

WALI AND KARĀMA

A Discourse and Authority Contestation in al-Tarmasī's *Bughyat al-Adhkiyā'*

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze Muhammad Mahfūz al-Tarmasī's concept of wali and karāma, as well as his response and position in the discourse on those issues. Drawing on historical, hermeneutic, and intertextual approach, it will elaborate his involvement in the 19th century discourse on wali and karāma, in which the Wahhabiyya's strong influence in Mecca was taking place. In this sense, Mahfūz wrote a treatise on Sufism entitled Bughyat al-Adhkiyā' fī Baḥthi'an Karāmāt al-Awliyā'. Although he mastered on tasawwuf and possessed a genealogical chain to al-Ghazali, al-Qushairi and some other Sufis, he did not use their arguments. He preferred to quote the arguments of the jurists (fuqahā'), such as al-Subkī and al-Haytamī. This actually shows the strength of his work in compiling arguments using the "criticism from within" approach. He realized, to some extent, that criticism to Sufism mainly came from the jurists (fuqahā'). Therefore, in order to be easily accepted, criticizing critics needs to employ the same perspective, fuqahā's arguments. In fact, Mahfūz criticism was not only directed at the jurists (fuqahā') but also to the group which at that time were incessantly spreading the ideas delegitimizing Sufism (in the context of orthodoxy), Wahhabiyya. This can be seen clearly in the way of Mahfūz's selection of figures and groups to whom he criticized. But interestingly, he delivered critics in a smooth way and did not show his finger

directly to the nose of Wabbabiyya.

[Tulisan ini merupakan analisis terhadap konsep wali dan karomah menurut Muhammad Mahfūz al-Tarmasī, serta respon dan posisinya dalam diskursus isu-isu tersebut. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan historis, hermeneutika, dan intertekstual, tulisan ini menjelaskan keterlibatannya dalam wacana abad 19 tentang wali dan karomah, di mana pengaruh kuat Wabbabiyya di Mekah tengah berlangsung. Untuk itu, Mahfūz menulis sebuah risalah tentang Sufisme berjudul Bughyat al-Adhkiyā' fi Baḥthi'an Karāmat al-Awliyā'. Meski ia menguasai tasawwuf dan memiliki silsilah spiritual yang sampai kepada beberapa Sufi kenamaan, namun dalam karyanya ini ia tidak menggunakan argumen-argumen mereka. Ia lebih suka mengutip argumen para ahli hukum (fuqahā'), seperti al-Subki dan al-Haytami. Ini merupakan salah satu kekuatan dari kepiawaiannya dalam menyusun argumen menggunakan pendekatan "critic from within" karena ia menyadari bahwa kritik terhadap tasawwuf lebih banyak berasal dari para fuqahā'. Oleh karena itu, agar mudah diterima, suatu kritik perlu menggunakan perspektif yang sama dengan sang pengkritik, dalam hal ini argumen fuqaha. Faktanya, kritik Mahfūz tidak hanya diarahkan pada para fuqahā' tetapi juga kepada kelompok yang pada saat itu terus-menerus menyebarkan ide-ide delegitimasi tasawwuf (dalam konteks ortodoksi), seperti Wabbabiyya. Ini dapat dilihat dengan jelas dari cara Mahfūz memilih tokoh dan kelompok yang ia kritik. Namun yang menarik, ia menyampaikan kritik dengan cara yang halus dan tidak secara eksplisit menunjuk langsung Wabbabiyya yang saat itu mulai berkuasa.]

Keywords: al-Tarmasī, wali, karāma, discourse, authority.

A. Introduction

The debate about *wali* and *karāma*, including related issues, has become a long-standing polemic hitherto. Actually, the discourse on this issue is a classic debate that had been carried out by the Mu'tazila group, Qadariyya, Ibn al-Jawzi, Ibn Taymiyya, and then it be strengthened in the hands of Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab and his followers until today. In fact, theological polemic, related to the concept of monotheism and theological purity in Islam where the concept of *wali* and *karāma* is part of the polemic, has become the main topic in the Wahhabiyya doctrine.

Furthermore, the alliance between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791), the founder of the religious doctrine of Wahhabiyya, and Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud (d.1765), the chief of the Saudi family in al-Dir'iyya was soon transformed into an Islamic militant movement. In 1760, by the enthusiasm of its religious confidence and the power of arms, the movement reinforced the primary rule of the Saudi-Wahhabis in Arabia. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, mediations by the Ottomans and Egyptians driven to the ultimate disintegration of the Primary Saudi-Wahhabi State in 1818. Six years later, the Saudi-Wahhabis succeeded in reestablishing their past run the show within the frame of the Second Saudi-Wahhabi State which kept going until 1891 and was reestablished once again in 1902 within the frame of the Third Saudi-Wahhabi State. In 1932, this state became the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.¹ With such great political power, the Wahhabiyya can easily influence their religious ideas outside Mecca.

Some phrases such as *bid'a*, *shirk*, *kaafir*, and un-Islamic practices often appear in the debate. This polemical nuances still can be found in the midst of society, as we experienced during conducting field research regarding the *Wawacan Seb* ritual in several areas in Banten. Supported by the role of social media, some people questioned local traditions that come from their spiritual expressions to *wali*, such as the *Wawacan Seb* ritual. Some people deemed this ritual as *bid'a*, even further they deemed it as the practice of *shirk* because of the excessive treatment to the Sheikh (*wali*), such as the practice of intercession and asking for help to the Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani in that ritual. Although they are using the same sources (Qur'an and Hadith), this polemic seems to have no end because each group has a different point of view in arguing and interpreting the text, one is expressionist and the other is textualist. For this reason, presenting Maḥfūz al-Tarṣasī's thoughts in this discourse is something interesting and important. Not only because he was a great Indonesian *ulama* who lived in Mecca, but also because he also experienced debate over this issue amidst the Wahhabiyya influence which at that time was getting stronger in Mecca.

Muhammad Maḥfūz al-Tarṣasī wrote the treatise of Sufism,

¹ Tarik K. Firro, "The Political Context of Early Wahhabi Discourse of Takfir", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 49, no. 5 (2013), p. 770.

especially dealing with the concept of *wali* and *karāma*, entitled *Bughyat al-Adhkiyā' fī Baḥthi'an Karāmāt al-Awliyā'* (the Intent of Intelligent on the Discussion of Saints' Spiritual Phenomenon). In the introduction, Muhammad Maḥfūz al-Tarmasī (hereafter it is called as Maḥfūz) acknowledges that this book was written eclectically by quoting earlier scholars' works, such as the first two chapters are the selected texts of Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī² and Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī.³

The writing of *Bughyat al-Adhkiyā'* is inseparable from the atmosphere of prolonged Muslim scholars debate on Sufism in the Islamic world. Sufism is an esoteric or a spiritual dimension of Islam. Practically, the development of Sufism started from the growth of Islam by making the Prophet Muhammad as the *par excellence* of the Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*), in which the peak achievement of the human's spiritual life becomes necessary. Ultimately, Sufism aims at making human close to God so that one can feel ultimate happiness. This spiritual accomplishment leads people to become God's friend or saint (*walī*).

The concept of sainthood (*walāya*) has a firm foundation in the Qur'an and the Hadith. Therefore, the study of this issue has been discussed in many kinds of literature on Sufism. Many scholars agree

² The work refers to *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā* published in 10 volumes. The author of this book is a Supreme Court Justice (*Qādī al-Qudāt*) of Tāj al-Dīn Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Kāfi b. 'Alī b. Tammām b. Yūsuf b. Mūsā b. Tammām al-Subkī al-Shāfi'i (727-771 H / 1327-1370 M). He was born in Cairo and then moved to Damascus with his father in *Jumādīl Akhīr* 739 H. He was an expert in various disciplines; such as *fiqh*, *hadīth*, *ushūl*, and literature. He died caused of a plague in Damascus. 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhabab fī Akhbār Man Dhabab*, vol. 8 (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1992), pp. 378–80.

³ The work refers to *al-Fatāwā al-Hadīthiyya*. The author is Shihāb al-Dīn Abu al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. 'Alī b. Hajar. Well known as Ibn al-Hajar al-Haytamī al-Sa'dī, al-Anṣārī al-Shāfi'i, or al-Imam al-'Allāma al-Bahr al-Zakhīr (909-973 H). He was born in Cairo and he was still very young when his father died. After the death of his father, Shams al-Dīn al-Shanawī brought him to Sayyidī Aḥmad al-Badawī's family to study, and in 924 H Shams al-Dīn brought him to al-Azhar University. Al-Haytamī has memorized Qur'an at his very young age, and before the age of twenty he had been given the mandate to issue a fatwa and to teach at al-Azhar. He was a prominent ulama in several disciplines, such as in *tafsīr*, *hadīth*, *fiqh* (its *ushūl* and *furū*), arithmetics, *fara'id*, theology, *naḥw*, *ṣarf*, literature, logic, and Sufism. 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhabab fī Akhbār Man Dhabab*, vol. 10 (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1992), pp. 541–2.

that al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī was the first to write this issue systematically and comprehensively in his work *Khatm al-Awliyā'*. According to him, the saints are people who have achieved the perfect knowledge of God (*ma'rifa*). Thus, they acquire the light from God and divine power (*qummaḥ ilāhiyya*). In addition, there are forty “truthful ones” (*ṣiddiqūn*) from among the Muhammadan people (Muslims) who achieve the rank of sainthood and one of them is placed at the highest position as the seal of the saints (*khatm al-awliyā'*), like the prophet Muhammad as *khatm al-anbiya'* in the context of prophethood.⁴

In general, the polemic among Muslim scholars about Sufis practices occurred due to the Saints' practices which are considered “un-Islamic” or incompatible attitudes with the Qur'an and Sunna. There are two aspects that caused many scholars involved in the discourse, i.e. internal and external. An internal aspect in this regard is dealing with the saints' attitudes, such as ecstatic words (*Shataḥāt*) and unreasonable actions or supernatural phenomena (*kbāriq al-'ādah*)—as told in any traditional hagiology—in which some Islamic law scholars deem it to be incompatible with an orthodoxy. While the external aspect deals with the people or community assumption and treatment to the saints, such as the practice of cult, supplication ritual to the saint (*tawāsul*), and others which are considered superstition (*takhayyul*) and idolatrous practices (*shirk*).

The publication of several scholarly works that explain the polemic of Sufism, such *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*,⁵ *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*,⁶ and *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*,⁷ indicates the maturity of Sufism Studies. In the first work, for instance, Sirriyeh focuses her study on intellectual and political opposition to modernism, which began in the 18th century until today. She began the discussion about Muslim indigenous criticism of the doctrine and practice of Sufism “before the impact of Europe” and concluded with

⁴ Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidī, *Kitāb Khatm al-Awliyā'*, ed. by 'Utmān Yaḥya (Beirut: al-Maṭba'at al-kāthūlikīyat, 1965), p. 344.

⁵ Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1998).

