names Ibn ʿArabī and his followers as "the philosophizing unbelievers and heretics [adhering to] the Oneness of Being" and ascribes them six problematic positions. For instance, they assert that everything in this world, including the most disgusting things, is God. They believe that God has no existence *in concreto*. They see divine existence and creatures as identical and believe that everything in this world is just a delusion. They claim that unity, which they perceive through their personal experience, is the real state of things. They see themselves equal to or above the Prophet of Islam since they claim things that never been heard from the Prophet about God. Lastly, they make an allegorical and extremist interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of the Quran in order to legitimize their heretical ideas.[193]

Al-Ḥalabī starts *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* with his evaluation of the first statement in *Fuṣūṣ*. In this part, Ibn ʿArabī suggests that in 1229 he saw Prophet Muḥammad in his dream who was holding *Fuṣūṣ* in his hand and handed it to Ibn ʿArabī saying, "Take this, the *Kitāb al-Fuṣūṣ*, and give it to the people so they would benefit from it." Al-Ḥalabī criticizes this

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[192] al-Ḥalabī, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa*, 1b.
[193] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 149.

phrase by suggesting that *Fuṣūṣ* could not have been transmitted by the Prophet since in this book there are many parts contradicting the sharia, such as the statement that "the Universe is the reflection of God." It also praises the infidels. Prophet would never accept this book as Islamic since it is full of these kinds of statements and deviations.[194]

After this, al-Ḥalabī quotes from *Fuṣūṣ* many parts related to the doctrine of the Oneness of Being (waḥdat al-wujūd). For example, he focuses on Ibn ʿArabī's interpretation of the story of Moses from the Quran. According to the story, after Moses turned from the mount of Sinai, he found his people worshipping a golden calf. Afterward, he got angry with his brother saying, "O Aaron! What kept thee back, when thou sawest them going wrong from following me? Didst thou then disobey my order?" (Aaron) replied: "O son of my mother! Seize (me) not by my beard nor by (the hair of) my head! Truly I feared lest thou shouldst say, 'Thou has caused a division among the children of Israel, and thou didst not respect my word!'"[195]

Ibn ʿArabī's interpretation is quite interesting. He suggests "Moses knew the matter better than Aaron, so he knew what people really worshipped. God prohibited worshipping any other thing than himself. But Aaron denied the calf, he was impatient and did not understand what people were really worshipping." Al-Ḥalabī understands from this interpretation that Ibn ʿArabī saw no difference between the calf and God, since for Ibn ʿArabī the essence of everything is God. In this way, according to al-Ḥalabī, Ibn ʿArabī tries to justify the blasphemy of the people who worshipped the calf.[196] Ibn ʿArabī, in this way, distorts the real meaning of the verses. Al-Ḥalabī suggests that even if he accepts that God is everywhere and the essence of everything, still, it is not enough to justify Ibn ʿArabī's statements. God ordered to worship Him in a specific way and prohibited worshiping of idols

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[194] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 118-9.
[195] Ta-ha 20/92-94.
[196] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 119-20.

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such as the golden calf. Muslims cannot worship everything under the pretense that in essence it is all God. The idols in this world are limitless and if we accept that Muslims can worship anything, then, at least one of the Muslims will worship a form that is prohibited by God in the Quran.[197]

In both his *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* Al-Ḥalabī utilizes the methods of various Islamic sciences, such as exegesis (*tafsīr*), hadith, logic, and grammar. Later on in the text he suggests that Ibn ʿArabī is ignorant even in the science of grammar that is the basis and the departure point in one's Islamic education. He criticizes Ibn ʿArabī's interpretation of the eleventh verse of the Sura of *Shura* (Council) that says, "There is nothing whatever like unto Him (*laysa ka-mithlihi shayʿun*)."[198] This is a verse that had been debated for a long time by the prominent grammar scholars. The subject matter of the discussion is the agency of letter "kef" before the word of *mithlihi*. Al-Ḥalabī dwells extensively on this debate by quoting from prominent scholars such as Taftāzānī and Zamakhsharī (d. 1144). By understanding the agency of "kef" wrongly, Ibn ʿArabī makes a mistake in suggesting that God is not free from comparison (*tashbīh*). This is, according to al-Ḥalabī, either ignorance or a deliberate statement. In any case, Ibn ʿArabī is very mistaken since if he is ignorant of the true meaning of the letter of "kef" in this verse, then it means that he does not know a grammar rule even the beginner students of Islamic sciences are well aware of. And, if Ibn ʿArabī knows about this rule, then he deliberately commits blasphemy and becomes an infidel.[199]

Another problematic statement of Ibn ʿArabī, according to al-Ḥalabī, is his statement about the torment of the people of hell. Ibn ʿArabī accepts the eternity of hell. However, he claims that everyone who enters hell will go out eventually except for four groups: the

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[197] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 122-3.
[198] Shura 42/11.
[199] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 123-4.

arrogant, polytheists, atheists, and hypocrites.[200] God's divine mercy that encompasses all is the central issue of Ibn ʿArabī's evaluation of the state of infidels in hell. As a result of His mercy, the torment of infidels will end eventually. According to Ibn ʿArabī, God's name of the All-Merciful (*Raḥman*) encompasses everything including his other names such as the Avenger (*al-Muntaqim*).[201] After 50.000 years, God's name of the All-Merciful will manifest itself completely and then the torment of the inhabitants of hell will start to turn into some kind of happiness. At the end of this process, the fire that is burning and tormenting them will get cooler and their suffering will end.[202] Another happiness that will be experienced by the inhabitants of hell will be seeing beautiful dreams after God's name of the All-Merciful manifested itself completely.[203]

According to al-Ḥalabī, by suggesting this Ibn ʿArabī distorts the certain and clear meaning of some verses of the Quran, such as "Our Lord! Bring us out of this [hell]: If ever we return (to Evil), then shall we be wrongdoers indeed!"[204] Al-Ḥalabī claims that if Ibn ʿArabī's statement were true, then people of hell would not ask for salvation from hell.[205] Here, and in many other places, al-Ḥalabī charges Ibn ʿArabī with changing the true meaning of the Islamic scripture because of either his ignorance of the Islamic sciences or his deliberate heresy.

