



## ‘ABD AL-KARĪM AL-JĪLĪ AND THE PRAXIS OF ḤADĪTH

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**Abstract:** The article provides a study of the use of *ḥadīth* in the works of al-Jīlī, the author of, e.g., *al-Insān al-Kāmil*. The article offers a fresh look on the use of *ḥadīth* in pre-modern Sufi writings. Esp., *al-Kahf al-Raqīm* a less studied work of al-Jīlī is analyzed. The study will help to precise analysis of *ḥadīth* in pre-modern times among Sufis. The study is not focused on the criticism of the way Sufis use *ḥadīth* by *ḥadīth* scholars. It is a reconstruction of one aspect of the thought and works of al-Jīlī as an exponent of the later school of *wahdat al-wujūd*. Thus, it widens the field of *ḥadīth* studies to other approaches than those shared by *ḥadīth* scholars. It is the praxis of *ḥadīth* in Sufi writings that can be studied this way and not claims for authority.

**Keywords:** al-Jīlī, sufism, ḥadīth, *Wahdat al-Wujūd*

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READING ḤADĪTH is often focused on the authenticity of *ahādīth* and implies a juridical normative view.<sup>1</sup> The discussion may be focused on the criticism of Sufi approaches to the *ḥadīth* by *ḥadīth* scholars or on the study of the approaches of Sufis to the *ḥadīth* and explorations into the writings of Sufi authors for a thorough understanding of these approaches. This study focuses on a specific case of these discourses. A study of the complex of the study of *ḥadīth* would have to include both aspects: criticism and Sufi praxis. Since the study of Sufi use and perception of *ḥadīth* is still in its beginnings (see below), this study is a first step into this direction. This respects the specific logic of Sufi discourses and is not following claims of authority and normativity.

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the two anonymous reviewers who helped to improve the text.

This study begins with an overview of Western studies of the *hadīth* as used by Sufis, esp., of the school of *wahdat al-wujūd*, the oneness of being, surveying the state of this field. As stated before, Islamic studies would prefer a focus on a critical analysis of the use of *hadīth* by Sufis. The second part discusses the specific studies on the approaches of Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Jīlī. The third is the main part of this study, elucidating al- Jīlī uses of *hadīth*.

## Western Studies of Sufi Approaches to Hadīth

Research on *hadīth* in European languages in recent years discusses the process of canonization and in recent times the commentaries on *hadīth* collections,<sup>2</sup> the paradigms of Oriental Studies and Islamic theology,<sup>3</sup> and a detailed analysis of the corpus of *hadīth* literature in all its varieties.<sup>4</sup> Very few studies are devoted to the role of *hadīth* in *tasawwuf*.<sup>5</sup> Even less studies are

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Joel Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadīth Commentary across a Millennium* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Fatma Kızıl, “In Pursuit of a Common Paradigm: Islamic and Western Hadīt Studies,” *Hikma* 10, no. 1 (2015): 11–32; Cf. for a similar position Muhammad Zuhri, “Perkembangan Kajian Hadits Kesarjaan Barat,” *Ulul Albab* 16, no. 2 (2015): 21–234.

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Gharaibeh, *Einführung in die Wissenschaften des Hadīth, seine Überlieferungsgeschichte und Literatur* (Freiburg i Br.: Kalām Verlag, 2016) or studying the example of al-Nawawī’s *Kitāb al-Arba‘īn* cf. Marco Schöller, trans., *Yahyā Ibn Sharaf Al-Nawawī: Das Buch Der Vierzig Hadithe Kitāb al-Arba‘īn Mit Dem Kommentar von Ibn Daqīq al-‘Id* (Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2007) and a special case of an *arba‘īn* collection; Sulaiman A. Mourad and James E. Lindsay, *The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihad Ideology in the Crusader Period: Ibn ‘Asākir of Damascus (1105–1176) and His Age, with an Edition and Translation of Ibn ‘Asākir’s The Fort Hadiths for Inciting Jihad* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013) For a detailed analysis of the role of Hadīth in Islamic pre-modern thought cf. Tilman Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen Das Verborgene: Die Heilszusage Des Sunnitischen Islams* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 495–654 with a specific approach.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. for two of the rare exceptions Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadīth: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 2nd ed. (London: Oneworld, 2018), 205–217; Aiyub Palmer, “Sufism,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadīth*, ed. Daniel W. Brown (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 268–279; Due to the epistemological differences of the terms Sufism and *tasawwuf* we are following Caner Karacay Dagli, *Ibn Al-‘Arabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture: From Mysticism to Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016) on using the original Arabic term.

discussing the role of *hadīth* in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī.<sup>6</sup> The study of *hadīth* in the school of *wahdat al-wujūd*, the oneness of being, is deplorably limited.