⁶ Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (New York: SUNY Press, 1999).

⁷ I. J. F. de Jong and Bernd Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

a discussion of the evolution of Sufism and its institutions in the second half of the 20th century, with special reference to the anti-Sufi politics of contemporary states (e.g., Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Union, and the Turkish Republic) and individuals (namely, Abu al-'Ala al-Mawdudi and Ali Shariati).

In the second work, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, Knysh tries to examine the furious theological contention over the incredible Muslim enchanted scholar Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1242). In analyzing the heated talks about around Ibn 'Arabi's thoughts all through the three centuries taking after his passing, Knysh brings out discursive strategies and arguments utilized by the polemicists, the covered-up agendas they sought, and the reasons for the striking life span of the issue in Islamic literature up today. In term of theoretical point, he also tries to reassess the validity of such common dichotomies between, for instance, orthodoxy and heresy, mainstream and mystical interpretations of Islam, and communalism and individualism as well as other issues pertaining the history of Islamic thought.

While the third work, *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, is edited by F. de Jong and Bernd Radtke. This meticulous scholarship of the thirty-six articles included in this volume were firstly presented at a conference on "Sufism and its Opponents", held in Utrecht, The Netherlands, from May 1-6, 1995. This work consists a wide scale of geographical and cultural areas about contestation to Sufism, in which the contested Sufi presence sub-Saharan Africa, Maghrib, South Asia, Nile-to-Oxus region, Central Asia, Subcontinent, China, and South Eastern Asia, are included in a single volume. The last part of this volume provides four essays about "Malay-Indonesian World"; they are *Opposition to Sufism in the East Indies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* by Azyumardi Azra, *Opposition to Islamic Mysticism in Nineteenth-Century Indonesia* by Karel Steenbrink, *Controversies and Polemics Involving the Sufi Orders in Twentieth-Century Indonesia* by Martin van Bruinessen, and *Sufis und ihre Widersacher in Kelantan/Malaysia. Die Polemik gegen die Ahmadiyya zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* by Werner Kraus. The four essays are an attempt to refresh the number of contemporary Sufism works that tend to ignore Southeast Asia as a whole after the Sufism polemic rhetoric of Hamzah Fansuri. Although, these four writers did not discuss the work of Maḥfūz on the same issue, the

discussion in it was very helpful in describing the nuances of polemic of the opposition to Sufism in the Malay-Archipelago which also invited Maḥfūz to write his work.

Different from Sirriyeh's *Sufis and Anti-Sufis* which tends to compare rigidly Sufism with "mainstream" Islam and to treat Sufism as a self-sufficient "thing-in-itself" (that is somehow alien to, and isolated from, the institutional, educational and doctrinal structures of Sunni and Shi'a Islam), *Islamic Mysticism Contested* has a helpful contribution to move beyond the inflexible and essentialized categories of 'Sufism' and 'anti Sufism' and to document the fluid responses to Sufis in a wide range of time periods and regions. In another word, this volume contributes in problematizing and deconstructing the all too facile dichotomy between *ulama* and Sufis.

In term of opposing *ulama* and Sufis, Ibn Taymiyya illustrated that the contradiction between the exoteric religious orientation of *fuqahā'* and the esoteric religious orientation of the Sufis resembles the contradiction between Jews and Christians as it is illustrated in the Quranic verse, "The Jews say, 'the Christians have naught (to stand) upon'; and the Christians say, 'the Jews have naught (to stand) upon'".⁸ Similarly, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the conflict between the Sufis and the *fuqahā'* mutually excludes one against the other.⁹ Polemics and controversies between them are inevitable. The Sufis rejected the religious phenomena of the jurists who had spent their lives studying sensible knowledge (*'ilm al-ẓāhir*). They claim that they focus on the substance of the deed (*rūḥ al-'amal*) by deepening the essence of the knowledge of God (*ḥaqā'iq al-ma'rifa*), and have come to God through striving (*al-mujābada*), the continuity and sustainability of spiritual struggle and sincerity of worship (*istiqāma-mudāwama*). The Sufis claimed to have succeeded in obtaining knowledge directly from God. They accused *fuqahā'* of taking the dead knowledge from the dead people, while the Sufis have taken the living knowledge from the Living God who never died.¹⁰

Through his work *Bughyat al-Adhkiyā'*, Maḥfūz involves in this

⁸ Qur'an, 2: 113.

⁹ Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtida' al-Sirat al-Mustaqim* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2003), p. 10.

¹⁰ Ḥusayn Mu'nis, *'Ālam al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1973), p. 227.

polemic. Maḥfūz affirms that *fuqahā'* are not always to be an opposition to the Sufis. He actually emphasized his argument by quoting selectively from the work of al-Subkī and al-Haytamī who were both *fuqahā'*. Even though he could make the works of al-Ghazālī or al-Qushāirī as the main reference in writing this book but he did not. In the book of *Kifāyat al-Mustafīd* he notes that he mastered the works of Sufism, such as the works of al-Ghazālī, the works of al-Suhrawardī, al-Qushāirī, and the work of other Sufis with the complete intellectual chain (*sanad*) he mentioned up to the authors of the books.¹¹

Scholars agree that Maḥfūz is a prolific scholar. He wrote many works from various fields of Islamic studies, for more than 20 books which entirely written in Arabic. His works have not been much studied in several *pesantren* in Indonesia, but actually used in several universities in the Middle East, such as Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and several other countries. Therefore, it attracted the interest of scholars to write his intellectual biography, albeit with different emphases. For instance, Umar 'Abd al-Jabbar who wrote Maḥfūz's biography which emphasized on his intellectual genealogy and the works,¹² Bruinessen emphasized Maḥfūz as a prolific *ulama* and his role in the literature distribution in *pesantren*,¹³ and Mas'ud emphasized the role of Maḥfūz as an architect of *pesantren* in Indonesia.¹⁴

In addition to biographical essays, other scholars also conducted research on Maḥfūz, especially in hadīth studies, such as conducted by

¹¹ Maḥfūz al-Tarmasī, *Kifāyat al-Mustafīd Limā 'alā Min al-Asanid* (Beirut: Dar Al Basyar al Islamiyah, 1987), pp. 34–5.

¹² 'Umar 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sīyar wa-Tarājim ba'd 'Ulamā'ina fī al-Qarn al-Rābi' 'Asbar lil-Hijrah* (Jeddah: al-Mamlakat al-'Arabiyya al-Su'ūdiyya, 1982), pp. 286–7.

¹³ Martin Van Bruinessen, "Mahfuz b. 'Abd Allah al-Tarmasī, (K.H. Mahfudz Tremas, d. 1338/1920)", *Dictionnaire Biographique Des Savants et Grandes Figures Du Monde Musulman Périphérique: Du XIXe Siècle à Nos Jours*, vol. Fascicule 1 (Paris: CNRS-EHESS, 1992).

¹⁴ Abdurrahman Mas'ud, "Mahfuz al-Tirmisī (d. 1338/1919): An Intellectual Biography", *Studia Islamika*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1998).

Sakdiyah and Widyaningsih,¹⁵ and Dewi Putri.¹⁶ While others wrote Maḥfuz's role at a glance in their works, such as Dhofier,¹⁷ Azra,¹⁸ Laffan,¹⁹ and Hooker,²⁰ all of which explain the important role of Maḥfuz in intellectual genealogy and transmissions among Nusantara *ulama*. Even so, none of those scholars discuss Maḥfuz in terms of his thoughts and polemics about Sufism, particularly about *wali* and *karāma* which were the subject of debate among Haramayn and Nusantara *ulama*.

Accordingly, presenting Maḥfuz's view in this context is remarkably interesting for several reasons. *First*, he is one of the 19th century prominent scholars from the Malay-Indonesian living in Mecca. He had many disciples from both Arab and non-Arab circles, so he influenced many scholars thereafter or the writing of his work was influenced or was requested by some of his disciples. At that time, requesting work to respond to the religious problems from disciple to his master was very common, as well as the issue of sainthood in Sufism. *Second*, he is well-known as a jurist (*al-faqīh*), and also an expert in the field of hadith (*al-muḥaddith* and *al-musnid*). This expertise is important to be mentioned here because so many scholars believe that the conflict of Sufism is a polemic between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in Islam, where jurists (*fuqahā*), Hadith experts (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and theologians (*ahl al-kalām*) posit themselves as the representative of orthodoxy, while the Sufis represents

¹⁵ Rimanur Sakdiyah and Ria Candra Widyaningsih, "Menjadi Islam Nusantara yang Unggul (Studi atas Kitab alMinhah al-Khairiyah Karya Maḥfuzh at-Tarmasi)", *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2018), pp. 261–75.

¹⁶ Dewi Putri, "Ziyadah dalam Manhaj Zawi al-Nazar: Melacak Independensi Maḥfuz Termas terhadap al-Suyuthi", *Mashdar: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an dan Hadis*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2019), pp. 1–14.

¹⁷ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982), pp. 90–1.

¹⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulamā' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), p. 121.

¹⁹ Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma below the Winds* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 227; Michael Francis Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 52.

²⁰ M.B. Hooker, *Indonesian Islam: Social Change through Contemporary Fatāwā* (Crows Nest, N.S.W: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 2003), pp. 91–2.

heterodoxy. *Third*, the work of Maḥfūz that I mainly referred in this paper entirely contains some arguments of denial and answer for those who deny the virtues or miracles of the saints (*karāma*). Therefore, we will find much in it a dialogical statement and argument model of *fanqolah* (*fain kulta ... qultu... or if you said... I say...*).

B. The Biography of Maḥfūz al-Tarmasī

His full name is Muhammad Maḥfūz b. Sheikh ‘Abd Allāh b. Sheikh ‘Abd al-Mannān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Shāfi‘ī al-Jawī al-Tarmasī. ‘Al-Shafi‘ī’ refers to his *fiqh* school orientation. ‘Al-Jawī’ refers to his country, Indonesia. However, at that time, the word ‘al-Jawī’ also meant the scholar who came from Southeast Asia, such as the well-known word ‘*aṣḥāb al-Jawīyyīn*’ (fellows of Malay-Indonesians) that referred to all Malay-Indonesian community in Haramayn (Mecca and Medina).²¹ While al-Tarmasī refers to his hometown, namely Tremas, East Java. There are several other epithets which show his expertise, such as *al-‘Ālim al-‘Allāmah al-Faqīh* (his expertise in the field of *fiqh*), *al-Uṣūlī* (expert on *Usūl al-fiqh*), *al-Muḥaddith* (expert in the field of hadith), *al-musnid* (who has an authorized hadith narration), and *al-muqri* (an expert in reading the Qur’an).²²

Maḥfūz was born in Tremas, East Java, but historians have different opinions regarding the date of his birth. According to Sheikh Yāsin al-Fadānī, he was born in 12 *Jumadilula* 1285 H / 30 August 1868 AD, while according to Sheikh Dahlan, his siblings, he was born on Monday, 6 *Safar* 1280 H / 22 July 1863 AD. Maḥfūz was born when his father was still in Mecca. His mother and uncles were the first responsible for introducing him to a very basic understanding of religious knowledge and practices. Maḥfūz studied religious knowledge to many prominent scholars. Maḥfūz had memorized the Qur’an before he reached adulthood. At first, he learned to his own father, *al-Faqīh* ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abd al-Mannān al-Tarmasī who took him to Mecca at the age of 6 years. To his father,

²¹ Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia*, p. 4.