In his *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, al-Ḥalabī directly attacks Suyūṭī's claims about Ibn ʿArabī. He states this at the beginning of the book: "This book is supplementary to the book that I wrote about *Fuṣūṣ* (*Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa*). In this supplementary, I answered Suyūṭī's *Tanbīh al-Ghabī bi-Tabriʾati Ibn ʿArabī* and named this book *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī*

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[200] Mohammad Hassan Khalil, "Muslim Scholarly Discussion on Salvation and the Fate of Others" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2007), 88.

[201] Khalil, "Muslim Scholarly Discussion," 95.

[202] Ibid, 98.

[203] Cağfer Karadaş, "Muhyiddin İbn Arabî'nin İtikâdı," *Tasavvuf İlmi ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 21 (2008), 92-3.

[204] Muminun 23/107.

[205] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 127.

Tanzīhi Ibn ʿArabī.[206] After asserting his reason for writing *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, al-Ḥalabī quotes Suyūṭī's categorization about the stance of people toward Ibn ʿArabī and counts the names of the Sufis who accept the veracity of the sainthood of Ibn ʿArabī. After that, al-Ḥalabī says, "It is impossible that Ibn ʿArabī is a true saint since he approves of any belief whether it were heresy or not, and orders people to become open to accepting any belief. *Fuṣūṣ* is full of this kind of heretical assertions. And all those statements are nonsense contradicting the sharia and sunna of all prophets.[207]

After this, he discusses the scholars who keep silence about Ibn ʿArabī. As mentioned in the first subchapter, Suyūṭī counts Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām among them. Accordingly, al-Ḥalabī gives considerable space to discussion of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām. Firstly, al-Ḥalabī quotes the narrative about Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām's change of attitude towards Sufism under the influence of al-Shādhilī. al-Ḥalabī suggests that the narrative recorded by Suyūṭī is not accurate since it contradicts the narrative in al-Dhahabī's *al-Mizan*. According to the record in *al-Mizan*, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām argues that Ibn ʿArabī is an untruthful shaykh. He builds this argument on the suggestion of Ibn ʿArabī that he got married with a female jinni in Damascus. Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām claims that this is impossible. Yet, Ibn ʿArabī asserts that he got married and had three children by that female jinni.[208]

Al-Ḥalabī continues his argument about Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām by saying that a great scholar like Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām does not name another Muslim a liar without being sure of his deviancy and heresy. According to al-Ḥalabī, the reason for the discrepancy in the records about Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām is that, before he met Ibn ʿArabī personally, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām was giving Ibn ʿArabī the benefit of the doubt. During this process, he may have claimed that Ibn

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[206] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 37-8.
[207] Ibid, 39.
[208] Ibid, 41.

ʿArabī was the pole. But after Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām met him personally and understood that Ibn ʿArabī was among those Sufis who mix Sufism with philosophy, he changed his mind.[209]

Another prominent scholar whom Suyūṭī considered as silent on the issue of Ibn ʿArabī was Shaykh al-Islam Sharaf al-Dīn al-Munāwiyya. Al-Ḥalabī asserts that it is true that it is best to keep silent about Ibn ʿArabī, but only before understanding the heretical character of his belief. After understanding it, it is incumbent for a Muslim to warn people against the danger of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas, just like al-Ḥalabī's version of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām did.[210] In this way, al-Ḥalabī upholds the claims of those detractors of Ibn ʿArabī who tried to construct the image of ʿAbd al-Salām as a prominent scholar who was a contemporary of Ibn ʿArabī and also refuted him. That is how al-Ḥalabī disproves Suyūṭī's rebuttal of anti-Ibn ʿArabī scholars.

Al-Ḥalabī also attacks Suyūṭī's effort to highlight the names of Mamluk scholars who supported Ibn ʿArabī. As I mentioned in the previous subchapter, Suyūṭī based his list of names of pro-Ibn ʿArabī scholars on his teacher Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr*. Al-Ḥalabī claims that Suyūṭī used this source in the wrong way and deficiently. According to al-Ḥalabī, Ibn Ḥajar records the biography of these pro-Ibn ʿArabī scholars not for praising but for decrying them. This is simply a record of their state of infidelity.[211] In addition to that, al-Ḥalabī also narrates the conversation of Ibn Ḥajar with Suyūṭī's shaykh al-Baqillānī. This is an important strong story involving on the one hand Suyūṭī's teacher and on the other Suyūṭī's shaykh. According to al-Ḥalabī, Ibn Ḥajar said that he met with Shaykh Baqillānī and asked him about Ibn ʿArabī. Baqillānī quickly answered: "Ibn ʿArabī is definitely an

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[209] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 42-3.
[210] Ibid, 43.
[211] Ibid, 59.

infidel." Then, al-Ḥalabī asks Suyūṭī: "Why did you not include the narrative of your shaykh al-Baqillānī?"[212]

About the "decisive statement" of Suyūṭī that advises accepting the sainthood of Ibn ʿArabī but prohibiting the studying of his books, al-Ḥalabī argues that this argument is either stupid or foolish. If Suyūṭī is prohibiting the studying and reading of Ibn ʿArabī's books, then he should also prohibit opposing the detractors of Ibn ʿArabī. This is deceptiveness for which Ibn ʿArabī and his followers are well known.[213]