On a more general plane, Knysh assesses the importance of the Qur'an and *hadīth* literature for *tasawwuf* and Sufis: "Its importance for Sufi thought notwithstanding, the *hadīth* corpus (*sunna*) still takes a back seat to the Qur'an that has served as a principal starting point and frame of reference for Sufi disquisitions about God, the cosmos and the vicissitudes in this world and in the hereafter."<sup>7</sup>

Hence, the study of *hadīth* in the writings of Sufis and, esp., in the school of *wahdat al-wujūd* is still in the beginning. Our contribution aims at exploring in this field. Furthermore, the first study of this aspect of the writings of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī is intended.<sup>8</sup>

### **Hadīth, Ibn 'Arabī and al-Jīlī**

A great impact on the Western study of *hadīth* in the work of Ibn 'Arabī has two recent articles by Denis Gril.<sup>9</sup> Gril stresses the

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Peter Bachmann, "A Propos d'un Hadīt Expliqué dans Les, *Futūhāt* d'Ibn al-'Arabī (1165-1240)," in *Das Propheten Hadīt: Dimensionen Einer Islamischen Literaturgattung*, ed. Claude Gilliot and Tilman Nagel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 108–112; Peter Bachmann, "Hadīt im Text, im Kommentar Oder im Hintergrund: Zu Einigen Versen aus dem *Dīwān* von Ibn al-'Arabī," in *Hadīthstudien: Die Überlieferungen des Propheten im Gespräch. Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Tilman Nagel*, ed. Rüdiger Lohlker (Hamburg: Dr. Kovács, 2009), 5–18; Angelika Brodersen, "Die Autorität des Hadīt: Zur Bedeutung Muḥammads im theosophischen System Ibn al-'Arabīs," in *Das Propheten Hadīt: Dimensionen einer islamischen Literaturgattung*, ed. Claude Gilliot and Tilman Nagel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 113–122.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 72.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the study of Ridha Atlagh, *Contribution à l'étude de la Pensée Mystique d'Ibn 'Arabī et son école à Travers l'oeuvre de 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī* (Paris: Diss. Phil., 2003); for a short overview cf. Ridha Atlagh, "Contribution à l'étude de la Pensée Mystique d'Ibn 'Arabī et son école à Travers l'oeuvre de 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī," in *École Pratique des Hautes études, Section des Sciences Religieuses, Annuaire* 109 (Paris: Diss. Phil., 2000), 509–511.

<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed overview cf. Denis Gril, "Le Hadīth Dans l'œuvre d'Ibn 'Arabī Ou La Chaîne Ininterrompue de La Prophétie," in *Das Prophetenhadīt: Dimensionen Einer Islamischen Literaturgattung*, ed. Claude Gilliot and Tilman

importance of *hadīth* in the education of Ibn 'Arabī living in a context that encouraged these studies: al-Andalus and the Maghrib under the rule of the Almohads and the Mashriq under the rule of the Ayyubids and the Seljuks.

Gril mentions the collections of *hadīth* compilated by Ibn 'Arabī, most of them disappeared. But there are some specialized works on *hadīth* by Ibn 'Arabī that are extent, leaving aside the other works with many references to *hadīth*. Generally speaking, Ibn 'Arabī accepts *ahādīth* from different origins insofar as these *hadīth* convey an undeniable truth.<sup>10</sup>

"His *Mishkāt al-anwār fīmā ruwiya 'an Allāh min al-akhbār* is a collection of *hadīth qudsī*, of which the first forty are preceded by an *isnād*, while for the others the reference is generally indicated. Another work should also be noted, *al-Mahajjat al-baydā' fī al-ahkām al-shar'iyya*, written in the style of *ahādīth al-ahkām*. [...] we can assume that the author, who was in Mecca in ah 600, intended to compose for himself a vast collection of *hadīth*, serving as a reference in matters of jurisprudence."<sup>11</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī in the last work refers to a *hadīth* transmitted via – we may assume – an *ijāza 'āmma* received through an intermediary he does not mention. At the same time, it is a work dedicated to the needs of juridical thought.

Ibn 'Arabī especially considered the *hadīth* directly received from the Prophet in dreams as a highly valuable source for those who are favored by it. This seemingly not coherent way of coherent way may be considered deficient. Recent research on non-modern Islamic thought, however, allows for a different understanding making it possible to leave a homogenizing Salafi style approach and adopt another one more in line with traditional Islam.<sup>12</sup>

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Nagel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 123–144 and ; Denis Gril, "Hadīth in the Work of Ibn 'Arabī," *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, n.d., accessed January 25, 2021, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/ahadith-in-the-work-of-ibn-arabi-denis-gril/>.

<sup>10</sup> Gril, "Le Hadīth," 130.

<sup>11</sup> Gril, "Hadīth in the Work of Ibn 'Arabī."

<sup>12</sup> For this aspect cf. Thomas Bauer, *Die Kultur Der Ambiguität: Eine Etwas Andere Geschichte Des Islams*, Berlin: Verlag Der Weltreligionen (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2011); Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

Comparing Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Jīlī Claude Addas writes in her article on the figure of the prophet in the work of al-Jīlī:

“I would stress that Ibn ‘Arabī himself never refers to any of the many traditions which have flourished on the subject of the *nūr muhammadī*, deriving from the *hadīth* reported by Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh (“The first thing God created was my light...”), or traditions which appear even in the writings of certain ‘ulamā’, stating, in one form or another, that “If not for you, I would not have created the universe” (*law lāka...*).”