²² Maḥfūz brief biography was written by Habib ‘Abd al-Shukur, Habib Kamil, and Bahrum Bunyamin. They are editors for published work of Maḥfūz, Maḥfūz al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-Adhkiyā’ fī al-Baḥth ‘an Karamāt al-Anlīyā’*, ed. by Habib ‘Abd al-Shukur, Habib Kamil, and Bahrum Bunyamin (Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, 2008), p. 9.

he studied several books such as *Sharḥ al-Ghāyah (taqrīb)*, *al-Minhaj al-Qawīm*, *Fath al-Mu'īn*, *Fath al-Wahhāb*, *Sharḥ al-Sharqānī 'alā al-Ḥikam*, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* from *surah al-Fatihah* to *surah Yunus*. Because of the great influence of his father, Maḥfūz called his father as “the educator of my soul and my body” (*murabbi ruḥī wa jasadī*).²³ When Maḥfūz stepped into his adolescence, in the late 1870s, his father drove him back to Java. Arriving in Java, his father sent him to study to the famous *ulama* of Java at that time, Kyai Saleh Darat (1820-1903) in Semarang. To Kyai Saleh Darat, Maḥfūz studied the book of *Sharḥ al-Ḥikam*, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, and *Sharḥ al-Mārdīnī* and the book of *Wasīlat al-Tullāb fī 'Ilm al-Falak*.

In the 1880s, he made an intellectual journey again to Mecca, Madina, and Egypt.²⁴ In Mecca, he studied *qirā'at* of Imam 'Ashim to Sheikh Hashīm and *tajwid* to Sheikh Ahmad al-Minshāwī. He achieved a certificate (*ijāza*) of *Sharḥ ibn al-Qasīb 'alā al-Shātibīyyah* and took a *talaqqi* with Sheikh 'Umar b. Barakāt al-Shāmī on the book of *Sharḥ Shudhūr al-Dhabab* by Ibn Hishām. He also studied *al-Mughnī al-Labīb* and *Sharḥ Jam' al-Jawāmi' wa al-Man' al-Mawānī* to Sheikh Mustafā al-'Afīfī, while for the book of *Sahīb al-Bukhari* he got *ijāza* from Sayyid Husein Muhammad al-Habshī. From Sheikh Muhammad Sa'īd Bafaḍal he studied *Sunan Abī Dāwud*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*.²⁵

He also obtained the certificate of *Sharḥ 'Uqūd al-Juman* and *al-Shifā'* (both are the works of Qāḍī 'Iyyād) from Sayyid al-Zawāwī. The certificate of *Sharḥ ibn al-Qasīb*, *Sharḥ al-Durrab al-Muḍī'ab*, *Sharḥ Tayyibat al-Nasbr fī al-Qirā'aāt al-'Asbr*, *Sharḥ al-Rāyah*, *Itḥāf al-Bashar fī al-Qirā'āt al-Arba'at Ashar*, *al-Rawḍa al-Nazīr*, and *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī bi Hashīyyatih* he achieved from al-Sheikh Muhammad al-Sharbīnī al-Dimyaṭī. For the book of *al-Mumawṭta'*, he studied under the guidance of al-Sayyid Muhammad Amin b. Ahmad Riḍwan al-Madanī. In addition, he also studied much to the great Malay-Indonesian scholars in Mecca, such as Sheikh Ahmad al-Fattānī and Sheikh Nawāwī al-Bantanī. From all of those teachers, he recognized that the very influential *ulama* for his intellectual career was Sheikh Abū Bakr Muhammad Shaṭā, the author of *I'ānat al-Ṭaālibīn Sharḥ Fath al-Mu'īn*.

²³ al-Tarmasī, *Kifāyat al-Mustafīd*, p. 7.

²⁴ Mas'ud, “Maḥfūz al-Tirmisī (d. 1338/1919)”, p. 34.

²⁵ al-Tarmasī, *Kifāyat al-Mustafīd*, pp. 7–8.

Besides studying from many ulama, he also taught some students who later became great scholars; they were both Arabian and non-Arabian *ulama*. Those Maḥfūz's disciples from non-Arabian are: Hasyim Asy'ari of Tebuireng Jombang, Sheikh Bisri Syansuri of Denanyar Jombang, Sheikh Abdul Muhith bin Yakub of Sidoarjo Surabaya, Sheikh Raden Dahlan of Semarang, Sheikh Muhammad Dimyathi of Tremas, Sheikh Dalhar of Watucongol, Sheikh Muhammad Faqih bin Abdul Jabbar of Maskumambang, Sheikh Baidhowi bin Abdul Aziz of Lasem, Sheikh Abdul Muhaimin bin Abdul Aziz of Lasem, Sheikh Abbas of Buntet Cirebon, Sheikh Nawawi of Pasuruan, Sheikh Khalil of Lasem, Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah al-Banjari al-Makki, Sheikh Bagir of Jogja, Sheikh Muhammad Maksun bin Ahmad of Lasem, Sheikh Shodiq bin Abdullah of Lasem, and Sheikh Abdul Wahab bin Abdullah of Tambakberas Jombang.²⁶

Meanwhile, some *ulama* such as Sheikh Habib Allah al-Shanqiti, Sheikh 'Umar Hamdan al-Maḥrasī (the expert of Hadith in Haramayn), Sheikh Ahmad al-Mukhallatī, Sheikh 'Umar b. Abu Bakr Bajunayd al-Makkī, Sheikh Muhammad 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Ayyūbī al-Kinawī, Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadir b. Ṣābir al-Mandahlī al-Makkī, they were Maḥfūz's disciples from the Arab community.

Maḥfūz is well known as a prolific scholar. He wrote many books in the different fields of study, like *fiqh*, *ushūl*, *hadīth*, *Qur'an* and *qirā'āt*, theology, and Sufism. Not less than 20 books he has written, some of them have been published and some still in the form of manuscripts. To mention some of them are *Manhaj Dhawī al-Naẓar fī Sharḥ Alfīyyat 'Ilm al-Athar*, *Mawbibah Dhawī al-Faḍl Hashiyyah Sharḥ Bafaḍal* (4 vols), *al-Minḥat al-Khairiyyah fī Arba'in Hadīthan min Aḥādīth Khayr al-Bariyyah* (or *Arba'in al-Tarmasī*), *al-Khal'at al-Fikriyyah bi Sharḥ Arba'in al-Tarmasī*, *al-Risālat al-Tirmisiyyah fī Isnād al-Qirā'at al-'Ashariyyah*, *al-Siqāyat al-Marḍiyyah fī Asāmī Kutub Aṣḥābinā al-Sh.afi'iyyah*, *Kifāyat al-Mustafīd fī mā 'Alāmin al-Asānīd*, *Bughyat al-Adhkiyā' fī al-Baḥṭh 'an Karāmāt al-Awliyā'*, *Nayl al-Ma'mūl Sharḥ Lubḥ al-Uṣūl*, *Is'af al-Maṭālī' bi Sharḥ al-Badr al-Lāmi'* (*Naẓam Jam' al-Jawāmi'*), *Inshirāḥ al-Fu'ād fī Qirā'at al-Imam Ḥamḥab*, *Ta'mīm al-Manāfi' fī Qirā'at al-Imam Nāfi'*, *Tanwīr al-Ṣadr bi Qirā'at al-Imam 'Abi 'Amrū*, *Tabī'at al-Fikr bi Sharḥ Alfīyyat al-Sayr*, *Ghunyat al-Ṭalabah bi Sharḥ al-Ṭayyibah*,

²⁶ al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyā' fī al-baḥṭh 'an karāmāt al-awliyā'*, pp. 12–3.

Ināyat al-Muftaqir fī mā Yata'allaqu bi Sayyidinā al-Khiḍr, Faḥ al-Khabīr bi Sharḥ Miṣṭāḥ al-Sayr, al-Juz' al-Khāmis Takammulab min Mubībah Dhawī al-Faḍal, al-Badr al-Munīr fī Qirā'at al-Imam Ibn Kathīr, and Thulāthiyyāt al-Bukharī.

Maḥfūz passed away in Mecca on Sunday, 1st of Rajab 1338 H / 1919 AD. He was buried in the Ma'la cemetery complex, beside the grave of Sayyidah Khadijah al-Kubra.

C. On Defining *Walāya* and *Karāma*

As I mentioned above, Maḥfūz's work of *Bughyat al-Adhkīyā'* is a selected text that he collected from al-Subkī and al-Haytamī, except the first chapter on the definition of a saint. Although he selected information from both scholars, Maḥfūz also provides additional information almost at the end of the discussion. At the beginning of his writings, he elaborated the meaning of the saint and the sainthood. The discussion is a brief introduction to further discussion on this issue so that the reader does not lose its context.

By quoting al-Qushairī's account,²⁷ Maḥfūz said that the word "*walī*" has two meanings. *First*, although the word "*walī*" is the same structure (*wazan*) of "*fā'il*" (subject) but its meaning is "*maf'ūl*" or object/passive. It means that *walī* is a person whose business is borne by Allah, or a saint does not rely on him at all but Allah is the one who takes care of it (actually surrendering to Allah), in accordance with Qur'an, 7: 196. *Second*, the word "*walī*" is in the form of "*fā'il*" or subject/active. It means that a *walī* is a person who controls himself (or controls his desire) to worship and to obey God continuously. These two attributes (both as objects and as subjects) are a common trait that must be attached to the saint (*walī*). Therefore, the saint not only should uphold the rights of God with all his heart but also manages himself and his lust endlessly whether in

²⁷ His complete name is 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Talhah b. Muhammad al-Qushayrī al-Naisabūrī al-Zāhid al-Šūfī (376-465 H / 986-1072 M). He was a sheikh from Khurasan, professor and the sufi master. Al-Khatīb said, "we categorized his as a trusted scholar (*al-thiqa*). In the field of theology, he was Ash'arites ulama, while in the field of fiqh he was Shafi'i scholar. His book in the field of tafsīr is one of the best work, as well as his masterpiece, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya* in the field of Sufism. Shalahuddin Khalil al-Safadi, *al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt*, vol. 19 (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, 2000), pp. 63–4.

pleasure or in distress condition.²⁸

Furthermore, Maḥfūz explained the process of how one can become a *wali*. As he quoted from al-Kharrāj if someone wanted to reach the degree of sainthood, he should begin with the level of *al-dhikr* (remembrance).²⁹ If the level of *al-dhikr* has been reached and has become a part of it, then he turns on the next level, *al-qurb* (proximity),³⁰ then to the level of *al-uns* (intimacy)³¹ and on the seat of monotheism (*tauhid*). Then the veil (*ḥijāb*)³² was opened for him and then raised again to the level of *fardāniyya* (solitude) and revealed to him the glory and greatness of God.