After that, Al-Ḥalabī turns to Suyūṭī's discussion of the subject of interpretation (taʾwīl). Al-Ḥalabī starts with the critique of Suyūṭī's claim of the existence of a specific terminology of Sufis. Suyūṭī was asserting that Sufis in their unclear and usually problematic statements utilize a specific terminology that is peculiar to Sufism. In those statements, they do not intend the common external meanings of words. Against that, al-Ḥalabī says, "What Sufis really aim for is the truth of the Muslims who are obeying the Book, i.e. Quran, and sunna. They have been described in the *Risāla* of Kushayrī and *Awārif* of Suhrawardī. When using the terminology of Sufism, they interpret these unclear words according to regulations of Islam. You can not find anything contradicting the sunna and sharia in their texts." However, according to al-Ḥalabī, in these heretical Sufis' writings, it is really easy to detect contradiction to the regulations of Islam.[214] By saying so, al-Ḥalabī does not deny the specific Sufi terminology; however, he claims that the writings of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers cannot be explained by way of this terminology since it is impossible to interpret their statements in a way complying with sharia.

The interpretation (taʾwīl), according to al-Ḥalabī, could be done only if the interpreted version is corresponding with the external meaning of the statement. That is to

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[212] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 60.
[213] Ibid, 44.
[214] Ibid, 45.

say, that the external meaning of a statement and the interpreted version cannot be essentially different. Hence, statements of Ibn ʿArabī such as "God is the essence of things" or "Become open to accepting any belief!" cannot be interpreted in a way that complies with sharia. External meanings of these statements are problematic and they are similar with the statements of "I am the truth/God (*ana al-haq*)" and "I glorify me, my glory is the greatest! (*subḥanī mā aʿzama shānī*)."[215]

Two examples al-Ḥalabī used are examples that were used widely by detractors of Ibn ʿArabī. The first one belongs to Hallāj Manṣūr (d. 922), a prominent Sufi of the earlier ages famous for this problematic statement. The second one belongs to another famous Sufi of the earlier period, Bāyezīd Bisṭāmī (d. 848). Ibn Taymiyya is the one who likened the doctrine of the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) to these two problematic statements. Ibn Taymiyya did that so as to show that Ibn ʿArabī held the blasphemous belief in divine incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and mystical union with the divine (*ittiḥād*), just as Hallāj and Bisṭāmī.[216] Al-Ḥalabī's goal in repeating these two problematic statements is the same as that of Ibn Taymiyya. He not only tries to prove that Ibn ʿArabī actually believed in the heresy of divine incarnation and mystical union with the divine, but he also suggests that Ibn ʿArabī's statements that make him infidel are different from what al-Ghazzālī had in mind, as referred by Suyūṭī, that is the problematic statements of Sufis are similar with unclear (*mutashābih*) verses of the Quran.

According to al-Ḥalabī, what al-Ghazzālī intended when he likened the problematic statements of Sufis to the unclear (*mutashābih*) verses of the Quran were the ecstatic pronouncements (*shaṭḥiyya*s). For example, statements of Bisṭāmī and Hallāj are *shaṭḥiyya*s since they were made during the state of ecstasy. Ibn ʿArabī's situation, however, is not

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[215] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 47.
[216] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 91.

shaṭḥiyya.[217] This is because Ibn ʿArabī wrote these problematic statements in his books. Writing a book is not something that could be done while experiencing the state of ecstasy. One should prepare an introduction, build arguments, etc. That is why Ibn ʿArabī's statements cannot be interpreted as *shaṭḥiyya*.[218]

Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī also criticizes the biography of Ibn ʿArabī as it is fashioned by Suyūṭī, full of miracles. According to al-Ḥalabī, these extraordinary incidents experienced by Ibn ʿArabī are not actually miracles (*karāmat*) but *khidhlān* or *istidrāj*.[219] According to the Sufi terminology, *karāmat* is a certain experience that is peculiar only to true saints of God, while *istidrāj* is not. *Istidrāj* and *khidhlān* can happen to everyone and their manifestation is not the result of the beneficence of God as it is for *karāmat*. On the contrary, God ordains a person with *istidrāj* for showing that person that they were not forgotten by God, but this divine experience is a warning for him because of his deviant acts. In this sense, if *karāmat* is a proof of sainthood, *khidhlān* and *istidrāj* are the proofs of infidelity and heresy.[220] According to al-Ḥalabī, even the Christian clergy may experience extraordinary incidents. These are called *khidhlān* and the so-called miracles of Ibn ʿArabī are called *khidhlān* as well.[221] By using the same argument of Suyūṭī that proves Ibn ʿArabī's sainthood, al-Ḥalabī tries to show that these extraordinary incidents were actually proof of Ibn ʿArabī's infidelity. In this sense, al-Ḥalabī makes an analogy between Ibn ʿArabī and the Christian clergy.

The issue of *karāmat* vs. *istidrāj* is not the only place where al-Ḥalabī made such an analogy. He also remarks on the similarity of Ibn ʿArabī with other heretic groups when he discusses the difference between real Sufis and *wujūdi* Sufis. The only part of Suyūṭī's book that is not subject to al-Ḥalabī's criticism is the part in which Suyūṭī reports the conversation

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[217] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 47.

[218] Ibid, 84.

[219] Ibid, 85.

[220] Durmuş Özbek, "Harikulade Olaylar ve İhanet/Hızlan," *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 7 (2002), 90.