On the other hand, Jīlī makes abundant use of these traditions without calling their validity into question in the least. In the field of *‘ilm al-hadīth* he certainly did not benefit from as solid an education as that of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>13</sup> We may remember that this science was especially in evidence in Andalusia during Ibn ‘Arabī’s time and that he also pursued the study of it throughout his life to the degree that it imbued him, literally, with a holy character. Whatever it might have been, one can pick out several traditions in Jīlī’s writings, the authenticity of which is somewhat suspect. This can be said of the two above-mentioned *hadīths*, and equally of two other *hadīths* relating to the cosmic function of the Prophet. According to the first, the Prophet is said to have added:

“I come from God and the believers come from me” (*anā min Allāh wa al-mu’mīnū minīnī*), a tradition that Jīlī quotes on several occasions, particularly in the *Kamālāt ilāhiyya*<sup>14</sup>, the *Qāb qawsayn* and *al-Kahf wa al-raqīm*.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, a thorough study of the use of *ahādīth* by al-Jīlī is still missing. A thorough study may rectify some ideas presented by Addas. Interesting studies analyzing single works of al-Jīlī do not focus on the role of *hadīth* in it.<sup>16</sup> Few studies analyze the use of

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the conclusion of this article for an assessment of these views.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Kamālāt al-Ilāhiyya fī Sifāt al-Muhammadiyya*, ed. Sa‘id ‘Abd al-Fattāh (Cairo: Maktaba ‘Ālam al-Fikr, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Claude Addas, ““At the Distance of Two Bows’ Length or Even Closer” The Figure of the Prophet in the Work of ‘Abdal Karīm Jīlī – Part II,” *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, n.d., accessed January 26, 2021, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/muhammad-character-jili-two-bows-length-claude-addas/>.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., the erudite study of Angelika Al-Massri on the Sharh mushkilāt al-Futūhāt al-makkiyya Angelika Al-Massri, *Göttliche Vollkommenheit Und Die Stellung Des Menschen: Die Sichtweise ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Ǧīlīs Auf Der Grundlage Des Sharh Muškilāt al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999); cf. also the text

ḥadīths in *al-Insān al-kāmil*.<sup>17</sup> We will only give some references for the sake of focusing on the analysis of all aspects of al-Jīlī's approach to *hadīth*.

## Al-Insān al-Kāmil

In *al-Insān al-kāmil*<sup>18</sup> of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī<sup>19</sup>, we read references to the Prophet without direct quotations from ḥadīth literature.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, we find *ahādīth* to be found in well-known *ḥadīth* collections like the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī saying "Everyone of you is a herdsman and all of you are responsible for your herd."<sup>21</sup> Or Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* saying "God has some seventy covers (*hijāb*) of light (*nūr*)",<sup>22</sup> and "The people of the Qur'an are the people of God and his chosen one (*khāssatuhu*)".<sup>23</sup> Other *hadīths*

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of the Sharḥ in 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Manāzir al-Ilāhiyya*, ed. 'Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī al-Husaynī al-Shādhilī al-Darqāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2009), 85–153; The same holds true for a recent study by the author Rüdiger Lohlker, "'Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī, Wahdat al-Wujūd, and Reconfiguring Epistemology," *Ullumuna* 23, no. 1 (June 27, 2019): 1–23.

<sup>17</sup> Agung Danarta, "Corak Hadis Sufistik dalam Konsep Insan Kamil Abd al-Karim al-Jili," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 22, no. 1 (2021): 161–184.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the recent study of the concept of al-insān al-kāmil Fitzroy Morrissey, *Sufism and the Perfect Human: From Ibn 'Arabī to al-Jīlī* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil fi Ma 'rifat al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhīr*, ed. 'Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī al-Husaynī al-Shādhilī al-Darqāwī, 2nd ed., vol. 1–2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2016); 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *Al-Insān al-Kāmil fi Ma 'rifat al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhīr*, ed. 'Āsim bin Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2016); 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil fi Ma 'rifat al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhīr* (Baghdad: Manshūrāt al-Jamāl, 2012); 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil fi Ma 'rifat al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhīr*, ed. Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Salāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Uwayda (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, vol. 1–2, p. 31, 179, 210–211, 223, 227–228, 231, 235, 260, 274, 277, 332, and 349.