A man who has achieved this level, where his eyes are only on his Majesty and Greatness, will stay with God and annihilate himself. He became a man who makes God as the only goal and then he was free

²⁸ al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adbkiyā' fī al-Baḥth 'an karamāt al-awliyā'*, p. 23.

²⁹ In Sufism, the term 'al-dhikr' means detached from negligence by the intensity of the presence of the heart with God (*al-Ḥaqq*). Practically, one begins with an explicit remembrance (*dhikr jalī*), then continues with an implicit remembrance (*dhikr khaḥī*), also followed by the dhikr of "the Essence of All-Doing with His will and all matters in His power" in interacting with Him. The last is a moral remembrance (*dhikr akhlāqī*), or remembering the divine morality and longing for morals like *al-Ḥaqq* (God). See Rafiq al-'Ajm, *Mausū'ah Muṣṭalahāt al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Maktabah Libnān Nāsīrūn, 1999), pp. 360–1.

³⁰ *Al-qurb* is revealed as the fulfillment of the promise between the servant and his Lord who has been vowed in the *azālī* period as stated in Qur'an, 7: 172. Some scholars also define it as the preoccupation of the heart only to God. There are three levels of proximity in Sufism: first, the closeness of the ordinary people (*al-'awām*), the loss of a sense of beauty to something from the heart. Second, the closeness of the elite people (*al-khawāṣ*), the tranquility of the heart in the unseen world. Third, the closeness of elite of the elite people (*khaṣ al-khawāṣ*), the disclosure of the veil between himself and his God. *Ibid.*, pp. 754–5.

³¹ *Al-uns billāh* means relying only on God, peace with Him and asking Him for help. Only this meaning can be reached by this term. According to some Sufis, *al-uns* can be interpreted as the state of a servant tossed between the veiled and the unveiled. In fact, the majority of Sufis define it as *tajallī Dhāt* of The Greatest and The Most Beautiful. Apparently, this term is too exaggerated meaning, not all Sufis are given the gift of carefulness in distinguishing and observing the true disclosure of God (*mushāhadā*). *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³² The intent of *ḥijāb* here is barrier. The world is *ḥijāb* of human from Allah, as well as the hereafter. Even all creations is obstacle for servants to reach God. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

from his lustful pleas. Therefore, according to Maḥfūz, there are three preconditions for one to be a saint, namely: his business, his shelter, and his goal are only towards God.³³ At this point, there is almost no debate about the concept of saint and sainthood. The debate emerged when the concept of the saint was juxtaposed with the supernatural phenomenon (*karāma*). Maḥfūz defines *karāma* as the emergence of something that is beyond the fairness of a pious believer (*al-mu'min al-sālib*) without accompanied by the recognition of prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and treatise (*risālah*). In other words, if something out of the ordinary arose from an unbeliever person, it was called *istidrāj*, while if it emerged from a prophet and was accompanied by a treatise then it was called a miracle (*mu'jiza*).

Regarding the difference between *mu'jiza* and *karāma*, Maḥfūz quotes al-Ghazālī, who said that miracles are something supernatural that followed by the recognition of a prophet as a sign of prophethood; this recognition is differentiating factor from *karāma*. The supernatural state is not an impossible thing, its existence cannot cancel the miracle because *karāma* is only a supernatural event that comes without a challenge (*taḥaddi*). Nevertheless, if its emersion was accompanied by the challenge, it was called a miracle.³⁴ In the case of the supernatural conditions which include *mu'jiza* and *karāma*, Maḥfūz employed much information from Muslim scholars (*ulamā'*) who agree with the permissible *karāma* for saints. Some scholars argue that *karāma* occurs not because of the will of a *wali*, and it is different from the miracle of a prophet. Some also presuppose *karāma* should not be accompanied by the recognition as a saint to differ it from *mu'jiza*. While others also presuppose supernatural events in the context of the *karāma* should not resemble the object to the miracle of a prophet, such as splitting the sea and reviving the dead.

Based on the phenomenon of *karāma* that happened in some miraculous stories, Maḥfūz does not fully agree with those scholars' opinions. He agrees with al-Imām al-Haramayn who said that *Karāma* is the right of the saint as the grace of God. *Karāma* also often occurs as a will of a saint without contradicting to the provisions of God, and the supernatural phenomena of *karāma* might resemble with a miracle

³³ al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyā' fī al-Balṭh 'an karamāt al-awliyā'*, p. 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86; Muhammad Abū Hamid Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-'Iqād* (Beirut: Dār Qutayba, 2003), p. 136.

in its object by the condition that there is no prophetic claim in *karāma*, such as reviving the dead. By quoting al-Qushairī, Maḥfūz went on to say that there are no different conditions between *mu'jizā* and *karāma* except the recognition of prophethood.

Dealing with the example of *karāma* as mentioned before, Maḥfūz also completely quoted a narration (*riwāya*) from the book of *al-Risāla al-Qushairiyya*, such as the miraculous story of Abū 'Abd al-Allah al-Tustarī. It is narrated that Abū 'Abd al-Allah went to war with a troop. In the middle of the journey, the horse he was riding on died, when he was in the desert. Then he prayed, "O God, lend him to me until I arrive Tustar (the name of his village)!" Then, the horse got up and revived as before. After he fought and came to Tustar he said to his son, "Release the saddle! O my son, the horse is just a loan." So shortly afterward the horse swayed, fell and died.³⁵ The same story is also narrated from al-Yāfi'ī,³⁶ "Having narrated to me a pious man from the land of Maghrib, I trust the validity of its narrations. It is said that a friend of Sheikh Abū Yūsuf al-Dahmanī died and his family felt very sad. So Sheikh Abū Yūsuf came to them (along with his friend's body). So The Sheikh said to the body, 'revive (live again) with the permission of Allah! So his friend came back to live for a long time by God's will."

Another story that narrated by al-Yafi'ī is "Among the eminent narrations is the story of the axial saint (*wali quṭb*) of Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī which was narrated from the five paths of the distinguished *ulamā'*". It is said that there was a woman who came to Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī with his son. The woman handed her son to the Sheikh to be educated. The Sheikh accepted him and told him to strive (*mujāhada*). On another occasion, the woman visited her son. She saw her son grow thin with yellowish skin (a sign of lack of eating) who was eating a flat of wheat bread. Then she met the Sheikh—who ate which in front of him there was a basin containing the rest of the chicken bones. The woman said, "Oh my lord, do you eat chicken while my son only eats the bread?"

³⁵ al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyā' fī al-Balṭh 'an karamāt al-awliyā'*, pp. 87–8.

³⁶ His full name is 'Abd Allāh b. As'ad b. 'Alī b. Sulaymān b. Falāḥ Sheikh al-Hijāz al-Yāfi'ī al-Yamanī al-Makkī al-Shāfi'ī (698-768 H / 1298-1366 M). He has a title '*ʿAḥfīf al-Dīn*', and he was expert in some disciplines, such as *fiqh*, *usūl fiqh*, linguistic, literature, history, and Sufism with several *ṭarīqas*. He was also known as a vocal criticism of Ibn Taymiyya. See al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhabab fī Akbbār Man Dhabab*, 8: 362–3.

The Sheikh then put his hands on the food and said, “Revive (live) bones, in the name of Allah, the Savior!” Then, the bones were back to life as before until the woman was shocked and screamed hysterically. Thus, the Sheikh said, “If your son can be like this then he can eat chicken at will.”³⁷

There are many narrations quoted by Maḥfūz to describe similar supernatural phenomena of *karāma* and to show that the material or the object of *karāma* could be similar to *mu’jiẓa*, but the prophethood recognition becomes the key differentiating factor of the two. For example, reviving the dead, splitting up the sea (narrated also in *al-Risāla al-Qushairiyya*), changing the form of objects, and others. In addition, Maḥfūz also agreed with al-Yāfi’ī on the difference between *mu’jiẓa* and *karāma*. He said that the difference between the two is that the miracle must be shown by a prophet while the *karāma* must be hidden by a saint. Yet, *karāma* could be shown by the saint in the condition of emergency or permitted by God or in a state of distress which has no other option for him to do so. The *karāma* might be shown to strengthen the belief of *murīd* (a disciple or one who wants God). In other words, the condition of allowing *karāma* to be revealed is the presence of public interest (*maṣlahā*) from the appearance of *karāma*.³⁸

D. On Replying Criticism

Unlike al-Haytami, in the book of *Bughyah*, Maḥfūz seems to avoid “direct polemic”, so rarely he directly mentioned the name of scholars whom he criticized. He is very selective in choosing sentences and themes which were quoted from both scholars. There is no the name of Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned in his work. Yet, he only mentioned some others, such as Qadariyah,³⁹ Mu’tazilites,⁴⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī and the rest he mentions

³⁷ al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyā’ fī al-Baḥth ‘an karamāt al-awliyā’*, p. 89.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 90–94.

³⁹ Qadariyya is a name usually applied to announce a group of theologians, not in itself homogeneous, who represented in one cast or another the principle of liberum arbitrium (free will) in the early period of Islam, from about 70/690 to the definitive consolidation of the Mu’tazila at the start of the 3rd/9th century. J. van Ess, “Kadariyya”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 4, ed. by P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. 368.

⁴⁰ It applied to refer to someone or a group of people who withdrew (i’tazala, from which the term Mu’tazila derives) from an eighth-century circle of majority on whether a grave sinner was a believer or unbeliever. Later on, the term Mu’tazila was

anonymously. Even so, almost every issues of *walāya* and *karāma* that had been polemic he responded to still mentioning fully story transmission and ideas of the answers. Perhaps this is the polite way of Maḥfūz in criticizing, instead of expressing a harsh phrase he chooses to respond politely but radically.

For scholars who deny the existence of *karāma* (no mention of any scholars who deny it, probably it were some scholars of the Muʿtazilites), Maḥfūz stated emphatically that *karāma* is true. He, quoting al-Subkī, also denied the scholar's argument that rejected the existence of *karāma* by attributing it to Abū Ishāq al-Isfirāyīnī (d. 1027). According to him, pointing that argument to al-Isfirāyīnī is a lie because al-Isfirāyīnī is a prominent scholar of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a*.⁴¹ al-Isfirāyīnī only stated that all things or actions those could be regarded as a miracle of the prophet (*mu'jiza*) are not possible to appear as *karāma* which only occurs to the saint. He expressed this opinion to distinguish between *karāma* and *mu'jiza*, or among *karāma* actions.⁴²

Al-Subkī, according to Maḥfūz, asserted that *karāma* and *mushabāda* are not deception, except for one who makes it a goal in his spiritual life. There are two extreme treatments in this issue: people who exalt the *karāma* so much which then they forget that it is a gift from God, not a goal; and there are also excessive people in disparaging it, so they regarded

used to designate a school of Islamic theology that follows certain rules known as the five principles (*al-usul al-khamsa*). However, its emphasis on the use of reason in its theological quest and its assimilation of some Greek ideas and methods of arguments with Islamic principles have contributed to a great extent to the development and flourishing of rationalism in early Islamic thought. The seeds of Muʿtazilite views disseminated by its early figures such as Waṣīl b. al-ʿAttā, ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd, and Abū al-Huḍayl eventually got formulated and adopted as five Muʿtazilite principles. Shalahudin Kafrawi, "Muʿtazilites, Muʿtazila", *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, vol. 2, ed. by Richard C. Martin et al. (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004), p. 497.