[221] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 97.

between Shaykh Taqi al-Dīn al-Qudsi and Zayn al-Dīn Khwafi. Al-Ḥalabī approves of Khwafi's remarks.[222] Khwafi's views on what constitutes real Sufism and the fault of those *wujūdi* Sufis match up with al-Ḥalabī's own definition. According to al-Ḥalabī, *wujūdi* Sufis, indeed as Khwafi suggested, are stuck in the station of *taḥaqquq* without knowing that there is another station higher than that one. By building on the misleading presumptions that they acquired in this station, they write books and lead Muslims astray. In reality, mystical union with the divine (*ittiḥād*) is a heresy that is impossible to commit by the real Sufis who undergo advanced forms of worship. Furthermore, real Sufis have not been influenced by these heretic Sufis. The divine union (*ittiḥād*) is nothing more than the Christians' belief in divine union with the Holy Spirit. Another group that commits the same blasphemy is the Shi'i group of *Rāfidhī*s. *Wujūdi* Sufis' suggestion of Divine Union with God is quite similar to what *Rāfidhī*s believe for Ālī b. Abi Talib, the fourth caliph.[223]

This argument is a very important one when it is considered that al-Ḥalabī wrote this book in the Ottoman realm at a time when the strife between Safavids and Ottomans was at its peak. In this assertion, al-Ḥalabī does not only try to refute Suyūṭī, but he also tries to show that the followers of Ibn ʿArabī are as dangerous as *Rāfidhī*s for the integrity of the Islamic community. In this way, he wishes to attract the attention of possible supporters for his cause, which is to banish the influence of Ibn ʿArabī from the Ottoman realm completely.

In his effort, al-Ḥalabī did not only confront the supporters of Ibn ʿArabī but he also was able to find some supporters for himself. At the end of the book, al-Ḥalabī writes that he finished the book at the end of July 1538.[224] In addition to that, we know that not much time lapsed between the writing of *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*. In 1538, Sadi Çelebi (d. 1539) was the chief-jurisprudent (*shaykh al-Islam*) of the Ottoman state. The importance

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[222] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 68.
[223] Ibid, 70.
[224] Ibid, 101.

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of Sadi Çelebi is that he was one of the two chief-jurists who issued a condemnatory fatwa against Ibn ʿArabī, and it was likely not a coincidence that al-Ḥalabī wrote *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* precisely at the time of his tenure.

3.3. Ottoman Scholars' Response to al-Ḥalabī's Anti-Ibn ʿArabī Polemics

As mentioned in the Second Chapter, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī witnessed the reign of three sultans and eight chief jurisprudents. Two of these sultans, Selim I and Süleyman I, actively participated in Ibn ʿArabī debates and four of these chief jurisprudents, Ibn Kemal, Sadi Çelebi, Çivizade, and Ebussud, issued fatwas about Ibn ʿArabī. Both of the sultans endorsed Ibn ʿArabī in their policies and Sultanic decreases. However, there was divergence among the chief jurisprudents: two of them, Çivizade and Sadi Çelebi, criticized Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, while the other two, Ibn Kemal and Ebussud, showed their support for Ibn ʿArabī. What was the role of al-Ḥalabī in these disagreements? How strong can the influence of an imam be on the sultans and chief jurisprudents? Of course, al-Ḥalabī was not an ordinary Imam. Besides his impressive academic background and geographic provenance that landed him additional authority, he was the imam of the imperial mosque of Fatih, a high and influential position that could not be ignored by scholars. Furthermore, when the network al-Ḥalabī was a part of is considered, it is quite clear that his influence went beyond the earshot of his pulpit.

Selim I, after he conquered Damascus found and repaired the tomb of Ibn ʿArabī and built a mosque near that tomb. Then, he ordered the hanging of the fatwa that was signed by the Anatolian military judge of the time, Ibn Kemal, on the wall of this mosque. This fatwa asserted that Muslim scholars who understand Islamic scripture according to external meaning only are unable to understand Ibn ʿArabī's ambiguous statements. Hence, they

should keep silent about Ibn ʿArabī and not declare him an infidel. If they do that, it is Sultan's duty to discipline them.[225] Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī, however, was undaunted by this and expressed his ideas without fear or favour. As was pointed out above, in his *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* he asserted that it was impossible to interpret statements of Ibn ʿArabī in a way that they would comply with the sharia and sunna. One wonders whether the wording of this *fatwa*, rather than just Suyūṭī's arguments, was in the back of his mind when he wrote his work.

Al-Ḥalabī was well aware of the Ottoman high bureaucrats' attitudes toward Ibn ʿArabī, both supportive and condemnatory. Since he lived in the Ottoman society and was greatly concerned with the issue of Ibn ʿArabī, it is hard to imagine that he was ignorant about the previous Ottoman fatwas on Ibn ʿArabī. Hence, he must have been aware that Ibn Kemal supported Ibn ʿArabī to such an extent that in one of his *fatwa*s he implied that suggesting the existence of heresy and infidelity in *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* requires repentance.[226] In this fatwa, Ibn Kemal also shows his certainty about the authenticity of Ibn ʿArabī's books and problematic statements. In it the inquirer asks, "What is required for the person who suggests that a Jew distorted Ibn ʿArabī's books by adding heretical ideas into it so as to lead Muslims astray, and that is how these heretical ideas got into Ibn ʿArabī's books?" Ibn Kemal answers "Repentance is required."[227]

The issue of authenticity was, as we have already seen, intensely debated in the books of both Suyūṭī and al-Ḥalabī. The followers of Ibn ʿArabī made this argument in order to defend Ibn ʿArabī from the detractors. It is likely that some parts of the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* were not resonating with some of the followers of Ibn ʿArabī, such as the suggestion that the Pharaoh died a believer or that the torment of the people in hell will stop eventually. The supporters of Ibn ʿArabī probably did not sincerely believe that these kinds of statements

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[225] Tek, "İbnü'l-Arabi'yi Müdafaa Etmek," 296-297.
[226] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 328.
[227] Ibid, 335.

were written by Ibn ʿArabī. So they came up with the argument that a Jew who was the enemy of Muslims tampered with the text so as to distort Muslims' belief. This argumentation was also widely debated in the Ottoman realm and the earliest evidence of it is this fatwa of Ibn Kemal.