<sup>21</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, 39.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 129, and 130; Contrary to Nicholas Lo Polito, 'Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī: *Tawhīd, Transcendence and Immanence* (Diss. Phil.: University of Birmingham, 2010) fn. 169. there is a reference in one of the main ḥadīth collections having exactly this word of the Prophet (cf. Abū 'Abdullāh Ahmād ibn Ḥanbāl, *Musnād al-Imām Ahmād ibn Ḥanbāl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Atā, vol. 5 (Beirut, Dār al-

quoted by al-Jīlī are to be found in other collections, e. g., "I saw my Lord in the form of a beardless (*amrad*) young man,"<sup>24</sup> or not at all: "The alms given fall at first in the palm of the All-Merciful and then in the palm of the beggar".<sup>25</sup> Some are shortened: "The angel (*malak*) split up his heart (*qalb*), took out some blood and cleansed the heart."<sup>26</sup>

Sometimes al-Jīlī is quoting – again in abbreviated form – *ḥadīths* from minor collections: "In the thin clouds. What is above it there is air (*hawā*) and below it there is air."<sup>27</sup>

This overview over some selected *ḥadīths* allows for first insights into al-Jīlī's approach to *ḥadīths* in *al-Insān al-Kāmil* that may help us to understand the approach used in other works. At least at this stage of analysis, we may say that al-Jīlī does not follow the conventional paths of the specialists of *ḥadīth* but integrates the *ḥadīth* he refers to in one way or the other in his arguments much more than using them as a kind of proof external to his argument. He cares for the spirit not the text of the scripture (see below).

## Qāb Qawsayn

Although a study of the veneration of the Prophet Muhammad is not intended, we have to turn to a text by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī dedicated to the study of the example of the Prophet. Before anything else, following the Muhammadan model<sup>28</sup> is a keystone of the belief of Muslim believers. As Claude Addas writes:

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Kutub al-'Ilmiyya), 358 Hadīth No.12613; cf. Ibn Māja.) adding one question and one sentence.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, 70, 89, 91; Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad al-'Ajlūnī al-Jarāhī, *Kashf al-Khafā' wa Muzil al-Ilbās 'Ammā 'Shtahara min Aḥādīth 'alā Alsina al-Nās.*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Bairut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1351), 436 (Hadīth No. 1409) with different versions of the text.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, 67 the text is not to be found in any collection, only similar wordings.

<sup>26</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, 230.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 85, and 88 to be found, e. g., in the *Sahīh* of Ibn Hibbān or in *al-Jāmi'* *al-Sahīh* of al-Tirmidhī.

<sup>28</sup> For an excellent overview cf. Claude Addas, *La Maison Muhammadienne: Aperçus de la Dévotion au Prophète en Mystique Musulmane* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015).

"It is that the *Qāb Qawsayn* by 'Abd al-Karīm Jīlī [...] - a brief pamphlet which is to be the subject of this study - attempts to demonstrate. Innumerable texts belonging to the literature of *tasawwuf* deal with the prophetic following, so much so that the idea of the exemplary nature of the Prophet, which is at the heart of the process for spiritual Muslims, is also part of the common inheritance of the *umma* and participates in the genesis of Islam."<sup>29</sup>

As to the use of *hadīth* in this work references to the Prophet are current without referring to specific *ahādīth* saying e. g., that he was "singled out by God with His all-encompassing great self-disclosure (*tajalliyāt*) with was not received by anybody else in this world or the other."<sup>30</sup> Later on we read: "However, he was an intermediate reality (*barzakh*)<sup>31</sup> between the realities of the non-contingent (*haqqiyā*) and the realities of the contingent (*khalqiyā*) because he is the true reality of all realities (*haqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*)."<sup>32</sup> This may be classified as a reference to the Prophet as part of the narrative on him in this book.

Al-Jīlī directly quotes *hadīth* and we read: "He said: I am from God, I am from God, the believers are from me."<sup>33</sup> This *hadīth* is embedded in a discussion on the self-disclosure of God and the Muhammadan reality (*haqīqat al-muhammadiyya*) and is a kind of conclusion to this argument.

This *hadīth* is not listed in the standard *hadīth* collections. It is regarded as dubious by some authors, variations are noted.<sup>34</sup> Thus,

<sup>29</sup> Claude Addas, ""At the Distance of Two Bows' Length or Even Closer" The Figure of the Prophet in the Work of 'Abdal Karīm Jīlī – Part I," *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, n.d., accessed January 26, 2021, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/muhammad-character-two-bows-length-claude-addas/>.

<sup>30</sup> 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *Qāb Qawsayn wa Muṭlaqā al-Νāmūsayn with K. al-Nuqta al-Mawsūm bi Haqīqat al-Ḥaqā'iq, Risāla al-Isfār al-Gharīb Naṭījat al-Safar al-Qarīb, and al-'Ayniyā* (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2016), 13; For another editon cf. 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *Qāb Qawsayn wa Muṭlaqā al-Νāmūsayn fi Ma'rifat al-Sayyid al-Kawnayn*, ed. Ahmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-'Arabīyya, n.d.).

<sup>31</sup> Salman H. Bashier, *Ibn Al-'Arabī's Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004) for this concept.

<sup>32</sup> al-Jīlī, *Qāb Qawsayn*, 49.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>34</sup> al-'Ajlūnī al-Jarāhī, *Kashf al-Khafā'*, 1:205 (Hadīth no. 619).

this *hadīth* is part of an argument about the role of the Prophet, but not embedded in a technical discussion on *hadīth*.

