



‘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 *waḥdat 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-Jili, sufism, ḥadīth, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*

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READING ḤADĪTH is often focused on the authenticity of *aḥādīth* 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.

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<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 *ḥadīth* as used by Sufis, esp., of the school of *waḥdat 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 *ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīth*.

## Western Studies of Sufi Approaches to Ḥadīth

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

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Gharaibeh, *Einführung in die Wissenschaften des Ḥadīth, seine Überlieferungsgeschichte und Literatur* (Freiburg i Br.: Kalām Verlag, 2016) or studying the example of al-Nawawī's *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn* cf. Marco Schöller, trans., *Yahyā Ibn Sharaf Al-Nawawī: Das Buch Der Vierzig Ḥadīthe Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn Mit Dem Kommentar von Ibn Daqīq al-ʿId* (Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2007) and a special case of an *arbaʿīn* 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 Ḥadīths for Inciting Jihad* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013) For a detailed analysis of the role of Ḥadīth 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, *Ḥadīth: 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 Ḥadīth*, 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 *ḥadīth* in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>6</sup> The study of *ḥadīth* in the school of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the oneness of being, is deplorably limited.

On a more general plane, Knysh assesses the importance of the Qur‘an and *ḥadīth* literature for *tasawwuf* and Sufis: “Its importance for Sufi thought notwithstanding, the *ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīth* in the writings of Sufis and, esp., in the school of *waḥdat 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>

### **Ḥadīth, Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Jīlī**

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

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Peter Bachmann, “A Propos d’un Ḥadīṭ Expliqué dans Les Futūḥāt d’Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165-1240),” in *Das Propheten Ḥadīṭ: Dimensionen Einer Islamischen Literaturgattung*, ed. Claude Gilliot and Tilman Nagel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 108–112; Peter Bachmann, “Ḥadīṭe im Text, im Kommentar Oder im Hintergrund: Zu Einigen Versen aus dem Dīwān von Ibn al-‘Arabī,” in *Ḥadīthstudien: Die Überlieferungen des Propheten im Gespräch. Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Tilman Nagel*, ed. Rüdiger Lohker (Hamburg: Dr. Kovács, 2009), 5–18; Angelika Brodersen, “Die Autorität des Ḥadīṭ: Zur Bedeutung Muḥammads im theosophischen System Ibn al-‘Arabīs,” in *Das Propheten Ḥadīṭ: 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’œuvre 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’œuvre 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 Ḥadīth Dans l’œuvre d’Ibn ‘Arabī Ou La Chaîne Ininterrompue de La Prophétie,” in *Das Prophetenḥadīṭ: Dimensionen Einer Islamischen Literaturgattung*, ed. Claude Gilliot and Tilman

importance of *ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīth* compiled by Ibn 'Arabī, most of them disappeared. But there are some specialized works on *ḥadīth* by Ibn 'Arabī that are extant, leaving aside the other works with many references to *ḥadīth*. Generally speaking, Ibn 'Arabī accepts *aḥādīth* from different origins insofar as these *ḥadīth* convey an undeniable truth.<sup>10</sup>

"His *Mishkāt al-anwār fīmā ruwiya 'an Allāh min al-akhbār* is a collection of *ḥadīth 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-aḥkām al-shar'iyya*, written in the style of *aḥādīth al-aḥkām*. [...] we can assume that the author, who was in Mecca in ah 600, intended to compose for himself a vast collection of *ḥadīth*, serving as a reference in matters of jurisprudence."<sup>11</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī in the last work refers to a *ḥadīth* transmitted via – we may assume – an *ijāza 'amma* 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 *ḥadīth* 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, "Ḥadīth in the Work of Ibn 'Arabī," *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, n.d., accessed January 25, 2021, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/aḥādīth-in-the-work-of-ibn-arabi-denis-gril/>.

<sup>10</sup> Gril, "Le Ḥadīth," 130.