There were other fatwas which focused on other problematic statements mentioned above: in one, the inquirer asks "What is required for the person who asserts that the torment of infidels will terminate and people will enjoy themselves in hell?;" while in another one the inquirer asks, "What is required for the person who suggests that the 'Pharaoh died a Believer?'" In his answer to the first question, Ibn Kemal stipulates "The renewal of faith by reciting the *shahadāh*" is required, while in the second case he states that it "Requires repentance."[228] These are interesting answers contradicting Ibn ʿArabī's statements. As the first fatwa indicates, Ibn Kemal maintained that if a person makes the assertion about torments in hell eventually ending, he commits blasphemy and becomes an apostate (*kāfir*); however, a person who suggests that the Pharaoh died a believer only commits a sin. That is why repentance is required.

The stance of Ibn Kemal seems quite ambiguous. He does not accept the existence of a forgery in Ibn ʿArabī's books, yet he suggests that two of the statements written by Ibn ʿArabī do not comply with sharia and sunna; one of them even amounts to blasphemy that requires renewal of faith. Since Ibn ʿArabī was not an apostate in the mind of Ibn Kemal, what could be the reason behind these discrepancies? We can rule out the possibility that Ibn Kemal was not aware that these statements belonged to Ibn ʿArabī, for he wrote a separate treatise about the statement that "the Pharaoh died a believer" of Ibn ʿArabī and disagreed with the great Sufi master's position.[229] Still, he defended Ibn ʿArabī in his fatwas.

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[228] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 335.
[229] Ibid.

In the records, two more fatwas about the heresy of Ibn ʿArabī exist. In those fatwas, inquirer asks: "What happens if a person charges Ibn ʿArabī with apostasy or heresy?" The answer given for both of the fatwas is that they should be disciplined." Ibn Kemal does not give an explanation in the first fatwa but he does in the second: "Because they read the books which they do not understand and they blame the saints of God with heresy."[230] The approach in this fatwa is similar to that of Suyūṭī in his *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* and may explain the contradiction in Ibn Kemal's other fatwas on Ibn ʿArabī.

Suyūṭī claimed that uneducated scholars should not read Ibn ʿArabī because in the end, if they blame Ibn ʿArabī with infidelity, they become infidels since Ibn ʿArabī was not an infidel but a true shaykh. Not speaking about Ibn ʿArabī, in this sense, and not reading his books may preserve the faith of the society. Accordingly, Ibn Kemal's fatwas are texts aimed at the public. Ibn Kemal was aware of that aspect of the fatwas and knew that his own decree would be used as precedent by future qadis. Hence, as for the most problematic sentences of Ibn ʿArabī related with Pharaoh's faith and torment of the infidels, he simply thought about the "common good."

Sadi Çelebi was the successor of Ibn Kemal in the position of the chief jurisprudent of the empire. On the topic of Ibn ʿArabī, Sadi Çelebi issued one fatwa. The question part of the fatwa is really long when compared with other *fatwa*s. In this fatwa, inquirer asks:

> What do the honorable ulama and the leaders of believers say about these problems [contained in a] book that is in people's hands and whose author fancies that he had composed it and delivered it to the people with the permission of our Prophet, peace be with him, in a vision; he moreover fancies that he saw him and talked with him. His book runs contrary to what has been revealed in the revealed scriptures and is at variance with messages brought by His messengers, may God's peace and greetings be with all of them. Among the things he said is that Adam, peace be with him, was named *insān* (man) for the reason of being to God what the pupil (*insān*) is to the eye, through which He sees and is called vision and sight. In another instance he says that the Transcendent God is the creature for which a similarity existed (*mushabbah*). On topic of Nuh's people, he said that had they abandoned the worship of idols

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[230] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 138.

like Wadd, Sawa', Yaghuth, Ya'un and Nasr they would be in ignorance of God, in proportion to their abandonment of the idols. Moreover, he said that True One has a face (*wajh*) in every worshipped object and that the face will be recognized by people of spiritual ability whereas those who lack it will be ignorant thereof. One who knows is aware of whom he worshiped and in what image it [i.e. the worshiped object] emerged. Distinction and multiplicity are but an illusion. Later, on Hud's people he says that they attained the status of ultimate proximity and the distance was removed for them. The notion of Hell ceased to exist for them, and they obtained that proximity through merit and deserving. Their intuitive and joyful experience of proximity to God was not an undeserved gift He offered them but an accomplishment they deserved by way of their value and observance, because they were on the right path leading to their Lord. The author also denied in it [i.e. his book, presumably the *Fuṣūṣ*] the divine threat of hellfire for all those who deserve punishment. Is the one who accepts these doctrines an unbeliever or not? Is the one who is satisfied with these statements unbeliever or not? Is the one who is of full age and sound mind and who hears these words and did not react to them in any way, by his tongue or condemn them in his heart, a sinner or not? Deliver us a clear fatwa in plain wording, may God reward you as He promised to and as you committed yourselves to the truth and its clarification, because the infidels by way of this book portray rejection as belief, ignorance as knowledge, polytheism as monotheism and rebellion as obedience. In their eyes neither transgressor deserves punishment nor there is any difference between worshipping idols and God. The negligence and overlooking [of this situation] harms the weak and those who are not vested in knowledge. We seek help from God and on Him we rely to defeat infidels and reform our condition as well as to prevent misguidance from spreading. Allah knows best.[231]