Another *hadīth* that is generally accepted reads: "Nobody of you will be a believer unless he loves me more than his soul, his property, and his offspring."<sup>35</sup>

The *hadīth* is to be found in the *Sahīh* of al-Bukhārī.<sup>36</sup> The version given by al-Jīlī is a shorter one. In this case, the *hadīth* is part of a narrative on the love to the Prophet, not embedded in a technical discussion on *hadīth*.

### Al-Kahf wa al-Raqīm

Let us turn to another work of al-Jīlī! A popular work of al-Jīlī is *al-Kahf wa al-Raqīm fi Sharḥ bismi Allāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*<sup>37</sup>, the cave and the inscription.<sup>38</sup> The text of this work – not the commentary – has been studied by Lo Polito in his thesis and Ridha Atlagh in an article.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, in these studies there is no thorough discussion of the use of *hadīth* in this work. Thus, we will give some insights into this aspect of the *Kahf* by discussing several selected *hadīths*.<sup>40</sup>

The first relevant and famous *hadīth* reads in the reading of al-Jīlī: "I was a hidden treasure (*kanz makhfīyy*) and I desired to be known. I created the creatures (*khalq*) and I introduced Myself to

<sup>35</sup> al-Jīlī, *Qāb Qawsayn*, 46.

<sup>36</sup> Ḥadīth no. 15, see *Aldorar Alsuniyat - Almawsueat Alḥadīthia*, accessed January 28, 2021, <https://www.dorar.net/ḥadīth/sharḥ/7339>.

<sup>37</sup> 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf wa al-Raqīm fi Sharḥ Bism Allāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm wa Sharḥ li Mu'allif Majhūl*, ed. 'Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shādhilī al-Darqāwī (Beirut: Book Publisher, 2013); and partially 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf wa al-Raqīm fi Sharḥ Bism Allāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm wa Sharḥ li Mu'allif Majhūl*, ed. 'Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shādhilī al-Darqāwī (s.l.: s. publ., n.d.).

<sup>38</sup> Following the translation of Lo Polito (see below).

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas Lo Polito, "'Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī: Tawḥīd, Transcendence and Immanence" (Dissertation Phil, University of Birmingham, 2010), accessed August 28, 2019, <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1193/>; Ridha Atlagh, "Le point et la ligne: Explication de la Basmala par la science des lettres chez 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ǧīlī(m. 826 H.)," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 44 (1992): 161-190 44 (1992): 161-190.

<sup>40</sup> A thorough discussion of all ḥadīths in the *Kahf* would need a book-length study.

them so they recognized Me."<sup>41</sup> This *ḥadīth* is not to be found in any collection but common knowledge among Sufis.

The text of the *Kahf* starts with a lengthy *ḥadīth* saying "It has been reported in the tradition (*khabar*) following the Prophet - may God bless and grant salvation to him - that he said, "All that is contained in the revealed books is contained in the *Qur'an*, and all that is contained in the *Qur'an* is contained in the *fātiḥa*, and all that is contained in the *fātiḥa* is contained in the words *In the Name of God the All-Compassionate and Most Merciful*" (*bism Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*). It has also been reported that "all that is contained in [the formula] *In the Name of God the All-Compassionate and Most Merciful* is contained in the [letter] *bā'*<sup>42</sup> and all that is contained in the *bā'* is contained in the dot (*nuqta*)<sup>43</sup> that is under the *bā'*."<sup>44</sup> From the point of view of *ḥadīth* studies the main problem of this text is that there seems to be no authoritative source in the canon of collections of *ḥadīth*. Nevertheless, al-Jīlī is inscribing himself in a tradition: the tradition of Ibn 'Arabī. Thus, he claims an added legitimacy by joining the *shaykh al-akbar* as an authority more important than any reference to the six or nine books of *ḥadīth*. He stresses the superior knowledge gained by Sufi practice and knowledge.

<sup>41</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 31; al-'Ajlūnī al-Jarāhī, *Kashf al-Khafā'*, 1:155 Ḥadīth No.2016 there is another version of the text. Al-'Ajlūnī says that there is no reliable Ḥadīth source for this saying but there are similar wordings related to this saying. The version in the reading of al-Jīlī is a common saying al-'Ajlūnī says. Cf. for the translation Lo Polito, *'Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī*, 206.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn 'Arabī has written on the *bā'*, e. g., in his *Futūhāt* (cf Rüdiger Lohker, "Das *Bā'* Bei Ibn 'Arabī: Aus Den Mekkanischen Eröffnungen," in *Der Buchstabe *Bā'* – Texte Zur Einsheit Des Seins in Der Tradition Ibn 'Arabīs*, ed. Rüdiger Lohker, vol. 23 [Hamburg: Dr. Kovač, 2016], 21–27; Denis Gril, "Commentaries on the *Fatiḥah* and Experience of the Being According to Ibn 'Arabī," *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabī Society*, n.d., accessed March 20, 2021, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/commentaries-on-the-fatiha-denis-gril/>).