<sup>11</sup> Gril, "Ḥadīth 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 muḥammadi*, deriving from the *ḥadīth* 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-*ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīths*, and equally of two other *ḥadīths* 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’minīn minnī*), 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 *aḥādīth* 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 *ḥadīth* 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 Ṣifāt al-Muḥammadiyya*, ed. Sa‘īd ‘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 ‘Abd al-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 *Sharḥ mushkilāt al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* Angelika Al-Massri, *Göttliche Vollkommenheit Und Die Stellung Des Menschen: Die Sichtweise ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Ġilīs Auf Der Grundlage Des Šarḥ Muškilāt al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya*. (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 ḥadīth.

### 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 *aḥādīth* 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 (*ḥijāb*) 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 ḥadīths

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of the Sharh in 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Manāẓir 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, Waḥdat al-Wujūd, and Reconfiguring Epistemology," *Ulumuna* 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 fī Ma'rifat al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhir*, 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 fī Ma'rifat al-Awākhir wa al-Awā'il*, ed. 'Āsim bin Ibrāhīm al-Kayālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2016); 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Ma'rifat al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhir* (Baghdad: Manshūrāt al-Jamal, 2012); 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Ma'rifat al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhir*, ed. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Salāḥ 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: *Tawḥīd, 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 Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbāl, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad 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 Muḥammad 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 Ḥadīth 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 Muzīl al-Ilbās 'Ammā 'Shtahara min Aḥādīth 'alā Alsina al-Nās.*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Bairut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1351), 436 (Ḥadīth 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 Saḥīh of Ibn Hibbān or in al-Jāmi' al-Saḥīh 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 *ḥadīth* in this work references to the Prophet are current without referring to specific *aḥādīth* 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 (*ḥaqqiyya*) and the realities of the contingent (*khalqiyya*) because he is the true reality of all realities (*ḥaqīqat 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 *ḥadīth* and we read: "He said: I am from God, I am from God, the believers are from me."<sup>33</sup> This *ḥadīth* is embedded in a discussion on the self-disclosure of God and the Muḥammadan reality (*ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyya*) and is a kind of conclusion to this argument.

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

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<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 Multaqā al-Nāmūsayn with K. al-Nuqta al-Mawsūm bi Ḥaqīqat al-Haqā'iq, Risāla al-Isfār al-Gharīb Natījat al-Safar al-Qarīb, and al-'Ayniyya* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2016), 13; For another edition cf. 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, *Qāb Qawsayn wa Multaqā al-Nāmūsayn fī Ma'rifat al-Sayyid al-Kawnayn*, ed. Ahmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Cairo: Dār al-āfāq al-'Arabiyya, 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 (Ḥadīth no. 619).



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

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

### 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 fī Sharḥ bismi Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*<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 *ḥadīth* in this work. Thus, we will give some insights into this aspect of the *Kahf* by discussing several selected *ḥadīths*.<sup>40</sup>

The first relevant and famous *ḥadīth* reads in the reading of al-Jīlī: “I was a hidden treasure (*kanz makhfiyy*) 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 - Almaawsueat 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 fī Sharḥ Bism Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm 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 fī Sharḥ Bism Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm 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-Ġīlī(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 (*khābar*) 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 (*nuqṭa*)<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.

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<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 *Futūḥāt* (cf. Rüdiger Lohlker, "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 *Fatihah* and Experience of the Being According to Ibn 'Arabi," *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi 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 Qawsayn*, 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’an 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 Ḥadīth* (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-Karīm Al-Jīlī*,” 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-Duwalīyya, 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, *Musnad*, 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 (*laḥẓ*) 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 *ḥadīth*<sup>52</sup> quoted also in other works of al-Jīlī is: “My earth (*arḍ*) 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’min*).”