⁴¹ It used to refer to someone or a group of people who committed to following the practice of sunna (tradition) by the Companions of the prophet (*ṣaḥāba*) before the emergence of heresies (*bid'āt*). This sect is headed by two theologians, they were: Imam Abū Manṣūr Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Māturidī al-Ḥanafī (d. 333 H), and Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl al-Ashʿarī al-Shāfiʿī (d. 330 H). Muhammad ʿAmīm al-Iḥsān al-Mujaddidī al-Barakatī, *Al-Taʾrīfāt al-Fiqhīyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah, 2003), p. 39.

⁴² al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyāʾ fī al-Baḥth ʿan karamāt al-awliyāʾ*, pp. 30–1.

it is nothing but trickery. Maḥfūz preferred the middle way of these two extremes, which still believed in the *karāma* as God's grace and not as the goal of Sufis' path. A Sufi must have known that he would not stop in the midst of his spiritual journey due to getting *karāma*, because the goal is what is behind the phenomena of *karāma*. If the *karāma* becomes his spiritual goal, he has been lost and deceived, and in the truth, he is far from the aims of *karāma* itself.⁴³

Additionally, Maḥfūz also adds an argument developed by al-Haytamī. According to him, there are some *naqli* arguments (a textual argument based on the Qur'an and Sunna) that contribute the argumentation of the existence of *karāma*, as well as the books compiled by the pious ancestor (*al-salaf al-sāliḥ*). Some of the stories of *karāma* that mentioned in the Qur'an are the fortune earned by Maryam; the base of dates that she (Maryam) rocked to drop the ripe date palm even though it was not the time of the fruit date season; the supernatural phenomena of al-Khiḍr which in the most valid opinion (*marjūh*) he is a "*walī*" instead of a prophet; the story of Dhu al-Qarnayn and Aṣḥāb al-Kahfi with their talking dog; the story of 'Asīf b. Barkhiyā' who has '*ilm al-kitāb*' and capable to bring Balqis's throne only in a wink. Some supernatural phenomena (*karāma*) also narrated in the *hadīth*, among others: a baby who can speak as in the story of Jurayj,⁴⁴ the prayer of three people trapped in the cave that can shift a large stone covering the cave,⁴⁵ the multiplied food of Abū Bakr three times more than before when guests visited his home.⁴⁶ These anecdotes are narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim, as well as they narrated that the Prophet called Umar as one of the *muhḍathīn*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

⁴⁴ The story was narrated by al-Bukhārī in hadith no. 3436 and by Muslim in hadith no. 2550. See Muhammad b. Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 3rd edition, ed. by Raid b. Sabri (Riyadh: Dar al-Hadharah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 2015), p. 564; Muslim b. Al-Hajjaj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2nd edition, ed. by Raid b. Sabri (Riyadh: Dar al-Hadharah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 2015), pp. 821–2.

⁴⁵ The story was narrated by al-Bukhari in hadith no. 5974 and by Muslim in hadith no. 2743. See Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, pp. 967–8; Al-Hajjaj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 872.

⁴⁶ The story was narrated by al-Bukhari in hadith no. 602 and by Muslim in hadith no. 2057. See Al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, pp. 102-3; Al-Hajjaj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, pp. 677-8.

(the inspired ones).⁴⁷

The Qadariyya thought that the *karāma* would result in *safsāta* (ambiguity, looks right but wrong). According to them, if *karāma* was allowed to happen then there will be chaos both in material and in an ideational way like the mountain turned into a pile of gold and others. There are three answers provided by Maḥfūz in this regard: *first*, Imam al-Subkī did not justify any *karāma* occurring at such condition, like the opinion of Imam a-Qushayrī. *Second*, according to Sunni scholars, it is justified the existence of *karāma* up to the same level of miracle (*mu'jiza*) in terms of its object, but the miracles of the prophets had not yet to reap *safsāta* as it happened in the time of the Prophet. *Third*, the *karāma* that occurs and is considered beyond reason does not at all undermine the principle of natural sciences. Meanwhile, the possibility of changing the principle of natural sciences caused by *karāma* is a reasonable one. Therefore, it will not destroy the orders and rules of natural science.⁴⁸

The Mu'tazilites also denied the *karāma* of the saints and questioned the issue. They claim that if the miraculous phenomena happened repeatedly to the saint, it would finally be a normal phenomenon for them. Because of being normal, it would be regarded as a habit for the saints to do the miraculous action. Then, (in the context of the door of prophecy still open) if a prophet of their time is present, then surely their supernatural habit will sink to justify the concept of miracle. The Mu'tazila also expressed their rejection in another way. According to them, if the miraculous action can arise from a pious person, surely the same can also appear to other pious people as his *karāma*. It is certainly very common because there is no exception to say that some of them—related to the supernatural event—is more important than another saint. If so, then the supernatural has become a habit that he can no longer be a proof of prophethood, and thus absolutely seal the prophetic opportunity.⁴⁹

In answering the doubts of the Mu'tazila, Maḥfūz employed the argument of “our scholars” (*wa li a'immatinā*)—that is, the Sunni scholars' argument—that provided two sides of answers. *First*, some of our scholars reject *karāma* which occurs successively and continuously until

⁴⁷ al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyā' fī al-Baḥth 'an karamāt al-awliyā'*, pp. 80–4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

it becomes a habit. Even they reject the same event of the miracle of the apostles sent by God, because, it will make the miracle as a habitual one. *Second*, some of the other scholars, and it was the majority voice, justify the occurrence of *karāma* in a row and could be repeated but it is as a record occurs in secret, not openly, unfamiliar and not becoming a habit. The reason is that the *karāma* is not general public consumption. They also assert that *karāma* occurs consecutively and repeatedly to the saint until it becomes a habit then it is not to be removed from the path of instruction and truth. This could happen if the saint is indeed getting God's blessing. However, on the contrary, if he did not get God's blessing, then he would get lost, and on the fact that he is not really a *wali*. Besides, there are some distinguishing factors between *mu'jiza* and *karāma*, such as the emergence of overt, broad-spread, subdued and accompanied by prophetic proclamation. If *karāma* could be distinguished from *mu'jiza*, then the way to know a prophet is not closed.⁵⁰

Maḥfūz argued that *karāma* will not appear to the wicked and unjust people, but it will appear only to those who are consistent in their obedience to God. Thus, it is clear that the way to know a prophet is not closed, because a *wali* will undoubtedly obey and submit to a prophet if it comes from him a miracle, and undoubtedly, he will say, "O people, this man is a prophet of God, and then obey him!" The issue looks complicated when the discussion in the context of prophethood is still open. However, with the closing door of prophethood—by the coming of the last prophet, Muhammad, whose prophethood is proved by the clearest miracle and the assertion that there is no prophet afterward—hence the confusion can be clearly explained. If it is true that the likeness and the closeness (the way which distinguishes between the prophet and the saint) occur, it must be applied to the saint that existed in the former community, not at the current saint of Muhammadan's people.

There is another sect (here, Maḥfūz did not mention the name of the sect), which stated that if the *karāma* existed and was permitted, then the most deserving of it was the first generation (the companions of the prophet—*ṣaḥāba*). The companions of the Prophet were the chosen people of Muslims, *par excellence* and some of them have been being Caliph after the Prophet. Yet, there is no information narrating

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–38.

their *karāma* stories. Their statement, according to Maḥfūz, is a wistful statement. They are not seriously looking for a story about the *karāma* of the Companions. In fact, there are many stories telling about the *karāma* of the Companions.

To prove his argument, Maḥfūz told the story of *karāma* of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq which is narrated from ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr from ‘Āisha:

“...That Abū Bakr once gave 20 wathāq⁵¹ of the date palm harvest when he was healthy. Nearly to his death, he said, ‘O my daughter, no one is in a state that I have favored but you, and no one will be in a tightness I do not desire but you. In the past, when I gave you 20 wathāq of the date palm harvest, you did not receive it. If you would accept it and keep it for you, it would be yours. Now the dates would be an heir. While there are two of your brothers and two of your sisters, then divide it according to the provisions of the Book of Allah!’, ‘O Father, if that is the case I will give a share to them, but my sister is only one that is Asma’, then who is the other?’ ‘Aisha asked. Abu Bakr replied, ‘I saw at your mother’s womb a woman will be born.’ Later on, it was happened to what is said by Abū Bakr, Aisha had her story.”⁵²

Maḥfūz argued that in the *athar* (Companion narration) there was two *karāmas* of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. *First*, he knew that he will die of his illness. *Second*, he knew that the baby conceived by his wife is a woman. In the other note, it was narrated that Abū Bakr has another *karāma*, such as in the case of an increasing amount of foods that were eaten by his guests, instead of decreasing.

While the *karāma* of Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb which is mostly narrated is the story of Sariyya b. Zanīm al-Du’alī. Umar gave a mandate to Sariyah to lead the Muslim troops to Persia. Arriving there, right at the gate of Nahawand, the troop’s condition was being squeezed, while he and his troops were besieging the city. Finally, the enemy was massively coming more and more while Muslim forces were almost defeated. Meanwhile, Umar who was then in Medina (a city very far from where the forces of the Muslims are) directly up the pulpit to make a sermon and *istighātha* (asking for help to God) with a loud call so that his voice was heard by many people around him, “O Sariyya! (Watch out!) On the mountain...,

⁵¹ For about 2,611 tons

⁵² al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyā’ fī al-Baḥth ‘an karamāt al-awliyā’*, p. 40.