<sup>43</sup> Al-Jīlī has written a treatise on the dot, cf. al-Jīlī, *Qāb Qāwsayn*, 55–114.

<sup>44</sup> Slightly adapted version of the translation in Lo Polito, *'Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī*, 172; This author does not provide any discussion of Ḥadīth-related issues. al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 13; al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 13.

Al-Jīlī quotes another *ḥadīth* of Jābir ibn ‘Abdallāh<sup>45</sup>: “God - may He be exalted - created the Prophet’s breath of life (*rūh*) - may God bless and grant salvation to him and his family - from His own being (*dhāt*).”<sup>46</sup> He created the world in its entirety from the soul of Muhammad - may God bless and grant salvation to him and his family.” Al-Jīlī continues saying that the Prophet is created as an outward appearance of the creation in His name.

Another *ḥadīth*<sup>47</sup> says: “I saw my Lord in the form of a beardless youth wearing a golden garment instead, and on His head, He had a golden crown, and on His feet two golden sandals.”<sup>48</sup>

Sometimes al-Jīlī quotes a *ḥadīth* available in the main collections. Thus, he says: “The people of the Qur’ān are the people of God and his chosen one (*khāssatuhu*).”<sup>49</sup> But he also quotes other ones that are not part of the main collections: “I am from God and the believers are from me.”<sup>50</sup>

In his commentary<sup>51</sup> there are similar types of reference to *ḥadīths*. The commentary to the *Kahf* has not been thoroughly

<sup>45</sup> A prominent companion allegedly died in 697 CE G. H. A. Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Hadīth* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 259–260.

<sup>46</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 14; al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 15 and shortened 92; the editions slightly differ. Cf. for the translation Lo Polito, ‘Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī, 175; al-‘Ajlūnī al-Jarāhī, *Kashf al-Khafā*, 1:265 Ḥadīth No. 827 says “from the light (nūr) of your Prophet.”; Lo Polito, “Abd Al-Karim Al-Jili,” 175 fn. 29 speaks of a “Shiite fabrication” without giving references.

<sup>47</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 16; al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 17; Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-‘Ummāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa af’āl*, ed. Ishāq al-Tībī, 2nd ed. (Amman, Riyadh: Bayt al-Afkār al-Duwaliyya, 2005), 83 Ḥadīth No. 1152 with a slightly shortened text and; al-‘Ajlūnī al-Jarāhī, *Kashf al-Khafā*, 1:436 Ḥadīth No. 1409 with different version.

<sup>48</sup> Lo Polito, ‘Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī, 179 fn. 43.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 208 fn. 169 there is a reference in one of the main Ḥadīth collections having exactly this word of the Prophet. fn.169 (cf. Ibn Ḥanbāl, *Musnād*, 5:358., Ḥadīth No.12613) adding one question and one sentence.

<sup>50</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 33; al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 27. There is no reference in the major Ḥadīth collections. But Ibn Taymiyya states: “This word (*lafz*) is not known to be on the authority of the Prophet.” See, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *Aḥādīth al-Qussās*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd Allāh Bājūr (Cairo: Dār al-Misriyya al-Lubnāniyya, 1993), 36 Ḥadīth No. 7. But he mentions several ahādīth with similar wordings.

<sup>51</sup> Lo Polito, ‘Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī.

studied yet. Hence, this analysis may be the first look at this interesting part of the works of al-Jīlī.

Another *hadīth*<sup>52</sup> quoted also in other works of al-Jīlī is: “My earth (*ard*) is not wide enough for me nor is my heaven (*samā’*). But there is enough space in the heart of my believing servant (*‘abdī al-mu’mīn*).”

Again there is a reference to a *hadīth* that may be regarded as dubious by *hadīth* specialists<sup>53</sup> but in Sufi milieus, it is understood as a *hadīth* expressing a true meaning of Islam beyond any words.

A shortened version of a *hadīth* reads “We are the last (*ākhirūn*) and the first (*awwalūn*).”<sup>54</sup> This *hadīth* is in the usual collections related to the day of resurrection but shortening allows for recontextualizing it in a way referring to the double nature of the Prophet Muhammad and Ādām representing the inner and outer aspect of existence. It is a reference to standard collections reframed to be part of the author’s argument.<sup>55</sup>

Another *hadīth* reads: “Salmān is from us, the people of the house [of the Prophet].”<sup>56</sup> This popular *hadīth* refers to Salmān al-Fārisī, the Persian convert to Islam and companion of the Prophet<sup>57</sup>, as an example to be followed. This statement is supported by another *hadīth*<sup>58</sup>: “My companions are like stars (*nūjūm*). You are following them and you are rightly guided by

<sup>52</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 66.

<sup>53</sup> al-‘Ajlūnī al-Jarāhī, *Kashf al-Khafā’*, 1:116–117, Ḥadīth No.1885 and 1884. These entries do have some different wording; al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 66 has only Ḥadīth no. 1885.