The response:

May Allah have mercy on you. Indeed, the Almighty speaks truth and He guides to the Right Path. Whatever that text contained of horrendous and low words is rejected by both rational and traditional teachings of Islam. For some of them it is but empty philosophizing, for others it is outright misguidance and rejection, apostasy from Islam and falling from it. This is the consensus of all Muslims. [These ideas are] negation of the foundational principles of Islam and rejection of the unambiguous speech of Almighty Creator. Every person who believed in these, was in dilemma or suspected [that the aforesaid is truth] has disbelieved in Allah, Exalted be He. If he persists in his disbelief and repents not, he should be executed with the sword of sharia. It is obligatory for every Muslim who hears these wicked words to combat them by negation and exposing their corruption. That will be considered a good deed that brings divine reward on the Day of Judgment. That is equivalent to removing obstacles and harm from Muslims' pathway. I seek help from God and on Him I rely. The poor Sadi wrote it, might his sins be forgiven.[232]

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[231] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 146-7.
[232] Ibid, 147-8.

Sadi Çelebi's fatwa requires a detailed discussion of both the question and the answer. The question part of this fatwa is very important. One aspect of the question is that it seems like the concern of the inquirer is not to reassure a doubt or to solve a problem. Rather, the inquirer seems to be expressing and asking for confirmation of his own views on Ibn ʿArabī's writings. The inquirer definitely believes that Ibn ʿArabī is an infidel. He has no doubt about that. What he tries to do is, rather, to obtain a confirmation from the highest judicial official of the state. Zildzic remarks on another possibility in that sense: Sadi Çelebi himself may have used the medium of a *fatwa* to express his own views about Ibn Arabi.[233]

I would suggest that the inquirer could in fact have been Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī. Firstly, the inquirer is not an ordinary scholar; when the content of the fatwa is examined we can clearly see that the question is posed by a scholar who specialized in several Islamic sciences and also concerned himself with the issue of Ibn ʿArabī in particular. Secondly, the content of the question, even the arrangement of the issues, is very similar to al-Ḥalabī's *Tasfīh al-Ghabī* and *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa*. These are not the cliché accusations that had been directed at Ibn ʿArabī for centuries and by several scholars.

The questions in the fatwa required a thorough familiarity with Ibn ʿArabī's texts. For example, the inquirer starts with Ibn ʿArabī's suggestion that he saw Prophet Muḥammad in his dream handing the *Kitāb al-Fuṣūṣ* to him and ordering him to pass it to the people. If we recall, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* starts with the same criticism.[234] Then both the inquirer of the fatwa and al-Ḥalabī continue with the same reason for the rejection of Ibn ʿArabī's claim, arguing that since *Fuṣūṣ* and other works of Ibn ʿArabī is full of statements contradicting the sharia, Prophet Muḥammad could not have given such a book to Ibn ʿArabī.[235] Then, the inquirer proceeds with the example of Prophet Noah, same as Ibrāhīm al-

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[233] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 148.
[234] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 118-9.
[235] Ibid, 119.

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Ḥalabī does in *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa*. Furthermore, both the inquirer and al-Ḥalabī accuse Ibn ʿArabī of the same fault.[236] Then, in the fatwa comes the issue of the torment of infidels in hell, and al-Ḥalabī also touches upon this issue in his *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa*.[237]

By the end of the question, the inquirer asks for a clear answer. This is important for disciplining the readers of Ibn ʿArabī's books. The answer of Sadi Çelebi is quite severe. He suggests that the consensus of all Muslims is that Ibn ʿArabī's books are empty philosophizing that makes people commit apostasy from Islam. Hence, if one persists in reading Ibn ʿArabī's books even after he was warned, he should be executed by the sword of sharia. In addition to that, it is incumbent for every Muslim who hears the words of Ibn ʿArabī to combat them by negation and expose their corruption.

In his *Tanbīh al-Ghabī*, Al-Ḥalabī also asserted that upon understanding the heresy of Ibn ʿArabī, it is incumbent on Muslims to combat and negate his ideas loudly.[238] If my suggestion is true that Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī is the inquirer in the fatwa, the reason for his cooperation with Sadi Çelebi in preparing such a text may have been to explicitly raise their argument for the public. Before Sadi Çelebi there was a follower of Ibn ʿArabī occupying the post of chief jurisprudent. Likewise, the policy of Sultan Selim had also popularized Ibn ʿArabī's ideas in the Ottoman realm. Al-Ḥalabī and Sadi Çelebi concerned themselves with the integrity of the Islamic community in their minds when they were preparing such a fatwa. Even if the inquirer was not al-Ḥalabī, we can say that Sadi Çelebi was influenced by al-Ḥalabī's ideas about Ibn ʿArabī to a great extent. It is likely that after reading al-Ḥalabī's *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* Sadi Çelebi decided to make his ideas circulate more and hence prepared this fatwa expressing al-Ḥalabī's assertions.

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[236] Has, "A Study of Ibrahim al-Halabi," 128-9.
[237] Ibid, 127.
[238] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, 43.