O Sariyya! (Watch out!) On the mountain... whoever handed her herd of goats to wolves would undoubtedly have done wrong!" So, Allah made Umar's voice to Sariyya with all of his armies as if Umar was in the midst of them. Finally, they moved to the other side of the mount so they survived and won. They muttered to each other with surprise, "This is the voice of *Amīr al-mu'minīn* (Umar)!"⁵³

Maḥfūz also recounted another *karāma* of Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb from Imam al-Haramayn in his book *al-Shāmīl*: "...At that time the earth shook, Umar then praised and worshiped God. Nevertheless, the earth continues to shake and vibrate. Then Umar hit it with a whip and said, 'Calm down the earth, haven't I do justice to you?!' Therefore, soon the earth stopped the shaking."⁵⁴ And there are still some stories of other Umar's *karāma* narrated by Maḥfūz, such as the Nile river that flowed back after it was dry,⁵⁵ stopping hot lava from the mountain,⁵⁶ as well as the rejection of war troop's deployment.⁵⁷

To provide other evidence of the Companions' *karāma*, Maḥfūz elaborated many other narrations related to the *karāma* of Uthmān b. 'Affān, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭālib, Sa'd b. Abū Waqqāṣ, 'Abd al-Allāh b. 'Umar, and some other companions of the Prophet. In addition, he also exposed the 25 forms of *karāma* happened to the saints of the Prophet's companions, *tābi'in*, *tābi' al-tābi'in*, and the saints thereafter, including the *karāma* showed by al-Imam al-Shāfi'i. Acknowledged by Maḥfūz, these forms of *karāma* are not limited to the 25 shapes as described, but more than one hundred events. What is described in the book is only a proof for those who deny the *karāma* of the Saints. The most important thing, according to Maḥfūz, is that the saint's *karāma* is a perfection of the miracles of the Prophet, because *karāma* could be a witness to the truth of a saint who is firm in obeying the perfection of religion and his steadfastness in justifying the teaching of the prophet.

Criticism of the Mu'tazilite view is more aggressively put forward

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 42–3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 43–4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 45–8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

by al-Haytamī. Maḥfūz, by quoting al-Haytamī, says that it is not surprising that the Mu'tazilites deny *karāma* because they have used to dare to criticize more crucial thing than the *karāma* issue. They disbelieve in prophetic information whose meaning is *mutawātir* from the Prophet, such as the question of two angels, the doom of the grave, the *mīzān*, and other supernatural things. They do that because they use reason as their foundational viewpoint. If these things were compatible with reason, they accepted them, and if they did not they will reject. If so, then they no longer care about the Qur'an, Sunna and Muslim scholars consensus (*ijmā'*). Nevertheless, even more surprising, said al-Haytamī, is the denial of *karāma* by Sunni scholars. Some of them denied the existence of the Sufi Sheikh and his followers. There were also those who accept and trust the *wali* and *karāma* in general, but when the saint and his *karāma* were coming to them they would deny it and call it as trickery. Such people, according to al-Haytamī, are the obstructed and stubborn people.

Another critic was Ibn al-Jawzī. Maḥfūz agreed with al-Haytamī who appreciated the good intentions of Ibn al-Jawzī who affirmed not to fall for the deceit and heretics. However, according to him, good intentions should also be criticized and be straightened out. The reason is that he has written a book entitled *Talbīs Iblīs* in which he discussed Sufi masters and their congregations, and generalized his judgment that Satan has deceived them. Maḥfūz responded to Ibn al-Jawzī's criticism explicitly in two respects. *First*, Ibn al-Jawzī did not deny the existence of *karāma* but he cautioned that *karāma* was one of the most difficult issues to validate its truth so that it was a very vulnerable means of temptation and deceit of Satan. Disclaimer, in this case, is clear as described before. *Karāma* is true and a saint is a pious Muslim who is very afraid to his God, so it is impossible for him to lie by the *karāma* he received, even though a saint is not an infallible but *Maḥfūz* (guided) because of his obedience to God.

Second, Ibn al-Jawzī's denial that al-Khidr is still alive. In this case, Maḥfūz, by quoting al-Haytamī, said that Ibn al-Jawzī actually denied his own argument. The reason is that he narrated four hadiths following its connecting *sanad* and pointed out that al-Khidr is still alive. Some of these narrations are the hadith that narrated from 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib who said that he saw al-Khidr hanging on the curtain of the Ka'ba. He also

narrated from the path of Ibn ‘Abbas (even he said, “I do not know the path of this hadith but the *marfu*”) from the Prophet that he said, “al-Khiḍr and Ilyās meet annually in one season, then both shave the hair off each other.”⁵⁸ It was narrated from ‘Alī who said that al-Khiḍr gathered with Isrāfīl, Gabriel, and Mikāil at ‘Arafa with the other pilgrims there.⁵⁹

E. ‘*Ulamā’ al-Bāṭin* and ‘*Ulamā’ al-Zābir*

In his book, Maḥfūz presented a provocative question: which one is more important between the esoteric *ulama* (‘*Ulamā’ al-Bāṭin*) or exoteric *ulama* (‘*Ulamā’ al-Zābir*)? To answer that, it is necessary to define first what the meaning of esoteric *ulama* and exoteric *ulama* are. If the meaning of the esoteric *ulama* are the pious people who have divine knowledge (*ma’rifat Allah*), whom Allah gives them to grace with the virtue of charity, guards them against all wrongs and reveals the veil covering them to be close to Him. As well as they worship God believing He always sees them, they preoccupy to love Him and set aside everything but Him, then God blessed them with all His blesses and wisdom. By all of these, the religion comes alive, the disciples get the benefit, the people in need get their help and the nations get good prosperity. While if the meaning of the exoteric *ulama* are scholars who master the acquired knowledge (knowledge by representation), the details of events that are deeds and speeches, by mastering the complexity of reasoning (*aql*) and of textual (*naql*) verification they control the Sharia law that saves them from doing wrong and doing heretical practice. Thus, according to Maḥfūz, quoting al-Haytamī’s argument, the esoteric *ulama* is more important than the exoteric one.⁶⁰

Yet, Maḥfūz recognized that the judgment is not an absolute appraisal because it might be in some aspect the exoteric *ulama* are more important than the esoteric one. In fact, all knowledge is just a medium that can bring someone to “know” God (*ma’rifā*) and know how to

⁵⁸ The text of hadith:

يلتقي الخضر و إلياس كل عام في الموسم فيحلق كل واحد منهما رأس صاحبه

⁵⁹ Al-Tarmisi, *Bughyat al-Adhkal-Tarmasī, Bughyat al-adhkiyā’ fī al-Baḥth ‘an karamāt al-awliyā’*, p. 101.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 129–130.

worship Him, because worship is the goal of the creation of human.⁶¹ The eminence of *ma'rifa* from *fiqh*, according to al-Haytamī, can be seen from the way of obtaining. *Ma'rifa* is more eminent because it is *ladunnī* (knowledge obtained from God without representation; knowledge by presence) which is only reserved for the saints and sincere people. Meanwhile, *fiqh* and other knowledge are obtained by acquisition (*kasbī*) and representative way (*ḥuṣūlī*), achieved even by the transgressor (*fāsiq*) and the heretic (*ẓindīq*). Maḥfūz quoted al-Suhrawardī's argument in his *ʿAnwārif* saying that all knowledge—except Sufism—cannot keep a person away from loving the world or harming the piety and its essence. It could even be a love of the world precisely drives the achievement of the knowledge; they tend to be prestige and honor by achieving this knowledge. It's contrary to Sufism, it will only be achieved by avoiding the mundane, and it will not be revealed except by avoiding lust, besides it can only be studied in the school of piety as stated in Qur'an, 2: 282.

Another thing that makes the eminence of the Sufis scholars from the *fiqh* scholars is supernatural phenomena (*karāma*) that Allah has bestowed upon His saints. Those *karāmas* are not given to the *fuqahā'* unless they take the path as Sufis did. In this case, Maḥfūz said that if the jurist (*faqīh*) practiced his knowledge and took the path of life as the Sufis life, he would become the most important *ʿarif* (*abl al-ma'rifa*). It is because not only he knows an Islamic law as his expertise but also revive his religious life and knows the essence and the owner of the knowledge itself, i.e. Allah.

Unfortunately, in this discussion Maḥfūz neglected scholars whose different arguments. He only mentions earlier scholars who have the same argument (who said that the esoteric *ulama* are more important than the exoteric one) to support his arguments, such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, al-Suhrawardī, Imam Abū Hamīd al-Ghazālī, Imam al-Qushayrī, Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī, ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Salām and others. However, the scholar such as Ibn al-Jawzī in his *Talbīs Iblīs* (The Devil's Deceptions) very strongly opposed it. He strongly opposed the acquisition of knowledge, *ladunnī* (knowledge without intermediaries), to make it certain methods in Sufism. He considered that this kind of method is precisely what makes Muslims lazy and makes Sufi as a group who leave the business of looking

⁶¹ Qur'an, 51: 56

for science (*tark al-tashāghul bi al-‘ilm*). He also quotes Imam al-Shāfi‘ī who says that Sufism is built on the foundation of laziness, and many other criticisms related to the distinction between the esoteric knowledge and the exoteric one, the difference between *shari‘a* and *ḥaqāqa*, and others.⁶²

F. Al-Tarmasī’s Stance in Polemic

The saint, on the one hand, is people who have attained a degree of closeness to God. But on the other hand, he is an ordinary people who live in a community. In any case, the saint has a responsibility. His responsibility required him not only “to unite the heavens and the earth” but also to live worldly and normally in the midst of community.⁶³ Therefore, his speech and attitude are always observed by his followers and others around him, even he is also watched by those who take the task of keeping religious practices on the track (orthopraxy), and those who often feel they have the right to judge the orthodoxy of Muslims. The polemic that occurred in the midst of the Islamic community (*umma*)—dealing with the practice of the saints—emerged due to an absence of the Islamic institution to authorize a saint. There is no institution in Islam that could authorize expressly and absolutely what may or may not be disclosed or done by (or about) the saints. As a result, there is an

⁶² Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbis Iblīs* (Cairo: Idārat al-Ṭibā‘ah al-Muniriyyah, 1966), pp. 310–9.

⁶³ According to Sean Foley, Muslims also stress a broad definition of the term *wali* that incorporates two Quranic terms: *wilāya* (delegated power or authority) and *malāya* (closeness in the physical or the metaphorical sense to power, including personal status. Foley quoted Vincent Cornell who argues that these two terms coexist “symbolically like yin and yang” and reflect a logic by which an individual “can only exercise authority over another by being close to one who bestows authority.” Because the Quran defines God as the ultimate source of authority, Cornell contends that it follows that the friends and protégés of God—much like those who are close to kings or other powerful people—benefit from their proximity to power and their ability to act as intermediaries. As intermediaries, protégés are also patrons: Muslims call on the friends of God to intercede for them. The *wali*, or Muslim saint, is simultaneously close to God (*malāya*) and a patron for clients (*wilāya*) or for those Muslims who follow his teachings. These two frameworks allow Islamic saints to fulfill their two chief roles: intercede with God on behalf of those particular people who appeal to them and to facilitate the path of devotees in reaching union with God on Judgment Day. Sean Foley, “The Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya, Islamic Sainthood, and Religion in Modern Times”, *Journal of World History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (2008), pp. 527–8.

opportunity for emerging various personal opinions concerning the saints and sainthood. The differences among the figures who participated in this debate were mainly dealing with the form of tenacity and sentimental argumentation rather than essential and fundamental opinions.

Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200), a Hanbali scholar and renowned *muballig* (although not the first one to express his opinion on this issue), was the one causing later polemics heat up concerning the saint and the sainthood. In his book, *Talbis Iblīs* (the Devil's Deception), there are only two chapters (chapters 10 and 11) having a long description to question the attitudes or statements of those who are considered the saints. He criticized the deviations of the Sufi order. Actually, no one is free from his criticism. He was also keen to criticize his fellow jurists (*fuqahā'*), theologians (*mutakallimūn*), Qur'an readers, sultans, rich people, poor people, where he saw that devil's hands work a lot.

According to Ibn al-Jawzī, through the innovation of religious practices (*bid'ā*), the devil relentlessly tempts the human and keeps them away from the righteous path. Therefore, every heresy should be cursed, even if it did not appear to deviate from certain sharia law.⁶⁴ Honoring people who, in one way or another, have incorporated innovative religious terms and attitudes which is unknown by the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-sāliḥ*) into Islamic teaching is heresy. Therefore, they cursed Dhun al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (who first introduced the terms *maqāmāt* in Sufism), Ibn Abī al-Hiwarī (who maintained the opinion that the saints are higher in rank than the prophets), Sahl al-Tustārī (who was able to speak with angels), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nūrī (who declared that man could have a passionate love for God, *'ishq*), and, of course, al-Hallāj (who made such a heavy insult to God, whereas his *karāma* was considered extremely hoax). Maḥfūz also noted several objections and criticisms of Ibn al-Jawzī, such as his opinion that *karāma* has been just a trick of the saint, his denial of the hierarchy of the saint, and his denial that al-Khidr is still alive.⁶⁵

Ibn Taymiyyah also declared similar criticism. Like Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Taymiyyah was a Hanbali scholar. However, his criticism to the saint and *karāma* is more aggressive, persistent and comprehensive rather than Ibn al-Jawzī. On the one hand, it must be admitted that Ibn Taymiyyah did not

⁶⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbis Iblīs*, pp. 17–8.

⁶⁵ al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyā' fī al-Baḥth 'an karamāt al-awliyā'*, pp. 100–1.

deny the saint and *karāma* in Islamic thought. Theoretically, he recognized the existence of *wali* and *karāma*, and defined both in accordance with traditional hagiology—even he denounced the Hanbali adherents who denied it. Yet, on the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya realized that there are no clear references in the Qur’an (*Nas̄*) for some of those matters, which are something that can lead one to heresy. For example, he questioned such as how to address the saints and *karāma*? How to know exactly in what condition a person has become a saint? And how to ensure that the supernatural phenomena are a *karāma*?

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, to distinguish a valid *karāma* with the fake one is not an easy matter. It is possible for the saints to be blessed with “disclosure/divine irradiation of the essence” (*mukāshafā*), but this possibility sometimes leads people to make a mistake and misunderstanding. Generally, the divine visions that experienced by some saints are nothing more than the illusion caused by the temptation of Satan. Some of the other faults, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, are excessive attitudes towards the saints, not only when the saint is still alive but also after he died. In this case, Ibn Taymiyya specifically stated that the pilgrimage to the saint’s tomb and making supplication to the saint (*tamassu*) is idolatry (*shirk*). Moreover, he regarded that *mauled* celebrations of the prophet, which spread over the Sunni community since the second half of the 12th century,⁶⁶ should be seen as a heresy imitating Christmas celebrations among Christians. It can easily be concluded also that the *mauled* celebrations of the saints are not acceptable to Ibn Taymiyyah.

However, although Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyyah have been aggressively and fervently resisting and attacking distorted beliefs and practices, these two figures still posit within the boundary of the consensus of the ulama concerning the concept of “*walāya*”, albeit in a position at the edge of the boundary. It should be mentioned here that in the genealogy of the Master-Disciples (*Sheikh-Murids*) relationship, Ibn Taymiyyah was a descendant of —only one generation later, and this was emphasized by himself—the great Baghdad Sufi and saint, ‘Abd

⁶⁶ Nico J.G. Kaptein, *Muhammad’s Birthday Festival: Early History in the Central Muslim Lands and Development in the Muslim West Until 10th/16th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); Aviva Schussman, “The Legitimacy and Nature of Mawid al-Nabī: (Analysis of a Fatwā)”, *Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1998), pp. 214–34.

al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. He also mentioned in tones praising saints like Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibrāhīm bin Adham, Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, Bishr al-Ḥāfi, Junayd, Abū Madyan and others.

In addition, those criticisms provide great encouragement to the later ulama to declare similar refusal. In some literature, scholars usually conclude simplistically that the contradiction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy takes the form of the conflict between Sufis and jurists (*fuqahā'*). Almost in the next few generations since Ibn Taymiyyah, scholars who criticize *walāya* and Sufism are a minority and often get counterattacks from their own circles (*fiqh* experts). Their criticism was strongly denied by their fellows, supported by the authorities and public opinions. One example of such a counterattack is, for instance, declared by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) who, in 1470 and again in 1483, sided with Anṣārī against al-Biqā'ī.⁶⁷ In addition, with his extensive knowledge, al-Suyūṭī opposed Ibn Taymiyya's views in a number of major debates, for example in the statement of the axial saint (*wali qutb*) or the hierarchy of sainthood,⁶⁸ the question of the validity of the celebration of the *mauled nabī* and the *mauled* of the saints.⁶⁹ He also refused to view that every innovation as a heresy (in his opinion, that innovation must be categorized by nature, in one of the five valid categories).⁷⁰ The same response is also continued by Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d.1355) and Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī (d. 1567), both are profoundly influential Shāfi'ī scholars.

Other scholars have objected to the judgment of Ibn Taymiyyah, some of them are experts on *fiqh* (*fiqahā'*). This is not too surprising due to the people who are called as *fuqahā'* may become Sufis, or indeed they live as Sufis without having to leave his expertise in the field of *fiqh*. An interesting example of this case is Zakariyā al-Anṣārī (d.1520),

⁶⁷ To be noted that Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī was sentenced due to his criticism of al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Farīḍ, and Ibn 'Arabī. He was sentenced by a fatwa that issued by Shāfi'ī Supreme Court Justice, Zakariyā al-Anṣārī who was assigned by Sulṭān Qaitbay to solve the case.

⁶⁸ Imam Jalaluddin al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Khabar al-Dāl 'alā Wujūd al-Quṭb wa al-Awtād wa al-Nujabā' wa al-Abdāl* (Beirut: Dar al-Beirut, 2005).

⁶⁹ Imam Jalaluddin al-Suyūṭī, *Husn al-Maqṣad fi Amal al-Mawlid* (Beirut: Dar al Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1985).

⁷⁰ Imam Jalaluddin al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥaqīqa al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Libnani, 1992).

he was a highly respected Muslim scholar and died over 100 years old after serving as a Qādhī Shāfi'ī in Egypt for about 20 years. He lived in Sa'īd al-Su'adā's cottage and lived a rigorous spiritual practice (*ẓuhd*), be sufficient to eat bread distributed to the Sufis. Maḥfūz in this work also found that Zakariyā al-Ansārī was a saint based on the history/legitimate story of a trusted jurist (*al-faqīh al-thiqab*) and strength (*thabat*) who met an axial saint (*wali al-Quṭb*). Then the Saint said to him, "The Egyptian saint comes from your community, the *fiqh* scholars!" Then he replays, "The Egyptian saint has now been Sheikh Burhān al-Dīn bin Abū Sharīf, then afterward is Zakariyā."⁷¹

The last three scholars—Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, Zakariyā al-Ansārī, and Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī—were scholars mostly influencing Sheikh Maḥfūz al-Tarmasī. As an expert on hadith and as a *musnid*, Maḥfūz was very concerned about intellectual genealogy. These three scholars, who were *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a* and the Shafi'i school of thought, are often mentioned in Maḥfūz's intellectual genealogy. It was noted in his book *Kifāyat al-Mustafīd*, including the intellectual genealogy on the field of tafsīr, hadīth, fiqh, *usūl*, and taṣawwuf.⁷² Therefore, they were very influential on Maḥfūz scholarship, even intellectually or emotionally. They were known as scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a* and in some of their works are known to be very loudly criticizing Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyyah.⁷³

Nevertheless, the polemic of *walāya* and *karāma*, as well as Sufism in general, still continues hitherto by taking the form of contradiction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. What is interesting here is not the mapping of the binary opposition between supporters and opponents, or between Sufis and *fuqahā'*, but in the process of grasping scholars' understanding from time to time on this issue. Many scholars, after the death of Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyyah, declare their criticisms but an only minority in numbers. They face similar challenges from scholars who defended the concept.

⁷¹ al-Tarmasī, *Bughyat al-adhkiyā' fī al-Baḥth 'an karāmāt al-awliyā'*, pp. 170–1.

⁷² al-Tarmasī, *Kifāyat al-Mustafīd*.

⁷³ See, for example, the harsh denunciation of al-Haytami to Ibn Taymiyya in Ibn Hajar al-Haytami. See Imam Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, *al-Fatāwa al-Hadithiyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa), p. 489.

By the 18th century until today, the situation was very different from the past. Among the jurists and anti-Sufis *ulama*, who earlier were a minority in number, now their votes are represented by a larger and louder group, namely Wahhābīsm⁷⁴ that begins to provide theological and political support to the anti-Sufi groups.⁷⁵ Yet, strengthening of this position must be paid with a betrayal. Ibn Taymiyyah and his followers up until that time only attacked the deviation practices of the Sufis. Now, in the name of the great scholars of the Hanbali school (Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyya), they are going to eradicate Sufism itself and all related to it. In his various works, Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb pointed out his understanding that Sufism is no longer on the boundary of a consensus of *ulama* but is openly beyond it.⁷⁶

By his idea of outright *tawhīd* (monotheism), Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, the author of the Wahhabi doctrine, upbraided all types of *shirk* (polytheism) showed by the practice of a few Muslims. He considered the Islamic principle of *shahāda* (declaration of faith) as inadequately, and accepted that it ought to be went by an understanding of its meaning, which needs a consistency illustrated in practices. He doled out to his development the assignment of filtering Islam from all sorts of innovation that inferred a refusal of monotheism among numerous Muslims. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab committed his *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* to negate the exegetical works of past and modern scholars who deluded Muslims and caused them to receive the propensities and traditions of shirk. In his famous work, *Kashf al-Shubuhāt*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab states that shirk practices in his time had extended to include many Muslims. By comparing the shirk

⁷⁴ Wahhabism (Arabi: *Wahhābiyya*), is not the name given by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. The designation was first coined with derogatory connotations by Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s opponents to denounce his doctrine as mere personal opinion. Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab and his followers called themselves *al-Muwahhidun* those who profess the unity of God”. See W. Ende, “Wahhābiyya”, *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 11, ed. by P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 39.

⁷⁵ George Makdisi, “Ibn Taymiyya: A Sufi of the Qadiriya Order”, *American Journal of Arabic Studies*, no. 1 (1973), pp. 118–29.