<sup>54</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 92.

<sup>55</sup> This version is available in Muslim and al-Nasā’ī. A slightly different wording has *sābiqūn* instead of *awwalūn* e.g., “‘Umdat al-Qārī Sharḥ shāhīh al-Bukhārī,” *Islamweb.net*, accessed January 19, 2021, [https://islamweb.net/ar/library/index.php?page=bookcontents&flag=1&bk\\_no=303&ID=3631](https://islamweb.net/ar/library/index.php?page=bookcontents&flag=1&bk_no=303&ID=3631).

<sup>56</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 114; Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu’jam al-Kabīr*, ed. Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Silfī, vol. 6 (Cairo: Maktaba Ibn Taymiyya, n.d.), 212–213, Ḥadīth no. 6040 with a slightly enlarged wording.

<sup>57</sup> Sarah Bowen Savant, “Muhammad’s Persian Companion, Salmān al-Fārisī,” in *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 61–89.

<sup>58</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 114.

them.<sup>59</sup> Both *hadīths* together are part of a larger argument of al-Jīlī on models to be emulated. The *hadīths* are to be found in minor collections or regarded as dubious even faked *hadīths* by some *hadīth* specialists. Al-Jīlī put them in a context of models to follow and being rightly guided by them

Other *ahadīth* are used by al-Jīlī not referring to any *hadīth* collection at all<sup>60</sup>: “My God, make us understand You since we will not understand You without You.” This *hadīth* may be read as a paradoxical argument transcending conventional thought and enabling to grasp an understanding of God. This paradoxical approach is followed in the next *hadīth* we quote.

Sometimes al-Jīlī refers to *hadīths* explicitly: “My God, I seek protection by your favor from Your anger. I seek protection by Your willingness to pardon from Your punishment, and I seek protection by You from You.”<sup>61</sup>

Here is one of the few occurrences of an explicit reference to a *hadīth* to be found in one of the standard *hadīth* collections albeit a little bit shortened.<sup>62</sup> Thus, assuming al-Jīlī was not well trained in the discipline of the *hadīths*, ignores his ability to follow the usual way of referring to *hadīths*. He evidently did not deem it necessary in all cases when his quotations capture the spirit of the model of the Prophet. The last *hadīth* of our selected number of *hadīths* from the *Kahf* is: “He created Adam in the form of the All-Merciful.”<sup>63</sup> This *hadīth* is well-known<sup>64</sup> and quoted in several collections. This time it is framed in an argument being a reference to the *hadīth* literature not understood as a proof for some truth but as part of the discourse of al-Jīlī.

<sup>59</sup> al-‘Ajlūnī al-Jarāhī, *Kashf al-Khafā*, 1:156–157, Ḥadīth No.381 referring to al-Bayhaqī.

<sup>60</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 121 The editor mentions that he was not able to find any reference.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 155, and 233.

<sup>62</sup> Abū al-Hasan Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Dār Ihyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1991), 352, Ḥadīth no. 486 (222).

<sup>63</sup> al-Jīlī, *al-Kahf*, 250 Al-Jīlī has some other wordings of this Ḥadīth, too.

<sup>64</sup> There are several collections having this Hadīth, cf. for a discussion of this Ḥadīth from a Ḥadīth specialists point of view Sa’d ibn Daydān al-Sabīl, *Ithāf al-Khalān Kalām ‘ala al-Ḥadīth khalaqa Ādām ‘alā Sūrat al-Rāḥmān* (s.l.: s. publ., 1430).

## Marātib al-Wujūd

The last work we will refer to is *Marātib al-Wujūd*, the levels of existence. Just looking into two examples of *hadīth* that are available in this work, we will gain additional insights into the way al- Jīlī uses *ahādīth* and how he refers to the Prophet Muhammad. The first example reads:

“Therefore the messenger of God called it thin clouds (‘amā) when somebody asked him: ‘Where was God?’ In a ḥadīth narrative (*riwāyā*): Where is our Lord before he created the creation (*khalq*)? The messenger of God answered: In the thin clouds. What is above it there is air (*hawā*) and below it there is air.”<sup>65</sup>

This is a *hadīth* referring to the creation of the throne (‘arsh) above the waters.<sup>66</sup> Again the *hadīth* is integrated into the narrative of al-Jīlī on the question of where the location of God may be.

The second example refers to the Prophet without any quotation of a *hadīth*. Al-Jīlī simply mentions that the Prophet indicated the expression “the merciful self” (*al-nafs al-rahmān*).<sup>67</sup> Thus, we may identify the same paradigms used by al-Jīlī before.