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The third chief jurisprudent of interest to our discussion is Çivizade, who also charged Ibn ʿArabī with heresy and had a close relationship with al-Ḥalabī. He became chief jurisprudent after Sadi Çelebi, on 21 February 1539. Furthermore, as Sadi Çelebi and al-Ḥalabī, he wrote a refutation against Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ*. He opposed Ibn ʿArabī not only in books but also publicly. He participated in a public debate against Halwati Sufi order shaykh Ramazan Efendi (d. 1556) about the compatibility of the ideas in *Fuṣūṣ* with the sharia.[239] He issued at least three fatwas about the issue of Ibn ʿArabī, two of which show the influence of al-Ḥalabī. The first fatwa is about the issue of the seal of sainthood. The inquirer asks: "What is required with respect to sharia for a person who accepts Ibn ʿArabī's statement in *Fuṣūṣ* that 'the seal of the saints is superior to the seal of the prophets,' and in *Futūḥāt*, 'I am the seal of the saints?'" The response of Çivizade is that this person becomes an infidel.[240] Al-Ḥalabī criticizes Ibn ʿArabī's suggestion of being the seal of the saints in his *Tasfīḥ al-Ghabī*.[241] In the second fatwa the inquirer asks: "Is the imamate of the person who agrees with the statements in *Fuṣūṣ* accepted?" Çivizade's response is very strong. He asserts that the one who understands the meaning of *Fuṣūṣ* and still agrees with it is definitely an apostate. Even if he repents, it will not be accepted.[242] Since that person will be an infidel, he, of course, will not be able to become the imam and lead a prayer.

As can be observed from the two fatwas above, Çivizade was very severe in his criticism of Ibn ʿArabī. Both of the fatwas imply the necessity of the penalty of execution in case of being a follower of Ibn 'Arabī; in the second one this implication is stronger since asserting the inadmissibility of repentance means that this person should be executed. His attitude toward Ibn 'Arabī shows coherence with that of Sadi Çelebi and al-Ḥalabī. However, as opposed to the latter two, Çivizade was confronted with pressure coming from above, i.e.

[239] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 326-7.
[240] Ibid, 336.
[241] al-Ḥalabī, *Tasfīḥ al-Ghabī*, 75.
[242] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 337.

the sultan, because of his ideas. He became the first chief jurisprudent who was dismissed by the sultan. Modern historiography counts his strong opposition to Ibn ʿArabī and his followers as one of the reasons of his dismissal.[243] In addition to dismissing him, Süleyman wrote a satiric verse about Çivizade: "shaykh al-Islam [Çivizade] would be a beginner in the school of love."[244]

Çivizade did not withhold his support for al-Ḥalabī on the issue of Ibn ʿArabī. As mentioned, he and Sadi Çelebi wrote an endorsement (*taqrīẓ*) for al-Ḥalabī's *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa*. In this endorsement, Çivizade says:

> This is a copy of the signature of shaykh al-islam and the mufti of mankind, the late Çivizade Ali Efendi. This book is superb, well respected and received among the ulama and it deals with refutation of the invalid doctrine of the *wujūdiyya*, particularly with Ibn ʿArabī al-Tai who strayed from the Right Path. Be it known, my brothers that whosoever knew what Ibn ʿArabī stated and thereupon abstained from proclaiming him an infidel indeed became an infidel himself, in the same manner as when someone refrains from proclaiming the unbelief of the Jews and Christians becomes an infidel himself. Written by the wretched Ali, also known as Çivizade.[245]

Çivizade's severe tone is reflected in this endorsement as well. He asserts that whoever does not proclaim Ibn ʿArabī an infidel, would become an infidel himself. This is a strong language that makes a random Muslim obliged to choose a side. According to al-Ḥalabī's side of the debate, the detractors, if a Muslim does not proclaim Ibn ʿArabī an infidel, he would be an infidel, and according to Suyūṭī's side, the followers, if a Muslim proclaims Ibn ʿArabī an infidel, he will become an infidel. Perhaps this is the very reason why scholars, Sufis, and sultans felt themselves obliged to assert their opinion about Ibn ʿArabī. The debate became a central issue that determined Muslims' state in the eternal life. Each side charged the counter side with infidelity.

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[243] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 327; Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 151-2.
[244] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 327.
[245] Zildzic, "Friend and Foe," 153.

The Ottoman side of the debate seems to be terminated with the intervention of famous shaykh al-Islam Ebussud. He issued eight fatwas about Ibn ʿArabī, all of which defended him, yet they were relatively moderate. He solved the issue by bringing the claim of forgery into the light again. As a response to the question of what should be done to the person who suggests that whoever reads Ibn ʿArabī becomes an infidel, Ebussuud accepts the existence of problematic statements in Ibn ʿArabī's books, yet suggests that those are injected into his books by a Jew who aimed to make Muslims heretical.[246]

Ibn Kemal does not accept the existence of forgery in Ibn ʿArabī's books but Ebussud does. This is Ebussud's solution for reconciling the diverging opinions on Ibn ʿArabī. Once he accepted the existence of problematic statements in Ibn ʿArabī's book, yet could find a way to do so without blaming Ibn ʿArabī, Ebussuud welcomes most of the suggestions of the detractors. For example, he supports the fallacy of the argument that the Pharaoh died a believer, but he also asserts that this was not stated by Ibn ʿArabī but the aforementioned Jew.[247] Another fatwa is intriguing in this context: the inquirer asks "What is required for a person who asserts that he saw that Ibn ʿArabī had many miracles and extraordinary states, which is why he cannot assert that Ibn ʿArabī's heretic words cause apostasy?" Ebussuud answers, "If he does not accept that these words do not comply with sharia, then he becomes an infidel."[248] This approach, for example, reminds one of al-Ḥalabī rather than Suyūṭī. However Ebussud never accepted that Ibn ʿArabī is a heretic but only that there are some statements in his books that do not comply with sharia. He solves this discrepancy by embracing the forgery suggestion.