⁷⁶ According to Imarah, there are three basic characteristics of Wahhabism. First, strongly opposing all philosophical, natural, and mystical (mystical) thoughts. Second, strongly opposing all beliefs that are considered *bid’a* and *kuḥūfāt*. Third, opposing all forms of rational interpretation (intellectuality). See Muhammad Imārah, *Tbayrāt al-Fikr al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Syurūq, 1995), p. 254.

phenomenon in his time with the time of the Prophet, he claims that the number of the earliest *mushrikūn* (polytheists) was far less than those of his own time. While the former had prayed to God,⁷⁷ the new *mushrikūn* of his time had even abandoned prayers and were committing idolatry.⁷⁸

For Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, *tawhīd* was an unequivocal criterion in defining *kufr*: *Inna al-Muslim lā yakfuru illā bi al-shirk*.⁷⁹ By considering the veneration of trees, rocks, graves and other sacred sites as pre-Islamic customs, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab denounced idolatry and all sorts of requests for intercession that cause Muslims to deviate from the belief in God as the absolute sovereign. He preached for the eradication of these customs as a manifestation of *shirk*, calling upon his supporters to fight against the *kuffār*s who committed *shirk* until they adhered to monotheism.⁸⁰ In this regard, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab received a more radical position than other Hanbalis who dealt with *kufr* and were more than tolerant towards commemoration rites for saints. Early Hanbali conventions contain more than one content that Hanbalis examined around the grave of Ahmad ibn Hanbal in a commemoration ceremony.

The popular book of Ibn al-Jawzi, *Manāqib al-Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* (The Merits of the Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal), was one of the works that solidified the early lawful standards utilized by Hanbalis in their religious polemics with others. In spite of the fact that Wahhabis had counseled the legal interpretation of Ibn al-Jawzi, they received a revisionist elucidation, withdrawing from a number subjects of Ibn al-Jawzi. One of these subjects was the attitude of Ibn Jawzi towards the adoration of sacred places, depicting with incredible regard the visitation ceremonies to the grave of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Ibn al-Jawzi indeed tended to acknowledge the story of one visitor who claimed that he saw creatures that appeared to him like angels sharing the ceremony around

⁷⁷ Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd Al-Wahhab, *Al-Ta’līqāt ‘alā Kashf al-Shubuhāt*, ed. by Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Shalih Al-Uthaymin (Beirut: Dar Auwli al-Nuha, 1996), p. 64.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷⁹ Husayn ibn Ghannām, *Rawḍat al-Afkār wa-al-Afhām li-Murtād ḥal al-Imām wa-Ta’dād Ghaṣawāt Dhaw’i al-Islam*, ed. by Nur al-Din al-Asad (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1985), p. 305.

⁸⁰ Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd Al-Wahhab, *Kitāb Kashf al-Shubuhāt fī al-Tawhīd*, ed. by M. al-Dīn Al-Khatīb (Cairo: al-Matba‘a al-Salafiyya wa-Maktabatuha, 1965), pp. 9–14; *ibid.*, pp. 37–43.

the grave.⁸¹ It is, in any case, not completely clear in Ibn al-Jawzi's work as to whether and how far he makes an unequivocal refinement between iman and *kufr*. He basically takes after Ibn Hanbal's legitimate position which emphasize the criteria of *īmān* instead of dealing with the criteria of *kufr*, citing Ibn Hanbal's articulation that faith depends on two related components: *qawl* (verbal declaration) and *'amal* (viable activity).⁸²

In any case, the articulation of Ibn Hanbal had disputable interpretations among the Hanbalis themselves. Whereas the Hanbali sufis depended on the early Hanbalis to endorse their conduct, including the request of intercession, the Wahhabis who claimed their adherence to Hanbaliyya highlighted the significance of practicing pure monotheism in which there's no place for activities and conduct that would lead to any sort of *shirk*. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's revision of the early Hanbali treatment of *kufr* and iman presented a strict interpretation of *shirk*, which Wahhabis have connected to exclude their rivals from the community of believers. In spite of the fact that many of their legal and theological interpretations proceeded to depend on Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn 'Ayūbiyya, the Wahhabis ignored this section concerning 'the other abandoned action' mentioned above. Instead, they turn to their own interpretation of chosen Qur'anic verses and Hadith regarding any activity that did not compare to their interpretation of these texts as *shirk*. In his reference to the spread of *shirk* in his time, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab condemned what he called acts of idolatry among expansive sections of Najdis still looking for salvation through saints in contradiction to *tawhīd*.⁸³

At the top of the list compiled by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, the most criticized of the practices of worship is when "Allah is associated with the pious servants (*ṣāliḥīn*)", he intentionally does not use the term "*awliyā*". This issue is repeated more and more as if it were an obsession: supplicating to human, including to the Prophet Muhammad himself, is

⁸¹ Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, 2nd edition, ed. by M.A. al-Khanji Al-Katabi (Beirut: Khanji & Hamdan, 1973), pp. 481–2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸³ Abd al-Aziz bin Baz, *Rasā'il al-Imam Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shakhsīyya*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: Dar Ishbiliya li-al-Nashr, 2000), p. 60.

a form of idolatry (*shirk*). Anyone who glorifies the *sālihīn* is no different from the Christians.⁸⁴ The same accusations have been repeated by other Wahhābis authors: *istighātha*—which means pleading saints to God’s intercessors—believing that saints can obtain divine inspiration and have access to the unseen knowledge (*‘ilm al-ghayb*), all of that, according to contemporary Saudi jurist, Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. Bāz, is the greatest idolatry (*shirk al-akbar*).⁸⁵

In the Wahhābi’s literature, the concept of *walāya* also disappeared. The saints are defined simply as “every Muslim who believes in God and fears Him”. Their goal is not to simplify the excesses of the form of glorification for the saints or to correct deviant doctrine or inadequate prayer. Nor was it enough to destroy the tombs that were made as suspicious places of pilgrimage—just as the Wahhābis had done in sites under the influence of his authority (only the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina was left unchecked, but if the pilgrims stopped too long there then they would be expelled). The aim of the Wahhābis is the abrogation of the concept of *walī* from the minds of the Muslims—the *walī* whom Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyyah had once discussed with an attitude of piety.

Finally, the position of Maḥfūz in the polemic of sainthood and *karāma* is clear. As a scholar of the Sunni and Shāfi‘ī school of thought, to write *Bughyat* is one of his efforts to respond and to contribute his opinion dealing with *walāya* and *karāma*’s discourse. However, although his work was written, by way of selecting some of the writings of al-Subkī and al-Haytamī and added his own argument, he preferred to choose a soft way and avoided harsh expressions against his critics. Therefore, we could not find the phrases, like al-Haytamī’s denunciation to Ibn Taymiyya, in Maḥfūz’s work, even though he quoted from al-Haytamī’s *al-Fatāwā al-Hadīthiyya*. In addition, as a *mubaddis* and a *musnid*, he is very concerned about history, both on telling stories and in proposing ideas.

⁸⁴ Abd al-Rahman Al-‘Isamī, *al-Durrar al-Saniyya fī al-Ajuibaal-Najdiyya: Majmu‘ Rasa’il wa-Masa’il ‘Ulama’ Najd al-‘Alam min ‘Asr al-Shaykh Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wabbab ila ‘Asrina*, vol. 2 (Riyadh, 1994), p. 386.

⁸⁵ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Bāz, *Fatāwā Nūr ‘alā Al-Darb* (Riyadh: Madār al-Waṭan lil-Nash, 2007), pp. 392–3.

G. Concluding Remarks

By scrutinizing *Bughyat al-Adhkīyā'*, we can find clearly that Maḥfūz is deeply bound up with traditional hagiology in defining *wali*, *walāya*, *karāma* and some related issues. There is almost nothing new he provided in defining the issues. However, what is interesting here is the way of which Maḥfūz compiled his book. He did not mainly refer to the writings of Sufis in explaining and refuting the opponents of the concept of the saint, although he actually mastered on many Sufi's works such as the work of al-Qushayrī, al-Ghazālī, al-Suḥrawardī, and al-Kalābadhī (they were also known as the Sunni Sufis). He instead uses the perspective of *fiqh* scholars in his denials.

Maḥfūz's method of presenting argument from *fiqh* ulama showed his intelligence on utilizing "criticism from within" method. He carefully considered the opponents to whom he criticized. He argued that the critics of the concept of *wali* and *karāma* mostly came from *fiqh* scholars. As he pointed out in his book that the cause of the prolonged polemic between esoteric scholars and exoteric scholars is due to their different perspectives. Many *fiqh* scholars see only the nutshell of the phenomenon without knowing the true matter of the spiritual experience. In accordance, Maḥfūz criticized *fiqh* scholars who only focus on "observed phenomena" without directly feel "the depth of experiencing phenomena".

Maḥfūz succeeded to show that not all *fiqh* scholars opposed the phenomenon of *karāma*, even supporting the argument of *karāma* can be found in the Qur'an and Sunna. In addition, he also presented an argument of the possibility for *fiqh* scholar to be a *wali*. He said that if the *fiqh* scholar was living the way as the Sufis did, he would be a very wise man (*al-ārif*). Therefore, he also mentioned that if *fiqh* scholar experienced life as Sufi, he would not be able to deny the existence of *walāya* and *karāma*. In fact, he will understand clearly and wisely Sufi's spiritual phenomena, such as *shatḥāt*, *jadhb*, *ladunnī*, *mushābada*, *maḥabbah* and other states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) in the Sufis tradition.

In his book, Maḥfūz did not mention clearly the names of scholars who were the object of his criticism. He was a polite scholar in criticizing his opponents. Although he quoted the works of al-Subkī and al-Haytamī in compiling his book, he selected his writings in good phrases. He only

mentioned certain groups in general, such as *Qadariyya* and *Mu'tazila* groups. The rest, he mentioned anonymously. The only scholar was mentioned in his criticism is Ibn al-Jawzī. Nevertheless, he still recognized the truth of Ibn al-Jawzī's argument that reminded Muslims to be careful with the phenomena that could lead to the idolatry (*shirk*). The mistake of Ibn al-Jawzī, he argued, is generalizing his judgment without knowing the true spiritual experience of the Sufis.

His polemical position on the issue is obvious. He stands for the argument of the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a* in defending Sufis tradition. Repeatedly, he emphasizes that his opinion referred to Sunni and Shāfi'i scholars. In fact, he did not hesitate to correct his opponents who utilize al-Isfirāyīnī's opinion, a Sunni scholar, in opposing the concept of *walāya* and *karāma*. According to him, they were wrong in capturing the intent of al-Isfirāyīnī's opinion. However, I have not been able to find a reason why Maḥfūz did not mention Ibn Taymiyya in his work. Ibn Taymiyya is well known as a scholar whose arguments are often cited by contemporary scholars to refute the *karāma* phenomena. In fact, al-Haytami, as cited in his works, often attacked the arguments of Ibn Taymiyya and not infrequently criticized him with harsh expressions.

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