## Conclusion

We may distinguish three ways of referring to the Prophet and *hadīth* followed by al-Jīlī.<sup>68</sup> The first way is referring to the Prophet without providing a *hadīth*. The second one is using a *hadīth* embedded in the narrative produced by the author, esp., *ahādīth* not listed in the standard collections of *hadīth*. The third one is using *hadīth* to be found in the standard collections – sometimes

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<sup>65</sup> ‘Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *Marātib al-Wujūd wa Haqīqa kull Mawjūd* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jundī, n.d.), 13; ‘Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *Marātib al-Wujūd wa Haqīqa kull Mawjūd* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qāhira, 1999), 16; ‘Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *Marātib al-Wujūd wa-Haqīqat Kull Mawjūd* (Cairo: Muntadā Sūr al-Azba‘iyya, 1999), 41; to be found, e.g., in the *Ṣahīh* of Ibn Hibbān.

<sup>66</sup> Narrated in the Sunan of al-Tirmidhī, cf. Abū al-‘Alā ‘Abd al-Rahmān ‘Abd al-Rahīm al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuhfat al-Ahwadhī bi Sharh Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Muḥammad ‘Uthmān, vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, n.d.), 528–531.

<sup>67</sup> al-Jīlī, *Marātib al-Wujūd*, 20.

<sup>68</sup> We do not claim it is the general approach used by Sufis. A study enabling us to understand the Sufi approaches in general is still to be done.

another version than the usual one, often shortened, also embedded in the narrative of the author.

These ways of using *hadīth* are followed to add additional aspects to the narratives of the author.

*Hadīth* is not used by al-Jīlī as a “proof” (*dalil*) for an argument,<sup>69</sup> but it helps to give the arguments of the author additional power by referring to the common knowledge of the Islamic community embodied in the Prophet, his actions and words. Thus, al-Jīlī’s does not subscribe to claims of authority and is not trying to enter into a competition with *hadīth* scholars, not because of a lack of knowledge or interest in *hadīth* studies (see below). He follows a different logic based in his experience as a Sufi.

Using *hadīth* this way is part of the pre-modern Islamic scholarly discourses. The knowledge and preeminence of the Prophet is the focus of the argumentation of al-Jīlī and the community he was raised in, not obeying to narrow rules of *hadīth* scholarship, al-Jīlī knew well (contrary to Addas as mentioned above) since he was educated in a community influenced by the ruling dynasty of the Rasulids in Yemen who tried to bolster their image by supporting renowned Sunni scholars like the commentator of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 1449 CE).<sup>70</sup>

Thus, *hadīth* is for al-Jīlī a tool created to help other Muslims understand what means *wahdat al-wujūd* and the experiences it expresses. Reading *hadīth* only through the lenses of the technical disciplines related to *hadīth* sprouts a misunderstanding of the role of *hadīth* in pre-modern Muslim societies. We may assume giving priority to the categories of *hadīth* scholars is misleading as to the structure pre-modern Islamic thought.<sup>71</sup> The attempt to

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<sup>69</sup> This may be the characteristics of Salafi and Wahhabi thought making Ḥadīth part of the theological goods available for any purpose, i. e., the commodification of Ḥadīth.

<sup>70</sup> R. Kevin Jaques, *Ibn Hajar* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> Misleading is also following the dichotomy of the formal aspects of Ḥadīth and its content. This dichotomy means subscribing to an idea that is privileging the thought of Ḥadīth specialists by accepting their worldview. Cf. For this

understand the spirit of the Prophet has been dominant, esp., in Sufi circles, i. e., the majority of pre-modern Islamic communities. As Morrissey puts it:

“While al-Jīlī, probably mindful of the attacks upon him and the Ibn ‘Arabian Sufis by their aforementioned critics in Yemen, displays a certain defensiveness with these remarks, and while the sentiment expressed here may also be something of a trope in Sufi writing, nevertheless they do reflect how in much of his writing he uses the Qur’ān and ḥadīth as hooks upon which to hang his ideas. This Qur’ān- and ḥadīth-centredness accords with his view that the knowledge attained through religious experience gives insight into the inner meaning of scripture.”<sup>72</sup>

For the theology of *wahdat al-wujūd* the literature of *ahādīth* is a resource for interpreting the Sufi experience following the model of the Prophet as a total human (*insān kāmil*).<sup>73</sup> Comparing it to modern trends it is an approach to *ḥadīth* differing from the reifying approach of modern Salafism, Deobandi approaches like that of Ashraf ‘Ali Thanavi<sup>74</sup> and, e.g., of Shu‘ayb al-Arnā’ūt.<sup>75</sup>

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acceptance Adrien Leites, “Ghazzālī’s Alteration of ḥadīths: Processes and Meaning,” *Oriens* 40, no. 1 (2012): 133–148.

<sup>72</sup> Morrissey, *Sufism and the Perfect Human*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. for this translation Lohlker, “‘Abd Al-Karīm al-Jīlī, Wahdat al-Wujūd, and Reconfiguring Epistemology.”

<sup>74</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Ashraf ‘Ali Thanavi Islam in Modern South Asia* (London: Oneworld, 2008); Ali Altaf Mian, *Surviving Modernity: Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī (1863-1943) and the Making of Muslim Orthodoxy in Colonial India* (Diss. Phil.: Duke University, 2015).

<sup>75</sup> A study of his approach (and other approaches) is about to be published.

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