Ebussuud's solution of forgery firstly arose after a meeting between Çivizade and Süleyman I. According to a record, after Çivizade fulfilled his haj duty, he visited Süleyman

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[246] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 337.
[247] Ibid, 338.
[248] Ibid, 337.

I. Çivizade was the Anatolian military judge at that time. In their conversation, Çivizade suggested that Ibn ʿArabī was an infidel and a heretic. Furthermore, according to Çivizade, as a religious duty, his bones should be extracted from his grave and burnt. These words disturbed Süleyman and he furiously told Çivizade that if he continued speaking in this way he would be punished with beating. Ebussuud calmed Süleyman by propounding the forgery suggestion. Süleyman believed in it and issued a decree in which he prohibited talking badly about Ibn ʿArabī and as well as reading his books.[249]

Until al-Ḥalabī came to Istanbul and wrote his two books against Ibn ʿArabī, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, the issue of Ibn ʿArabī was not debated so vigorously in the Ottoman realm, at least not by the highest officials of the state and the sultans. However, because of al-Ḥalabī's close relation with two chief jurisprudents, Sadi Çelebi and Çivizade, and his influence on them because of his prestige in Islamic sciences, Ibn ʿArabī's legacy became one of the most controversial topics debated among the highest echelons of Ottoman scholar-bureaucrats. Sadi Çelebi and Çivizade were detractors of Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn Kemal and Ebussuud were his supporters. Between these two sides, the debate between Suyūṭī and al-Ḥalabī, as reflected in their books *Tanbīh al-Ghabī* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī*, respectively, was in a sense repeated. At the end, Suyūṭī's side defeated al-Ḥalabī's side because of the intervention of the sultan Süleyman who took position beside Suyūṭī.

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[249] Özen, "Ottoman Ulama Debating Sufism," 329.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to contextualize two polemical, anti-Ibn ʿArabī works by Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī, *Niʿmat al-Dharīʿa fī Nuṣrat al-Sharīʿa* and *Tasfīh al-Ghabī fī Tanzīh Ibn ʿArabī,* in the changing social, political and religious dynamics in the early modern Islamic eastern Mediterranean. Examining the debate about Ibn ʿArabī in the sixteenth-century Ottoman state, I have argued that Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī had a great influence on the new, more critical stance of the Ottoman ulema vis-à-vis Ibn ʿArabī starting after the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk lands. In this period four chief jurisprudents issued fatwas about Ibn ʿArabī—both endorsing and rejecting his views—while Sultan Suleyman was compelled to issue a sultanic decree which ended the debates for a while, until they were reignited in the seventeenth century.

Of course, al-Ḥalabī's polemical works were not the only reason for the changing views of the Ottoman ulema on Ibn ʿArabī. After Selim conquered the Mamluk lands, a substantial number of scholars, soldiers, and artists from Damascus, Aleppo and Cairo went to Istanbul and settled there. The importance of al-Ḥalabī, however, is that he provides us with a good example of a Mamluk scholar's influence on the intellectual debates in the Ottoman capital. In this case, his ideas and arguments and the reactions of the Ottoman scholar-bureaucrats exemplify the confrontation of two different scholarly traditions and cultures of Sufism.

An important related development of this very same period were heresy trials against Sufi shaykhs such as Ismail Maşuki (d. 1529), Bünyamin-i Ayaşi (d. 1520), Hamza Bali (d. 1572), and Muhyiddin Karmani (d. 1550), or learned men with ideas that went counter the views of the ulama, like Molla Kabız (d. 1527).[250] Importantly, fatwas against many of these

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[250] For a detailed information on trial and execution of various Sufis shaykhs as well as Molla Kabız see Ocak, *Zındıklar ve Mülhidler*, 270-9.

Sufis were issued by the same chief jurisprudents discussed in this thesis who also ruled on the "orthodoxy" or lack thereof of Ibn ʿArabī's works: Sadi Çelebi, Çivizade, and Ebussuud Efendi. The overlapping of the very first fatwas against Ibn ʿArabī with the increasing oppression and distrust of certain kind of Sufis cannot be a mere coincidence.

The sixteenth century was an age of change for the Ottomans. The period also witnessed important developments in the evolution of Ottoman Sunnism. Recent scholarship has interpreted this change as a result of the conflict between the Ottomans and their rival to the east, the Safavids, and the Ottomans' pursuit of legitimacy in this context. However, the role of the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk Sultanate has not attracted the attention it deserves. Ottomans were perceived by some of the Mamluk scholars as newcomers to the Sunni tradition that long existed in the Arab lands. For them, the Ottomans were not "Sunni enough" and they were exceeding the limits of the sharia and sunna. At least, according to al-Ḥalabī, the doctrine of the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) of Ibn ʿArabī that was widely accepted in the Ottoman lands by sultans and the chief jurisprudents was definitely out of the limit.

To what extent were some of those Sufis' incarnationist beliefs and suggestions of being the pole (*qutb*)—both associated with Ibn ʿArabī's work—central to the attack on them? Or was it merely the positive attitude of these Sufis toward Ibn ʿArabī's intellectual heritage that brought them to these trials? In short, what makes a Sufi a heretic in the sixteenth-century Ottoman realm? What is the meaning of the "heresy-in-the-making" during this period? To be able to give some satisfactory answers to those questions, the research focus should move from those oppressed Sufis to the chief jurisprudents (*shaykh al-Islam*) and qadis of the era. This is because it was not necessarily the Sufis who changed but the meaning and practice of law, as well as the meaning and the praxis of Sunni orthodoxy. This

thesis was conceptualized as a contribution to the study of those changing sensibilities among

the Ottoman ulama.

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