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

A shortened version of a *ḥadīth* reads “We are the last (*ākhirūn*) and the first (*awwalūn*).”<sup>54</sup> This *ḥadīth* 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 Ādam 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 *ḥadīth* reads: “Salmān is from us, the people of the house [of the Prophet].”<sup>56</sup> This popular *ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīth*<sup>58</sup>: “My companions are like stars (*nujūm*). 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 ṣaḥīḥ 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, “Muḥammad’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 *ḥadīths* together are part of a larger argument of al-Jīlī on models to be emulated. The *ḥadīths* are to be found in minor collections or regarded as dubious even faked *ḥadīths* by some *ḥadīth* specialists. Al-Jīlī put them in a context of models to follow and being rightly guided by them

Other *aḥadīth* are used by al-Jīlī not referring to any *ḥadīth* collection at all<sup>60</sup>: “My God, make us understand You since we will not understand You without You.” This *ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīth* we quote.

Sometimes al-Jīlī refers to *ḥadīths* 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 *ḥadīth* to be found in one of the standard *ḥadīth* collections albeit a little bit shortened.<sup>62</sup> Thus, assuming al-Jīlī was not well trained in the discipline of the *ḥadīths*, ignores his ability to follow the usual way of referring to *ḥadīths*. He evidently did not deem it necessary in all cases when his quotations capture the spirit of the model of the Prophet. The last *ḥadīth* of our selected number of *ḥadīths* from the *Kahf* is: “He created Adam in the form of the All-Merciful.”<sup>63</sup> This *ḥadīth* is well-known<sup>64</sup> and quoted in several collections. This time it is framed in an argument being a reference to the *ḥadīth* 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-Ḥasan Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ 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 Ḥadīth, cf. for a discussion of this Ḥadīth from a Ḥadīth specialists point of view Sa’d ibn Daydān al-Sabī’ī, *Ithāf al-Khalāl Kalām ‘ala al-Ḥadīth khalaqa Ādam ‘alā Sūrat al-Raḥmān* (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 *ḥadīth* that are available in this work, we will gain additional insights into the way al-Jīlī uses *aḥādīth* 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 (*riwāya*): 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 *ḥadīth* referring to the creation of the throne (*‘arsh*) above the waters.<sup>66</sup> Again the *ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīth*. Al-Jīlī simply mentions that the Prophet indicated the expression “the merciful self” (*al-naḥs al-raḥmān*).<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 *ḥadīth* followed by al-Jīlī.<sup>68</sup> The first way is referring to the Prophet without providing a *ḥadīth*. The second one is using a *ḥadīth* embedded in the narrative produced by the author, esp., *aḥādīth* not listed in the standard collections of *ḥadīth*. The third one is using *ḥadīth* 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-Azbakiyya, 1999), 41; to be found, e.g., in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Hibbān.

<sup>66</sup> Narrated in the *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhī, cf. Abū al-‘Alā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuhfat al-Aḥwadhī bi Sharḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān 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 *ḥadīth* are followed to add additional aspects to the narratives of the author.

*Ḥadīth* is not used by al-Jīlī as a “proof” (*dalīl*) 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 *ḥadīth* scholars, not because of a lack of knowledge or interest in *ḥadīth* studies (see below). He follows a different logic based in his experience as a Sufi.

Using *ḥadīth* 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 *ḥadīth* 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, *ḥadīth* is for al-Jīlī a tool created to help other Muslims understand what means *waḥdat al-wujūd* and the experiences it expresses. Reading *ḥadīth* only through the lenses of the technical disciplines related to *ḥadīth* sprouts a misunderstanding of the role of *ḥadīth* in pre-modern Muslim societies. We may assume giving priority to the categories of *ḥadīth* 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’an and ḥadīth as hooks upon which to hang his ideas. This Qur’an- 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 *waḥdat al-wujūd* the literature of *aḥādīth* 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 ‘Alī Thanavi<sup>74</sup> and, e.g., of Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘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, Waḥdat al-Wujūd, and Reconfiguring Epistemology.”

<sup>74</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Ashraf ‘Alī Thanavi Islam in Modern South Asia* (London: Oneworld, 2008); Ali Altaf Mian, *Surviving Modernity: Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī (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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